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DEVELOPMENTAL READING COURSE REPEATERS WITH
SIGNIFICANT COGNITIVE DISABILITIES AT
THE COMMUNITY COLLEGE:
EVALUATING ENROLLMENT MOTIVATIONS AND GOALS

BY

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DISSERTATION

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
For the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Education
In the Graduate School of the
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UNIVERSITY OF MISSOURI-ST. LOUIS
GRADUATE SCHOOL

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JULIET LILLEDAHL SCHERER

Entitled:

DEVELOPMENTAL READING COURSE REPEATERS WITH
SIGNIFICANT COGNITIVE DISABILITIES AT
THE COMMUNITY COLLEGE:
EVALUATING ENROLLMENT MOTIVATIONS AND GOALS

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Abstract

This study investigated the enrollment motivations of developmental reading course repeaters at St. Louis Community College (STLCC) who are judged to be highly unlikely to exit the developmental reading sequence by their instructors and/or counselors in the Access Office, the office that assists students with disabilities. This three-phase study consisted of interviewing STLCC students in this population (Phase I) and surveying their parents (Phase II), as well as surveying fulltime reading faculty and Access counselors at STLCC (Phase III) to ascertain their opinions of the Phase I and Phase II findings and to collect their opinions on a range of possible institutional responses.

Six themes emerged from Phase I data that explain why these students initially enroll in college and persist despite repeated failure. They enroll because they believe they are intellectually capable students; to earn degrees to improve their self-worth; to earn degrees to improve their employability; because they are inspired by and/or prompted by others to do so; to meet their social needs; and, to some degree by default. Six additional themes emerged that explain why these students specifically choose to attend STLCC. They make STLCC their college choice to take advantage of the extensive array of academic support services known to be offered especially at community colleges; to continue benefiting from the important daily support their live-in advocates provide; to attend a specific STLCC campus because it is in close proximity to their home; because STLCC's open enrollment policy provides them their only opportunity to enroll as a college student; because STLCC is affordable; and because of STLCC's reputation as a quality institution of higher education.

Dedication

To a promising generation: my nephews – Mason and Cole Lilledahl; Luke, Dalton, and Conner Lilledahl; Lucas, Noah, and Graham Scherer; and my children – Julian, Will, and Audrey Scherer.

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Many colleagues across the district provided critical support to me in various ways. Specifically, I appreciate Vice Chancellor for Academic and Student Affairs Dr. Donna Dare's interest in my work related to improving learning outcomes at St. Louis Community College (STLCC), a goal she also values highly. For years, my dean, Dr. Vernon Kays, has dedicated every resource at his disposal to improve my scholarship and

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my current officemate, Christine provided important daily support throughout my time in the PhD program, while also serving as a model of excellence in scholarship, teaching, and work ethic. Four other dear English colleagues, Dr. Wil Loy, Dr. Gregory Marshall, Dr. Robert Boyd (all former professors of mine while I was a student at Meramec), and Dr. Larry McDoniel, have invested for many years in my scholarly development by faithfully providing comprehensive answers to my unending questions. It truly has been my privilege to learn from the best.

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CHAPTER ONE: OVERVIEW AND RATIONALE

Introduction

Scholars throughout the history of American higher education have asked the following three questions:

- 1) What is the purpose of postsecondary education?
- 2) Who should attend college?
- 3) What should the curriculum look like? (Cassaza and Silverman, 1996, p. 3)

The value in examining these questions concerning purpose, access, and curriculum in higher education comes from understanding that they have been answered differently throughout history and rightly so. The answers have fluctuated in response to both the desires and needs of college students in America within the context of an ever-changing national and global society.

Continued emphasis on increased access to higher education has resulted in greater enrollment representation of students belonging to groups that did not traditionally attend college. Students with disabilities represent one group whose participation in higher education settings has amplified as a result of increased access. Never before in history have so many students with disabilities participated in higher education in America. Because of their enrollment policies, community colleges serve more students with disabilities than any other type of higher education institution (McCabe, 2000; Price-Ellingstad and Berry, 2000; Rioux-Bailey, 2004; Rosenbaum, Deil-Amen, and Person, 2006; Rothstein, 2003; Savukinas, 2004), raising compelling questions about how these institutions can best serve the needs of students with disabilities.

This study investigates a group of developmental reading students at St. Louis Community College who are course repeaters and for whom qualifying for college-level courses by meeting a college-wide reading requirement – even with proper accommodations, quality instruction, and unsurpassed effort on the part of students and faculty – appears highly unlikely. Included in the group are students who enrolled prior to the college's 2005 reading requirement and who were not required to demonstrate reading proficiency *ex post facto*, yet who have not made appreciable progress when enrolled in courses throughout the college. The scope of the study endeavors to provide a contemporary response to Casazza and Silverman's enduring questions regarding the purpose of postsecondary education, student access, and the nature and intent of the curriculum.

Definition of Terms

Throughout this study, several terms are used which have varying denotative meanings. They are defined below to allay any confusion about how they will be used hereafter.

Ability to Benefit (ATB): federal terminology used to determine eligibility for Title IV (or student financial aid) funds. A student currently can demonstrate ATB by 1) possessing a high school diploma, 2) possessing an equivalent to a high school diploma, such as a GED, or 3) passing a federally approved ATB test, commonly doubling as incoming assessment devices at community colleges, such as ASSET, COMPASS, or Accuplacer entrance examinations (U.S. Department of Education, 2009, Ability-to-Benefit section).

Access Office: The STLCC office that “offers support services to students with disabilities and faculty and staff who work with these students” (St. Louis Community College, 2009c).

Community college: “any institution regionally accredited to award the associate in arts or the associate in science as its highest degree” (Cohen and Brawer, 2003, p. 5).

Developmental disability: a federal definition of developmental disability. Developmental disabilities are a diverse group of severe chronic conditions that are due to mental and/or physical impairments. People with developmental disabilities have problems with major life activities such as language, mobility, learning, self-help, and independent living. Developmental disabilities begin anytime during development up to 22 years of age and usually last throughout a person’s lifetime. (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2004, ¶ 1)

Developmental education: a professional field dedicated to studying and teaching students pre-collegiate material in the college environment. It is described as a “...field of practice and research with a theoretical foundation in developmental psychology and learning theory. It promotes the cognitive and affective growth of all learners, at all levels of the learning continuum. It is sensitive and responsive to the individual differences and special needs among learners” (NADE Executive Board, 1998 as cited in Casazza, 1999, p. 5,). In addition to being a professional

field of study, *developmental education* refers to curriculum offerings that fall below the college level (generally those courses numbered below 100) yet are offered at the college and are meant to prepare the student to succeed in college-level coursework.

GED: an acronym for General Education Development, also commonly, yet technically incorrectly, referred to as General Equivalency Diploma. “The GED Tests measure high school-level skills and knowledge” (American Council on Education, 2009, ¶ 1) and are generally accepted as equivalent to high school diplomas in terms of the academic proficiency a holder is required to demonstrate.

Higher education: education beyond high school and specifically in a college setting, whether at a community college, college or university.

IEP: an acronym used in the field of education that stands for *Individualized Education Program* but is also commonly, yet technically incorrectly, referred to as an *Individualized Education Plan*. The IEP is a “written statement for each child with a disability that is developed, reviewed and revised” (U.S. Department of Education, 2006, IDEA Regulations section ¶ 1) by a team of educational professionals, with welcomed input from parents or guardians while the student is in pre-K-12 grades or ages 3-21. The IEP essentially states measurable academic and behavioral goals that enable the student with an IEP to participate in and progress in the general education curriculum in the least restrictive environment.

The IEP also states what services are needed for the student, as well as any approved accommodations.

Intellectual disability (in the recent past referred to as mental retardation): A specific type of developmental disability marked by three enduring elements – “limitations in intellectual functioning, behavioral limitations in adapting to environmental demands, and early age of onset” (Schalock, Luckasson & Shogren, 2007, p. 119).

Learning Disability: “A neurological disorder that affects the brain’s ability to receive, process, store and respond to information. The term learning disability is used to describe the seeming unexplained difficulty a person of at least average intelligence has in acquiring basic academic skills” (National Center for Learning Disabilities, 2009, What is a learning disability? section). A discrepancy between achievement and expected performance, based on indications of the person possessing at least average intelligence, which often leads parents and/or teachers to first suspect the presence of learning disability and pursue diagnostic testing.

Least Restrictive Environment (LRE): an educational placement concept that evolved out of P.L. 94-142, or the Education of All Handicapped Children Act of 1975, which later become IDEA, and required “that children with disabilities be educated to the maximum extent appropriate with nondisabled peers” (Douvani and Hulsey, 2002, ¶ 5).

Open door policy (interchangeably referred to as open enrollment, open admissions, or open access): non-merit-based, non-competitive enrollment to higher education, most commonly seen at community colleges where access, historically, is a hallmark of the institution. Virtually anyone may enroll in an institution with an “open door” enrollment policy, though mandatory assessment and placement often accompanies the policy to ensure students possess or develop the requisite skills before enrolling in classes requiring those skills.

Postsecondary education: any formal education received after high school not limited to, but commonly including, 2- and 4-year college settings and vocational training.

Self-determination: “The right and capacity of individuals to exert control over and direct their lives” (Wehmeyer, 2004, p. 23).

Significant cognitive disability (SCD): a severe and persistent intellectual impairment, irrespective of etiology, such as a congenital disability or one incurred through accident, illness, or other cause later in life including, but not limited to, intellectual disability. No further effort in this study is made to categorize specific disabilities as to whether they are or are not SCDs. Rather, SCD will be used in this study to describe those with intellectual disabilities and others whose cognitive disabilities are not congenital, yet who – irrespective of other factors and as a direct result of their level of cognitive functioning – are

unable to exit the developmental sequence and qualify for the college-level curriculum. SCD in this study is not to be confused with the federal government's use of the term to classify students for testing for the purposes of No Child Left Behind compliance, though some students in this study referred to as possessing SCDs may qualify to be labeled as such under the federal definition.

Problem Statement and the Current Study

This study was conducted at St. Louis Community College (STLCC), a multi-campus institution in Missouri, with four main campuses and three centers in both urban and suburban settings. STLCC employs an open admissions policy coupled with mandatory assessment in English, reading, and mathematics. Due to the college-wide implementation of a reading requirement in 2005, students are not allowed to enroll in most college-level courses if they do not demonstrate a minimum level of reading ability in one of several ways prior to enrollment. Subsequent to the college adopting this reading requirement, advising personnel and reading faculty anecdotally began to observe the phenomenon of some students repeatedly re-enrolling in developmental reading courses without successfully completing them. *Figure 1* (p. 8) proves these observations to be true. STLCC enrollment data show only 75 developmental reading repetitions district-wide during the two years prior to the reading requirement (2004-2005), but 300 in the two years following the requirement (2006-2007), an increase from 2.5% of all developmental reading enrollees to 7.7% over this two-year span.

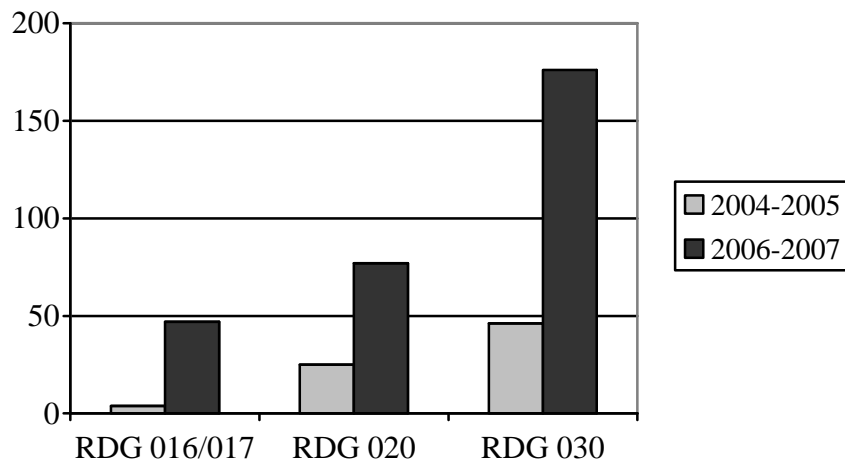


Figure 1. Number of Multiple Attempts by Developmental Reading Level: A Two-Year Comparison of Pre (2004-2005) and Post-Requirement (2006-2007) Course Repeating at STLCC.

Note. Data provided by STLCC Institutional Research, 2009.

Greatly concerned about the course-repeating phenomenon my colleagues and I were witnessing, one year after the reading requirement was instituted, I studied this phenomenon during a sabbatical leave at the Meramec campus of St. Louis Community College, where I serve as a full-time faculty member. I found that some students, unable to matriculate past developmental reading courses and qualify for college-level curricula, were left with very limited enrollment options at the college. Rather than dropping out, they chose to persist and repeatedly re-enroll in the same developmental reading courses they could not previously pass. Of the new, first-time students district-wide that registered during the fall semesters of 2005, 2006, and 2007 and tested into developmental reading (RDG 016/017 through RDG 030), 172 took at least one developmental reading course three or more times. Students that tested into RDG

016/017 accounted for 55.2% (95) of the three-plus enrollments, RDG 020 students only 17.4% (30), while 27.3% (47) of those initially testing into RDG 030 enrolled in that course three or more times (Data provided by STLCC Institutional Research, 2009).

Some developmental reading course repeaters at STLCC are judged by faculty as essentially having reached an academic plateau directly related to their cognitive capacity, beyond which significant progress in critical reading and thinking – skills necessary for success in college-level courses – appears unlikely. It is important to note that faculty and other college personnel who work closely with these students attribute their lack of progress to a discrepancy between the cognitive abilities of the student and the curricular demands of the class as opposed to a domain that could be controlled by the student, such as motivation, effort, or acquiring and employing greater study skills or learning strategies. To the contrary, these students tend to distinguish themselves with high attendance and superior effort, often availing themselves of all available supplementary academic support, yet they still struggle to make appreciable academic gains in the most fundamental developmental reading courses. The lack of progress is also thought by faculty to be caused by issues beyond the control of the instructor, such as employing more effective teaching methods or providing more intensive individualized instruction. For some students, multiple exposures to the same curriculum – in some cases spending three or more semesters in the same developmental reading course – does not result in progress toward mastering the skills necessary to qualify for college-level courses, the majority of courses offered at the institution. These students are not believed to possess learning disabilities, a notable feature of which is a discrepancy between ability and performance. Instead, they are believed to possess significant

cognitive disabilities, or SCDs, that cannot be compensated for using available, college-approved accommodations.

The following examples are provided to more explicitly illustrate the student population being studied herein. My colleagues and I sometimes work with students in developmental reading classes who are so cognitively low-functioning that they struggle to participate in one-on-one conversations about general, non-academic topics. Students have enrolled who are unable to independently locate the correct page number in their textbooks so that they can participate in the lesson. Some students have taken the same classes with exactly the same instructors, readings, assignments, and assessments, yet have registered *lower* grades in their succeeding efforts, despite remaining very dedicated students. One semester I worked with a student in her early 40s who lived with her father and repeatedly stated that her sole goal for enrolling at STLCC was to ultimately get a job that would help her earn enough money to support her cat. When she raised her hand in class, she would not ask a question or contribute a comment related to the lesson but rather would invariably update the class on the well-being of her cat.

Even students with SCDs who can recognize words and successfully word call regularly struggle to grasp the main ideas of even texts assessed at a sixth-grade reading level. Implied or inferential meaning generally proves to be the most difficult for students like these described to grasp. When students struggle to comprehend stated main ideas, it is understandable that asking them to recognize, analyze, and ascertain the meaning of more subtle messages is likely to remain an unfulfilled request, despite the students' most sincere attempts to understand and achieve.

A formal academic policy exists at STLCC that requires students to receive authorization from a counselor or advisor before attempting the same class a third time, a policy that would seem to communicate that excessive re-enrollment behavior without success is generally not supported by the college. A widely held belief among experienced reading faculty at STLCC is that excessive, repetitive enrollment in the same developmental reading course without success does not increase the likelihood a student with an SCD will qualify for the college-level curriculum, the institution's professed purpose for offering developmental courses. But with few curricular alternatives to developmental education for those who experience great difficulty qualifying for college-level courses, many students re-enroll in developmental reading courses in what appears to be a relatively unimpeded manner yet with little hope of ever exiting the developmental sequence.

Significance of the Study

Some of the significance of the study can be ascertained by reviewing existing data which describe the success rates of cohorts to which the population being studied belong. Both my 2006 sabbatical work, which focused on this population at the Meramec campus of STLCC for the school year immediately following the reading requirement implementation, and the work of a district-wide assessment committee that tracked developmental reading students for five years (2001-2006) on all campuses, aid in establishing the success rates of the population in qualifying for college-level courses at STLCC. *Table 1* (p. 12) reports the final grades assigned to RDG 016/017 students enrolled at STLCC during the first semester the reading requirement was in effect.

*Table 1.**Grades Earned by RDG 016/017 Students from 2005-2008 at STLCC*

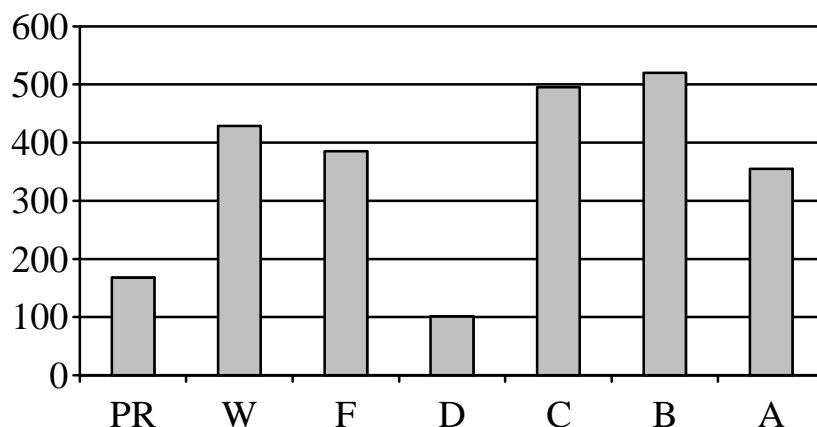
N=2,453

Grade earned	A	B	C	D	F	PR	W
Number of Students	355	520	495	101	385	168	429

Note. Data provided by STLCC Institutional Research, 2009.

A grade of “C” is required to move on to the next class, RDG 020. A grade of “W” refers to a withdrawal from the course, and a grade of “PR” stands for “progress re-enroll,” which is a non-punitive grade that does not influence the student’s GPA. The PR can be assigned when an instructor determines the student has made progress and the instructor does not want to discourage a student by assigning an “F” but rather encourage them to enroll in the class again.

A graphic display of *Table 1* (p. 12) data is seen below in *Figure 2*, which displays the abnormal, relatively bimodal distribution of the final grades assigned to the RDG 016/017 students district-wide from 2005-2008.



N = 2,453

Figure 2. Grade Distribution of RDG 016/017 District-Wide 2005-2008

Note. Data provided by Institutional Research, 2009.

Two distinct groups are revealed: nearly 56 % who passed and 44% who did not. Of the 2,453 students who enrolled in lowest level of developmental reading offered by all campuses, only 1,370 (56%) received a grade (A, B, or C) that would allow them to enroll in the next course, RDG 020. Of those who passed, more than one third earned a C; a key finding from the 2006 District Developmental Education Assessment Committee's work was that earning a "B" or higher is much more predictive of success in subsequent developmental reading courses (see Appendix P, p. 365; and see Appendix S, p. 384, for permission to include Appendix P). The committee's finding suggests that of the 2,453 students district-wide who enrolled in RDG 016/017, only 875 (35%) were likely to succeed at even RDG 020, the next highest reading course in the developmental sequence.

Figure 3 below details the rates at which first-time students enrolled in all levels of developmental reading at STLCC from 2005-2008 did not earn grades qualifying them for the next level of reading in the sequence, or in the case of RDG 030 did not allow them to exit the sequence.

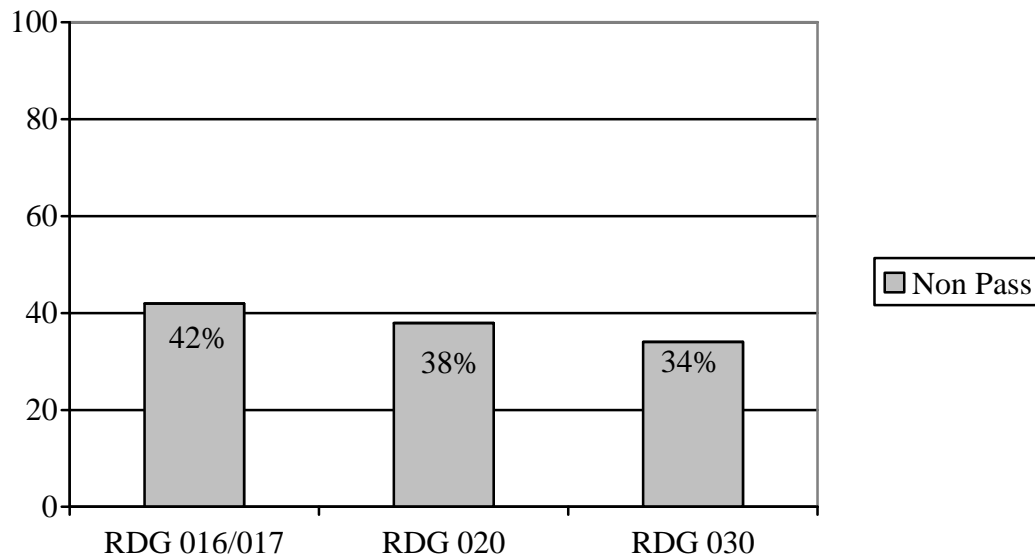


Figure 3. Non-Passing Rates of First-Time Enrollees 2005-2008 at STLCC by Developmental Reading Level

Note. Data provided by STLCC Institutional Research, 2009.

Analysis of *Figure 3* reveals that for first-time developmental reading enrollees between 2005-2008 the overall non-pass rate (including grades of D, F, PR, and W) is the highest at 42% for students who initially tested into and enrolled in the lowest level of reading, RDG 016/017. The rate of non-passing drops to approximately 38% for those who initially tested into and enrolled in RDG 020 and is only 34% for those who initially tested into and enrolled in RDG 030 for the first time. To summarize, the data show that the lower the level of reading a student initially tests into, the lower the likelihood of

passing. This finding was reinforced by the work of the district-wide assessment committee which found in studying over 26,000 students from 2001-2006 that students who placed at the 020 level or below in all three areas – math, English, and reading – had a 62% likelihood of not passing at least one of those classes (see Appendix P, p. 365).

Recognizing the negative impact on the college's overall educational efforts by the repeated enrollment of students with SCDs in developmental courses who do not progress also assists in conveying the significance of the study. Concerned STLCC faculty and counselors in the Access office, which supports students with disabilities, have long discussed the negative effects on the learning environment and the classmates of students with SCDs when students with SCDs repeatedly re-enroll in developmental courses in which their future success is not predicted. To begin with, the enrollment of students with SCDs in developmental courses has been observed by faculty of developmental reading courses to cause great doubt over appropriate placement in the minds of their classmates without SCDs. Faculty commonly witness eager, capable students become indifferent, formally withdraw from developmental reading courses, and in all likelihood withdraw from the college altogether in some instances, unfortunately.

Poor classroom experiences in one or more developmental courses can have a devastating effect on the retention of promising students because developmental education often represents the totality of a student's contact with the institution. Boylan (2002) affirms that students' "attitudes toward higher education in general and the institution in particular are often determined by their experiences in developmental courses and services" (p. 35). The STLCC three-year average (2005-2008) for course withdrawal in RDG 030 is 15%; for RDG 020 it is 14.3%, and for RDG 016/017 it is

17.6% (Data provided by STLCC Institutional Research, 2009). While there are undoubtedly other factors that contribute to the higher withdrawal rate in RDG 016/017 compared to RDG 020 and RDG 030, the phenomenon is undeniably due in part to the spread of abilities in the lowest reading course offered at all three STLCC campuses. This outcome is antithetical to desired retention and engagement effects of developmental courses because students who can profit often disengage while those who are unlikely to profit frequently persist. A reading faculty colleague summed up this effect by saying: “Most who have stopped coming are able enough. Those who are unable still come,” (personal communication, October 13, 2009).

The frequent display of behavior inconsistent with the expectations of a college classroom by students with SCDs constitutes another negative effect on the learning environment and also, therefore, their classmates without SCDs. Instructors are forced to either ignore or attend to and document all of the behavioral disruptions that occur and wait for students with SCDs to be removed administratively from their classrooms. Instructors may hesitate to involve administrators too soon in an admirable attempt to make the arrangement work because, as professional educators, they naturally decry denying students educational opportunity, which the college sanctioned when the student’s application for enrollment and tuition were accepted. It can also take time for instructors to witness and address enough disruptions to feel confident that a student will be unable to comply with behavioral expectations. Addressing these occurrences in a timely manner can be especially trying for classmates and instructors when there are multiple students with SCDs in one section.

The enrollment of students with SCDs also can change the very nature of instruction by causing the instructor to refrain from using the powerful tool of active learning because of students with SCDs who unintentionally and often unknowingly participate in inappropriate ways. Out of respect for the students who would be asked to work with those not capable of contributing meaningfully to group work and academic discourse, cooperative learning is frequently, yet reluctantly, shelved, a practice contradictory to what educators know can be *most effective* with academically at-risk students (Boylan, 2002; McCabe, 2000; McCabe and Day, 1998). Though I, sadly, am able to recall many examples of failed contributions by students with SCDs in collaborative learning situations, the time one student, whose mother described him as autistic, faced a corner in the front of the classroom and incessantly shook a box of chalk while his group members attempted to present their work stands out vividly. Earlier in this semester, the same student walked over to the window in the middle of class, pointed at the bus stop in front of the college, and informed the class that he liked to ride the bus because it took him to places he liked to go. Perhaps needless to say, these incidents paved the way for presenting a successful case for administrative withdrawal, since his mother would not willingly submit the withdrawal on the basis that she felt the college should have allowed her son the behavioral attendant he had throughout his K-12 education, an accommodation the college would not approve.

Another negative outcome associated with the enrollment of students with SCDs in developmental courses is self-inflicted. Investing time in developmental courses, while understandably producing social benefits for students with SCDs by allowing them to exercise self-determination in a safe environment, comes at the expense of students not

being able to take advantage of alternative experiences that ultimately may be more beneficial. What students with SCDs might find most profitable may not be found in a college-preparatory, developmental reading classroom. Holding unrealistic dreams, while idealistic, can be more damaging than being honest about ability, goals, and choices. Trainor (2008) reinforces this concern that “The very access that might help students with disabilities acquire the cultural and social capital necessary to transition into postsecondary education might also present obstacles to...(other) opportunities (i.e., cultural capital) needed to transition into employment” (p. 157). In other words, while there may be non-academic benefits for such students attending college, in the end they may supplant more rewarding experiences that could have been undertaken to build skills that possibly would help them become employed, more closely reach their full potential, and develop independence in a number of important life areas.

George Leef (2006), in *The Overselling of Higher Education*, echoes this general sentiment:

Teachers and counselors strongly encourage most high school students – even academically weak ones – to enroll in college. Students repeatedly hear the conventional wisdom that getting a college degree will make the difference between a comfortable life and a life of drudgery. Rarely do they hear it said that going to college could be a costly mistake and that other opportunities might be better for them. (p. 22)

At STLCC, the negative impact on the developmental education learning environment by the repetitive enrollment of students with SCDs is ironically further perpetuated by two of the college’s own policies. First, because the 2005 reading

requirement disallows enrollment in most college-level courses without establishing proficiency, it has had the intended effect of relegating the enrollment options of students with SCDs to mostly developmental courses. The reading requirement effectively barred access to college-level courses for students with SCDs who were not “grandfathered” in – a commendable tactic in shoring up the academic integrity of those courses.

Unfortunately, the representation of students with SCDs in developmental courses is now more concentrated than ever, and the negative effect in a class of eighteen of one, two, or more students who effectively do not possess the ability to benefit from the curriculum can be considerable.

Secondly, students are not required to demonstrate in any way a minimum level of intellectual functioning – or ability to benefit – before they are allowed to enroll if they possess a high school diploma or an equivalent. As will be discussed in Chapter Two in greater detail, students with SCDs are now able to procure regular high school diplomas without meeting the same academic standards required of students without IEPs. As a result, the range of intellectual abilities, particularly in the lowest developmental courses, is so wide that the effectiveness of those courses has suffered greatly, according to many faculty members who teach them.

In an STLCC district-wide reading meeting at a staff development day in October 2009, reading faculty discussed the creation of RDG 016/017 district-wide competencies, a more detailed and uniformly assessable set of outcomes than the broader course description’s goals and objectives. These specific district-wide competencies already exist for RDG 020, RDG 030 and RDG 100, and were created prior to the 2005 reading requirement implementation to ensure greater uniformity across the district in terms of

course outcomes and assessing students. One of the reasons district-wide competencies for RDG 016/017 were not developed at the same time is that only one campus, Forest Park, offered the course prior to the reading requirement in Fall 2005. Meramec began offering the course in Fall 2005 specifically to protect the integrity of the RDG 020 experience as well as to create a more appropriate forum in which to educate students who were not qualified to take RDG 020. Florissant Valley began offering RDG 016/017 in Spring 2006, the semester after the reading requirement was implemented, for effectively the same reason.

Table 2 below shows the number of 016/017 sections offered one year before the reading requirement (2004-2005) and every year thereafter.

Table 2.

Sections of RDG 016/017 at STLCC 2004-2009 by campus.

	2004-2005	2005-2006	2006-2007	2007-2008	2008-2009	5-year TOTAL
Florissant Valley	0	1	8	10	14	33
Forest Park	11	14	14	14	17	70
Meramec	0	7	6	6	5	24
TOTAL	11	22	28	30	36	

Note. The Wildwood campus does not presently offer RDG 016/017.

Note. Only sections that were offered in the Fall and Spring semesters are reported.

The number of both Florissant Valley and Forest Park's 016/017 sections increased over time. Inexplicably, Meramec's 016/017 sections decreased over time, so I queried Meramec Reading Coordinator and Assistant Professor of English, Lisa Mizes, about why she thought this might be. Mizes theorized that perhaps more students were being allowed by advisors to retake the Accuplacer and they retested into a higher reading course, or that students were somehow subverting the mandate and successfully registering for a higher course than what they tested into. While I have no data to substantiate or refute Mizes' first theory, data suggest she may be onto something with her second theory and that is disconcerting.

First-time students were tracked district-wide from Fall 2005 through Spring 2009 who tested into either RDG 016/017 (N=1,855) or RDG 020 (N=2305). In the RDG 016/017 cohort, 53% (988) enrolled correctly into RDG 016/017; 25% (456) did not take a reading course but registered elsewhere in the college; and 22% (411) somehow managed to register for a reading course higher than RDG 016/017. There are some college-level courses that the reading requirement does not apply to, such as most physical education courses, automotive courses, and personal development courses, so it is possible that the 456 students registered for courses like these and simply chose not to take reading at all. The numbers are not quite as bad but still disconcerting for the RDG 020 cohort. Sixty-eight percent registered correctly into RDG 020; 16% (363) chose not to enroll in reading; and 16% (368) managed to enroll in either RDG 030 or RDG 100 instead of the course they tested into.

For years, Forest Park has offered an even lower course, RDG 012, and reading faculty from Florissant Valley shared in the October 2009 meeting that they are

considering offering it because too much breadth of ability currently exists in their RDG 016/017 courses. Faculty reported feeling professionally torn between meeting two competing professional obligations in the same classroom: the need to maintain high standards to facilitate progress for the students who are accurately placed and can truly benefit from the RDG 016/017 experience and the desire to address the very different educational needs of enrolled students with SCDs.

Another negative impact by the repetitive enrollment of students with SCDs in developmental reading courses is felt by the faculty who attempt to remediate them and their classmates toward the college-level curriculum. Though there have been many classroom incidents through the years that signaled to me the growing population of students with SCDs enrolling in the lower-level developmental courses, one occurrence in particular demoralized me and caused me to seek higher ground. In a RDG 020 class, we were studying and discussing Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s "I Have a Dream" speech, delivered at the 1963 March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom. As a class, we had identified examples of figurative language in the speech, and I questioned the students about why they thought Dr. King chose to express his message so symbolically. One student suggested it may have been because of his religious education and profession as a minister; another suggested that people in the 1960s just spoke differently; and then a student with an SCD raised his hand and in all seriousness attempted to order a double cheeseburger from me with the follow-up command of "No pickles." Stunned, the class and I just looked at him for a few seconds and I watched his classmates visibly withdraw from what had been a lively discussion. Wanting to maximize my impact and ensure I was making a difference in my students' lives, I thereafter began to position myself to

work with students I felt I had a fair chance of educating and have been teaching RDG 030 and RDG 100 exclusively ever since.

Prior to the 2005 reading requirement, RDG 020 was a welcomed part of my teaching load for about six years; it provided the perfect forum for me to use my special education and literacy backgrounds to successfully address the needs of students with learning disabilities and those who lacked the critical reading and thinking skills needed to succeed in RDG 030 and beyond. Occasionally, students with SCDs enrolled in RDG 020 prior to Fall 2005, but because all students up to that time were allowed to enroll virtually throughout the college, many students with SCDs likely elected to try and fail in college-level courses instead of developmental courses. By examining the history of my teaching assignments after the implementation of the Fall 2005 reading requirement and thereafter, my retreat from the lower-level reading environment is apparent as I taught two sections of RDG 020 in Fall 2005, only one in Spring 2006, and none after the first year of the reading requirement. This is unfortunate, since I have both a passion to work with 020-level students and a skill set that should be employed to educate students appropriately placed in that important course. Even so, the hopelessness building in RDG 020 within one year of the reading requirement passing was evident. It is disappointing, to say the least, that the very courses originally created to provide critical, intensive instruction to the at-risk, yet intellectually capable, students in our community have become the terminal destination for so many students with SCDs who are judged to have virtually no chance of being successful in those courses.

Finally, even a conservatively estimated conception of enrollment numbers is helpful in grasping the growing impact students with SCDs have on their classmates,

their instructors and the classroom environment, which communicates in part the significance of this study. There is no way to accurately gauge the number of students currently enrolled at STLCC who could have been nominated for this study based on their instructors' and/or ACCESS counselor's judgments that the students will not ever exit the developmental reading sequence. However, a sense of the numbers can be ascertained by how quickly my colleagues nominated sixteen students still attending and reachable at the end of the spring semester of 2009 who had already repeated a developmental reading course. Consider that the sixteen originally nominated for this study were enrolled in classes with fourteen other students (the enrollment cap is fifteen for RDG 016/017), and consider that they were conservatively enrolled in only two classes – one of the reading classes and the lowest English course offered, 020, where the enrollment cap is 22. Those students would attend 32 sections and be co-enrolled with around 560 classmates. That projection might be slightly high due to enrollment not being full in every class and/or more than one of the sixteen students enrolling in the same section. However, two or more such students in the same section, while technically not affecting as many students, easily can be assumed to have a greater impact on class culture than only one student.

Many colleagues reached out and apologized for having so few nominations in Spring 2009, offering that they would have been able to nominate more students if I had asked earlier in the semester before some students withdrew or quit coming or if they hadn't been restricted to only nominating students with SCDs who had already repeated a developmental reading course. So, to try to get an even more accurate estimate on the enrollment incidence of students in developmental courses who faculty and ACCESS

judge to have effectively no chance of ever exiting the sequence due to a significant cognitive disability, I informally polled my Phase III colleagues via e-mail just before midterm of the following semester (Fall 2009). I asked them to respond if they had the time, and to be ultra-conservative in their judgment of students that they had taught or had counseled for enrollment in Fall 2009 who they could have nominated, based only on the judgment that the students would not be capable of ever exiting the developmental sequence.

District-wide, with the exception of the Wildwood campus for reasons that will be discussed later, ten faculty members and nine ACCESS counselors responded, representing only 76% of those who participated in the Phase III survey. Still, participating faculty reported they would have been able to confidently nominate seventy-one students for the current study, and ACCESS counselors reported seventy such would-be nominations. Granted, between ACCESS and faculty, some students could have been nominated by both groups; thus, the subtotals cannot be combined to suggest 141 individual students like those in this study are enrolled across the district. In fact, many of the nominations easily could be one in the same, which would account for the number of would-be nominees being so close to equal. Regardless, even if all 70 ACCESS nominations are taken out of consideration, to remove any chance of a double nomination, my colleagues conservatively could have nominated seventy-one students across the district. If each of these students enrolled in only two classes that semester, they would have enrolled in 142 sections at STLCC (or fewer sections if multiple student nominees are enrolled in the same section). By extrapolating these figures as before, these students would have enrolled alongside nearly 2,500 classmates. Sociopolitical

trends suggest the number of students in America with SCDs who will be awarded regular high school diplomas and will seek college enrollment in the foreseeable future will only increase.

Community college faculty across the nation witness daily the bounty of negative effects that attend the excessively repetitive enrollment of students with SCDs who are unable to make progress in developmental courses. Many of the previously detailed concerns actually drove a college-wide investigation at STLCC and eventual adoption of the 2005 reading requirement when it became undeniable that allowing students to enroll in college-level courses they were unprepared for was mutually exclusive to providing quality educational experiences. My professional involvement in the field of developmental education has exceeded a decade, and during that time I have had many opportunities to work closely with dedicated colleagues across the country who also recognize the seriousness of the issue related to students with SCDs repeatedly enrolling in developmental courses, and they strongly desire to address it.

Access colleagues shared many unsolicited comments of support during the study in response to my requests for participation, which firmly communicate their shared belief that this student population must be addressed at STLCC. I felt a growing responsibility as the study progressed to accurately and thoroughly identify the issues related to the repeated enrollment of students with SCDs because such enrollment impacts so many. The following are some of the comments received from Access colleagues that reveal how important they feel it is for the college to better address this student population.

- A very important study to look at what ‘next steps’ STLCC needs to take.
– from a Phase III survey.
- We have all been talking about this issue for years and it has just seemed too big for us in the Access office to tackle alone. When you left the other day we all just felt that a weight had been lifted – it’s wonderful to know that there is a faculty member out there who sees this issue pretty much as we see it and is trying to do something about it! – Access (personal communication, May 22, 2009).
- I really enjoyed meeting with you and am in awe of your fortitude in trying to address this issue. It takes a very persistent person to try to get this district to move. – Access (personal communication, May 21, 2009).
- I think the project you are doing is extremely worthwhile! Research seems to be something that’s very lacking around the community college and it’s something that I’ve always had a lot of interest in—gathering data on what we are doing and figuring out if what we are doing is good and/or right! – Access (personal communication, August 12, 2009).
- We should be thanking you for doing a study that will enlighten the administration, faculty, and staff by helping them to understand the issues that these students and their parents face and how they affect our faculty and staff. – Access (personal communication, August 12, 2009).

Many key policymakers at community colleges across America, including faculty, but especially administrators and others not teaching in the developmental classroom, likely remain unaware of a rather recent change of some states awarding regular high

school diplomas to students with SCDs, which enables them to gain admission to the community college. The excessively repetitive enrollment of students with SCDs in developmental courses without success enervates the effectiveness of developmental education – and therefore all of higher education – which makes this issue one of the most important yet most inadequately addressed in the open door community college today. Because so many students enroll in developmental reading courses en route to qualifying for the college-level curriculum, it is imperative that community colleges are prepared to more comprehensively and conscientiously address the issue of course repeaters with SCDs who are unlikely to succeed in the developmental curriculum as opposed to allowing them to re-enroll with limited intervention. This study was undertaken with the presumption that a response from open door community colleges to the population being studied is inevitable. The more pressing philosophical concern then is *how* institutions should respond, which is directly related to the purpose of this study.

It may be useful, for instance, to learn more about what motivates students with SCDs to enroll repeatedly when success is so unlikely and what their overall goals are so that policymakers may better understand and carefully take these students' interests into consideration when weighing future institutional responses. It is particularly important that community college decision makers gain a greater understanding of developmental course repeaters with SCDs and how their institutions may or may not be helping all students reach their potential. The vastly different higher education experiences by course repeaters compared to those of community college faculty and administrators, who were themselves successful college students, may naturally inhibit the ability of faculty and administrators to identify with the students in this study. Therefore, capturing the

community college reality as experienced by these students is of the utmost importance, and their perceptions, interpretations, explanations, feelings, and beliefs are the closest that high-achieving outsiders may get to truly understanding this cohort's motivations for course repeating and their educational, employment and life goals. A greater appreciation of these students and their enrollment motivations may generate more appropriate institutional responses, as opposed to allowing the students to repeatedly enroll in the same courses with little progress or responding in ways that are less than ideal.

The findings and recommendations from this study may influence how community colleges develop, deliver, and apply academic policy and programs when they consider their students with SCDs who find qualifying for college-level curricula difficult, yet still desire enrollment in a postsecondary education setting. Besides tailoring the institutional environment in ways to better meet the needs of students with SCDs that remain enrolled, any institutional changes may also allow community colleges to better address the needs of students with SCDs who decide to formally withdraw or simply stop attending classes every semester. For example, students with SCDs intent on withdrawing because they do not find the developmental education experience profitable may benefit from counseling, needs assessment or even referral to another agency in the community that may better address their needs before leaving the institution altogether. Undoubtedly, more effectively addressing this community college student group will yield benefits to all community colleges students, which is at the heart of the institution's primary mission: to serve the needs of the community in which the college exists.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to discover the enrollment motivations of students who repeatedly enroll in developmental reading courses, yet who are unlikely to establish reading proficiency. Four research questions guided the study:

1. What motivates developmental reading course repeaters to enroll in college initially and persist, despite repeated failed attempts, when they are judged by college personnel to be unlikely to qualify for college-level courses?
2. What educational, employment, and life goals do these course repeaters have?
3. What influence do parents/guardians report playing in their child's college enrollment decision(s)?
4. What expectations do the parents/guardians have of the community college?

Delimitations

This study involved three stages of data collection. In Phase I, course repeaters who were enrolled in developmental courses at STLCC at any point after the Fall 2005 reading requirement went into effect and were judged by their instructors and/or Access counselors (those who work in the office that provides support to students with disabilities and the faculty who work with them) to be unlikely to exit the development reading sequence were sought for inclusion in this study. However, an exception was made for participants who attended the college prior to Fall 2005 and were allowed to enroll in college-level courses by virtue of being “grandfathered” in but otherwise fit the description of the developmental course repeaters. All participants were at least eighteen years old and were provided written information explaining the study and my contact information. Participants were able to use this information about the study for their own

edification, and they were encouraged to share it with a parent/guardian, and/or advocate if they so chose.

While similar repeating behavior may, and likely does, occur in the two other disciplines offering developmental courses at STLCC, English and mathematics, this study was further limited by interviewing developmental reading course repeaters, except for the students attending prior to 2005 mentioned earlier. The reason for this limitation was that the other two developmental areas currently do not have minimal requirements that globally affect institutional enrollment, meaning students who demonstrate reading proficiency, yet test into developmental English and/or math instruction, are allowed to enroll in college-level courses. Therefore, enrollment limitations on college-level classes are virtually nonexistent when only developmental English or math classes are not completed if a student has established reading proficiency through one of several established ways. The enrollment repercussions for not advancing in the areas of English and/or math, as a result, are not as immediate or severe as failing to establish reading proficiency. As such, course repeaters in developmental reading present more compelling cases to investigate because they have limited enrollment options and must choose from attempting the same developmental reading course and/or other limited developmental offerings en route to qualifying for college-level courses. Regardless, much of what is found and written about the students studied here will no doubt be applicable to course repeaters with SCDs who happen to repeatedly enroll in other disciplines, such as English and math or even in college-level courses, if they are allowed. Some attempts to assist readers in making these global applications can be observed when *developmental course repeaters* are referenced and not exclusively *developmental reading course repeaters*.

In the Phase II parent/guardian survey, only one parent or legal guardian of each student in the study was allowed to participate. In Phase III, full-time faculty who teach developmental reading courses at STLCC and Access personnel were invited to participate in identifying students in this population for Phase I and to participate in responding to the findings from Phases I and II via a survey. Full-time reading faculty have worked together extensively on developing district-wide curriculum, assessment and developmental education projects and, thus, readily recognize the population being studied. Adjunct faculty and part-time Access employees were purposely excluded from participating in this study for a variety of reasons. Most notably, adjunct faculty and part-time Access employees have not been as involved in the ongoing district-wide work that led to the reading requirement and assessment of results and therefore may lack critical knowledge of the more subtle contributing factors causing the studied phenomenon. Additionally, adjunct faculty members and part-time Access employees usually are not on campus as frequently and, due to their part-time employment status, may have been more likely to become unassociated with the college during the span of the study.

Assumptions and Limitations

Any research that invites participants to speculate about their personal motivations for taking any course of action, as this study does, has inherent limitations. These include the possibility of participants misidentifying and/or struggling to articulate the sources of their motivations. Moreover, it is the belief of STLCC full-time reading faculty members and personnel in the Access Offices, which provide support services for students with disabilities, that some course repeaters possess SCDs, though the nature and severity of such disabilities vary from student to student. In many cases, Access

personnel are given diagnostic paperwork that verifies the SCD and qualitatively and/or quantitatively describes the student's current level of intellectual functioning. It is important to note that this study involved data collection during interviews with students who possess such disabilities. It was anticipated that these students would have greater than usual difficulty identifying and expressing motives, so I encouraged participants to ask clarifying questions when they appeared to need further information. I also actively looked for signs that participants were struggling to understand the questions so that clarification could be offered.

The students interviewed in Phase I were invited to ask their parents/guardians to participate in a Phase II survey designed primarily to learn about parents'/guardians' expectations of the community college and what kind and amount of influence they had on their child's decision to enroll and stay enrolled at the community college. This parent/guardian survey data naturally provided only a limited view of the students' motivations and may have even revealed self-serving motivations from parents/guardians for responding in whatever way they did. For instance, it is possible that some parents or guardians were suspicious of my motivations for inquiring about their child's enrollment at STLCC and, intentionally or not, altered the truthfulness of their answers.

Another acknowledged shortcoming is the limited ability of the study to be generalized to other institutions. While conversations with community college colleagues across the nation indicate that the developmental course-repeating phenomenon is not unique to STLCC, it cannot be determined with confidence that the results here will warrant use beyond STLCC. For one, the student sample size in this study was small; thus, generalizations to other populations must be made with caution. There may also be

unique known or unknown variables and dynamics associated with this particular study site or the study participants that limit the applicability of findings to other students and/or other institutions. Finally, no known previous studies have investigated the college enrollment motivations of students with SCDs, so the results and recommendations in this study are unable to be balanced against previous research.

Background and Role of the Researcher

For the past ten years, I have taught primarily developmental reading and writing courses at STLCC, among other developmental and college-level courses. I have a somewhat unorthodox educational pedigree for a higher education faculty member in that I hold a baccalaureate degree in Special Education – LD/EMH (learning disabilities/educable mentally handicapped). Effectively, my undergraduate education prepared me to teach students with learning disabilities and those with mild to moderate cognitive disabilities. I am also a graduate of the Kellogg Institute for the Training and Certification of Developmental Educators, where I earned my certification as a developmental education specialist, and my master's degree is in Literacy and Language. My educational experiences have prepared me well to teach developmental reading and writing courses at the community college, and indeed this was my professional goal.

I am also a graduate of STLCC – Meramec. While a budding educator and student at Meramec, I was a student-athlete in the intercollegiate athletic program. During my sophomore year, I learned through friends in another sport that a teammate of theirs, Mike (a pseudonym), previously had failed a developmental math class and again was struggling mightily to pass the course. I knew Mike, who had competed against my brothers in high school, and I made myself available to tutor him so that he might retain

his athletic eligibility and remain enrolled at STLCC. I recognize now that I was likely working with a student who had a learning disability. Our one-on-one, intensive study sessions helped him pass his math class and remain eligible to compete. I was pleased that I had done what I could to help, and I gained some confidence that my instructional efforts could make a difference in the lives of others.

I credit this formative experience in my life with focusing my attention on developing my skills as an educator so that I could assist students with special needs and/or those unprepared to take college-level courses yet desiring such future enrollment. My experiences taught me that I would find the highest concentration of students like Mike in an open-door community college setting and, thus, ample opportunity to work with the student population I most desired to teach. My professional life has been dedicated to helping college students who struggle academically – often those with disabilities – improve their literacy skills in preparation for college-level courses. Truly, nothing pleases me more professionally than witnessing a capable, yet struggling, student blossom into the reader, writer, and thinker he or she is capable of becoming.

I view my role in this study as an advocate for students with SCDs and their parents and guardians – as a resource and potential catalyst to get their unique needs better addressed by many community colleges. As a proud community college graduate and community college educator, I equally endeavor to uphold the interests of all other community college students, faculty, and staff, as well as the communities those colleges serve. Better understanding what motivates students with SCDs to reenroll in developmental courses they are unlikely to pass in the future may stimulate community colleges to evaluate their current institutional responses to this student population, which

will ultimately strengthen these institutions' capability to effectively serve their communities.

Summary

Chapter One has set the stage for the study by describing the historically significant events that have contributed to the current issue being studied. Additionally, the purpose of the study, research questions, assumptions, delimitations, definition of terms, theoretical perspectives, and the significance of the study have also been presented.

In Chapter Two, a brief overview of disability law that relates to federally funded education settings is presented. Also provided is a review of the pertinent literature that traces the evolution of open door policy in the community college. This history is used to explain why STLCC gradually moved from one school of thought to the other over time in regard to enrollment management. This evolution in policy, reflected by the 2005 adoption of the college-wide reading requirement, is examined because it is directly responsible for making visible the cohort of course repeaters studied herein.

Also in Chapter Two, literature focused on college choice theory and college enrollment motivations is investigated. Specifically presented are the most common reasons college students of traditional age enroll in institutions of higher education, enroll in community colleges, and reasons why students with disabilities enroll at higher rates in community colleges. Additionally, the influence of parents on college enrollment and choice is reviewed. Finally, motivation theories that help explain the enrollment behavior of the students in this study are presented. Specifically reviewed are social cognitive

theory, achievement motivation, self-efficacy, goal theory, task value and rewards, attribution theory and motivation theories specific to those with intellectual disabilities.

Chapter Three describes the methodology utilized in this study, the data sources that were used, and how data were collected and analyzed. Furthermore, protocols surrounding the use of qualitative methods will be established.

Chapter Four provides a summary of the results gleaned from data collection and analysis as they relate to the first purpose of the study: to discover the varied enrollment motivations of this student population. Themes noted in the student interviews and parent/guardian surveys are presented and interpreted in light of the study's four guiding questions. Full-time reading faculty and Access personnel provided their opinions of the enrollment motivations reported by Phase I and Phase II participants, and they had an opportunity to contribute additional motivations they believe exist but were not reported in Phase I and Phase II.

Chapter Five summarizes the study and explains the findings as they relate to the literature.

Chapter Six presents the case for the importance of open-door community colleges to address the issue of students with SCDS repeatedly enrolling in developmental courses they are not predicted to pass upon successive attempts.

Finally, Chapter Seven presents recommendations for policy change and/or program design for community colleges to consider in attempting to better meet the needs of all students. This chapter also contains recommendations for further research related to the guiding questions and findings of this study.

CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

This chapter presents a review of literature relevant to this research. First, the key laws and legal decisions pertaining to federally funded education settings and those with disabilities are reviewed. The enactment of these laws and interpretation of these cases directly led to an increase in higher education enrollment of students with disabilities, a trend that has amplified over time. Second, literature that shows the chronological evolution of open door policy in American community colleges, from liberal to more conservative application, is presented. Additionally, I connect recent groundbreaking legislative, policy, and cultural changes that enable students with SCDs to qualify for admission at community colleges and encourage them to enroll in the midst of the most historically conservative era of open door policy. Third, literature on college student enrollment motivations and college choice is presented. Fourth, the reasons the community college is a particularly attractive option for students with disabilities and how parents influence students' college choice are evaluated. Finally, motivation theories that help explain the enrollment behavior of the students in this study are discussed – specifically social cognitive theory, achievement motivation, self-efficacy, goal theory, task value and rewards, and attribution theory, as well as personality and motivation theories that apply specifically to those with intellectual disabilities.

I anticipated and wrote principally before data collection the first four sections of the literature review mentioned above. I developed the final piece of the literature review on motivation, however, after data collection and analysis, which was the primary reason a grounded theory approach was selected. Prior to the study, I was not confident in hypothesizing about the enrollment motivations of the students in this study.

Laws Pertaining to Federally Funded Education Settings and Those with Disabilities

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)

Public Law 94-142, passed in 1975, was originally entitled the Education for All Handicapped Children Act (Bartlett, Etscheidt, and Weisenstein, 2007; Yell, 2006). Out of respect for, and in deference to, the desire of those with disabilities and their advocates, the act was renamed the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) in 1990 to emphasize the person first in the language. That same year the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), more widely applicable to the general population and activities beyond education, was signed into law by President George H. W. Bush. Though IDEA was updated with amendments in 1997 and 2004, the heart of the 1975 law still exists and exclusively addresses the educational needs of students with disabilities while building upon the successes of the broader Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act passed in 1973 (Henderson, 2001). IDEA ensures “two basic substantive rights of eligible children with disabilities: (1) the right to a free appropriate public education, and (2) the right to that education in the least restrictive environment” (U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, 2000, Individuals with Disabilities Education Act section).

The federal government requires that states receiving federal funding must educate any child with a disability in the state public school system or pay for and provide an appropriate placement from age three until high school graduation or the age of 21 (Bartlett, Etscheidt, and Weisenstein, 2007; Yell, 2006). IDEA applies to students ages 3-21 in the pre K-12 public education system only. A separate set of federally mandated early intervention services applies to those with disabilities who are under three years old. IDEA does not extend to postsecondary education.

Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act

Upon graduating from high school or upon reaching age twenty-one – whichever occurs first – students with disabilities are no longer protected under IDEA by the federal government. Federal laws protecting *all American citizens* with disabilities, in particular Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act and the ADA, pick up at that point and guarantee students with disabilities, if they are otherwise qualified, access to programs receiving federal funding. In 1973, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act was passed, stating:

No otherwise qualified individual with a disability in the United States...shall, solely by reason of her or his disability, be excluded from the participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance. (Section 504, 29 U.S.C., as cited in Yell, 2006, p. 117)

In other words, the law prohibits discrimination against those with disabilities who are otherwise qualified to participate in federally funded programs. This law affects all higher education institutions in America that accept federal funding, including institutions administering Title IV funds, more commonly known as student financial aid.

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Service's (DHHS) Fact Sheet (2006) states that "Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 is a national law that protects *qualified* individuals from discrimination based on their disability" (§ 1). Throughout the DHHS Fact Sheet the phrase *qualified individuals with disabilities* is repeatedly italicized to emphasize that the law does not require programs receiving federal funding to extend services carte blanche to those with disabilities who are unqualified for the programs. Those protected from discrimination on the basis of disability must prove to be otherwise

qualified for access to the program to be legally entitled to access. Section 504 ensures students with disabilities the opportunity to participate in a federally funded educational institution's programs when they meet the same qualifying criteria that every other student is required to meet. Students with disabilities, protected under Section 504 and the American's with Disabilities Act (ADA), are allowed to use approved accommodations when attempting to qualify for admission and while attending college, provided that the needed accommodations do not substantially alter the program or course.

The Evolution of Open Door Policy in the American Community College

Open door policy is the enrollment practice of allowing students to register for classes in college without requiring demonstration of ability to benefit other than possession of a high school diploma, a GED, or another acceptable alternative. Open door policy is one that has historically extended greater access to higher education for students who belong to underrepresented populations, including those with disabilities.

Institutions with open door policies especially afford enrollment opportunities to students who cannot attend other institutions of higher learning for a variety of reasons, such as the inability to reside away from home, financial considerations, or the inability to meet selective admissions criteria.

The GI Bill and Its Effect on Enrollment at Community Colleges

Open door policy first was instituted in widespread fashion by community colleges in the 1940s in response to millions of WWII soldiers who enrolled as college students and utilized the benefits provided to them by The Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944, more commonly known as GI Bill. The GI Bill was signed into law in 1944

by President Franklin D. Roosevelt as a way for the federal government to aid soldiers in their readjustment to civilian life, and it “was in effect the largest scholarship program in the Nation’s history” (Folger and Nam, 1976, p. 27). While these federal funds allowed veterans to reenter American society smoothly by paying for necessary hospitalizations and helping veterans pay for homes and businesses, providing veterans access to education would prove to be a significant long-term benefit.

At the conclusion of WWII in 1945, the first Commission on Higher Education (CHE) was convened by President Harry S Truman. The CHE was created in response to Truman’s recognition of the unique educational needs of the millions of returning American soldiers, many of whom had postponed their secondary education to go to war (Folger and Nam, 1976; Warren, 1998). During the war years, approximately 500,000 fewer high school diplomas were issued from 1939-1945 compared to prewar diploma trends (Folger and Nam, 1976). As a result, most of the new community colleges established on the recommendation of President Truman’s Commission on Higher Education, if not all, employed open enrollment policies to more easily accommodate the vast number of soldiers without recent formal education records or high school diplomas.

President Truman predicted that the needs of the burgeoning population of post-WWII soldiers seeking employment, but perhaps not aspiring to an elite liberal education, could best be met by the two-year community college. An estimated 20-25% of veterans who attended college directly after WWII probably would not have enrolled without the benefits provided by the GI Bill (Folger and Nam, 1976). Even more striking, nearly one million WWII veterans represented half of the men who graduated from college from 1940 to 1955 (Folger and Nam, 1976). The young WWII veteran returned to a changed

America, sometimes without a completed secondary education and/or specific postsecondary job training. Additionally, each veteran had to compete against millions of fellow soldiers in a society where many jobs now required some formal job training or completed postsecondary education. Jesse R. Bogue, the executive secretary of the American Association of Junior Colleges in 1946, is credited with coining the term 'community college' in his 1950 book *The Community College*, and the CHE worked to establish a national network of colleges located in communities to accommodate this societal need for higher education (Vaughan, 1995 as cited at American Association of Community Colleges, 2009a, 1946 section). Gone were the days in America when some formal secondary schooling and a good work ethic ensured the masses lifetime employment and membership in the middle class. The abundant manufacturing jobs that built America during the Industrial Age, roughly between 1860 and 1920, had long dried up before WWII. America's major infrastructure of railroads and large cities had been constructed through the 1920s, to the point that every American worker was no longer needed as a laborer in the 1940s and beyond. The Industrial Revolution and resulting increase in mechanization meant fewer jobs required manual laborers.

As a result, the percentage of jobs requiring at least some postsecondary education increased sharply between the 1930s and the 1960s, which led to an increase in the percentage of Americans accessing higher education in order to obtain employment. Of the eligible population, only 30% of students graduated from high school in 1924 compared to 75% in 1960 (Cohen and Brawer, 2003). In 1910, just 5% of eighteen-year-olds enrolled in college contrasted with 45% in 1960 (Cohen and Brawer, 2003).

The community college movement, which thrived because of its most fundamental desire to make education accessible to the masses, carefully selected campus locations in the heart of well-established and densely populated cities. These colleges of the community were more likely to avoid the bucolic settings preferred by the nation's earliest colleges and universities, which desired unsettled, open spaces. Land grant colleges and universities frequently benefited from donated (often unused) countryside and as a result were also located away from urban centers. Palinchak (1973) anointed the community college as "the new land-grant institution; the people's college in the truest sense" (p. 1). Simply put, the community college movement, which began in the 1940s with President Truman's commission, was driven by the nation's needs, and making a college education accessible to more of the population was the movement's primary goal (Cohen and Brawer, 2003; Palinchak, 1973; Quigley and Bailey, 2003; Roueche and Baker, III, 1987; Rudolph, 1962; Warren, 1998).

Increased College Enrollment, From the 1960s to Present Day

While Joliet Junior College in Illinois, generally recognized as the first publicly-supported community college in America, had existed since 1901 (Palinchak, 1973; Quigley and Bailey, 2003), the two-year institution movement reached its zenith in the 1960s, a time in our nation's history when 497 new junior colleges were founded at a rate of almost one per week for a decade, compared to 82 such foundings in the 1950s and 149 in the 1970s (American Association of Community Colleges, 2004; American Association of Community Colleges, 2006). Another reason for the dramatic rise in college enrollment during the 1960s was that the first wave of the Baby Boomers (born between 1946 and 1964), America's most populous generation to date, was of college

age. Open door policy at the nation's community colleges continued through the 1950s, and in the 1960s the policy remained in effect to accommodate the influx of college-age Baby Boomers and in response to the equality-driven civil rights movement. McCabe and Day (1998) described this pursuit of educational equity in America, coupled with other efforts to extend social equality to previously marginalized groups, as "the access revolution" (p. 3). Lavin and Hyllegard (1996) proclaimed open admissions to be:

The most ambitious effort to promote educational opportunity ever attempted in American higher education. ...One of the last great examples of the 1960s commitment to the idea that social policy could and should be used to advance equity in U.S. society. (p. 195)

Federal legislation, as well as evolved educational philosophy and policy encouraged greater inclusion of minority and disadvantaged populations historically excluded from higher education, including non-whites, women, those without the financial means to attend, and persons with disabilities. Some of the more significant pieces of federal legislation responsible for diversifying higher education enrollment are Title VI of The Civil Rights Act of 1964; the Higher Education Act of 1965; Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972; Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act in 1973; and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (Kaplin and Lee, 1997; Rudolph, 1962). Arguably, no institution in higher education has so consistently, efficiently, and appropriately responded to society's continually changing needs than has the community college (Cohen and Brawer, 2003; McCabe, 2000; Rosenbaum, Deil-Amen and Person, 2006; Rosenbaum, Redline and Stephan, 2007).

Both college enrollment rates and America's population increased significantly between the 1960s and the new millennium. In the fall semester of 1959, approximately 3.6 million students enrolled in American colleges and universities compared to nearly 17.5 million in 2005 (National Center for Education Statistics, 2007), an increase in college attendance over those 46 years of more than 386%. To compare the nation's population during that same span of years, in 1959 the United States had approximately 177.8 million citizens (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000) and more than 295.8 million by 2005 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2007), an increase of only 66.3%. Between 1959 and 2005, college enrollment grew from around 2% of the total population to nearly three times as many at approximately 6%.

College enrollment remains high. While national undergraduate enrollment figures stayed between 11-12.5 million for over eleven years from 1990-2001 (U. S. Census Bureau, 2004), a record high of 15.3 million students enrolled in Fall 2001 (National Center for Education Statistics, 2002). Between 2000 and 2006, enrollment in college and graduate school grew from 15.3 to over 17 million (Davis and Bauman, 2008). Enrollment was over 18 million in 2007, and enrollment is projected to exceed 20 million by 2017 (National Center for Education Statistics, 2009, first two charts). This great enrollment increase is partly due to the escalating need for students to earn a college degree to increase employment opportunity and partly due to the fact that people from many more segments of society attend and will attend college in the new millennium than did in the 1960s and earlier. While Davis and Bauman (2008) credit the increase mostly to higher enrollment by non-traditional populations such as women and ethnic minorities, many other studies have specifically noted the considerable impact of students with

disabilities on that ever-increasing college enrollment number (Ankeny, 2000; Chang and Logan, 2002; Cohen and Brawer, 2003; GW HEATH, 2002; Quick, Lehmann and Deniston, 2003; Rioux-Bailey, 2004; Rosenbaum, Redline and Stephan, 2007; Savukinas, 2004).

The Shift Toward Conservative Application of Open Door Policy

As a result of the increased college enrollment initially spurred by the GI Bill and continued into the 1960s era of equality, many four-year colleges and universities were inundated by applicants with presenting an ever-widening range of abilities. Many institutions responded by instituting stricter admissions criteria. Students from more diverse segments of society sought enrollment between the 1940s and 1960s as financial aid availability, increasing employment dependence on possessing a college degree, and new interpretations of equality-based college-going compelled students outside the white, male and middle/upper-class populations to seek enrollment as never before. As a way to assess ability and potential among those applying, standardized tests were employed more routinely, such as the SAT and the ACT, the latter of which was developed in 1959 (Kinzie, Palmer, Hayek, Hossler, Jacob and Cummings, 2004). Because of this, students unable to qualify for enrollment at more selective institutions began to seek higher education enrollment in greater numbers at open-door community colleges and other institutions.

By the 1970s, scholars openly began to debate the merits of open door policy, which had been widely celebrated during the 1940s-1960s community college movement and was partly responsible for the expansion of developmental education offerings in this sector of higher education. Professionals began to question the practice when unprepared

students who were allowed to enroll in college-level courses experienced unconscionable rates of failure (Grubb, 1999; McCabe, 2000; Mitchell, 1989; Morante, 1989; Palinchak, 1973; Roueche and Roueche, 1999; Zeitlin and Markus, 1996). Palinchak (1973) noted the following emerging dichotomies in community college philosophy – “quality v. quantity; pedantic v. realistic; elite v. mass; idealism v. pragmatism; standards v. democracy; privilege v. right” (p. 250).

In his 1973 vanguard text, *Evolution of the Community College*, Palinchak was one of the first to criticize the appropriateness of *laissez-faire* open door policy as a response to the most diversified community college student body in history when he wrote:

A distinct problem arises over the interpretation of what is euphemistically called the ‘open door’ policy. ...When a ‘two-year’ institution admits anyone and everyone, as a true open door would, it is often done with a sincere attitude of extending democracy and bringing more rights to our citizens. At this point, however, many institutions discover that they are unprepared or unable to provide adequate programs for ‘students’ who are unconventional by all traditional criteria. (p. 3)

Open door policy in American community colleges had been applied most liberally up until the 1970s on campuses that had not yet experienced the revolutionary disability legislation that, for all intents and purposes, began with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act in 1973 (Kaplin and Lee, 1997; Price-Ellingstad and Berry, 2000; Quick, Lehmann and Deniston, 2003; Rothstein, 2003; Rudolph, 1962). Many students previously unable to gain admittance to institutions of higher learning with competitive

enrollment policies found and continue to find opportunities to continue their education as a result of the open door enrollment policies of community colleges (Cohen and Brawer, 2003; Rioux-Bailey, 2004; Savukinas, 2004). The enrollment effects of Section 504, which legally codified the rights of individuals with disabilities who are otherwise qualified to participate in federally funded programs and activities, likely influenced to some degree the eventual coast-to-coast reconsideration of unrestricted open door policy in community colleges.

A number of factors led many institutions to adopt more conservative iterations of open door policy over time, beginning in the 1970s and continuing through the present: exploding college enrollment in higher education; enrollment of student bodies with a wider range of academic abilities; increased pressure from state legislatures and accrediting bodies (demanding higher education institutions assess their programs and be accountable for their activities); and growing recognition by higher education professionals that a wide open door without entrance assessment and appropriate placement may have the unintended effect of ultimately providing *less* opportunity to students who enroll in courses for which they are not prepared. In 1999, Grubb described the evolution of thought on open door policy as follows:

The tactic of blissful indifference has emerged in the past in discussions about the ‘right to fail.’ In the early 1970s...a debate ensued about whether the responsibility for success lies with students or with the colleges themselves. ...Over time the discussion about the ‘right to fail’ has moderated, replaced by a more sophisticated discussion about what to do about high rates of noncompletion. (p. 221)

In an attempt to more successfully educate students enrolling with an ever-widening breadth of abilities, the idealistic “right to fail” philosophy prevalent from the 1940s through the early 1970s fell out of favor as community college scholars began to embrace a moderated “right to succeed” philosophy that employed features of mandatory assessment and placement. Nationwide estimates on mandatory assessment, with or without mandatory placement, vary. According to McCabe (2000), approximately half of all institutions with open door policies at the time of his publication assessed all incoming students and fewer still mandated placement of students into pre-college or developmental courses in the basic skill areas of reading, writing, and mathematics, when skills remediation were deemed necessary. A more recent national survey in 2007 found mandatory assessment employed in 92.4% of the institutions surveyed, which starkly contrasted with only 68% in a 1992 sister study (Gerlaugh, Thompson, Boylan, and Davis, 2007). Mandatory placement, though, was not investigated in the 2007 Gerlaugh et al. study, so national figures more recent than McCabe’s in 2000 have not been published, to my knowledge. Most assuredly, however, mandatory placement practices lag behind mandatory assessment (Gerlaugh, Thompson, Boylan, and Davis, 2007).

Ethical Considerations that Drive Conservative Interpretation of Open Door Policy

“Right to fail” philosophy gave way over time to “right to succeed” due to the ethical concerns of community college faculty and administrators who witnessed the casualties of *laissez-faire* open door policy without mandatory assessment and placement. It can be inferred from Thomas Mitchell’s (1989) description of his institution’s conversion from a *laissez-faire* open door policy to one with mandatory assessment and

placement components that any college not employing mandatory assessment and placement with an open door policy is acting fraudulently:

Few Texas colleges have had mandatory assessment, placement, and remediation programs, and yet we have taken the state's and the students' money claiming to be able to provide these students with a higher education. If our standards were high, our attrition rates were also extremely high, leaving us open to the charge that we were committing the fraud of promising and charging for educational services that we could not deliver because we gave 'students the right to fail' and provided programs that all but insured that they exercised that right (p. 3-4).

...Either we could commit the other fraud – allowing students to continue to enroll in virtually any course they wanted while we raised standards so high that many, if not most, had no chance to pass the courses – or we could do the right thing and prepare them for college level work before we allowed them to attempt college level work. We could 'give them the right to fail' or 'give them the right to succeed.' (p. 9)

Morante (1989) argues that mandatory assessment and placement should not be viewed as a penalty, but rather as an important indicator of an institution's stewardship.

The "right to fail" is a pernicious concept too often prevalent in higher education. Essentially proponents of this philosophy argue that, as adults, students have the freedom to choose courses even if there is a low probability of succeeding in these courses. This philosophy of the right to fail is based on the concept of freedom and a process of decision-making. ...In making a good decision – a truly free decision – an entering student needs to know what his/her strengths and

weaknesses are as well as interests and goals, the courses available at the college, and the standards and requirements of the institution. Without an appropriate understanding of these factors, decision-making is a guessing game and little true freedom is present. (p. 57-58)

Open door policy, historically responsible for allowing some students to register and pay for college-level courses they were not prepared for, has been referred to derogatorily as “revolving door” policy (Ankeny, 2000; Mitchell, 1989; Roueche and Roueche, 1999), which is the unfortunate experience for a large number of students who enter community colleges, enroll in courses beyond their abilities, fail, and ultimately leave. Hadden (2000) notes that “mandatory placement may actually provide the key to opening the door to true academic, vocational, or community success despite the criticisms by some that it excludes students and restricts their freedoms” (p. 823). No one arguing for mandatory assessment and placement in community colleges contends that access to higher education should be denied a student capable of benefiting from instruction. However, it is reasonably argued that all enrolling students deserve honest evaluation and general academic support and guidance from the institutions accepting their tuition. One alternative to this unacceptable practice is mandatory assessment and placement in appropriate developmental courses into which students test. But for those clinging to the more liberal enrollment policies of an earlier community college, this approach is often viewed as overly restrictive, undemocratic, and even discriminatory.

“Right to Fail” Philosophy

Higher education professionals who maintain that open door institutions should accept literally all who apply philosophically align with the egalitarian sentiment that was

the hallmark of 1940s-1960s open door policy during the early community college movement. Those who argue that a student's "right to fail" is embedded in the very democratic fabric of community college history emphatically maintain that students testing into developmental courses should be allowed to choose enrollment in college-level classes if they so desire because they might succeed and therefore that opportunity should not be denied. "Right to fail" proponents believe the existence of open door policy welcomes many students who otherwise might not be encouraged to enroll in higher education. This perspective cautions that assessing and placing students in developmental courses presents unnecessary obstacles that will discourage them from attending and will add extra semesters to their college educations, costing them additional time and money.

An early example of pro-access thought among community college advocates is reflected in the following excerpt from the 1947 Truman Commission's report (as cited in Warren, 1998, p. 95):

The Commission does not subscribe to the belief that higher education should be confined to an intellectual elite, much less a small elite drawn largely from families in the higher income brackets. Nor does it believe that a broadening of opportunity means a dilution of standards either of admission or scholarly attainment in college works.

It is important to note that The Truman Commission idealistically proposed the peaceful coexistence of access and high standards in 1947, long before legislation existed to encourage the enrollment of students with disabilities in higher education. Furthermore, when members of the commission claimed that broadening opportunity would not dilute academic standards, it is highly unlikely that they could have predicted that one day

students with SCDs would seek and be granted enrollment in credit courses at community colleges. As late as 1972, for example, of the eight million children with disabilities in America, at least half were not receiving any special education services in the K-12 system (Douvani and Hulse, 2002). With this state of affairs in K-12 education, access to higher education was hardly a consideration for many.

While there are data that suggest open door policy is effective in supporting the success of some students enrolling in college-level courses who would have tested into developmental courses (most notably Lavin and Hyllegard's 1996 *Changing the Odds* responsive to Traub's 1994 *City on a Hill*), there are much data that support the opposite. Those who tout open access as the preferred community college enrollment philosophy do so from the viewpoint that not allowing unprepared students to enroll in college courses is tantamount to denying them opportunity. However, maintaining a *laissez-faire* open door policy at the modern-day community college is such an anachronistic view that current data-driven research touting its benefits is not prevalent.

"Right to Succeed" Philosophy

Traub (1994) concluded: "Open admissions was one of those fundamental questions about which, finally, you had to make an almost existential choice. Realism said: It doesn't work. Idealism said: It *must*" (p. 80). In 1970, Edmund Gleazer predicted: "The greatest challenge facing the community college is to make good on the promise of the open door" (as cited in Rouche and Rouche, 1999, p. 13). Those who believe mandatory assessment and placement should inform community college enrollment policy do so armed with research that demonstrates mandatory assessment and placement is a crucial component to the success of students enrolling in institutions with open

enrollment policies (Boylan, 2002; McCabe, 2000; McCabe and Day, 1998; Roueche and Rouche, 1999). These proponents argue for a student's "right to succeed," pointing to evidence that shows low pass rates for developmental students who choose to enroll in college-level courses without first taking the developmental courses into which they placed (Hadden, 2000; Mitchell, 1989; Morante, 1989; Roueche and Roueche, 1999; and Zeitlin and Markus, 1996). Implementing a "right to succeed" mandatory assessment and placement policy is the first step in the endeavor to educate students who test into developmental classes at the community college. When faced with placing into developmental courses, if given the choice, many students would register for college-level courses only to experience failure (Morante, 1989).

Research shows that two phenomena occur when large numbers of students are allowed into courses without possessing the requisite skills: 1) these unprepared students fail at high rates, and 2) faculty, worn down by the lowered skills sets pervasive in their classrooms, compromise their academic standards and teach to the middle so that a reasonable number of students pass (Berger, 1997; Cohen and Brawer, 2003; McCabe, 2000; Mitchell, 1989; Morante, 1989). Dr. Jill Jacobs-Biden (2006), wife of Vice President Joseph Biden, concluded in her doctoral executive position paper addressing community college student retention that "Although there is strength in diversity as a classroom component, the lack of homogeneity in academic ability makes it difficult to teach to a single standard" (p. 2). Neither student failure nor lowered expectations is an acceptable practice, yet they represent the reality of unfettered "right to fail" open door policy. Roueche and Roueche (1999) describe the dilemma egalitarian-minded

community college leaders wrestle with in an attempt to maintain academic integrity in an open door environment:

There is reluctance on the part of many administrators and faculty to implement standards that work to improve both persistence and achievement. Many colleges have focused so much on providing access that they have difficulty establishing requirements or prerequisites that might block student opportunity for higher education. (p. 15)

Upon analyzing one of the nation's first open access experiments at City College in 1960s Harlem, James Traub (1994) offered this unsettling conclusion: "The right to an education for which one was hopelessly unprepared was not much of a right at all" (p. 180). Accordingly, more and more community colleges are abandoning their formerly less restricted open door policies in favor of mandatory assessment and mandatory placement practices. Even institutions still not subscribing to these requirements at least have begun to scrutinize their application of open door policy, in part to assure that college-ready students' opportunities are not usurped by would-be developmental students in college-level courses who then exhibit high rates of failure.

A Continuing Trend Toward Conservative Interpretation of Open Door Policy

While the spirit of open door policy attempts to accommodate all who wish to enroll, institutions increasingly have found it unfeasible to offer programming below a certain academic level and sometimes decline service to students who arrive at the institution without meeting the requirements for enrollment in a course or program, even when appropriate accommodations are provided. One of the earliest written references to the concept of *ability to benefit* (ATB) appears in a 1970 special report by the Carnegie

Commission (as cited in Palinchak, 1973) when it was recommended that admission to public community colleges be extended to “all applicants...who are capable of benefiting from continuing education” (p. 150). In their paper on the history of developmental education, researchers Hunter Boylan and William White, Jr. (1987) addressed the issue of ATB when they wrote that the field of developmental education “also represents the most recent version of American higher education’s long standing commitment to providing access to college for *all the nation’s citizens who might profit from it*” (p. 1). Some interpret the open door policy held by most community colleges to mean that any person can enroll at that institution in any course or program of study, but such an interpretation, termed “laissez-faire open access” by Fonte (1997, p. 43), is usually too literal. Institutions that receive federal funds are legally within their rights to establish enrollment criteria even for their lowest level academic courses, or to essentially create a bottom on their developmental offerings in order to effectively deliver the level of education they purport to provide.

Open door policy in most American community colleges today does not operate in its purest, unrestricted form because the population it was designed to address in the 1940s, 1950s and 1960s did not remain the same. In all practicality, modern community colleges with open door policies seldom, if ever, deny initial admission to a student because of possible political ramifications and because there are no legal grounds for doing so. St. Louis Community College (2007), for example, by the 2007-2008 academic year, removed from its catalog this previously long-published statement: “The College...is committed to the delivery of high quality instruction and support programs to a broad range of students who are qualified and who can benefit from the instruction” (St.

Louis Community College Catalog, 2004, p. 8). One reason ATB denial may not be applied as frequently as it could be is because of the potential backlash from the community the institution serves and is financially supported by. Worse, denying admission to a student with a disability at an open door institution, heavily funded by the community in which that student is a resident, may be viewed as particularly harsh, especially when the community college may be that student's only enrollment option for higher education. Understandably, an institution would predict such a stance to be a potential public relations disaster, given the steady increase of popular and legislative support since the 1970s for the inclusion of persons with disabilities in all important life activities, most notably in employment and education. The public relations aspect of the decision is heightened by the reality that parents of students with disabilities have proved to be vocal and potent advocates.

Making it a more difficult decision to deny admission is the irrefutable evidence that a college degree directly correlates with financial solvency, independence, and prosperity in America now more than ever before (Barton, 2008; Horn, Berkold, and Bobbitt, 1999; Kolesnikova and Shimek, 2008; Leef, 2006; Price-Ellingstad and Berry, 2000; Quick, Lehmann and Deniston, 2003; Rosenbaum, Redline and Stephan, 2007; Stodden and Dowrick, 2000; Trainor, 2008). In 2000, McCabe predicted 80% of new jobs in the new millennium would require some kind of postsecondary education. Additionally, The Spellings Commission Report (Commission Appointed by Secretary of Education Margaret Spellings, 2006), formally entitled *A Test of Leadership: Charting the Future of Higher Education* found that "ninety percent of the fastest-growing jobs in the new information and service economy will require some postsecondary education" (p.

7). In 2006 nearly 58% of American high school graduates, 16-21 years of age, were enrolled in college (Davis and Bauman, 2008), and one study found that more than 80% of high school graduates enroll in higher education within eight years of graduating high school (Rosenbaum, Deil-Amen and Person, 2006). A college education in the new millennium is no longer viewed as only a socioeconomic accoutrement for those with the greatest reserves of intelligence and/or money, but by many as necessity for anyone who wishes to live comfortably in America.

As early as 1973 Palinchak declared that “The most critical issue in all of higher education is whether higher education is a right or a privilege” (p. 148). Today, postsecondary education is so closely tied to socioeconomic success in America that society dictates it is impolitic to refer to it as a privilege. Former U.S. Secretary of Education Richard Riley said as much in a college commencement address:

At no time in history have the level and quality of education had such a profound impact on one's personal and professional success. I believe that when historians look back on this time, they will mark it as a critical point—the beginning of a new ‘age of education.’ A quality education is the new civil right for the 21st century. (U.S. Department of Education, 2000, ¶ 3)

In his address, Riley was specifically referring to education in the K-12 system, but the extent to which obtaining higher education is correlated with a higher standard of living in America in the 21st century is thoroughly documented (Barton, 2008; Horn, Berkold and Bobbitt, 1999; Kolesnikova and Shimek, 2008; Leef, 2006; Price-Ellingstad and Berry, 2000; Quick, Lehmann and Deniston, 2003; Rosenbaum, Redline and Stephan, 2007; Stodden and Dowrick, 2000; Trainor, 2008).

Administrators and admissions personnel at community colleges with mission statements that tout open access may find it much easier to allow students with low academic ability to enroll and fail as opposed to bearing the burden of demonstrating that the student does not possess the ability to benefit from the institution's offerings. It is also imperative that at least one easier entry point into higher education exists so that students who might not be prepared or choose not to enroll in four-year colleges or universities with competitive enrollment policies have opportunities to begin or continue their education. Furthermore, it is important that students who no longer have access to a K-12 education by virtue of graduation or age, are given an opportunity to acquire the skills and knowledge they need to succeed in college-level courses through, for example, developmental coursework.

More frequently, open door community colleges apply only federal ATB criteria, if at all, to determine whether or not to extend enrollment opportunity. Some open door institutions may choose to limit enrollment for students deemed ineligible for Title IV money, but it is rare that such students would be denied enrollment altogether at community colleges, despite their inability to establish ATB by federal standards. The federal criteria for determining ATB are possession of a high school diploma or its equivalent (usually a GED), or demonstration of ATB by passing a federally approved ATB test. Three of the many currently approved tests – COMPASS, ASSET, and Accuplacer – serve multiple purposes for community colleges that also frequently use one of them to assess all incoming students for placement. However, being ineligible for Title IV money by not establishing an ATB really means just that. Students who are willing and able to pay tuition may still enroll in courses they are allowed to by the

institution. Because of mandatory assessment and placement policies, these students often place into developmental courses. Stated simply, students who test very low on these entrance assessments are still given the opportunity to demonstrate that they can or cannot benefit from classroom instruction.

Factors Encouraging Community College Enrollment for Students with Disabilities

The presence of federal legislation and the related increased support students have enjoyed in both K-12 public education and higher education over the past thirty-five years has led more students with disabilities than ever to seek enrollment at postsecondary institutions. A sharp increase in post-secondary enrollment has occurred among those receiving IDEA (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act) services. “The percentage of college freshmen reporting disabilities has more than tripled since 1978; in 1978, 2.6 percent of full-time freshmen reported disabilities, and in 1991, 8.8 percent reported disabilities,” according to The American Council on Education (as cited in U.S. Department of Education, a, Chapter 3, Educational Attainment and Employment section). One recent study indicates that the ten-year period between 1990 and 2000 saw as much as a tenfold increase of students with disabilities enrolling in college (Mull, Sitlington and Alper, 2001 as cited in Trammell, 2003). Most higher education enrollment data on students with disabilities was first collected upon the enactment of 1970s educational disability laws; therefore, accurate comparative data on students with disabilities who attended college prior to this time are not available.

Students attending college in America prior to the 1973 passage of Section 504 did not benefit from major legislation supporting those with disabilities in educational settings. Many disabled students may not have chosen to pursue higher education in the

open door era before 1973, or even until the 1977 implementation of Section 504, because institutions were not legally required to accommodate their disabilities. While the doors to many institutions of higher education were technically wide open to students, it is unlikely that many students with disabilities felt encouraged to cross that threshold before the mid-1970s and certainly not to the extent they are actively encouraged today by parents/guardians, educators, and society as a whole.

Postsecondary transition services for students with disabilities have only been a required component of secondary school students' IEPs under IDEA since 1990 (Price-Ellingstad and Berry, 2000; Trainor, 2008). The 2004 amendments to IDEA specifically express that "all children with disabilities have available to them...special education and related services designed to...prepare them for further education, employment and independent living" (U.S. Congress as cited in Bartlett, Etscheidt, and Weisenstein, 2007, p. 166). It seems that at least some of the relatively recent increase in students with disabilities enrolling in higher education can be attributed to the intensified efforts of the federal government, parents, educators and advocates to actively help secondary students with disabilities transition to meaningful postsecondary experiences.

Enrollment of Students with SCDs at STLCC

Through its open door policy, STLCC has always been committed to access and opportunity, but from the college's inception evidence abounds that STLCC leadership did not subscribe to a *laissez-faire* interpretation of the policy. Early Junior College District (JCD) admission and retention standards, which have relaxed considerably over the years, required students to "have completed an approved high school course, or its equivalent as determined by JCD authorities" (JCD, 1963, p. 17) to be eligible for

admission. Freshmen students ranking “in the lower half of their high school class and who, in addition, score in the lower third on the counseling and placement examinations” (p. 17) were admitted under restricted status. Such students were only allowed to enroll in up to twelve credit hours and they were subject to dismissal if after their first semester their GPA was below a 1.5 or C- average, policies that no longer exist. Admissions eligibility requirements also were significantly higher for students not residing in the district, a policy that is now also defunct. Out-of-district students had to “rank in the upper two-thirds of their high school class, and...score above the 33rd percentile in the counseling and placement examinations given by The Junior College District” (p. 17).

Further evidence of STLCC’s inclination toward historically conservative application of open door policy is that by the mid-1960’s, within five years of STLCC opening, a revision to the admissions policy was made and is revealed in this July 1968 Board Policy Manual excerpt:

The Junior College District accepts for admission on a first come, first served basis all high school graduates residing within the District to the limits of available space. Admission to the District does not, however, ensure admission to all of the programs offered. The District reserves the right to guide the enrollment of students on the basis of counseling examinations, pre-enrollment interviews, and achievement in previous academic work. (as cited in Warren, 1998, p. 296)

STLCC followed the tenets of the Missouri state legislation that approved the JCD of St. Louis and required enrollment opportunities be extended to, in the words of President Joseph Cosand, “all graduates of approved high schools or the equivalent thereof” (as cited in Warren, 1998, p. 283), because it was legally required. The high

school diploma or equivalency standard for admission was believed at the time to be a reasonable measure of a student's ability to benefit from the college's offerings.

Policymakers could not have predicted in the 1960s, however, what has amounted to – at least the state of Missouri – the elimination of high school diploma standards for some students. Starting in the early 1990s, students with disabilities began to be awarded non-conditional, regular high school diplomas for meeting IEP goals that are not required to reflect mastery of content on par with students who receive their diplomas by earning Carnegie Units. Despite exhaustive inquiries with state officials in the Office of Special Education, The Missouri House of Representatives, The St. Louis Special School District, Missouri special educators in the K-12 setting, and Access personnel at STLCC, I uncovered no statute or law that mandates regular high school diplomas be issued for students in Missouri who meet their IEP goals. Rather, educational professionals in the K-12 setting and at STLCC believe the statewide practice simply evolved due to pressure from advocates for students with disabilities to lessen the stigma associated with a certificate of completion and to increase the employability of those students after high school.

Lending credibility to my theory of organic ideological advancement, Stroman (2003) describes “the evolution of self-determination” as occurring “primarily in the 1990s first as a philosophy and subsequently implemented in varying degrees as operational principles by many states and entitlement programs” (p. 213). The experiences and movement of those with more significant physical and intellectual disabilities in America from institutional settings to inclusive settings is traced in Stroman's text. Stroman describes the gradual shift in delivery of services for persons

with physical, psychiatric and intellectual disabilities from the “supply side model” (p. 213) of government-provided care prevalent in the 1960s and earlier to the current “demand side model” (p. 213) that emphasizes person-centered planning and that gained traction in the early 1990s.

Gaining access to community colleges may or may not have been the original or primary intent of those who led the charge to have Missouri students with disabilities who meet IEP goals awarded regular high school diplomas. However, since possessing a high school diploma qualifies students for enrollment at most community colleges in the state, that has been the result. The policy of issuing regular high school diplomas to students in the state who meet their IEP goals has undeniably led to more students in the population being studied qualifying for enrollment at open door community colleges, regardless of whether or not their IEP goals are equal to the graduation requirements of students without disabilities. This phenomenon is far from unique to Missouri and reveals a widespread national trend. According to the Education Commission of the States (2008), more than half of states (34/50) in America, shown by dark shading in *Figure 4* (p. 66), award regular high school diplomas to students with special needs when they meet their IEP goals.

same curriculum standards required of those earning Carnegie units for graduation. The IEPs of some students with disabilities may be as academically rigorous as those of students who do not have disabilities, perhaps only awarding in the IEP appropriate accommodations needed to succeed in the general curriculum. Alternatively, the IEPs of some students with disabilities may be filled chiefly with behavioral goals, which may not measure mastery of academic material on par with what is required for a student without a disability. Further, IEP teams in some states, like the state of Missouri, may have the latitude to waive “any specific graduation requirement...for a disabled student if recommended by the IEP Committee” (Missouri Division of Special Education, 2008, p. 3, #1).

Further encouraging the enrollment of students with SCDs in higher education settings is the August 14, 2008 reauthorization of the Higher Education Act of 1965, known as the Higher Education Opportunity Act (HEOA or P.L. 110-315). For the first time, HEOA makes Title IV funds, or federal student financial aid, available to students with intellectual disabilities to pursue a “comprehensive transition and postsecondary program” (110th Congress of the U.S.A., 2008, Sec. 760, p. 285), defined as a degree, certificate or non-degree program at institutions of higher education. Previously, students not able to establish ATB were ineligible for Title IV funds (Lee, 2009). In addition to HEOA providing assistance for academic, career and technical pursuits in preparation for compensated employment, those with intellectual disabilities also may receive support to seek “independent living instruction” (110th Congress of the U.S.A., 2008, Sec. 760, p. 285). HEOA partly defines a student with an intellectual disability as one “with mental retardation or a cognitive impairment, characterized by significant limitations

in...intellectual and cognitive functioning” (110th Congress of the U.S.A., 2008, Sec. 760, p. 285) and who is or was previously eligible for a free and appropriate education under IDEA.

Grants were also authorized by HEOA for the development of high quality “model comprehensive transition and postsecondary programs for students with disabilities” (110th Congress of the U.S.A., Sec. 767, p. 289). Institutions receiving grants are required to extend four curricular/experiential areas of participation to the students with intellectual disabilities they serve: “(A) academic enrichment; (B) socialization; (C) independent living skills, including self-advocacy skills; and (D) integrated work experiences and career skills that lead to gainful employment” (110th Congress of the U.S.A., 2008, Sec. 767, p. 290), clearly demonstrating federal commitment to the expansion of enrollment opportunities for students with SCDs in higher education settings. In addition to serving students with intellectual disabilities and attending to the aforementioned programmatic requirements, institutions receiving HEOA grants are obligated to provide for “social inclusion of students with intellectual disabilities in academic courses” (110th Congress of the U.S.A., 2008, Sec. 767, p. 290), among integrating students in virtually every other area of the institution. This federal financial assistance will inarguably facilitate increased enrollment of students with SCDs at institutions of higher education, particularly at community colleges.

In the next section, literature related to why students choose to enroll in higher education is evaluated, which may provide some insight into the motivations and enrollment behaviors of course repeaters in developmental reading at STLCC.

Why Students Attend College

There are many reasons students choose to enroll in postsecondary education. While multiple studies analyze the college choice process of students and sources of influence on their choices, the primary motivations of the research fall into two categories: those that were distinctly more student-centered in their purpose (e.g. Kinzie, Palmer, Hayek, Hossler, Jacob and Cummings, 2004; National Postsecondary Education Cooperative, 2007) and those that originated from a marketing inquiry and thus should be considered more institution-centered in their purpose, though the findings from both are useful to students and to those who serve them (e.g. Bers, 2005; Bers and Galowich, 2002; Paulsen, 1990).

College Choice Models

College choice models exist that examine student selection exclusively through one of three frames (psychological, sociological or economical, as discussed in Paulsen, 1990) or utilize the frames in combination (e.g. Chapman, 1981; Hossler and Gallagher, 1987; Jackson, 1982). The college choice models have been developed from studies by researchers with backgrounds in psychology, sociology, or economics, which explain the three resulting conceptual frameworks. Psychologists view college choice by estimating “the impact of college experiences and environments on students and optimal student-institution fit” (Paulsen, 1990, p. 23). Students tend to self-regulate their enrollment by pursuing admission to institutions with student bodies similar to themselves. Sociologists view college choice as a product of many factors, including a student’s socioeconomic status and academic abilities, which lead them to seek particular institutions for enrollment and select goals related to certain levels of educational attainment (Cabrera

and La Nasa, 2000). Sociologists view college choice as an outgrowth of attempts to gain status or attain approval from society or other important people, such as parents (either by reaping the benefits of being a college student or a graduate). Economists see choosing to attend college as a method of self-investment (Paulsen, 1990). From the economist's perspective (Becker, 1993), one of the prime reasons students elect to attend college is to get an education, theoretically certified by the awarding of a degree and/or certification, which in turn positively affects a student's future employability and earning power. Cohen and Brawer (2003) decidedly align with the economists by labeling all higher education as career oriented and suggesting that "the poverty-proud scholar, attending college for the joy of pure knowledge, is about as common as the presidential candidate who was born in a log cabin..." adding that "...both myths deserve decent burials" (p. 387).

Hossler and Gallagher's (1987) three stage-model of college choice serves as a stable model which represents the stages effectively communicated in other popular models (e.g. Chapman, 1981; Jackson, 1982). The Hossler/Gallagher college choice model (and essentially all others) posits that students go through three stages when making the decision to attend postsecondary education: predisposition, search, and choice. The predisposition stage involves self-reflection and assessment about one's abilities and interests, which leads to a decision to attend college. Research suggests that often during the predisposition stage students begin to recognize the link between earning college degrees and entering valued occupations later (De La Rosa, 2006). The search stage, as its name implies, involves investigating options and collecting information about prospective institutions before narrowing the pool of options to those more likely to

be pursued. Finally, choice(s) about which college(s) to apply to and to attend are made by students and their parents/guardians in the choice stage upon analyzing the results of the search stage and considering other contributing factors specific to the student's situation.

Factors Influencing College Choice

Paulsen (1990) conducted a meta-analysis of existing research to explain college student enrollment choice. He reported three categories of factors that influence the formation of college aspirations: socioeconomic background factors such as race, family income and parents' level of education; academic factors such as aptitude and achievement; and contextual factors such as self-esteem, attitudes about school and success. Because this study investigates college choice by interviewing students and surveying parents, literature related to those two groups is presented first, followed by other significant sources of influence on college choice. Implicit reference to Paulsen's three categories of influential factors is therefore found throughout the college choice and community college choice literature discussed.

Student Factors Related to College Enrollment

The following student factors are associated with a greater likelihood of college enrollment: higher student educational or employment goals, greater self-esteem, positive student attitudes toward school and success, higher academic aptitude, higher academic achievement in high school, greater encouragement from high school teachers and counselors to attend, more peers planning to attend, and greater parental encouragement (Paulsen, 1990). Students are more likely to attend college when the job market shrinks for those without college degrees and when "the amount of income students forego while

attending college also decreases” (Paulsen, 1990, p. 44). Paulsen also found that students are more likely to attend college when they perceive increased financial benefits for college graduates related to salary, employment, and associated opportunities.

Students belonging to families with greater socioeconomic status, as measured by the financial means of the student’s parents and level of education of those parents, are found enroll in college at higher rates (Paulsen, 1990). Parents with greater financial and social capital are more able to provide tangible support, which differs from freely supplied emotional encouragement, and more easily enables college enrollment for children in such families (Bers, 2005; Plank and Jordan, 2001). Paulsen also found that higher income and higher academic ability for students translates into decreased concern over college cost when making a college choice.

Parental Influence on College Choice

Many scholars have investigated the role that parents play in influencing the college choice process of four-year college students (Cabrera and La Nasa, 2000; Cabrera and La Nasa, 2001; Choy, Horn, Nunez and Chen, 2000; Conklin and Dailey, 1981; Flint, 1992; Hossler, 1999; Stage and Hossler, 1989). Research shows parental encouragement to be the most influential effect on college aspiration (Cabrera and La Nasa, 2000; Conklin and Dailey, 1981; Hossler and Gallagher, 1987; National Postsecondary Education Cooperative, 2007). Cabrera and La Nasa (2000) suggest that encouragement from parents is two-dimensional, with one component stemming from the parents’ high expectations relating to education and the other relating to the activities parents engage in to support enrollment such as saving for college, discussing future enrollment plans, etc. Research shows parents provide more encouragement to children with high academic

abilities (Hossler, Braxton and Coopersmith, 1989); as such, “the ability of the student seems to moderate the amount and quality of parental encouragement” (Cabrera and La Nasa, 2000, p. 9).

Others Who Influence College Choice

Older siblings have also been found to influence a student’s college choice process, particularly if the parents are not college-educated, by serving as role models, sharing college experiences, and in some cases cautioning younger siblings against making their same unwise choices of not enrolling or not persisting (Ceja, 2006 as cited in National Postsecondary Education Cooperative, 2007). Peers are also found to somewhat influence college choice, but mostly during the final stage of the choice process (National Postsecondary Education Cooperative, 2007). Even then, peer influence is not reported to be great, and it certainly does not outweigh the influence parents or the student has on the final decision. Of guidance counselors and teachers, the counselors tend to influence college choice more (National Postsecondary Education Cooperative, 2007), most likely due to their involvement in activities with students related to college searches.

Institutional Factors that Influence College Choice

Institutional characteristics also have been found to increase the attractiveness of a potential college choice. Paulsen (1990) lists among these factors: lower tuition, greater financial aid availability, closer proximity to a student’s home, higher admissions criteria, higher quality, greater social atmosphere, and greater curriculum offerings. Most importantly, Paulsen points out that the interaction between student and institutional attributes is least well understood, yet most critical in understanding college choices. In

other words, the college choice process is complex and highly individualistic: students may attend the same institution for varied and differently weighted reasons.

Community College Choice

A veritable vacuum of information exists regarding the college choice process of community college students, considering nearly half of all undergraduate students enroll in community colleges (American Association of Community Colleges, 2009b, ¶ 1).

Student Factors Related to Community College Choice

In the only study to directly ask community college students why they chose to enroll at those institutions (Somers et al., 2006), students reported price and location as the most important factors affecting their decision. As with students enrolling in four-year institutions, students selecting the community college also was correlated with socioeconomic status, with most students being heavily motivated to select the community college for financial reasons (Bers and Galowich, 2002; Somers et al., 2006). Parents strongly indicate that the relatively inexpensive community college is chosen for financial reasons over more expensive options (Bers and Galowich, 2002).

According to parents, the following factors were found to be notable reasons students elected to attend the community college: cost and location/convenience were the most important reasons; additionally, quality, the student's readiness for college, and their need to gain a sense of direction were found to be important factors (Smith and Bers, 1989). Bers and Galowich (2002) report an association between community college enrollment and students with lower academic skills and levels of social maturity. Parents reported three additional reasons their children selected the community college: to

combine work and school, to remain living at home, and because students were not sure what academic field they wanted to study (Smith and Bers, 1989).

Parental Influence on Community College Choice

The small body of research focused on the college choice process of community college students (Bers, 2005; Bers and Galowich, 2002; Bers and Galowich, 2003; Smith and Bers, 1989, Somers et al., 2006) investigates the influence that parents exercise in their child's community college enrollment choice, though that emphasis was decidedly less in Somers et al. No existing studies focus on parent roles in the college choice process of community college students with SCDs, but one study (Bers, 2005) aimed among other things to "clarify to parents what the community college can and cannot provide (especially for parents who goals for their students are unrealistic in light of students' academic achievements and skills)" (p. 414). Four studies (Bers, 2005; Bers and Galowich, 2002; Bers and Galowich, 2003; Smith and Bers, 1989) specifically evaluated the role of parents in their children's choice to attend community colleges. Community college enrollment odds were increased for students with parents whose support for college enrollment vacillated as opposed to students who enrolled more frequently at four-year institutions when college attendance was "taken for granted" in their home (Smith and Bers, 1989).

There are several findings regarding community college choice that relate to parental judgment of student academic ability. Smith and Bers (1989) found a correlation with community college attendance and students with parents who judged their children's academic abilities to be lower. Specifically, parents of children who only applied to a

community college rated their children's academic abilities lower than the parents of community college students who applied as well to other colleges.

Bers (2005) found a statistically significant correlation between parent involvement in the college search process and the parents' judgment of their children's academic abilities. Parents who judged their children's abilities to be high were more likely to be completely uninvolved in the college choice process, suggesting that greater parental involvement in the process occurs when parents judge their children's academic abilities to be lower.

Applying College Choice Theory to Students with SCDs

Paulsen (1990) authored one of the most comprehensive reports about college choice, which was commissioned by the Association for the Study of Higher Education and was conducted primarily out of a desire by the government and the higher education community to help explain enrollment changes and to predict future college enrollments. Paulsen's report (1990) pulled together what he labeled "macro level studies" and "micro level studies" (p. 24), including existing college enrollment data from national, state, and institutional studies, as well as models attempting to explain enrollment behavior. The smallest data looked at by Paulsen was at the institutional level; in other words, individual students were not directly questioned about their enrollment motivations. Ostensibly, the purpose of Paulsen's work was to inform higher education institutions about factors to consider when attempting to attract new students and increase future enrollment. Paulsen's work could be fairly characterized as an institution-centered and marketing-influenced piece as opposed to a student-centered report.

Further, while Paulsen's findings do help to explain some general college choice behavior, they do nothing to lay bare the complexity of why individual students elect to enroll in higher education; the complexity is simply acknowledged. In particular, research like Paulsen's, chiefly conducted to aid higher education institutions in successfully marketing themselves to maintain or increase enrollment, focuses largely on the enrollment behaviors of traditional student groups because they represent the largest faction from which to make enrollment/financial gains. Existing college choice studies typically sample students from the general population and statistically yield measures of central tendency, which fail to consider students outside traditional populations. The outlier numbers are so few that their enrollment impact on an institution's financial bottom line easily could be interpreted as insignificant and, therefore, not worth investigating. Furthermore, these studies were not designed to inquire in ways that would elicit answers from students who lie outside the largest populations. Student populations that are small and unique, like the one in this study, are the most likely to be overlooked in studies because their overall institutional impact is judged to be minimal.

Though the academic abilities of the students in this study are different from students without cognitive disabilities attending college, the two groups may share some of the same enrollment motivations. Ultimately, caution is warranted in applying existing college choice theory to the specialized population in this study because it appears to have been developed using average student population. The closest a study comes to investigating the population in this study is Bers' 2005 study, where 32% of students studied needed remedial work in English and 79% needed remediation in math. There is no indication, though, that any of the students in the Bers study possessed SCDs, making

this study (Scherer, 2010), to my knowledge, the first to investigate the community college enrollment motivations of students with SCDs.

The next section evaluates literature that suggests why students with disabilities overwhelming make the community college their higher education institution of choice, and illuminates constructs important to their college choice process.

Reasons Students with Disabilities Attend Community Colleges

Community colleges historically have enrolled more students from minority and disadvantaged populations than any other sector of higher education, and students with disabilities have benefited particularly from access provided by the open admissions policies most commonly found in community colleges (Ankeny, 2000; Cohen and Brawer, 2003; GW HEATH, 2002; McCabe, 2000; Quick, Lehmann, and Deniston, 2003; Rioux-Bailey, 2004; Rosenbaum, Redline, and Stephan, 2007; Savukinas, 2004). In 2002, the U.S. Department of Education (as cited in Savukinas, 2004) estimated that almost 60% of students with disabilities who attend postsecondary institutions enroll in either institutions with two-year programs or less than two-year programs. The National Education Longitudinal Study of 1988 (as cited in Price-Ellingstad and Berry, 2000) also found that students with disabilities attend 2-year postsecondary programs at much higher rates than 4-year college and universities.

Students without disabilities often enroll in community colleges for many of the same reasons students with disabilities do: non-competitive or open enrollment policies; low tuition rates and other financial aid incentives; specialized educational programs, smaller class sizes and more personal attention; and retention of their previously existing family and social support systems. These factors and others that may compel students

with disabilities to more frequently choose enrollment in community colleges over four-year colleges and universities are presented next.

Open Enrollment

Some students with disabilities may have greater difficulty qualifying for enrollment at institutions with competitive enrollment policies and are attracted to the community college because the students experience vastly fewer, if any, barriers to enrollment due to the open admissions policies found in most community colleges (Ankeny, 2000; Cohen and Brawer, 2003; GW HEATH, 2000; Neubert, Moon and Grigal, 2002; Kolesnikova and Shimek, 2008; Quick, Lehmann, and Deniston, 2003; Rioux-Bailey, 2004; Rosenbaum, Redline, and Stephan, 2007; Savukinas, 2004). Only 4% of students with disabilities enroll in 4-year colleges, and only 27% enroll in postsecondary education after high school compared to 68% of their peers without disabilities (Price-Ellingstad and Berry, 2000). For students with disabilities, the open door community college is overwhelmingly the higher education institution of choice.

Jackson's (1982) exclusion phase of his college choice model, during which students eliminate colleges from consideration, is applicable in reverse in that the open door community college is some students' only choice of postsecondary enrollment because college's with competitive enrollment policies exclude *them* from consideration. Due to their inability to meet selective admissions criteria, students like those in this study either tend to be excluded by colleges and universities with competitive enrollment policies from consideration *a priori* or the students and/or their parents exclude such institutions from consideration upon learning of the high standards. Research confirms that students with higher academic ability have "much broader geographic limits

regarding the search and application process” (Paulsen, 1990, p. 64). In fact, Hearn (1984) found that “The basic themes of students’ institutional choices may very well be established far in advance...” (p. 29). Two early influences on the decision-making process for students are knowledge about student aptitude and admissions criteria for colleges (Hearn, 1984).

With the community college’s conscious emphasis on access and its associated reduction of registration entanglements, it is not uncommon for a student to take a placement test, fill out paperwork, and be registered for courses in the same day. Four-year institutions with competitive enrollment policies, on the other hand, require stricter academic criteria to be met, and extensive applications must be submitted by students along with application fees as much as a year in advance of acceptance. Many students with disabilities, due to their inability to meet criteria at institutions with competitive enrollment policies, find their only opportunity to participate in a college atmosphere is at the open door community college.

Financial Considerations

Financial factors frequently drive the initial decision of students to choose the community college over four-year colleges and universities, primarily because community colleges are generally less expensive than four-year colleges (Cohen and Brawer, 2003; Grigal, Neubert, and Moon, 2002; Kolesnikova and Shimek, 2008). According to the U.S. Department of Education (as cited in Kolesnikova and Shimek, 2008), “Community college students paid \$2,017 in tuition and fees for the 2006-07 academic year, which is less than half of what students in public four-year universities paid (\$5,685) and only about one-tenth of...students in private four-year universities

(\$20,492)” (p. 7). In addition to lower tuition, many students of traditional age attending community colleges choose to continue living with their parents/guardians and forgo the added expenses of room and board and related costs of living that many four-year students on residential campuses must assume. Students with disabilities also may elect to avail themselves at least initially of less expensive higher education options because they and their parents/guardians may hesitate to invest money on a more expensive academic experience they are not sure will have a successful outcome. This cost/benefit philosophy is explained by economic theories of college choice (e.g. Becker, 1993; Hossler, Braxton and Coppersmith, 1989; and Jackson, 1978).

Access to Developmental Education and Other Educational Assistance

Of the nation’s higher education institutions, community colleges house the largest offering of pre-collegiate, or developmental, courses. In 2000, 98% of public two-year colleges offered developmental courses in reading, writing or math compared to only 80% of public four-year colleges in any one or more of those areas (National Center for Education Statistics, 2004). Further illustrating the saturation difference of developmental offerings by type of institution are these statistics: public two-year colleges offered all three developmental courses – reading, writing and mathematics – at rates that averaged between 96-98%, while public four-year institutions offered those same areas of study at significantly lower rates: 49% in reading, 67% in writing, and 78% in mathematics (National Center for Education Statistics, 2004).

Not only is the community college where the most developmental education courses are offered, but many postsecondary enrollees and their advocates perceive and/or understand two-year community colleges to be primary purveyors of these

courses, since the courses are technically pre-collegiate and not expected to be offered at four-year institutions with competitive enrollment policies. Cohen and Brawer (2003) provide a prime example of the rhetoric that influences this perception when they relate that “The community college’s ...concern is with the people most in need of their assistance” (p. 398). The history and mission of the community college is synonymous with higher education opportunity, especially for students least prepared for a college education, and public perception reflects this.

In the mid-1800s, many of the nation’s universities intent on pursuing research missions relegated the lower division courses typically taught to freshmen and sophomores to a new invention dubbed the “junior college,” which would offer the first two years of a baccalaureate degree (Cohen and Brawer, 2003; Rudolph, 1962; Warren, 1998). Since then, those institutions more commonly referred to today as community colleges have been associated with offering predominantly lower-level college and developmental courses, to reflect their comprehensive offerings to the region. Community colleges naturally assumed a large part of the responsibility of providing remedial opportunities to hopeful college students not prepared to enter college-level courses. It follows that students with cognitive disabilities would seek enrollment at a community college where likely they would find offerings tailored to meet their academic needs.

Social Benefits

Some students with SCDs appear to enroll at community colleges primarily to reap the social benefits of being around peers their age in a collegiate environment. Much research on students with SCDs hails the therapeutic benefits these students receive

simply because they are in the presence of non-disabled college students and are able to communicate with others, so much so that the purpose for these students being on college campuses is not in the least veiled by their advocates (Grigal, Neubert, and Moon, 2001; Grigal, Neubert, and Moon, 2002; Hall, Kleinert and Kearns, 2000; Smith and Puccini, 1995). Neubert, Moon and Grigal (2002) state that the “community college is the first post-secondary experience for many students exiting high school and (it) provides a natural setting for integrated experiences with students ages 18-21 without disabilities (p. 4). ...Students...have many casual opportunities for social interaction by hanging out at student centers, using the library, and attending athletic, cultural, and other college-sponsored events” (p. 5).

There is evidence that advocates for students with SCDs continue to push for greater inclusion on college campuses in part because college enrollment is seen as such an important social benchmark to reach in the lives of American youth (Aronauer, 2005; The Consortium for Postsecondary Education for Individuals with Developmental Disabilities, 2009; Grigal, Neubert and Moon, 2002; Lee, 2009; Neubert, Moon and Grigal, 2002; Neubert, Moon, Grigal and Redd, 2001; Smith, 2007; Trainor, 2008). Some contend that those with significant disabilities should be included in college campus life to primarily meet their age appropriate social needs (Grigal, Neubert and Moon, 2002; Neubert, Moon and Grigal, 2002). Some even propose that students with significant disabilities might be beneficial resources to college campuses because more academically capable students in medical fields, speech, occupational and physical therapy, etc. “need experiences, both formal and informal, with students who have disabilities” (Neubert, Moon, and Grigal, 2002, p. 4).

Among the stated goals by those who seek to increase inclusion of students with significant disabilities in postsecondary college settings have been to help them obtain full or part-time employment, to increase their mobility in the community, to help them improve social and communication skills, to help them develop friendships with those of similar ages, and to help them develop age-appropriate leisure pursuits (Grigal, Neubert and Moon, 2002). Grigal, Neubert and Moon (2002) hope that students with significant disabilities, including those with SCDs, will be integrated and accepted on college campuses.

Retention of a Supportive Home Environment

Students with disabilities often have greater than average difficulty managing a number of life changes that college enrollment concurrently introduces, such as an increased intensity and amount of academic work, greater need for effective time management, less contact with teachers and students, changes in social network, changes in living environment, and an overall greater requirement of independent thought and action. Students with disabilities are also more likely than students without disabilities to receive parental guidance in many areas of their lives (Destefano, Heck, Hasazi and Furney, 1999; Mellard and Hazel, 2005; Trainor, 2008; Wandry and Pleet, 2003). Students who attend community colleges and continue living at home stand to benefit from reducing the number of important life changes they might otherwise have to manage independently. Some specific benefits students with disabilities may accrue by maintaining their pre-college living arrangement, as opposed to attending a residential college or university, include greater access to transportation provided by a pre-existing network of family and friends; no room and board fees; laundry and food service; live-in

academic assistance from family members; and access to family members who can aid with managing complex paperwork and decisions related to maintaining college enrollment.

Research shows that students with disabilities are more likely to struggle with the “required social competencies” (Mellard and Hazel, 2005, p. 5) demanded of those who leave home for college. Other researchers cite nonacademic factors as negatively impacting successful transition to postsecondary education settings for students with disabilities, such as struggling independently with problem-solving, organization, prioritizing tasks, time management, self-regulation, self-empowerment, and persistence, among others (DuChossois and Michaels, 1994; Gartin, Rumrill and Serebreni, 1996; Hong, Ivy, Gonzalez and Ehrensberger, 2007; Mellard and Hazel, 1992; Putnam, 1984; Osgood-Smith, 1992). Living at home allows many students with disabilities daily access to family members who often help manage the multiple and complex demands that college students without SCDs usually handle much more independently.

The Opportunity to Develop and Exercise Self-Determination

In the view of many, community college campuses present an ideal environment for the postsecondary student with SCDs to further develop important skills of self-determination, “the right and capacity of individuals to exert control over and direct their lives” (Wehmeyer, 2004, p. 23). Implicit in discussion of self-determination are skills such as “self-regulation, self-knowledge, self-reflection, problem solving, goal setting, self-monitoring, and decision making” (Marks, 2008, p. 55). Zhang (2005) notes that “Self-determination has been appropriated by disability rights advocates and people with disabilities to refer to their ‘rights’ to have control over their lives” (p. 155). Summarily,

self-determination represents the combined resources of resiliency and skills that enable individuals to advocate for themselves throughout their lives and in a variety of settings.

Research suggests a positive relationship between both self-determination and improved quality of life and greater academic and non-school success experienced by students with disabilities who have enhanced self-determination skills (Bartlett, Etscheidt, and Weisenstein, 2007; Carter, Lane, Pierson and Stang, 2008; Jameson, 2007; Lachappelle et al., 2005; Marks, 2008; Nota, Ferrari, Soresi, and Wehmeyer, 2007; Wehmeyer and Schwartz, 1997; Wehmeyer, 2004; Zhang, 2005). Advocates for college students with disabilities, and especially those with more significant disabilities, believe that access to a college campus environment can help those students flourish in part by developing their self-determination skills and ultimately aiding those students in reaching their potential in a number of important life areas. Quick, Lehmann and Deniston (2003) note that access to community colleges is critical for students with disabilities because of the increased opportunity for students to become more like their peers without disabilities in terms of securing employment, gaining financial independence, and achieving equality.

The self-determination movement, particularly in K-12 special education, has been building steadily for approximately the last fifteen years, beginning with the 1992 amendments to Section 504 in the Rehabilitation Act (Wehmeyer, 2004) and continuing with the 1997 and 2004 amendments to IDEA (Carter, Lane, Pierson, and Stang, 2008; Eisenman, 2007; Lane and Carter, 2006). The 1992 amendments to the Rehabilitation Act outlined the rights of those with disabilities to exercise self-determination; make choices for themselves, and participate fully in all of society's major activities, including

employment and education (Wehmeyer, 2004). The following were fundamental goals of the 1997 amendments: emphasizing the importance of maintaining high educational expectations for children with disabilities; “strengthening the role of parents and ensuring that families of such children have meaningful opportunities to participate in the education of their children at school and at home” (105th Congress of the U.S.A., 1997, IDEA '97 – P.L. 105-17, Sec. 687, 5B, p. 4); helping children reach their individual potential; and helping students “be prepared to lead productive, independent, adult lives, to the maximum extent possible” (105th Congress of the U.S.A, 1997, IDEA '97 – P.L. 105-17, Sec. 687, 5E, ii, p. 4).

Driving the 2004 amendments to IDEA was this congressional finding:

Disability is a natural part of the human experience and in no way diminishes the right of individuals to participate in or contribute to society. Improving educational results for children with disabilities is an essential element of our national policy of ensuring equality of opportunity, full participation, independent living, and economic self-sufficiency for individuals with disabilities. (108th Congress of the U.S.A., 2004, Part D, Sec. 682, c, 1)

Without question, federal policy has encouraged greater inclusion of people with disabilities in society over time, and laws governing public education settings reflect this ideology. The 1975 Education for all Handicapped Children Act (EAHCA), Public Law 94-142, made history by codifying the right of children with disabilities to receive a free and appropriate education in the LRE, an acronym for *least restrictive environment* (U.S. Department of Education, b). Prior to this legislation, many children with disabilities, especially those with more severe physical and intellectual or SCDs, were not commonly

educated at public schools and were often institutionalized. Even if educated in the same schools as their nondisabled peers, they were not encouraged to interact with them in an LRE but instead were segregated in resource rooms away from their peers without disabilities. Though LRE language was included from the beginning of EAHCA in 1975, actual classroom application evolved markedly over time, and at no time prior in history have we seen students with SCDs more readily accommodated and educated in public schools alongside their non-disabled peers. At the crux of LRE evolution is how advocates for students with disabilities have pushed for more liberal interpretation of the key and malleable phrases *least restrictive* and *appropriate education* over time.

The three following points guide Marks' (2008) thesis that the development of self-determination in students with disabilities is best facilitated when addressed in inclusive settings:

- 1) All people want some level of self-determination in their lives.
- 2) Rich and varied experiences are necessary for promoting self-determination.
- 3) Self-determination is a lifelong process. (p. 56-57)

Recent research shows that the development of self-determination skills in students with disabilities, especially those with SCDs, can be enhanced greatly the more time the student spends in settings that provide varied and continually changing experiences with peers who do not have disabilities (Marks, 2008; Carter, Lane, Pierson, and Stang, 2008). Moreover, research shows that parents and students believe youth with disabilities do not have a lot of opportunities in society to develop self-determination (Grigal, Neubert, Moon and Graham, 2003; Zhang, Wehmeyer and Chen, 2005). From EAHCA's 1975 inception, parental participation in educational planning has been legally

codified to ensure students with disabilities benefit from those lifelong advocates who act with them, on their behalf, and in their best interests. Trainor (2008) points out that “transition to adulthood and the development of self-determination are inextricably intertwined with parent participation in special education service delivery” (p. 155). Such research supports the notion that a community college with an open admissions policy would appeal to parents and other advocates as an ideal setting in which students with more significant disabilities could spend time, with its low tuition rate, wide variety of educational and cultural experiences, and diverse student body of traditional-age college students to serve as peers.

The emphasis on self-determination opportunities by advocates of students with intellectual disabilities have influenced the financial aid provisions found in the 2008 HEOA and the rising efforts by higher education institutions to actively serve this student population. Perhaps most notably, The Consortium for Postsecondary Education for Individuals with Developmental Disabilities, funded by a five-year, \$4 million federal grant from the Administration on Developmental Disabilities and administered by the Institute for Community Inclusion at the University of Massachusetts Boston, was established in 2008. The consortium is partnered with seven other universities that have Centers for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities and the Association for University Centers on Disabilities to serve as “a national resource for knowledge, training and technical assistance, materials, and dissemination about the participation of individuals with developmental disabilities in postsecondary education” (The Consortium for Postsecondary Education for Individuals with Developmental Disabilities, 2009, p. 1, ¶5). A search of a database on the consortium’s website, “think COLLEGE! College Options

for People with Intellectual Disabilities” (The Institute for Community Inclusion, 2009a), reveals the existence of fifty-seven programs at four-year colleges and seventy-six programs at two-year colleges for students with intellectual disabilities, a total of 133 programs nationwide. These programs, between them offered in thirty-six states, are categorized based on how academically integrated on the campus the students are into one of three categories: inclusive, mixed, or substantially separate. The continuing trend, clearly, is to provide more access to higher education for students with intellectual disabilities.

The last section of the literature review, developed *post hoc* as a result of data analysis and which aided in developing a grounded theory, focuses on pertinent motivation literature.

Literature on Motivation Related to the Emerging Themes

A number of motivational theories and concepts, working together, are instrumental in explaining the enrollment choices and behavior of the students in this study: social cognitive theory, achievement motivation theory, self-efficacy, goal theory, task value and rewards, and attribution theory. Additionally, literature pertaining to personality and motivation factors specific to those with intellectual disabilities assists in explaining the enrollment motivations of the students in this study.

Social Cognitive Theory

Human agency refers to action taken or acts committed purposely by people to effect a desired outcome (Bandura, 1997); it refers to the actions people take to make things happen through effort. Bandura (1969, 1977) proposed what he originally called social learning theory, but what is now commonly referred to as social cognitive theory

(Dembo, 1994). At the heart of Bandura's social cognitive theory is the idea of "triadic reciprocal causation" (Bandura, 1986, p. 24) or "reciprocal determinism" (Dembo, 1994, p. 57), which is a model Bandura developed to explain the mutual influence three important sources of information have on a person. Triadic reciprocal causation is simultaneously influenced by behavior (B); internal personal factors (P), such as cognitive, affective and biological occurrences; and the external environment (E) (Bandura, 1986). These three facets of a human's existence influence each other bi-directionally and explain a person's agency choices as shown in *Figure 5*.

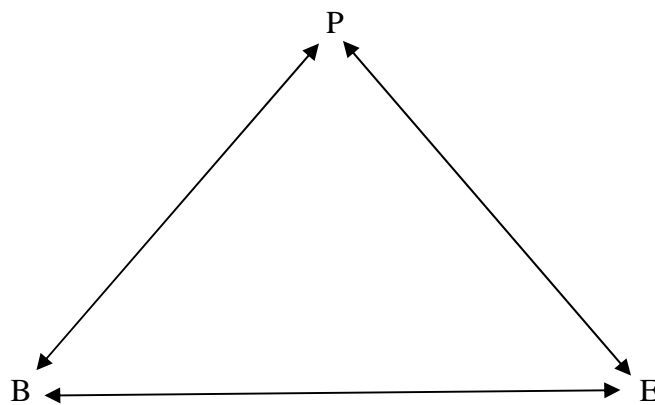


Figure 5. The interrelationship of the three determinants of triadic reciprocal causation.

For example, internal personal factors (P), like personal beliefs, intellectual functioning and biological makeup, influence a person's environment (E), while the environment concurrently influences a person's internal personal factors and behavior (B). Additionally, a person's internal personal factors certainly affect behavior, which in turn affects a person's environment; all the while, behavioral choices result in feedback that affects one's internal personal factors. For example, when a person receives feedback

(E) that they are performing well on a task, their self-efficacy rises (P), which tends to increase the likelihood they will choose to participate again (B). Bandura views triadic reciprocal causation as the driving force of the choices and behavior people make and claims that action is a reflection of desire for control.

Bandura (1986) posits that all of human functioning can be explained by his triadic reciprocal causation model. People's capabilities in the five following areas mediate their experiences with respect to triadic reciprocal causation: their ability to symbolize; their capability of forethought; their capability to learn vicariously; their capability to self-regulate; and their capability to be self-reflective. The ability to effectively utilize symbols, exercise forethought, and learn vicariously are somewhat related in that a person uses models and concepts in the place of concrete experience. Using symbols effectively means ascribing meaning to experiences and using that gained knowledge to take future action. Exercising forethought has to do with internalizing past experiences, learning from them and using them to motivate behavioral changes and choices for greater future gain.

Bandura (1986) classified learning into two forms: vicarious (or observational learning) and enactive learning (or reinforcement through punishments and rewards), both of which are influential features of social cognitive theory. In vicarious learning, the importance of models is impressed. Such observational learning is critical to a person's development because it is not possible for reasons relating to safety, time, and endurance, for example, for an individual to learn everything through personal experience. Through enactive learning, the importance of appropriate feedback is impressed. Persons tend to

reproduce behavior that results in rewards and avoid engaging in behavior that is punished.

Self-regulation and self-reflection are two more influential features of social cognitive theory and figure centrally in this study. Self-regulation refers to the internal mechanism by which one governs the self. Self-regulation manifests in the form of inner dialogue and internal goals and ultimately affects self-directed behavioral choices. Finally, self-reflection accounts for a person's ability to engage in meta-cognitive processes, which Bandura (1986) describes as a characteristic that is "distinctively human" (p. 21). Being able to effectively reflect on the self requires the ability to manage multiple roles, since an individual is not only the person experiencing something in real time, but in the future is the same person who reflects on that past experience and subsequently predicts how the lessons learned can be applied in the future.

Achievement Motivation Theory

Achievement Motivation Theory (Atkinson, 1964) is included in a group of theories "which attribute the strength of a *tendency* to undertake some activity to the cognitive expectation (or belief) that the activity will produce a certain consequence and the attractiveness (or value) of the consequence to the individual" (Atkinson and Feather, 1966, p. 328). Theoretically, a person engages in achievement-oriented activity with an expectation that his/her performance will be measured against a standard and that while success may occur, failure is also a possibility. Motivating the individual, among other external forces, is the constant interplay of the tendency toward a desire to succeed or achieve and the tendency to avoid failure (Atkinson and Feather, 1966), related to both

Skinner's (1953) classical operant condition theory and Bandura's (1986) observation of the effects of vicarious and enactive learning.

Motivation to achieve and the incentive value of success are seen as the two factors determining for each individual how attractive success is for any given activity (Atkinson and Feather, 1966). One can become persuaded to engage in pursuing an achievement-orientation activity, even if his/her orientation toward achievement-motivation tends to be negative, if he/she judges the benefits from engaging in the activity to be very important (Atkinson and Feather, 1966). It has been found, as well, that individuals with unrealistically high levels of aspiration can be persuaded to undertake achievement-oriented activities "to comply with an authority or to gain approval for doing what is expected" (Atkinson and Feather, 1966, p. 336).

A general principal of The Law of Effect (Atkinson, 1965 as cited in Atkinson and Feather, 1966) is that heightening one's aspirations is a typical response to experiencing success, while experiencing failure tends to decrease one's future aspirations. Contradicting this law are some individuals who have very strong achievement-motivation and other unique characteristics which yield a paradoxical response. In one study (Moulton, 1966), for instance, subjects indicating a concern with having their decisions perceived as socially acceptable chose subsequent tasks after success or failure in line with typical responses to The Law of Effect, even though they felt drawn to choose the opposite. The implication is that the unconventional and somewhat illogical choice of selecting difficult tasks after failure may be more likely undertaken by those unconcerned about or even unaware of the perceptions of others. Also, it has been found that achievement-oriented individuals tend to estimate their

probability of success higher than do those who are failure-oriented when virtually no information about probability of success is provided prior to task engagement (Litwin as cited in Atkinson and Feather, 1966).

Self-Efficacy

Self-efficacy refers to beliefs in one's capabilities to learn or perform actions at designated levels. "Beliefs of personal efficacy constitute the key factor of human agency" (Bandura, 1997, p. 3). In short, belief in one's abilities to accomplish a determined outcome lead people to engage in action(s) – or to exhibit agency, to act as a change agent for themselves – for the purpose of achieving the desired outcome. "Among the mechanisms of agency, none is more central or pervasive than beliefs of personal efficacy" (Bandura, 1997, p. 2). Self-beliefs are grounded strongly in past mastery experiences; they are not whimsical, easily changed beliefs (Bandura (1997). The pursuits one chooses to engage in, for example, often have to do with how well and how easily one achieved in the past when engaged in a related activity (Bandura, 1977; Locke and Latham, 1990).

Four sources of information integrate to affect a person's development of self-efficacy: mastery experiences that indicate capability; vicarious experiences through communication of competencies and comparison with achievements by others; verbal persuasion and social feedback that convince someone they possess certain capabilities; and physical and emotional states from which people partly judge their capabilities (Bandura, 1997). The first three information sources are environmental in nature, as determined by application of Bandura's triadic reciprocal causation model. Feedback from mastery experiences comes from a objective standard against which a person's

performance is judged. Succeeding against a fixed standard of measurement informs a person of their capability of performing at least at that level on that activity. Witnessing successful models and comparing oneself to different kinds of models provides a rich source of information by which individuals can judge their abilities. Finally, environmental feedback in the way of praise and encouragement by others serves to enhance the self-efficacy of the person who is the target of such support.

Self-efficacy is a judgment made by self about one's abilities, which may or may not be aligned with the reality of one's actual abilities or efficaciousness. Regardless of the veracity of these beliefs, they do represent a person's perception of reality. Misjudgment of self-efficacy can be caused by many things, such as judging one's abilities to be on par with a far more or far less competent model or overestimating or underestimating one's abilities due to receiving persuasive messages about one's abilities, for example. The two previous causes of misalignment are demonstrated by the following examples: 1. a 5-year-old child mistakenly believes he can safely operate a motor vehicle because he has witnessed his 16-year-old brother do so and believes they have the same capabilities because they are brothers; and 2. the same five-year-old child wholeheartedly believes he can be anything he wants to be when he grows up because his parents have repeatedly told him it is so, though they do so without taking into account any number of variables that likely make their statement untrue, since it is unlikely the child will grow up to possess the skills and abilities required to become literally anything he wants to become.

Bandura (1997) identifies several causes of disparity between efficacy beliefs and action, but the most applicable to the students in this study is what he refers to generally

as “faulty self-knowledge” (p. 70). Faulty self-knowledge can stem from a variety of sources, but two have particular bearing on this study: 1. error in selecting similar models, and 2. possessing personal factors (for example, a cognitive disability) that distort one’s ability to self-appraise accurately. Weiner (1989) also suggests that misuse of information or “ignorance” (p. 297), among other causes, can be a source of error in judging self-efficacy. While deleterious effects can result from undervaluing one’s efficacy, overvaluing one’s efficacy obviously also can have serious consequences. Of particular note, Bandura (1997) points to the quality of a person’s performance being judged subjectively as opposed to using objective criteria as contributing to the problem of accurately judging efficacy. Poor judgments of causation can stem from at least two sources of error: an individual harboring a predisposition toward an expected outcome and an individual not using all information available to them (Weiner, 1989).

Bandura (1997) makes a distinction between what he calls “resolute strivers” and “wistful dreamers” (p. 74), describing the resolute strivers as those who believe so much in themselves that they will go through great trials and persist in the face of great opposition to achieve their end goals. Resolute strivers, unlike wistful dreamers, maintain objective realism while simultaneously remaining optimistic. They are not delusional about the difficult odds they face on the road to success; they simply “believe they have what it takes to beat those odds” (Bandura, 1997, p. 75). Bandura makes a further distinction by describing those who hold “illusory judgments” (p. 77), or false ideas, and those who hold a strong commitment to a goal despite there being a low probability of success. People may be judged to be acting on illusions “when their self-beliefs remain adamantly unresponsive to massive disconfirming evidence” (Bandura, 1997, p. 78).

Sometimes, Bandura observes, lofty pursuits require an enormous amount of “time, effort, and resources that offer better prospects of benefit when applied to more realistic endeavors” (p. 77). About the negative results of maintaining unreachable goals, Bandura says this: “It is widely believed that misjudgment produces dysfunction. ... To act persistently on a belief that one can exercise control over events that are, in fact, uncontrollable is to tilt at windmills” (p. 71).

Academic Self-Efficacy

“Perceived academic self-efficacy is defined as personal judgments of one’s capabilities to organize and execute courses of action to attain designated types of educational performances” (Zimmerman, 1995, p. 203). Zimmerman identified the necessary co-presence of the following critical components influencing academic achievement motivation: students must believe that the means by which they plan to achieve are effective, that they possess those means, and that they have control over the end-result. Research (in Schunk, Pintrich and Meece, 2008) shows that younger children tend to have overly optimistic perceptions of their academic competence and that their overestimation of efficacy tempers over time, due perhaps to the acquisition of important information-processing skills and perspective for social comparisons. Another theory that explains the reduction of self-efficacy overestimation over time suggests that the changing environments throughout one’s school experience (from an elementary structure to a middle school, or from one teacher to multiple teachers, for example) may allow older children to more accurately judge their abilities through triangulating their experiences from a variety of contexts. Another change in environment as students age is the movement of teachers from mastery grading practices to more normative assessments,

which may reveal more accurately to students their abilities through tracking and placement with peers who exhibit similar abilities (Schunk, Pintrich and Meece, 2008).

Social Comparison and Self-Efficacy

Powerful information about one's capabilities is communicated by means of social comparison. Research shows that people's perceived self-efficacy is strongly influenced by social comparisons, which is "especially true in educational contexts where academic performances are subjected to a great deal of modeling and comparative evaluation" (Zimmerman, 1995, p. 206). Feedback that conveys competence not only has been shown to increase self-efficacy beliefs but also to increase the value assigned to that activity by the individual (Zimmerman, 1995). Persuasive messages from trusted sources, like teachers, counselors, and/or parents/guardians, that communicate belief that the student can learn leaves the student feeling efficacious (Schunk, Pintrich and Meece, 2008). Furthermore, observing positive consequences received by others or a model can provide vicarious reinforcement, which can lead the observer to engage in behavioral matching (Bandura, 1986; Dembo, 1994; Schunk, Pintrich and Meece, 2008).

Ford (as cited in Pintrich and Schunk, 1996) put forward several principles in his Motivational Systems Theory that are applicable to this study. Two of his seventeen principles are particularly useful here: The Feedback Principle and The Principle of Direct Evidence. "The Feedback Principle" emphasizes how important "relevant feedback is...for continued progress toward a goal. Feedback provides information that can be used to judge progress, repair mistakes, and redirect efforts" (p. 230). Ford's Principle of Direct Evidence encourages academic feedback to be honest and focused on building esteem through real academic gains and not an empty exercise of self-esteem

building that obfuscates the reality of a student's academic abilities. Pintrich and Schunk (1996) note how important this principle is "given the current interest in school programs to increase general self esteem" (p. 231).

Social comparison tends to be a fallback method of self-assessment when operating in an environment where standards for performance are unclear or nonexistent (Schunk, Pintrich and Meece, 2008), and is thus of particular import to this study. Locke and Latham (as cited in Pintrich and Schunk, 1996) reinforce this by stating that when goals are not present or assigned, "individuals often interpret this as a do-your-best situation" (p. 216). Bandura (1986) notes that persons who set high goals but operate in an environment without good performance feedback tend to have a strong self-perception of efficacy to attain their goal, and their efforts are further heightened by that ungrounded belief of efficacy. "Self-motivation through internal standards and perceived self-efficacy operate as interrelated...mechanisms of personal agency" (Bandura, 1986, p. 470). Veroff (as cited in Pintrich and Schunk, 1996) found that adults regularly rely on social comparison to self-evaluate, but that "higher levels of cognitive development and experience" (p. 185) are required to effectively make those complex comparisons.

Goal Theory

Locke and Latham's model (1990) posits that goal choice and commitment are contingent upon self-efficacy and how much value the individual places on achieving the goal. Setting goals and working toward them is correlated with task engagement and greater achievement. Pintrich and Schunk (1996) impart about Locke and Latham's goal theory the following: "Self-efficacy is one of the most important positive influences on personal goal setting. People who have higher efficacy set higher goals for themselves"

(p. 212). Achieving goals or even making progress toward more difficult goals positively impacts self-efficacy because individuals receive feedback that affirms their ability to achieve (Schunk, Pintrich and Meece, 2008). Locke and Latham (1990) identify goal choice and goal commitment as the two critical components of their goal setting theory. Goal choice reflects what goal has been selected and the performance level an individual is trying to attain while goal commitment refers to how strongly or determined an individual is to achieve that goal. Behavior and action reveal goal commitment (Schunk, Pintrich and Meece, 2008). Goal commitment is also stronger when self-efficacy is high; in other words, believing one can achieve a goal leads one to commit to that goal even more strongly. Two findings related to goals that are particularly important to this study follow. First, multiple people can adopt the same goal but also have varying motivations for adopting that goal. Second, self-determination in general, discussed earlier in regard to why students with disabilities elect to attend college, is derived from an intrinsic motivation to act willfully and utilize one's personal agency in their environment.

Level of aspiration is "defined as the level of future performance in a familiar task which an individual, knowing his level of past performance in that task, explicitly undertakes to reach" (Frank as cited in Locke and Latham, 1990, p. 110). Success and failure is not just determined by absolute performance compared to a set goal, but also by an individual's global perception of their progress. Lewin (as cited in Locke and Latham, 1990) refers to the level of aspiration an individual actually tries to reach as the "action goal" (p. 110) and views that minimum or "expected to get" goals are in reality a person's action goals or what drives them – not "ideal" or "hoped for goals" (Locke and Latham, 1990, p. 110). In other words, highly ideal goals serve motivational purposes,

but an inability to achieve those lofty goals is not necessarily mutually exclusive with success in the judgment of the goal setter.

Persistence and Self-Efficacy

Self-efficacy greatly affects persistence. Believing one can do something can raise and uphold motivation alone (Bandura, 1997; Bandura, 1986). “The stronger the sense of personal efficacy...the greater the perseverance” (Bandura, 1997, p. 43). Those who believe they can accomplish a task will be more highly engaged, work harder and longer, and persist when they encounter obstacles compared to those who do not strongly believe they are capable of completing the same task (Schunk, Pintrich and Meece, 2008; Zimmerman, 1995). Bandura (1997) noted that “when difficult accomplishments can produce substantial personal or social benefits...individuals have to decide...whether to invest their efforts...and how much hardship they are willing to endure in pursuits strewn with obstacles and uncertainties” (p. 71). Bandura even found that people who are greatly committed to a goal or outcome will even discredit people and information that conflict with their positive self-appraisal. Persistence in the face of adversity is highly linked to the value placed on attaining the determined goal.

Goal commitment is “the resolve to pursue a course of action that will lead to selected outcomes or performance attainments” (Bandura, 1986, p. 477). Commitment is affected by how much the goal setter values the activity and their perceived self-efficacy for attaining the goal, among other factors. Simply put, “goal commitments that facilitate realization of desired futures are not difficult to enlist” (Bandura, 1986, p. 477).

Task Value and Rewards

Task value generally refers to the perceived importance of a task to an individual, which affects engagement. The more the task is valued, the more an individual is likely to commit energy to the task. Task value is made up of four components: attainment value, intrinsic interest value, extrinsic interest value, and cost (Schunk, Pintrich and Meece, 2008). Attainment value was originally defined by Battle (as cited in Pintrich and Schunk, 1996) as “the importance to the individual of achievement in a given task” (p. 291). Pintrich and Schunk (1996) abridge the concept of attainment value when they refer to it as “importance” and define it as “the importance of doing well on a task” (p. 293). Intrinsic interest value is the second component of task value and it refers to the personal interest and enjoyment one attaches to engaging in a particular task. Third, extrinsic utility value – how useful achieving on a task is to an individual’s future goals – drives engagement and commitment to a task. Finally, cost is a consideration when judging task value. Individuals demonstrate their value of a task, especially when the toll on their available resources (time, money, energy, etc.) is expensive. The corollary to this is that a person who does not believe in the value of a task is unlikely to invest their limited resources engaging in the task or will limit their investment so that it does not negatively affect their ability to invest their energy in more worthwhile pursuits.

At the heart of Skinner’s operant conditioning theory (1953) is his stimulus/response/consequence model, which essentially posits that “rewarding...the consequences of behavior influences the likelihood of future occurrence of the behavior” (Pintrich and Schunk, 1996, p. 340). Bandura rejected Skinner’s theory by stating that the reward itself was not important but rather the *expectation* of the reward given upon

exhibiting certain behavior (Pintrich and Schunk, 1996). It is this belief combined with the perceived value of the reward that motivates individuals to engage in behavior linked to receiving a valued reward. Rewards can serve another important motivational function by signifying progress and efficacy in a particular domain.

Attribution Theory

Weiner is best known for his contributions to the development of Attribution Theory (1986), extending Rotter's earlier work (1982), which aims to explain how individuals ascribe causation to outcomes. Weiner (1986) considers the "desire for mastery and functional search" (p. 3) to be a universally human endeavor, ever-present in history, which is very similar to Bandura's (1997) human agency concept in triadic reciprocal causation. According to Weiner, humans naturally analyze their performances or outcomes to identify causation, which ideally lead to adaptations that increase the likelihood of future success. A critical consideration regarding attribution theory is that individuals ascribe their outcomes based on their perceptions of reality, which is referred to as "perceived causality" (Weiner, 1986, p. 43). Perception of the cause of an outcome is fundamental to Attribution Theory, and it offers one explanation for why individuals often react differently to the same outcome.

Perceived causation is derived through a three-faceted paradigm comprised of locus, stability and controllability (Weiner, 1986). *Locus*, Latin for "place," refers to where the individual perceives control of an outcome to lie – either under the control of the individual, resulting in an internal locus of causality, or outside the individual, resulting in an external locus of causality. For example, an individual attempting to increase his or her athletic performance through practice (effort) would indicate that the

individual is ascribing at least some internal causality to a future performance or outcome. However, an individual choosing not to practice throwing dice (an exercise in luck or chance) in an attempt to increase success indicates ascription of external causality. The stability dimension dictates an individual's attribution of an outcome based on how stable or unstable certain features affecting a performance are, such as the person's aptitude (a relatively fixed or stable internal trait, suggesting an inherent capacity) or chance, an unstable factor that is certainly external in source. Finally, controllability refers to the perception of an individual of their ability to control factors affecting performance.

Perceived causality for an outcome greatly impacts "expectancy-for-success beliefs" (Pintrich and Schunk, 1996, p. 135). If an individual attributes a successful experience to internal and stable causes, such as possessing the requisite aptitude to succeed on a task and giving enough effort, then he or she reasonably could expect to succeed again in the future on a task requiring those characteristics. Individuals who experience failure may be able to effect a different outcome in the future if they correctly attribute the outcome to an internal cause of failure to prepare (controllable effort), for instance, provided they possess the ability to succeed and properly prepare in the future. When an individual correctly attributes his or her failure at a task to stable but uncontrollable causes, such as possessing low aptitude (a fixed factor not alterable by through effort or practice), their expectations for future success reasonably would be expected to be low.

Of the three types of beliefs found to influence a person's perceived control in any given setting – strategy beliefs, capacity beliefs, and control beliefs (Skinner, Wellborn,

and Connell, 1990 as cited in Pintrich and Schunk, 1996), control beliefs are of particular interest to this study. (Capacity or ability beliefs are important as well but are closely related to self-efficacy, which was discussed earlier at length.) Control beliefs are those that a person possesses about his or her ability to effect an outcome if they want to. Control beliefs greatly affect intrinsic motivation. In an educational setting, “control beliefs are expectations about an individual’s likelihood of doing well in school without reference to specific means” (Pintrich and Schunk, 1996, p. 271).

Personality Factors and Motivations of Persons with Intellectual Disabilities.

Some personality factors and motivations are found to be specific to individuals with intellectual disabilities and are relevant to this study. Hickson and Khemka (2001) report existing studies “do suggest several serious shortcomings in the decision making of people with mental retardation” (p. 222-223): frequent failure to systematically or logically make decisions, instead drawing heavily on past experience and applying lessons learned and strategies uniformly to new situations; frequent inability to fully grasp all factors involved in a decision; failure to predict the consequences of their decisions and frequent selection of inappropriate courses of action. Research on persons with intellectual disabilities, even in those that possess relatively higher cognitive and strategic abilities, shows certain patterns in poor decision-making, such as “a failure to initiate action, a rigid reliance on past experience, and overreliance on others in the decision-making situation” (Hickson and Khemka, 2001, p. 211).

Motivation Characteristics Specific to Persons with Intellectual Disabilities

Hickson and Khemka (2001) note that the observed discrepancy between real self-image and ideal self-image may motivate persons with intellectual disabilities to

formulate goals and strive to achieve them. When any success occurs and self-image discrepancy is reduced, persons with intellectual disabilities may be more inclined to set even higher goals to further reduce the discrepancy. According to the developmental theories of Glick (as cited in Switzky, 2001) and Glick and Zigler (as cited in Switzky, 2001), acknowledgement of the discrepancy between real self-image and ideal self-image increases relative to a person's level of cognitive development; in short, those with higher cognition are more aware of the existing discrepancy. Further, persons higher on the cognitive spectrum of those with intellectual disabilities have a higher capacity to recognize social demands and values, which frequently leads to increased guilt over the inability to measure up to peers (Switzky, 2001). Research has confirmed that children with intellectual disabilities hold lower ideal self-images and lower self-images because of a history of failure and low expectancy of success (Switzky, 2001). A common observation in those with intellectual disabilities is "low expectancy for success" (Hickson and Khemka, 2001, p. 217), which is reflected in failure avoidance as opposed to an achievement motivation orientation (Cromwell, 1963; Bennett-Gates and Kreitler, 1999, both as cited in Hickson and Khemka, 2001).

External Locus of Control and Persons with Intellectual Disabilities

Several studies (e.g. Wehmeyer, 1993, Wehmeyer and Kelchner, 1994; Wehmeyer and Palmer, 1997) indicate that persons with intellectual disabilities tend to maintain an external locus of control. An internal locus of control, which tends to develop more in those without intellectual disabilities as they mature, is associated with higher self-esteem, higher self-concept, and lower anxiety (Wehmeyer, 1994 as cited in Hickson and Khemka, 2001). Wehmeyer and Palmer (1997 as cited in Hickson and Khemka,

2001) report three possible reasons for the tendency toward external locus of control in persons with intellectual disabilities: learned helplessness/dependency fostered by non-integrated settings and overreliance on adults; history of failure attributed to external causes; and a tendency of those with intellectual disabilities to not fully understanding the constructs and implications of effort, luck, and ability.

Other Motivational Implications for Persons with Intellectual Disabilities

Persons with intellectual disabilities tend to rely on other models and imitate them, especially in unfamiliar situations due perhaps to a history of failed independent problem-solving, as suggested by Turnure and Zigler (as cited in Hickson and Khemka, 2001). Zigler and Hodapp (as cited in Hickson and Khemka, 2001) also suggest that those with intellectual disabilities may be more interested in continuing contact with those they imitate than with the task they are engaged in through imitation. Supportive environments that encourage independence and self-determination are more likely to foster positive attitudes of personal agency and decision-making. Persons with intellectual disabilities are much more likely to be “task-extrinsic” (Hickson and Khemka, 2001, p. 218) than those without intellectual disabilities. The work of Switzky and Haywood (as cited in Hickson and Khemka, 2001) suggests that persons with intellectual disabilities are more likely to be motivated to engage in activities by external rewards, safety, comfort and to avoid failure. Challenge, responsibility, creativity, learning opportunities and achievement are all associated with being motives for engaging in tasks by those who do so for task-intrinsic reasons.

Summary

The review of the literature covered four major areas: disability law pertinent to higher education settings; the evolution of open door enrollment policy in the community college; enrollment motivations of college students, community college students, and students with disabilities in community colleges; and pertinent motivation literature related to the emergent themes. This review demonstrates the need for further exploration of the college enrollment and re-enrollment motivations of students with SCDs by revealing this to be an area that has received little to no research attention. Next, Chapter 3, Methodology, describes how this study was conducted and how its design contributes to this exploration.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

This study heavily utilized qualitative methods and was conducted in three stages, since some elements of participant selection and data collection were necessarily sequential. I sought in Phase I to learn more about what motivates some students with SCDs to repeatedly re-enroll in developmental reading courses when they are judged by their instructors and/or Access counselors to be unlikely to exit the developmental sequence. Additionally considered were students with SCDs who attended STLCC prior to the 2005 reading requirement, but who are not making appreciable progress in the developmental or college-level curriculum yet continue to re-enroll in those courses. I interviewed students in Phase I who fit the previously described criteria. In Phase II, by surveying the Phase I students' parents, I aimed to learn about what goals they had for their child's enrollment at STLCC and how they influenced the student's initial enrollment and/or influence their continuing enrollment. Finally, in Phase III, full-time developmental reading faculty and Access counselors evaluated and judged the veracity of the findings from Phases I and II and offered additional enrollment motivations they believe exist but were not reported by students and parents. Faculty and Access personnel also were asked for their opinions on a range of possible institutional responses to the population and were encouraged to suggest other potentially effective options not presented.

Theoretical Framework

Although studies exist that investigate the enrollment motivations and aspirations of students with and without disabilities in postsecondary education settings, those of students with SCDs are unaddressed. I theorize there are several possible reasons why

these studies have not been conducted. First, most baccalaureate-granting institutions require demonstration of academic aptitude, usually measured in part by submission of an adequate ACT or SAT score, which arguably demonstrates the possession of ability by the student to benefit from college-level courses. Students admitted to institutions with at least minimally competitive enrollment policies to pursue baccalaureate degrees generally possess average or above average cognitive ability. It can be presumed then that students who do not possess the cognitive ability to succeed in college-level courses, in part indicated by low ACT or SAT scores, are not admitted. As a result, studies cannot be conducted on students with SCDs in baccalaureate-granting institutions because such students are presumed not to be enrolled there.

Secondly, perhaps due to limited time and money, researchers may choose to focus their research on the college students with disabilities who have a greater chance to persist and succeed in college, since those students are more likely to benefit from their study's findings. Evidence of this is that almost all existing studies concerning students with disabilities in higher education settings center on students with learning, psychiatric, and/or physical disabilities, but who demonstrably possess the requisite intellectual ability to benefit from and succeed in college-level courses.

Another highly plausible explanation for the dearth of research on this population is that students with SCDs enroll almost exclusively at community colleges, yet the preponderance of research is conducted by four-year college and university investigators. Community college faculty members and administrators are sometimes even unaware that students with SCDs seek and are granted enrollment at their own institutions. It would stand to reason that most researchers at four-year colleges and universities with

competitive enrollment policies are unaware that open door community colleges enroll students with SCDs. Since community college faculty do not routinely conduct research, and university faculty are unaware of these students, they go unexamined.

In absence of existing research directly related to the inquiry about the enrollment motivations of students with significant cognitive disabilities, the following related areas of research influenced interpretation of Phase I and Phase II data: college choice (e.g. Hossler and Gallagher, 1987; Paulsen, 1990); parental influence on college choice (e.g. Cabrera and La Nasa, 2000 and 2001); community college choice theory (e.g. Somers et al., 2006; Smith and Bers, 1989; Bers, 2005); self-determination and students with disabilities (e.g. Marks, 2008; Wehmeyer, 2004; Zhang, 2005); postsecondary transition literature regarding students with disabilities (e.g. Lane and Carter, 2006; Mellard and Hazel, 2005); and motivation theory (e.g. Bandura, 1986; Schunk, Pintrich and Meece, 2008). I was not confident that any of these theoretical frameworks individually or in combination would sufficiently support this study, so I employed an approach using constant comparative analysis (Strauss and Corbin, 1998) to arrive at a grounded theory supported by themes induced from the analysis.

Setting and Participants

This study was conducted at St. Louis Community College in St. Louis, Missouri. In 1962, St. Louis county and city residents voted to establish a junior college district (JCD). The first president of the JCD of St. Louis, Joseph P. Cosand, oversaw the then-unprecedented simultaneous construction of three college campuses in urban and suburban settings: Florissant Valley, Forest Park, and Meramec (JCD, 1971). In 2007, STLCC opened a fourth campus, Wildwood, providing greater access to STLCC for

residents of the western-most section of STLCC's service area and beyond. STLCC's service area extends over 700 square miles, which encompasses St. Louis City, St. Louis County, and parts of two surrounding counties. Frequently, students living beyond the college's service area either commute or move into the service area, even though other community colleges are closer to their homes, due to the college's reputation for offering affordable, quality instruction and a wide array of courses and programs.

The following descriptive information about STLCC was accessed from the "STLCC – Quick Facts" webpage (St. Louis Community College, 2009b). By enrollment numbers, STLCC is the largest community college system in the state of Missouri. Through credit, continuing education and workforce development, over 100,000 students are served annually at the college. Around 25,000 credit students access STLCC each semester. Approximately 1,800 students transfer annually to public and private four-year institutions, and Missouri's four-year colleges and universities accept more transfer students from STLCC than they do from any other college in the state. STLCC offers fifteen college-transfer options; over 100 career programs; associates degrees in art, science, fine arts, applied science, and teaching; certificates of proficiency, specialization, and general education; and extensive offerings in continuing education and workforce development.

The median age of students at STLCC is twenty-three. Over 60% of the students are women; 56% of STLCC students are Caucasian, and 30% African-American. Sixty-nine percent of STLCC students live in the county while 20% live in the city. Part-time students make up 58% of the student population, leaving 42% registered full-time. New immigrants and international students enroll from over 80 different countries.

STLCC's 2008 fiscal operating budget was approximately \$160 million. In-district tuition is \$83/credit hour and out-of-district is \$123/credit hour. Out-of-state students pay \$158/credit hour and international students pay a rate of \$168/credit hour.

Phase I – The Students

To be considered for inclusion in the study, most student participants had to have first repeated a developmental reading course at the college. Full-time reading faculty identified repeating students they believed were unlikely to establish reading proficiency in the future as measured by successfully exiting the developmental reading sequence. To ensure a degree of uniformity in nominating students and to lend objectivity to the judgment, faculty utilized a rubric (see Appendix A, p. 308) when determining student eligibility for the study. Other students allowed to be considered for the study were those “grandfathered” in by virtue of attendance prior to the Fall 2005 reading requirement, but who either continue to exclusively enroll in developmental coursework or who enroll in coursework without making progress toward a degree. In addition to being able to nominate current developmental reading students, Access personnel were the nominators of the “grandfathered” students as they work extensively with students who have disabilities and are knowledgeable about the enrollment histories of students who have been on campus for an unusually long period of time without reasonable progress. Access counselors also utilized a rubric (see Appendix B, p. 309) to ensure some objectivity and uniformity in their nominations.

Sixteen students were nominated for the study, and I interviewed the six of the seven who responded to my invitation for the study. *Table 3* (p. 115) displays the campus origin and number of nominees, as well as the same for those who were interviewed.

*Table 3**Students nominated and interviewed in the study by campus.*

Campus	Florissant Valley	Forest Park	Meramec	Wildwood
Nominated	5	4	9	0
Interviewed	1	2	3	0

Note. Though some students have enrollment histories at more than one campus, only their association with the campus they most recently attended is recorded here.

No students were nominated or interviewed from the Wildwood campus, which has only been open since 2007. I spoke with that campus' Access counselor and another person who oversees developmental reading at Wildwood in an attempt to understand why students like those in the study population do not appear to enroll at that campus, and several explanations were offered. First, Wildwood is in its infancy in terms of student population growth and course offerings. As such, RDG 016/017 – a course where students sought for this study would likely be enrolled – is not offered currently. Students who arrive at Wildwood and test into RDG 016/017 are automatically referred to any of the other STLCC campuses or centers that offer the class. The Access counselor at Wildwood reported that she could “count on one hand” (personal communication, June 24, 2009) those who tested below RDG 020 since the campus opened, which is due to the comparatively lower overall student population. As a result, fewer developmental sections are needed at Wildwood compared to the other three well-established campuses in the district. For example, only one section of RDG 020 was offered at the Wildwood campus in Fall 2009 as opposed to twenty-two at Forest Park, eighteen at Florissant

Valley, and eleven at Meramec. To illustrate the considerable size difference in the pool of students that developmental courses have to draw enrollment from, headcounts at each campus from Fall 2008 were as follows: Florissant Valley – 6,515; Forest Park – 7,164; Meramec – 10,217 and Wildwood – 1,215 (data provided by STLCC Institutional Research, 2009). Clearly, by virtue of enrolling far fewer students, the odds of Wildwood personnel advising a student who might be considered for the study were statistically much lower than those of the other three campuses.

The reading chairperson at Wildwood shared with me during an informational meeting prior to the study that another possible reason students with SCDs have not yet attended Wildwood is that it currently lacks the traditional college campus culture students experience at the three established campuses. The chairperson hypothesized that students who are heavily motivated to enroll primarily to enjoy a more traditional collegiate campus atmosphere may not choose Wildwood because it does not offer the breadth of student activities and facilities for which the other three campuses are well-known. STLCC's investment of initial resources while Wildwood is getting established has been firmly on offering general education courses and rightly attending to students' academic needs at the expense of developing extracurricular opportunities for students. A survey of each campus' website (St. Louis Community College, 2009, a) revealed the following numbers of formal Campus Life opportunities, largely representing clubs and organizations: Florissant Valley – 28; Forest Park – 34; Meramec - 42; Wildwood – 2. In addition, while the other three campuses sponsor twenty-three intercollegiate athletic teams between them, Wildwood currently sponsors none.

Phase II – The Parents

The six students who agreed to be interviewed for this study had the opportunity to extend an invitation to their parents or guardians to participate in an online or written survey. Only one parent or guardian per each Phase I student was allowed to take the survey. One student interviewed, who lives independently, understandably chose not to invite a parent to participate. Of the five students who lived with their parent(s), three parents returned surveys.

Phase III – Full-time Reading Faculty and Access Counselors

All reading faculty and Access counselors who nominated students for Phase I and participated in a survey for Phase III are full-time STLCC employees, which enhanced the study's strength, because it assured a greater possibility of more frequent and continued contact with these participants for the duration the study. District-wide, ten Access counselors and sixteen reading faculty members were invited to participate by nominating students for Phase I and providing input via the survey in Phase III. These colleagues have a history of cooperative and enthusiastic participation in addressing the needs of all students and especially students with disabilities, and both employee groups regularly work with STLCC students who have SCDs. This increased the odds that the students sought for the study would be accurately identified and that Phase III input would be insightful.

Full-time reading faculty and Access counselors district-wide were invited to participate in Phase III by completing a survey (see Appendix N, p. 346) that asked them to respond both to Phase I and Phase II data and to indicate their assessment of a continuum of possible institutional responses to the student population being studied. All

ten eligible Access counselors completed surveys for a 100% response rate, and fifteen of sixteen eligible full-time reading faculty members returned surveys for a response rate of 93.7%. Only one eligible faculty member did not complete a survey, and that person contacted me to express regret that he or she simply did not have the time to participate. Though I am a full-time reading faculty member at STLCC, I did not participate in the survey. Altogether, ten Access counselors participated and fifteen reading faculty for a total of twenty-five participants in the Phase III survey.

Preparation for Data Collection

Prior to collecting data for the study, I conducted mandatory orientation meetings to the study with all full-time reading faculty and Access counselors on each of STLCC's four campuses for a variety of reasons. To ensure validity, it was critical that members in the student population sought for the study were accurately identified and nominated. I met with Access and faculty groups and individuals until each person expressed comfort with the rubric I provided and indicated they clearly understood how nominated students were to be identified as eligible for the study. I also conducted one-on-one orientations to the study with any individual faculty members or Access personnel who could not be present at their campus' initial meeting.

Understanding that judgments about cognitive abilities introduce the possibility of error in identifying the study population, I impressed upon my colleagues the need to be conservative in their judgments and nominations. Colleagues were instructed not to nominate any students to the study they believed might have even a chance of successfully exiting the developmental reading sequence in the future. I remained available to consult over specific cases throughout the nomination process. Some

colleagues contacted me to ask about including otherwise eligible students who had not repeated yet because it was their first semester of enrollment. I did not allow those students into the study because repeated enrollment behavior – the major criterion for being considered for this study – had not yet occurred. It was telling, though, that some students presented with SCDs so severe that they were quickly and confidently identified by STLCC professionals as belonging to the student population I was interested in interviewing for the study. I consulted with colleagues on a few student cases and provided guidance to help them make a final decision about whether or not to nominate the student. If there was any doubt about ability, I encouraged the nominator to err on the side of caution and refrain from nominating the student for the study. Based on my interactions and experiences with the six students interviewed in this study, I felt confident that the students my colleagues nominated were those sought for the study.

Instrumentation

I designed the student interview questions in Phase I (see Appendix H, p. 319) to serve multiple purposes. Some questions were closed and sought demographic information, which was necessary because of the error that likely would have been introduced by attempting to elicit the information from students with SCDs via a written instrument. Other questions or prompts were open-ended in design, which allowed students to respond more freely. I invited several trusted colleagues familiar with the study's purpose, the student population, and qualitative research techniques to scrutinize the interview questions and to offer suggestions for improvement. I also piloted the Phase I interview instrument with a former student who fits the profile of the students in this study and who functions on the high end of intellectual disability. This mock interview

was very profitable as I was afforded the opportunity to practice and improve my interviewing skills using this study's interview content, and my former student also helped me revise the instrument by making suggestions to improve the clarity of the questions.

The Phase II parent survey (see Appendix L, p. 327) was heavily based on the instrument used in the 1989 Smith and Bers study, which investigated parents and the college choice decisions of community college students, and for which permission was given to use and adapt for this study (see Appendix K, p. 326). Some questions or prompts served as a model for some Phase I interview questions, and data collected on those shared constructs was used to compare the child/parent answers from Phases I and II to observe consonance/dissonance between the two perspectives. Face validity was established on the original Smith and Bers instrument by college professionals through critiques as was accomplished on the final instrument utilized in this study. Both instruments measured the same constructs related to determining parental level of involvement in the college choice process of community college students. Beyond making general suggestions about the instrument for overall improvement and readability, I invited all reading faculty and Access counselors on my campus (Meramec) to evaluate and make suggestions about the lists of enrollment options in questions #13 and #16 (see Appendix L, p. 327). Their suggestions were very helpful in creating a comprehensive instrument that collected the data sought in this study.

Regarding my adaptations of the original Smith and Bers survey (1989), minor changes were made to some questions and options added or deleted to tailor the instrument to the purposes of this study; write-in areas were also added to encourage and allow for

qualitative comments. The resulting Phase III instrument proved to be valuable for what it was intended to accomplish.

Most of the Phase III Reading Faculty/Access Survey (see Appendix N, p. 346) was created from the results of Phase I and Phase II. The six themes generated from Phase I and the six enrollment motivations specific to STLCC that came from Phase I and Phase II analysis were presented to reading faculty and Access personnel in Phase III so that they could pass judgment on their veracity. Additionally, faculty and Access counselors were asked to contribute enrollment motivations they felt existed but were not represented in the Phase I or Phase II data. In order to gather these key college employees' opinions on possible future institutional responses to this student population at STLCC, Faculty and Access personnel were also presented with the continuum of possible institutional responses to the student population, as well as being given the opportunity to add their own ideas about future institutional response. Prior to administration, the survey was reviewed by two STLCC full-time reading faculty members who helped refine presentation to reduce confusion. No faculty members or Access personnel contacted me for clarification about any survey items.

Sampling

To create the best possible fit between the students being interviewed and the questions being asked in the study, purposeful sampling was used, as opposed to a statistical or probability sampling which would be considered representative of a broader population. A purposeful sampling usually employs small sample sizes, even as small as a single case, and the cases are “selected *purposefully* to permit inquiry into and understanding of a phenomenon *in depth*” (Patton, 2002, p. 46). To utilize a purposeful

sampling is to capitalize on the power and logic of its purpose, which is to learn a lot about issues related to the purpose of the research, leading to the term *purposeful* sampling (Patton, 2002).

Purposeful sampling was employed because the student participants in this study are very unique; it is unusual for a student to persist in the face of repeated failure and commit time, money, and other resources again and again while facing a low likelihood of success. Patton (2002) describes this type of purposeful sampling as extreme case sampling, because the “cases...are unusual or special in some way, such as outstanding successes or notable failures” (p. 230-231). While these individual tales of persistence, enrollment motivations, and lifelong goals cannot be considered generalizable to everyone who is a community college course repeater, it is very important for policymakers, administrators and faculty to better understand why students with SCDs at the college persist by seeking to learn what those students and their parents/guardians ultimately hope to achieve through continued enrollment. Indeed, “we are naïve if we think that we can ‘know it all.’ But even a small amount of understanding can make a difference” (Strauss and Corbin, 1998, p. 56).

The interview participants provided a wealth of data, since the primary purpose of the study was to learn more about the motivations of students in this specific subgroup of the college. Because one’s personal motivations and feelings usually can be most accurately identified by the person himself, it was imperative that the students in this study were allowed to speak for themselves. It would be imprudent for faculty members, administrators and other policymakers to presume to know all the motivations and the varying weights assigned to those motivations by the students repeating the courses.

Additionally, because the input of persons with disabilities historically has not always been sought in the development of programs created for them, I was particularly interested in providing these students an opportunity to share their experiences and possibly influence the decisions being made about programs and policies that would affect them and others like them who arrive at the STLCC in the future.

In this study, both students and parents/guardians were considered important participants who could help reveal the reasons why students with a low likelihood of passing developmental reading courses repeatedly re-enroll at STLCC. Furthermore, I felt confident that many reading faculty and Access personnel, through their close interaction over time with these students and sometimes the parents or guardians, would have unique insight into the enrollment motivations of the students. Inviting their opinions on the findings of Phases I and II greatly contributed to and strengthened the study's findings and aided with triangulation of the results.

Recruiting Participants and Encouraging Participation

Several measures were taken to encourage student participation in Phase I while considering the students' best interests. The students sought for interviews likely possessed SCDs and received daily assistance from trusted adults in making important decisions; therefore, I was particularly careful to ensure that students were recruited in a transparent manner. Study invitation letters and informed consent forms were mailed to the students' home addresses for two reasons. First, I wanted to increase the opportunity for students to access any important advocates in their lives when making the final decision to participate or not in the study. Aware of the tendency toward suggestibility of students like those in the study, I took every possible safeguard to invite them to the

study in an ethical manner. I did not want advocates to have any reason to believe they were being bypassed purposely, particularly because of the likely presence of SCDs in the students being sought. Second, I wanted the students to have the informed consent forms in advance so they would have the opportunity to read them with the help of an advocate. I predicted the students may struggle to understand the meaning of the forms, so I took measures to ensure only students were included in the study who understood their rights and to what they were consenting. I felt that if a student lived with an active advocate in his or her life, probably a parent or guardian, it would be likely that a large envelope arriving in the mail from St. Louis Community College might draw the attention of the advocate who could choose to inquire about it and, if necessary, help the student understand the documents and my invitation. Ultimately, I tried to insure that the students were given the best opportunity to make a good decision for themselves while respecting their privacy and encouraging them to utilize any support persons they normally did for important decisions.

Only three students were nominated for the study who did not first volunteer to be included in the study. Though the other thirteen nominated students willingly provided their home addresses to either their STLCC instructor or Access counselor and indicated they wanted to be included in the study, only six contacted me after the formal study invitations were mailed to their homes. It is possible that some of the parent/guardian advocates for these students' may have intervened when the invitations arrived and, perhaps wary about the study's purpose and how interviewing with a college representative might affect the student's opportunities to continue at STLCC, discouraged the previously interested students from participating. To combat the chance that initial

invitations were lost or misplaced, and in attempt to recruit as many students to the study as possible, I mailed a second invitation (see Appendix E, p. 313) to those who did not respond to the first request. Only one student replied to the second mailing and scheduled an interview, but that interview was never conducted due to the student's failure to arrive at either one of our two scheduled appointments.

Faculty and Access counselors used a generic recruitment letter (see Appendix C, p. 310) to assess initial interest of the student(s) they were considering for nomination to the study. All students in a class where a potential nominee attended were given this letter by their instructor and asked to indicate their interest so that it was not apparent that specific students were being sought. Faculty later kept only the letters from the students who indicated interest and were among those the faculty member already was considering for nomination; Access personnel used the letter in one-on-one advising situations. An additional benefit was that this document collected accurate mailing information for later use. This increased the likelihood that students would be reachable in the future, and this also kept the faculty members and Access personnel from having to look up mailing addresses, which would have been time-consuming and perhaps inaccurate in the STLCC record system if changes had not been updated by students. It also served the tertiary purpose of the student effectively giving me permission to use their address to contact them for purposes related to the study.

Finally, in an attempt to encourage and reward participation, interviewed students were informed of and entered into a drawing where two winners of \$50 each were selected at the completion of all student interviews. Many students made unsolicited

comments during their interviews that the opportunity to win money made the choice to participate in the study an easy one for them.

Parents/guardians were invited to participate in the study and share their input via written or online survey. Though gathering this data via personal interviews would have been ideal, I decided against that method for a variety of reasons. First, while meetings could easily be arranged with their child on the STLCC campus they regularly attended, parents/guardians may have had to take off work or come in during the evening or on a weekend to a campus. When I spoke with one mother by chance, I mentioned that her son would be coming home with study information for her to consider, and she explained that she worked. After I indicated that she would be invited to take part in a 20-minute survey, in paper or online, which would qualify her for two \$50 drawings, she seemed interested. Secondly, if parents/guardians were required to come to campus, they would have to navigate a large campus with which they may not be very familiar. Also, coming to campus to speak with me might be very uncomfortable for parents/guardians, particularly because their child has not experienced great academic success. This potentially dreadful feeling can be compared to the one parents/guardians experience when they are called to their child's principal's office. Not only did I want parents/guardians to participate, but I wanted them to feel comfortable doing so and to feel like their interests were being supported in this study and not scrutinized. As previously mentioned, in an attempt to encourage and reward participation, parents were also informed of and entered into a drawing where two winners of \$50 each were selected at the close of the survey.

I carefully designed the survey in a way that the questions asked could have been posed to any STLCC parent/guardian and not just those with children who had SCDs, as

was the reality. Still, even a general survey about community college enrollment motivations may have been enough to send the parents of college students with SCDs into protection mode as only one parent initially filled out the survey. Buoyed by this parent's honest and hearty responses, I decided to mail a second parent information packet to the other four students with parent advocates and ask them again to invite their parents to participate. In the second mailing, I included a handwritten note to each student, thanking him or her for allowing me to interview them and asking them to consider giving the second packet to their parent(s). I hoped by including the handwritten note the parents, if they saw it, would view me more as a person and advocate for their son or daughter as opposed to being a cold cog in an institutional machine. I emphasized again in the note that parents would remain anonymous in the study, that the college was really interested in learning about how it might better meet the needs of all students, and to contact me if they had any questions. Two more parents returned surveys after the second appeal was sent.

Full-time reading faculty and Access personnel at STLCC by all evidence were quite self-motivated to participate in the study overall and the Phase III survey, specifically. Early in the study, as I began working with each campus reading faculty and Access counselors, I created e-mail groups so I could efficiently and accurately contact those to be included in nominating for Phase I and participating in Phase III. I used periodic e-mail messages not only to inform Phase III participants about the study's progress but to encourage their participation in shaping the future of STLCC. I felt welcome on every campus and by every group, and I feel confident the study's purpose was well-received and supported by my colleagues represented in Phase III. Though I did

not feel a monetary reward was necessary to elicit their participation, to show my appreciation for their time, contributions, and overall support of the study, I held drawings where faculty and Access Phase III participants were eligible for two drawings of \$50 each and those who nominated students for Phase I were eligible for two drawings of \$50 each. My colleagues who won the drawings all expressed appreciation and more than one informed me they planned to donate their winnings to the college foundation, another scholarship fund, or to a favorite charity.

Procedures and Data Sources

Approval to conduct this research at STLCC and human subjects approval were secured from STLCC and the University of Missouri – St. Louis, the institution at which I am a graduate student. All nominated students were mailed invitations (see Appendix D, p. 312) and asked to participate in the study. Students were asked at the time of scheduling their interview if they were eighteen years or older, and all students interviewed restated that they were eighteen years or older at the time of the interview. I did not nominate any of my current or former students for the study, but one student interviewed was a former student of mine nominated by two other colleagues. Though I quickly established good rapport with each student, I believe my prior relationship with that student enhanced that interview because the student appeared to have a greater level of trust and comfort with me as opposed to the other students who were being interviewed by a researcher previously unknown to them. I could not predict in advance how many student interviews would occur before no new themes emerged. So, I interviewed as many eligible students as possible until the emergent themes were substantiated.

Most interviews took place in person at the STLCC campus of each student's choosing, except for two interviews, which took place near the homes of those students. With the exceptions just mentioned, interviews were conducted in a private conference room with only the participant and me present. All interviews were recorded with two voice recorders, and these audio recordings were later transcribed into electronic documents for further analysis. To ensure anonymity, all transcripts, notes, and this written report contain pseudonyms for all student names.

I preceded each interview with an explanation in plain language of the main tenets of the informed consent form (see Appendix G, p. 315) and asked students if they had any questions before beginning the interview. Before proceeding, I also required verbal confirmation that the students understood the interviews were voluntary; that questions could be declined while still choosing to continue the interview; that they could discontinue the interview at any time; and that their identities would remain anonymous in any future use of the data. Upon consenting to the interview by signature, students then were interviewed using the questions included in Appendix H (see p. 319). These questions and prompts provided the basic framework for the interviews, and they were designed to elicit answers that spoke to two of the most important concepts driving the study's purpose: to discover the enrollment motivations of students who are unlikely to establish reading proficiency, yet repeatedly re-enroll in developmental reading courses; and to learn about students' future aspirations for their education, employment and lives. In accordance with semi-structured interview protocol (Berg, 2007), I freely asked follow-up questions to help me better understand initial responses or augmented my initial questions when necessary to help the students more easily understand what I was

asking. Because the students' verbal inclination and capability to respond efficiently to the questions varied, I allowed a great deal of latitude for students to digress on related and sometimes seemingly unrelated issues in order to encourage their expression.

Upon completion of the interview, I asked the students to consider inviting a parent and/or guardian to participate in a survey in Phase II. Due to the Family Educational Right to Privacy Act, also known as The Buckley Amendment, college personnel are prohibited from communicating with parents/guardians about their son's or daughter's educational records without written permission from the student if the student is age 18 or older (U.S. Department of Education, 2008), and all students in this study met this criterion. For this reason, it was necessary to ask students to consider inviting parents or guardians to participate in the study rather than contacting the parents/guardians directly.

Administration of the Phase II parent/guardian survey employed a purposeful sample restricted to only the parents or guardians of the students in Phase I. Students interviewed chose whether or not to invite a parent/guardian to participate in the survey, which was made available online and in paper form. Here again, an informed consent form (see Appendix J, p. 322) provided participants with information concerning the voluntary nature of the survey and the anonymous nature of the results.

I intended for the study to serve secondarily as an opportunity for parents/guardians of students with disabilities to participate and share with the college, since some members of this group have been known to experience frustration or disappointment at their diminished role upon their child's enrollment in college. Not only did the study aid in the collection of data important to understanding these students'

enrollment behaviors, but it also gave any parents/guardians whose previous attempts to participate and advocate on behalf of their child have been de-emphasized a chance to be heard.

Students like those in this study attain varying levels of independence as adults, influenced by personal abilities, personal preferences, parental influence, employability, and the ability to take care of themselves and/or run a household. Many persons with SCDs live permanently as adults with their parents, do not operate motor vehicles for reasons sometimes unrelated to physical disabilities, and do not always advocate for themselves in ways that are commensurate with adulthood or that facilitate independence. For these reasons, considering parental/guardian influence on the child's community college choice in this study was particularly sage. I believed the additional opinions and information from the students' parents/guardians would help paint a more detailed picture of the enrollment motivations and goals for the students. In fact, while my interest in this research area initially compelled me to solely question the students, I was prepared to discover that decision-making influence by their parents/guardians indeed may account for as much or even more of the reason these students chose a community college and persist in enrolling despite their lack of success.

Once data were analyzed from Phases I and II, I designed the Phase III survey (see Appendix N, p. 346), which principally represented the Phase I and II findings but also included a range of possible institutional responses to the population, and I asked every full-time faculty of developmental reading at STLCC and all Access counselors to participate in the survey. Those who did participate signed an informed consent form (see Appendix M, p. 342) outlining their participation as voluntary and ensuring their

anonymity in the data they provided. The survey asked them to judge whether what was reported by the students in Phase I and parents in Phase II did or did not align with their perceptions and knowledge about the enrollment motivations of the students in this population and the influence of their parents/guardians. Faculty and Access personnel also had the opportunity to write in enrollment motivations they believe exist but were not offered by the students and/or parents/guardians. Seizing upon the opportunity to invite their input about the future of STLCC, I also asked survey takers to suggest any future institutional responses the college should consider, in addition to collecting their opinions about a selection of prepared institutional responses.

My instincts told me that students may express enrollment motivations of one type and be unaware of their parents' differing motivations for advising and supporting their ongoing enrollment at STLCC, which in effect may or may not be shared with me. Collecting data from this additional parental/guardian source, in conjunction with the student interview data, gave me a chance to discover a more complete explanation for why these students repeatedly re-enroll despite making little progress toward establishing reading proficiency. Allowing reading faculty and Access personnel the opportunity to judge the validity of the enrollment motivations offered by students and parents strengthened the power of those findings and served as a means of triangulating the data. Also, Phase III allowed STLCC professionals who work closely with the students (and often their parents/guardians) an opportunity to share what they know and observe about these students' enrollment motivations and perhaps shape the future at STLCC with their recommendations.

Phase I

Qualitative, inductive methods were employed with the student interview data in an attempt to determine course repeaters' enrollment motivations, as well as the goals these students have for the future. A qualitative approach aided in collecting rich detail provided by the students about their enrollment motivations and goals for their education, future employment and life and the parents on their child's college choice. It would have been inappropriate to utilize quantitative methods to investigate the questions put forth in this study, not only because the number of students in this study is so small, but also because I wanted to hear what the participants themselves had to say and to reserve the opportunity to ask follow-up questions for clarification. It also would have been inadvisable to presume that students who had repeatedly failed developmental reading courses and are believed to possess SCDs would successfully navigate a written survey instrument independently and would respond in a manner that would accurately represent their intentions.

A semi-structured interview approach of the students afforded comparison between participants on important issues asked about in the interview, such as enrollment motivations, and educational, employment, and life goals. The semi-structured approach encouraged the natural sharing of personal responses, which is a primary benefit of qualitative research: the flexibility to treat each individual participant and interview as unique (Maxwell, 2005; Strauss, 1987; deMarrais in deMarrais and Lapan, 2004).

Phase II

The Phase II parent/guardian survey also collected some qualitative data, and those strengthened the study's findings because parents provided much-needed

perspective on several important constructs regarding their children and their enrollment motivations.

The parent/guardian Phase II survey allowed me to collect and confirm demographic data about the student participants and their families, as well as to collect important insights about their children's enrollment motivations from the parents' perspectives and to ascertain their involvement in their children's enrollment. There is a marked difference between the parent/guardian population studied by Smith and Bers (1989) and those surveyed in this study. Smith and Bers surveyed over 1,100 households of parents and guardians of community college students who had graduated from high school in 1988 while the number of parents/guardians surveyed in the current study was three. From the outset, this number was expected to be considerably lower than the Smith and Bers general community college population, which appears to have been delimited only by graduation year and institution, because this study evaluated a small and unique cohort of students at STLCC with very specific criteria for qualification. As a result, the statistical analyses performed in the original Smith and Bers study were not performed in this study, and I was limited to reporting frequency data, due to only three parents returning surveys. Ultimately, while the two studies are not identical in design, population studied, or analyses conducted, some of the same variables were assessed, such as social capital, parental expectations, and parental assessment of the student's academic ability.

Phase III

The Phase III survey also collected some qualitative data, which verified the strong opinions expressed by faculty and Access counselors, since it required participants

to use their own words and submit their data independent of one another. The data helped reveal the degree to which members of these two STLCC employee groups know what motivates the enrollment behavior of students with SCDs. The qualitative data collected in Phase III also allowed participants to contribute important suggestions that could influence a future institutional response to the study population.

The Phase III survey yielded much countable data, and data were both disaggregated by STLCC employee group and combined in analysis. Analysis and presentation was limited to reporting frequency data, percentages and cross-tabulations. Such measures allowed interpretation of each group's opinions as well as the overall opinions of the Phase III participants.

Other Data

Throughout all stages of the study, I kept an informal journal that chronologically accounted for virtually every interaction I had with others relating to the study. This collection of factual observations, opinions, reactions, and budding theory served as an invaluable source of data. After every study interaction, I tried to immediately write down what was going on *around the study*, and in the end this provided an accurate accounting of many things factual and served as an informal space to write about the study outside of these chapters. Had I not kept this journal, I believe I would have forgotten many of important occurrences with the passage of time and/or because at the time I deemed some critically significant events to be inconsequential.

Data Analysis

Phase I Data Analysis

My earliest data analysis began during the interviews. As much as I tried to avoid making early judgments and focus solely on student responses and my follow-up questions, there were contributions by students that obviously spoke to the study's purpose and began to reveal student enrollment motivations and life goals. Certain words students used during their interviews, for instance, were identical to or representative of enrollment motivations presented in the Smith and Bers (1989) survey and also therefore present in this study's Phase II survey. My colleagues and I have informally discussed for years the possible enrollment motivations of students who repeatedly fail developmental courses before I conceived of or conducted this study, and some Phase I data reminded me of those earlier conversations with colleagues. Even more exciting was my real-time recognition of some enrollment motivations and life goals shared by students that I had not predicted.

I quickly gained confidence during the first few interviews that some of what I had hoped to learn about was being addressed by the students. I conducted the first three interviews over two days, and naturally began to compare the interviews in my head, which was an early and rudimentary form of constant comparison through cross-case analysis (Strauss and Corbin, 1998). I transcribed the interviews as soon as possible, which greatly increased accuracy in capturing the students' speech in a written document. Especially with qualitative data, it is important to analyze the data as they are collected, rather than to collect a lot of data with the intent to analyze them all at the conclusion of

the collection, far removed from the time of the first collection (Coffey and Atkinson, 1996).

Timely analysis aided in an additional, unanticipated way, since it turned out that every student I interviewed had a significant speech abnormality. The great variation among the students in pronunciation, cadence, strength of voice, sentence structure, and dialect, all layered upon the speech abnormalities, forced me to listen to significant portions of each interview many, many times. This requirement increased my exposure to the audio tapes and naturally allowed me to gain great familiarity with the general content of the interviews and the more subtle, yet often telling, nuances of delivery and emphasis. Despite clear audio recordings, in order to transcribe the interviews accurately at times I had to close my eyes, reflect on what we had discussed, and listen very carefully to the answers given by the students. Fortunately, in only a few instances was I unsuccessful in accurately recording the speech offered and luckily none of the content in those few indecipherable answers seemed to address a critical area of the interviews. In the future, with such a population, I would choose to incorporate videotaping as another mode of recording, which would have provided, among other visual clues, a chance to read the students' lips while listening to the audio.

I employed a type of structural coding (Berg, 2007; MacQueen, McLellan, Kay and Milstein, 1998) when analyzing the first three transcripts by using the research questions that drove the data collection. Using the first two guiding questions of the study as a general framework, I asked myself prior to and while reading the student transcripts, "What motivates these students' re-enrollment?" and "What goals do they have?" I pored over the transcripts without marking anything at first. I micro-analyzed the first three

student transcripts from the interviews – a process of analyzing text line by line (Strauss and Corbin, 1998) – in hard copy to get a feel for obvious themes that related to college enrollment motivations, community college enrollment motivations, and the future goals and aspirations students have for their education, employment and life. Eventually, I began to openly code those three transcripts by hand, a process of developing categories by defining their properties and dimensions – what makes a category what it is and is not, for example (Strauss and Corbin, 1998). I functioned as a researcher in the data so that the resulting analysis, findings, and themes emerged from the data. Open coding was used in the early stages of analysis to begin breaking down the data and to ascertain early meaning from those transcribed whole interviews.

Only after I felt that I had developed the most obvious categories did I import the transcripts electronically and begin using NVIVO 8 as a tool to aid analysis. There were two main reasons I waited to employ the NVIVO software. First, in an effort to achieve what I considered to be a form of authenticity, I wanted to roll up my sleeves and dig into the data in an organic way with nothing between me and the data. I did so away from my usual workspace, which is replete with potential distractions. In trying to understand what the students were saying, I wanted to give their words my full attention. So I found a comfortable chair and just read and reflected; eventually I made some annotations on the text. Secondly, on a much more practical note, the viewing window in the NVIVO software limits the amount of text that can be viewed at one time to fewer than twenty-five lines of one transcript. However, by using hard copies, I was able to fan several transcripts in my hands, spread the pages out, rearrange them, and essentially control my view of the data at will. This approach allowed for easy comparison of multiple

interviews side by side, particularly when I wanted to compare answers by questions, since the interviews shared the same foundational questions. Overall, this proved to be a very effective way to take it all in during the first rounds of exposure.

As I conducted more interviews, the new data drove constant comparisons with existing data, which helped me both refine properties of categories and create either new categories or subdivisions of major categories as a result (Berg, 2007; Dye, Schatz, Rosenberg and Coleman, 2000; Strauss and Corbin, 1998) as I constantly reevaluated the categories for internal homogeneity and external heterogeneity (Patton, 2002). Lincoln and Guba (1985) describe this process of constant comparison as “thought that leads to both descriptive and explanatory categories” (p. 341).

Once I felt confident that my early categories accounted for the most obvious explanations of student motivations, I turned my attention to analyzing what *else* students reported that could help explain their enrollment choices. Having analyzed much data already in a structural way, I incorporated process analysis, asking more critical questions about the data than I previously had. I started micro-analyzing the remainder of the transcripts for clues, but at some point my approach naturally shifted and I started looking far deeper than the words students offered to pick up on the abstract concepts the students had attempted to convey by the words they had chosen. This remaining data required employing much sensitivity and inference to understand what was really being communicated by the students. This stage easily required the most intense analysis of the study as I struggled with the data to truly understand the intended meaning of the students without imposing my interpretation or allowing my pre-existing beliefs to supply a convenient explanation that was not warranted by the data.

Working with data reported by students with SCDs compounded my struggle in this stage. Strauss and Corbin (1998) offer that, “Unless...participants are extremely insightful, they might not know all of the reasons why they do things. ...Conditions must be discovered in data and traced for their full impact” (p. 131). I found many places where I believe students lacking precise or accurate vocabulary intended one message but communicated another on the surface. I had to balance being careful enough not to project my interpretation onto their intended meaning while being bold enough to permit some interpretation where justifiable.

I began to tentatively code the remaining data into categories and some into subcategories only to realize time and again that I was close to the meaning but not precise enough in my interpretation. I was engaging in what Strauss and Corbin (1998) refer to as “combining structure with process...to get at some of the complexity that is so much a part of life” (p. 127). I constantly reworked the hierarchies of the categories and subcategories, as I challenged my interpretations with theoretical comparisons and hypotheses to ensure the integrity of each, and over time the category names, dimensions, and properties came together as my understanding of the phenomena responsible for their creation grew more complete. My illumination was facilitated by my increasing familiarity with the data as I worked with it and my growing awareness of the similarities and differences across cases and categories.

Though I experienced no defined borders between the acts of open coding and axial coding (Strauss and Corbin, 1998), the act of relating the dimensions and properties of categories to their subcategories to uncover interrelationship, I did in time strategically utilize some techniques that encouraged more comparisons. The NVIVO software I used

to analyze the student data easily allowed me to engage in analysis across respondents, for example. I was able to electronically collect all the text coded under what NVIVO calls a node (what Strauss and Corbin, 1998 call a category), which was another form of evaluating the data associated with one particular category or node. One technique I used was to print out the excerpts of text I had identified as supporting any category or subcategory for all interviewees and compare the data across interviews, which aided in establishing and confirming the dimensions of those categories and subcategories.

NVIVO also allowed me to quickly analyze the saturation of constructs in two important ways. First, I was easily able to determine how many participants had contributed to each category, which told me how much or little a category being analyzed affected or involved the students and which students were affected or involved. Secondly, I benefited from generating the total reference count for each category. One of the ways I began to code the data axially when working in NVIVO was to rearrange the categories, which had previously been random, in a hierarchy that reflected first those with the greatest amount of references down to those with the least, treating all meaningful data as important, of course. This helped me see which categories or themes received the most attention by the data, and they were not always the ones I had expected while initially working with the data.

Berg (2007) suggests that the biggest problem with qualitative analysis of any type is confidence in the accuracy of interpreted patterns. For three reasons, I chose not to conduct member checks (Schwandt, 2007) with the interview participants, which would have allowed students the opportunity to confirm or disconfirm my interpretations of their interview data. First, due to the presence of SCDs in the student population, giving

the students the opportunity to clarify their earlier intended meaning may or may not have been useful in terms of achieving what Lincoln and Guba (as cited in Schwandt, 2007) call “confirmability” (p. 299). I also found some verifiable information within the interviews provided by some interviewees to be conflicting or inaccurate; presenting my interpretations at a later date to students with SCDs might only serve to confirm the presence of those disabilities and not to legitimately corroborate or challenge my findings. Furthermore, presenting some of my findings related to their true enrollment motivations and discrepancies I found between students’ perceived self-efficacy and actual ability may have either caused students to deny the findings out of self-protection or suffer damage to their self-esteem. Finally, considering the difficulty I encountered in arranging meetings with these students and sometimes having to operate through protective parents, not attempting to meet with students again for what benefits that meeting may or may not have held seemed prudent. Two qualitative researchers, who did not otherwise participate in this study but were both familiar with it, each coded different sections of two interviews to increase the trustworthiness of my analysis by ensuring the measures of dependability and confirmability of my coding. No semantic discrepancies were found between those researchers’ interpretations of the data and mine.

Data from Phases II and III helped to corroborate and challenge the findings in Phase I. These additional data points provide some measure of trustworthiness because the parents who participated in Phase II revealed they know their children well and appeared to provide honest answers in every way. The faculty members and Access counselors in Phase III provided unique insights and perspectives on student/parent enrollment motivations due to their intensive work experiences with these students and

their parents/guardians. Differences in vantage points can actually illuminate truth in data as much or more than data that is one-dimensionally agreeable (Hammersley and Atkinson 1983; Schwandt, 2007). With the likelihood of competing goals among the participants in this study – students, parents, and faculty/Access personnel – using their viewpoints to reveal “truth” resulted in a more authentic, three-dimensional model of enrollment motivations.

Phase II Data Analysis

I first classified all of the questions on the Phase II survey that related to the six college enrollment motivations and the six themes related to enrolling specifically at STLCC that Phase I data generated. I then coded the remaining data that related to each existing theme. Because there were data from only three surveys and because most thematic categories already existed from Phases I, few new categories emerged. The analytic procedure for this set of data was not complex, especially compared to Phases I and III, since it heavily relied on themes already generated in Phase I.

Phase III Data Analysis

For the first two sections of the Phase III survey, frequencies, percentages and cross-tabulations were used to report the opinions of each group – faculty and Access – as well as those of the Phase III participants overall. All data supplied in the areas asking for written comments about Phases I and II data were coded for the six broad college-going and six specific STLCC choice themes, as well as being analyzed for any emergent themes, since faculty and Access personnel were asked to share additional college and STLCC enrollment motivations they believed exist.

For the third section of the Phase III survey, faculty and Access personnel were provided with a range of five possible institutional responses to the student population at STLCC and asked to indicate their preference for those they believe STLCC should consider. Those data were tabulated and presented by frequency and percentage for each reporting group and also in aggregate fashion (see data tables and charts in Appendix O, p. 354). Additional write-in institutional responses contributed by Phase III participants that they believed STLCC should consider were analyzed for emerging themes. Not all data collected on the Phase III survey were noteworthy due, in part, to the high number of options participants had to select from; therefore, I reported all pertinent observations in-text while choosing to present the complete Phase III data tables and some informative graphics as appendices instead (see Appendix O, p. 354).

Researcher as Instrument

Though I have dedicated my professional life to working with and educating students with disabilities in particular, as a college student I was never concerned about my ability to qualify for or succeed in college-level classes. By all measures, my academic experiences in higher education have been very different than the students in this study. Corbin and Strauss (1998) note that attempting to reconcile our disparate experiences "...means having an understanding, while recognizing that researchers' understandings often are based on the values, culture, training, and experiences that they bring to the research situations and that these might be quite different from those of their respondents," (p. 43). I do function partly as an insider (Schwandt, 2007) to the group being studied in that I have ten years of experience working at STLCC with students like those in this study in a very close fashion. Beyond teaching these students in a classroom

setting, I frequently confer with students outside class – particularly those having difficulty – and actively attempt to better understand and address their struggles.

My desire to better meet the needs of all students at STLCC and accurately portray the data provided by the study participants provided the guiding light for my actions throughout this study as a researcher. This study provided many opportunities for me to listen and learn. I truly enjoy working with people, and I believe my sensitivity to issues surrounding the study, my experience in working with persons with cognitive disabilities, and my interpersonal skills enabled me to gain the trust of all participants in the study, all of which bolstered the trustworthiness of the findings.

Summary

In Chapter 3, the theoretical framework was described. Additionally, the study setting and participants were discussed, as well as justification for the methodology, data sources, procedures, and data analysis approaches. Finally, I discussed how participation was encouraged in the study population and addressed my role as a measurement instrument. Chapter 4 presents the findings and themes culled from the analysis described in Chapter 3.

CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS AND FINDINGS

The Students

To ensure anonymity, all student names in this report have been changed to pseudonyms. I interviewed three men – Carl, Jaron, and Scott; and three women – Shanice, Karen, and Jane. The following descriptions serve to introduce the students and explain some of my first interactions and impressions of them. In reporting students' comments, with the exception of Scott who speaks with a significant stutter, I chose not to correct their verbal expressions or adjust them to achieve more clarity because in many cases their word choices and miscues aid the reader in understanding the varying level of disability affecting each student. With Scott's responses, I eliminated the meaningless starter sounds, repetitions, and prolongations related to his speech impediment because they were semantically unrelated to the messages he communicated. Though the transcript of Scott's interview more accurately depicts the timing and sounds of Scott's speech irregularities, I pared down the literal transcription of any of Scott's quotations used in this paper to just the words he spoke or attempted to speak that held the meaning of his message.

Carl, 20 years old

I realized the difficulty I would encounter in scheduling and executing meetings with these students when I heard Carl, the first student who left me a voice message, being coached on what to say by an adult female in the background (likely his mother as I later learned during his interview that she is his primary advocate and he lives with her alone). Phrase by phrase, Carl repeated what she was telling him to say into the phone, beginning with her saying, "My name is Carl" and him repeating, "My name is Carl."

Upon listening to the voice mail Carl left, where he repeated the words being fed to him, I decided it would be a good idea to mail appointment reminders to the students upon scheduling their interviews (see Appendix F, p. 314). It occurred to me that while the student may have made the appointment with me over the phone, a parent or guardian may be keeping the student's calendar and/or providing transportation to the interview.

When I returned Carl's phone call to schedule his interview, his mother answered the phone and asked if I was aware that Carl had "a learning disability." I assured her that Carl's disability would not negatively affect his ability to participate in the study, and I asked to speak with him. I was unsure from the brief exchange with his mother if she intended with her disclosure of her son's disability to best prepare me for my interaction with Carl or if she hoped I would rescind my offer to involve Carl in the study upon learning of his disability. Either way, I quickly discovered through my interaction with Carl that he did not possess a learning disability but rather an SCD.

Near the end of Carl's initial message, he was told to say that he was interested in the "work study." When I called Carl back to schedule his interview, I made it clear to him that I was asking him to participate in a research study and that the interview was not related to work study. I also asked Carl if he had any questions about the study or the informed consent forms he received in the invitation envelope mailed to him. Carl responded that he had not received the study packet. I assured him that he must have, since that was how he knew to phone me and indicate his interest in the study, but Carl insisted he had never seen the packet. I concluded that either Carl was confused, or that someone else handled his mail, initiated the first phone call, and he truly had never seen the packet. During our conversation and again prior to his interview, Carl indicated that

he understood he was being asked to participate in a research study, but the day after his interview Carl left me a phone message to see if he had done well enough in his interview to qualify for work study.

Carl and I first met in the lobby of the library, where I had reserved an interview room. Walking behind Carl, I gave him verbal directions as we made our way to the room. As Carl opened the door to a hallway, I instructed him to turn left, but Carl instead turned right and proceeded down the hallway, unaware that I had been left behind to consider whether he did not know the difference between left and right or had not heard me. I called after him and informed him that our interview was in the opposite direction, and when we entered the interview room I specifically asked him to choose a seat at one of the rectangular tables so that we could sit across from one another. Carl, however, sat down at the only other kind of table in the room, a crescent-shaped conference table. These misinterpretations of basic directions – the only two I had given him to that point – coupled with the previous interactions I had with Carl over the phone, left me with no doubt that Carl was an appropriate nomination for the study.

Jaron, 25 years old

When I called to set up an appointment with Jaron, his mother answered the phone and informed me that Jaron had “a learning disability.” The tone in her voice suggested that she may have hoped the news of the disability would discourage me from interviewing her son. I assured her, however, that Jaron’s disability would not affect his ability to participate in the study and I asked if I could speak with him.

After scheduling the first interview with Jaron, I phoned him the day before the interview and he said at that time that he would be unable to keep our appointment

because he had to work. So, we scheduled another time to meet and I phoned him the day before that interview and confirmed our appointment. However, after waiting ten minutes beyond our appointment time on his campus that day, I contacted Jaron by phone and found he was at home. He did not offer an explanation for why he was not on campus, but he agreed to conduct the interview at his house on the front porch when I offered to come to him later that day. Though Jaron seemed very eager to participate in the study, he neither had been able to keep the first two appointments nor had he contacted me ahead of time to let me know.

Scott, 19 years old

Scott arrived ten minutes early for our meeting and, besides a fairly significant speech impediment, presented himself as any other college student – that is to say there were no other outward signs that Scott might possess an SCD. Scott was also, in my judgment, the highest intellectually functioning student in the study.

Shanice, in her early twenties

Shanice declined to answer my question about her age in the interview, but she graduated from high school in 2005 which, if true, means at that time she was no older than 21, and she appeared to me to be in her early twenties. When I called to schedule her interview, Shanice suggested that we meet in a learning center on her campus, where she often studied. I waited for approximately ten minutes in the learning center before phoning her house, only to get a message machine. Remembering how confused Shanice appeared during our initial phone conversation, I decided she had either forgotten about our meeting or was perhaps somewhere else on campus. Eventually, I abandoned our meeting place and went in search of Shanice. I started with the Access Office a few doors

down, and asked my colleagues if they had seen her. Someone said they had seen Shanice and walked me over to a computer lab, where I found her studying for her sociology class. Happy to find her and not wanting our first meeting to be an inquisition about her inability to keep our appointment, I did not ask why she was not where she had asked me to meet her. She neither acknowledged that she had asked me to meet her earlier in a different place on campus nor offered any explanation for why she was elsewhere.

I asked Shanice if I could buy her something to drink, as I did all my interviewees prior to their interviews, so that she would be comfortable during the interview. She asked if we could go to the cafeteria, and I agreed. Along the way, nearly everyone we encountered walking across campus greeted Shanice by name. In the cafeteria, the cook and the cashier both knew Shanice, and the cook even teased her about not changing her order once she asked him to grill a cheeseburger for her. This was interesting because while his tone was playful, the subtext of his message revealed a hint of frustration at Shanice's apparent history of ordering food and then changing her mind. True to form, just as her cheeseburger was almost done, Shanice began to inquire about another dish on the line. The cook laughed and said, "I *told* you you'd do this," and eventually he convinced her to take the cheeseburger she had originally ordered. Another early sign of Shanice's tendency toward confusion was that after we had walked up two flights of stairs toward the interview room Shanice decided to return to the cafeteria for ketchup she had forgotten. Nearly an hour after our appointment time, we finally began the interview.

Near the end of our interview I remarked to Shanice that she spoke very softly, and she shared with me that she had been "run over" by a car when she was a child and

was in a coma for nine months as a result. Though I have no evidence besides her account, it is possible that the etiology of Shanice's cognitive disability is not congenital but rather a result of this serious accident. Shanice also had what appeared to be a long-healed tracheotomy scar, which likely contributed to her very weak vocal projection.

Karen, 44 years old

Though I neither nominated Karen nor any other students for the study, Karen had been one of my former students for a short time in a college-level reading class over a year before the interview. Because she attended STLCC prior to the Fall 2005 reading requirement, Karen was "grandfathered" in and could take virtually any college-level course. When she was my student in a college-level reading course, I documented Karen's behavior and was compelled to present a case for an administrative withdrawal to the Dean of Student Affairs. Much to Karen's dismay at the time, she was either administratively withdrawn or withdrew on her own under pressure from me, her Access counselor, and the dean, due to what were effectively classified as behavioral issues. In all of my classes, we engage in a great deal of cooperative learning and discussion. Unfortunately, Karen's best efforts and earnest contributions were so distracting and disruptive of the class environment that I requested the administrative withdrawal primarily for the sake of the other students and their educational rights. Karen is the student I referred to earlier in Chapter One as the one who talked about her cat all of the time in class. It is notable that I wrote that anecdote about Karen to provide a prime example of a student in the study population before she was nominated by her Access counselor. Indeed, I was unaware that Karen was still enrolled at STLCC, but I knew she was the type of student I hoped to interview.

When Karen arrived for our interview, she was very happy to see me. She recalled during our interview that she formerly had been my student, and she showed no signs of harboring ill feelings toward me or that she even remembered the occurrence or circumstances surrounding her withdrawal from my class. To the contrary, Karen expressed many times how happy she was to be interviewed for the study, and she even arrived with two handwritten pages entitled “Speech Notes!” which she had planned to use as a guide during the interview. She allowed me to copy her notes for my records and I assured her she would do just fine without them. The notes were presented in essay form and detailed Karen’s opinions about why students choose to go to “junior colleges,” which she correctly remembered as the reason I gave her for the interview.

Jane, 28 years old

Jane was interviewed on a weekday at her condominium complex, since Jane does not drive and public transportation had been pulled from her area due to budget cuts. We found a quiet spot at a table on the porch of the clubhouse, which afforded us a relaxing outdoor environment with great privacy. When I arrived at Jane’s condominium, she informed me that her mother wanted to speak with me on the phone, since she was at work. I took Jane’s cell phone, introduced myself as the representative from the college who had mailed the study information packet earlier, and assured her mother that we would stay on the complex property. Jane’s mother, convinced her daughter was in good hands, shared with me that Jane had “a learning disability” and explained that her reason for wanting to speak with me was that Jane sometimes did not always make the best decisions on her own. Jane was nominated for the study without each others’ knowledge by both her former reading instructor and her Access counselor.

My perception of the students' intellectual abilities relative to one another, descending from highest to lowest functioning, is as follows: Scott, Jane, Karen, Shanice, Jaron, and Carl.

Results

From the student interviews in Phase I, six general college enrollment themes were discovered along with six others that were specific to the decision to enroll at STLCC. For each theme, supporting Phase I data from the student interviews will first be presented, followed by the parents' Phase II data, and finally the faculty/Access Phase III data will be reported. The data are being presented in this order for three reasons. First, I was primarily interested in discovering the college enrollment motivations of these students from the students themselves, so I consider Phase I interview data to be paramount. Second, Phases II and III were conducted with the primary intent of triangulating the enrollment motivations reported by the students in Phase I; therefore, those data are subordinate to Phase I, though parents and STLCC faculty and Access counselors provided critical insights about the students' enrollment motivations by offering their perspectives. Finally, presentation of the results in this order parallels the chronology of how data were collected during the three phases and also takes into account the development of the Phase III instrument, which was based on findings from Phases I and II.

Six Motivation Themes Related to Enrolling in College

Six themes were culled from the Phase I interviews that aid in explaining why the students initially chose to enroll in college and why they continue to enroll, though they experience little academic success. However, not all six reasons can be ascribed to every student. All students reported that a combination of some or all motivations played a role in their enrollment decision, and the weight on the college enrollment decision of any applicable motivation varied by student.

1. They enroll because they believe they are intellectually capable students.
2. They enroll to earn degrees to improve their self-worth.
3. They enroll to earn degrees to improve their employability.
4. They enroll because they are inspired by and/or prompted by others to do so.
5. They enroll to meet their social needs.
6. They enroll to some degree by default.

1. They Enroll Because They Believe They are Intellectually Capable Students

The college enrollment motivation most evidenced in the data is that these students enrolled in college and continue enrolling because they believe they are intellectually capable students. I was curious about how these students perceived their academic abilities, because I hypothesized that one reason they might be seeking enrollment is that they believe they are capable of being successful college students. So, during the Phase I interviews, I presented students with *Figure 6* (p. 155) and asked them to characterize their current academic skills.

- Honors/outstanding
- Above average
- Average
- Below average
- Remedial needs/Special assistance needed

Figure 6. Current academic ability judgment chart.

The students' self-judgments of their current academic skills are presented in *Table 4* below.

Table 4.

Students' self-perceptions of their current academic skills.

	Honors/ Out- standing	Above average	Average	Below Average	Remedial needs/ Special Assistance needed
Scott	✓	✓			
Jane					✓
Karen			✓		
Shanice			✓		
Jaron		✓			
Carl	✓				

Only Jane, in my judgment one of the highest functioning students in the study, placed herself in the category of “Remedial Needs/Special Assistance Needed.” Every other student judged himself or herself to fall within the range of at least “Average” academic ability all the way up to “Honors/Outstanding,” which means that all except Jane believe they already are accomplished students. The highest self-judgment came from Carl, who unequivocally estimated his academic ability to be in the “Honors/Outstanding” category, but in my opinion actually possesses the lowest intellectual functioning of all students in the study. In this exercise, Jaron judged his academic ability to be “Above Average,” but he later shared in the interview that his ultimate goal for attending STLCC was “to get out, and pass classes and then leave with high honors,” suggesting he also felt he was capable of being classified as an honors student by some measure. Scott was unable to decide on one category, and he believed he is between “Above Average” and “Outstanding.”

I felt the students trusted me and were honest with all of the other answers provided in the interviews. When I presented the academic abilities chart (*Figure 6*, p. 155) to the students and asked for their current self-assessments, I looked closely for any outward signs of hedging or ego protection as they listened to the question and answered. I firmly believe they offered their honest self-perceptions of where they thought they belonged on the academic ability chart. If their selections are indeed representative of their self-perceptions, then every student but Jane overestimated his or her abilities.

By effectively creating a Likert Scale (Trochim, 2006) and weighting the options by assigning numbers 1-5 (eg. 1 = Remedial Needs/Special Assistance Needed while 5 = Honors Outstanding), the mean of all student judgments was found to be 3.41 or between

“Average” and “Above Average.” No other student besides Jane described academic abilities as even “Below Average,” much less as “Remedial Needs/Special Assistance Needed.” This reveals the students’ tendencies toward inflated academic self-efficacy, considering these students previously have been unsuccessful in developmental reading classes and have been judged by faculty and/or Access personnel to be among the least intellectually capable students at STLCC. By nature of repeatedly failing to pass low-level developmental reading courses despite great effort alone, their academic skills would be described accurately as “Remedial Needs/Special Assistance Needed.”

Not all incidents of inflated self-efficacy provided by the students related specifically to academic ability, but they were at least tangentially related to their college enrollment motivations. For example, all students expressed at least one employment and/or personal goal that I strongly believe to be incongruent with their abilities. The discord I found between the students’ self-efficacy beliefs and reality led me to create a coding dichotomy to evaluate student estimates of self-efficacy that I believed were not in concert with reality (Discord) and those that were (Harmony). Of all the nodes developed in analysis, Discord had the most references by far (58), nearly twice the rate of Harmony (30). Some of the references in Discord came from overstating academic ability in response to the prepared chart presented earlier (see *Figure 6*, p. 155), a forced choice if you will, but many others were offered by the students in their own words.

Karen’s career goal, for instance, is to be the lead teacher in an early childcare classroom, but before moving over to the credit side of the college she took classes in Continuing Education at STLCC for eighteen years (1985-2003) because she “wanted to get a feel for the campus.” When asked about the classes she took in Continuing

Education, she could not recall any class names or even describe the general content of any of the courses she had taken. When Shanice, one of the lowest functioning students in the study, was asked how long she thought it would take to earn an associate's degree in childcare and she cheerily responded, "Hopefully not long." Jane has been attending STLCC since 2001 and early in her interview stated she hoped to be done in five more years with STLCC. She then conceded, "I know that is a little long for a community college, but I'm trying to think realistic." Jane, who also hopes to earn bachelor's and master's degrees eventually, modified her original timeline at STLCC later in the interview, saying it might take her until she's 35 to earn an associate's degree. If that prediction comes true, Jane will have been enrolled at STLCC for about fifteen years.

Carl, who I viewed as the intellectually lowest-functioning student in the study, wholeheartedly believes he will transfer from STLCC to a four-year institution and earn a bachelor's degree in electrical engineering. When Carl was asked what he specifically planned to study at STLCC before transferring, since he was planning to bypass the associate's degree, he said, "Um, just study on it. Like do some kind of work and all kind of math for electrical engineering." Later in his interview, when Carl specifically indicated that his desire was to become an electrical engineer, I asked what inspired him to follow that career path, and he shared that his sister and brother-in-law were engineers. When I inquired about what kind of engineers they were, Carl said, "A pilot engineer. Like a pilot, which it drives the plane. ... Yeah. And the other one is, mmm, a ceiling fan, one that fix ceiling fans..." Through further conversation, it became apparent that Carl believes his relative who works as a handyman and sometimes fixes ceiling fans is an electrical engineer and the other "engineer" was apparently an airline pilot.

Jaron believed he had received “invitations” to attend different universities, including the Art Institute of Pittsburgh, University of Northwestern, Arizona State, “TCU,” “Minnesota,” and UCLA. Through further conversation, it became clear that Jaron was referring to college marketing literature he may have requested or come across in some way, but Jaron believed he was being recruited to or had already been accepted by these colleges. Jaron still plans to visit some of these schools, but claimed he had not yet done so because he had not had the time. He also expressed that he considered attending St. Louis University, a private institution with very high admissions standards, after graduating from high school but that he did not do so because he did not know where the campus tours occurred. I pressed him on what he meant by that and our exchange follows:

Jaron: One time, when I graduated high school, I was thinking of attending St. Louis University, but I didn't know where they campus tours or anything like that at, cause it was kind of odd to me.

Scherer: Did you say you didn't know where the campus tours were?

Jaron: Yeah, I didn't know where the, um, entrance was or anything...I was trying to...

Scherer: What do you mean by entrance?

Jaron: No, like the main entrance, where you go through to look around and everything...

Scherer: You mean the actual entrance to campus?

Jaron: Yeah, yeah.

Whether or not such messages were intended for them, all students in this study demonstrated reception to the ubiquitous college-going messages they have encountered throughout their lives. These students appear to enroll partly in response to the

omnipresent societal message that earning a college degree equates to a better future, and they have internalized that message. Because less self-aware students, like Jaron, Shanice and Carl, do not appear to make any distinction between their intellectual abilities and those of their peers without significant cognitive disabilities, they strongly believe these college-going messages are intended for them. They enroll in part out of social mimicry, and the seriousness with which they undertake imitating academic behaviors without productive results demonstrates this.

Shanice is a very low-functioning, yet dedicated, student. She reports that she studies constantly and greatly utilizes the college's support labs and services. At the time of her interview, Shanice was enrolled in an intensive, eight-week sociology course over the summer, and when I first saw her she was diligently working with her textbook. She shared that when she is on campus, she is "here to get my education and go home. ...I'm here to do my work...but, I'm not here to talk or communicate with nobody." Jaron said "When I was at Flo Valley (the Florissant Valley campus of STLCC), I wouldn't have no choice but stay up late to get some tutoring so, that's what I do." These two are committed to getting a college education, which they understand to be the ticket to a better future, but they appear to be totally unaware that they do not possess the skills or intellectual capacity to earn a college degree. Three of the six students in the study (Karen, Jaron and Shanice) are so committed to earning a college degree that when they experienced academic difficulty on their home campuses, they enrolled at a second campus within the STLCC system in hopes of finding an easier academic experience and environment in which they could succeed.

Jaron shows signs of desperately wanting to be a traditional college student. He has high hopes of attending a college “out of state to learning something new.” His mother doesn’t appear to believe college is a wise choice for Jaron at all, but seems rather to tolerate his enrollment at STLCC because she cannot convince him to give up on the idea of enrolling in college altogether. He reported going to public libraries for two to four hours a day to read books about colleges “to see what college might be suitable for me.” In an apparent attempt to dissuade him from considering colleges beyond STLCC, Jaron’s mother told him that the other colleges he was looking into were “too far away” and that she thought STLCC would be the best college for him. Jaron’s description of the exchanges with his mother about college enrollment beyond STLCC lead me to infer that Jaron’s mother does not believe any other college enrollment option is viable. In the past, when Jaron has persisted in discussing the possibility of attending colleges other than STLCC, he has experienced great conflict with his mother: “After screams and frustration, I just...I look at them (the college marketing literature) every time I got them in the mail when my mom was at work and stuff. I just kept ‘em to myself, so... Cause it would make things worse when you show ‘em somebody.”

Jaron works very hard to keep his dream alive of enrolling in a college beyond STLCC, ignoring his academic history of failure and advice from his mother that both indicate such an enrollment is not a plausible option. Jaron, it seems, is totally fixated on the idea of going to college and exchanges with his mother of “screams and frustration” do nothing to deter his interest and belief that he belongs at virtually any college or university he is interested in attending. He does not seem capable of accurately judging his academic abilities against the requirements of colleges with competitive enrollment

policies and his likelihood of success at such institutions if he were to gain entrance. Instead of agreeing with his mother that attending a four-year college or university is unlikely, he chooses to hide his habit of perusing college marketing literature so that he can keep this dream alive. He clearly views himself as a legitimate college student.

Jaron mentioned being interested in studying virtual communications and electronics, but also shared that his ultimate career goal was to “be a dishwasher or a busboy, like for a big-time restaurant.” The loft of his career goal relates not to the type of work he plans to do but rather the status associated with the eventual place of employment. When I suggested to him that he did not need a college degree to do the kind of work he planned to do, he did not respond to my prompt and instead changed the subject. I consider that Jaron either could have thought my suggestion that college is not necessary for him to become employed as a dishwasher/busser was errant, or that he may not have wanted to hear that it was unnecessary for him to go to college, since being in college is where he really wants to be and where he believes he belongs.

Some students acknowledged having IEPs in their K-12 experiences and receiving accommodations at STLCC to complete tests and other schoolwork. I suspect those who said they did not have an IEP in their K-12 experience (Karen, Shanice, and Jaron) were simply confused or unaware of the document’s name, since their cognitive disabilities are so significant it is inconceivable that they would have gone undetected by educational professionals. Shanice told me she did not have an IEP in school, but when I investigated the high school she told me she had attended, the school’s website described the school as a “community access and job training” high school exclusively for students “with moderate/severe developmental disabilities.” Furthermore, the website describes the

school as “not a typical four year high school. Many of our students stay in our school up to their 21st birthday,” which is allowed for students with special needs under IDEA.

Karen also attended a high school specifically for students with special needs and believes she earned a regular high school diploma.

Occasionally, students displayed signs of recognizing the impact of their disabilities or limitations imposed by their disabilities. Again, I coded observations of students expressing self-awareness of their disability and/or expressed an academic, employment and/or personal goal that appeared to be more congruent with my perception of their abilities under the category “Harmony.” Students acknowledged various signs of their disability, such as previously having had IEPs, needing and receiving accommodations in their K-12 experience and/or at STLCC, needing job coaches, and being non-drivers. Karen and Jane were the students who most readily acknowledged the presence and impact of their disabilities in their interviews. Karen effortlessly used the words “learning disability” and “handicap” to describe herself. Jane, again arguably the most self-aware student in the study, liberally used “learning disability” to describe herself or associate herself with other student groups she was describing. Jane had previously driven in New Mexico before moving to St. Louis, where she found the traffic to be too much for her to navigate safely. Karen drives to the Meramec campus, but takes public transportation to another campus because she is uncomfortable navigating that trip alone. Both students either self-impose and/or obey driving limitations placed upon them by others.

The following are comments by Karen and Jane that further illustrate their awareness of the impact of their disabilities:

- “I can’t finish tests on time like other students are able to.” (Karen)
- “I get job coaching because of my handicap.” (Karen)
- “I’m like ‘I can’t get by to do this degree.’” (Jane on giving up becoming an interpreter for those with hearing impairments.)
- “Once I...stopped being proud, I’m like, ‘You know what? I need to just go down and do this.’” (Jane on relenting and using Access services at STLCC.)

Carl, Jaron, Shanice and Scott, however, rarely acknowledged their status as persons with disabilities, and when they did it was very casual, as if their disabilities were of no real consequence to their lives. For example, some affirmed only that they used Access services, thereby simply admitting the presence of a disability; and/or that they had IEPs in K-12, which also only acknowledged the presence of a disability. Generally, in every student a positive relationship was observed between intellectual ability and acknowledgment of limitations, with the exception of Scott. The more intellectually capable the students were (Karen and Jane), the more likely they were to acknowledge their disability, demonstrate awareness of their limitations, and report addressing them in strategically compensatory ways. Those less likely to acknowledge the existence or impact of disability (Carl, Shanice and Jaron) reported fewer instances of attempting to employ effective compensation strategies.

Scott came across in his interview as a relatively higher functioning student intellectually, but besides acknowledging that he had an IEP throughout his K-12 setting, he did not directly acknowledge the presence of a disability. He does not use Access

services at STLCC, for instance, because an updated diagnosis of his disability is underway, and he rated his academic abilities between “Above average” and “Honors/outstanding,” even though he has been unable to pass RDG 020 and was nominated for the study by his reading instructor. Scott may experience success in the future after becoming eligible for and using accommodations for his disability; it is often very difficult to accurately judge the academic abilities of students who have severe learning disabilities but who are not appropriately accommodated. While I do not believe this is the case with Scott, the possibility remains that he was judged and nominated for the study based on performance that was adversely affected by a severe learning disability that has not yet been properly accommodated.

The parents' perspective on the students' intellectual abilities.

The same academic ability chart (see *Figure 6*, p. 155) was presented to parents in the Phase II survey, and they were asked to choose the option that they felt best described their children's current academic skills. *Table 5* (p. 166) displays the parents' choices compared to those of their children.

Table 5. Parent's and children's perceptions of the children's current academic skills.

	Honors/ Out- standing	Above average	Average	Below Average	Remedial needs/ Special Assistance needed
Scott	✓	✓			
Scott's mother					✓
Jane					✓
Jane's mother					✓
Karen			✓		
Karen's father				✓	
Shanice			✓		
Jaron		✓			
Carl	✓				

Both Jane's and Scott's mothers selected "Remedial needs/Special assistance needed." Only Jane's mother's estimation matched Jane's self-assessment. Scott's mother and Karen's father judged their children's abilities lower than the students did, but Karen's father indicated his belief that Karen's abilities were only "Below Average." It is notable that her father, who reported he holds a professional degree, such as a master's or above, chose not to categorize Karen as "Remedial needs/Special assistance needed," even though Karen graduated from a high school that exclusively served students with special needs.

By again weighting the options by assigning numbers 1-5 (eg. 1 = Remedial Needs/Special Assistance Needed while 5 = Honors Outstanding), the mean of all parent

judgments was found to be 1.33, or between “Below Average” and “Remedial needs/Special assistance needed,” which is quite different than the overly optimistic 3.41 average their children reported, which fell between “Average” and “Above Average.” I acknowledge that utilizing the mean on an ordinal scale, and with such a small sample size, is not statistically sound. However, observing the gap between the means of the parents’ and students’ opinions of the students’ academic abilities yields some quantifiable evidence that the two groups’ judgments on the same item are rather dissimilar.

Overall, the parents displayed much greater awareness of the limitations imposed by their children’s disabilities on their academic abilities than did their children. For example, in a forced choice prompt asking them to indicate the highest possible level of educational attainment they thought their child is capable of attaining, all parents selected the Associate’s degree, which does not necessarily indicate they believe their child has the ability to earn that degree. It does confirm that the parents believe earning any degree higher than an Associate’s is not even a possibility. Karen’s father also indicated that only “earning some college credits” for Karen might be possible in lieu of an Associate’s. Further evidence of the parents’ having a more accurate view of their children’s academic abilities occurred when parents were asked to estimate their child’s high school class rank. Jane’s mother and Karen’s father reported their children’s high school rank to be in the lowest quartile of her graduating class, while Scott’s mother reported him to be in the second lowest (or third) quartile of his graduating class. All parents acknowledged in other ways throughout the survey the impact of their child’s disability on their academic ability and social maturity.

The faculty/Access perspective on the students' intellectual abilities.

The Phase III participants clearly judged the current academic skill levels of the students at the “Remedial needs/Special assistance needed” level when they nominated these students to the study. However, I failed to include this motivation – students enrolling because they believe they are intellectually capable students – on the Phase III survey because at the time I created the survey, this eventual category’s supporting data was separated into “discord” and “harmony” categories and was being viewed away from the rest of the data related to enrollment motivations. I believed I was dealing with important data, but data that evidenced the impact of the students’ cognitive disabilities and did not relate directly to their enrollment motivations, since I had anticipated the collection of some data that didn’t fit or make sense specifically because I was interviewing students with SCDs. In time, I came to understand that the discord and harmony categories actually represented how cognizant the students were of their own abilities. It eventually became clear that their tendency to overestimate their abilities (discord) at twice the rate of reporting accurate self-judgments and awareness of factual information (harmony) explained greatly why they initially enrolled in college and continue to enroll, which is that they believe they are capable students.

2. They Enroll to Earn Degrees to Improve Their Self-Worth.

Students expressed a desire to increase their self-worth through college enrollment and ultimately degree attainment in varying specificity. I attribute the articulation variation to the level of self-awareness and command of vocabulary possessed by each individual. For instance, Jaron was very vague in description, but clearly enrolled in college in part to increase his self-worth. He was enrolled “to see what

I could do from there” and “to prove myself in school in my class...with people and everything.” He likes attending STLCC “just to goal have.” He expressed that he would be “a little bit happier and everything” if he were enrolled in college as opposed to not at all.

For the more self-aware students, like Karen and Jane, being a college student allows them to distance themselves from their disability and feel more like their peers without SCDs, thereby increasing their self-worth. As the student in the study arguably most aware of and vocal about the presence and impact of her disability, Jane seemed to view college enrollment and degree pursuit as an opportunity to demonstrate her capabilities and, in turn, avoid the disappointing experiences she has had in the past where she feels others have viewed her disability as the most significant and remarkable characteristic about her. Jane understands she has a disability, but she sees it as a much less overriding part of her whole person. She spoke of how much she “hated” the IEP meetings in her K-12 experience and how much she enjoyed the high school she transferred to in St. Louis when she moved because of its size and the inclusive nature of special education. She used the word “big” many times to describe what she liked about both her new high school and STLCC.

Jane said of her second high school, “The school was so big that you couldn’t tell, and that’s what I loved about it!” I asked her what she meant by “you couldn’t tell” and she explained that her new high school delivered special education classes to students in a decentralized manner. She spoke of her former high school delivering all of special education in one building, which made it “so obvious” to everyone else which students had cognitive disabilities or needed extra assistance. At STLCC, the size of the institution

and large student enrollment provides Jane, in her perception, an opportunity to comeingle with peers while her cognitive disability goes undetected. Jane did not consider any other options besides enrolling in college after high school because she “wanted it so bad, and I wasn’t going to let *anything* stand in my way!” She shared that if she could retain desirable employment with a lower degree then she might not pursue the higher degrees, but she conceded, “I mean, I want my master’s degree and I want my bachelor’s,” indicating that earning the degrees would themselves bring her a sense of satisfaction besides the associated rewards of better employment.

Karen was another student who strongly expressed motivations of increasing self-worth through her college enrollment and degree pursuit. For someone who spent her first eighteen years at STLCC exclusively taking non-credit continuing education classes and getting a feel for the campus, Karen holds some pretty lofty goals of earning an associate’s degree in early childcare education and eventually transferring to a four-year university to earn her bachelor’s degree in the same area. Karen offered that though her Access counselor has suggested she set a goal of starting out as a teacher’s aide, she remains committed to becoming the lead teacher in an early childhood classroom. I explained to her that an aide works in the same classroom as the lead teacher and also teaches the children, and then I invited her to explain her perception of the difference between the two positions. Karen expressed a clear understanding of the status and responsibility differences of the two positions when she said that an aide “assists the teacher. What I want to do is be more like the head teacher – run the whole thing.” Karen shared that she had become “so motivated” through her twenty plus years at STLCC that if she were not enrolled her “motivation ability would probably go down.” She

effectively was expressing that her self-worth and happiness are tied to her identity as a college student and a degree pursuer.

When I asked Karen to share with me any fears or concerns she had of not being enrolled in college, she sighed and said, “Oh, my dad and I talked about this last night. . . . If I wasn’t in school, I’d be depressed. Hurt.” When I asked her why she would feel that way if she were unable to go to college, she said that she would feel like a failure. She spoke of her brother and sister having college degrees and said, “I told my dad. . . . I would feel like a complete jerk or a failure that I can’t match them.” She went on to describe how her siblings are married with children, but how she holds no hope for marriage and cannot have children. Going to college, she expressed, was one remaining major area of life where she felt she might accomplish something on par with her brother and sister. In a moment that captured the essence of why she continues to enroll at STLCC in the face of failure, the usually ebullient Karen raised her voice, her face clouded over, and she implored, “Right now I just feel like: ‘*Why* can’t I be like *them*?’”

The parents’ perspective on self-worth.

The item on the parent surveys most closely related to the motivation of enrolling for the purpose of improving self-worth was the opportunity to increase self-confidence, and all three parents indicated this factor was moderately or highly influential in the child’s decision to attend STLCC. In fact, out of fourteen possible enrollment benefits provided to parents on the survey, all three parents ranked this item among the top three reasons that influenced the decision to enroll at STLCC. Jane’s mother wrote the most about how Jane’s enrollment bolstered her self-worth. She shared that “Jane wants so

much to be considered ‘normal’ for people her age – she struggles and was in special ed all her life.”

The faculty/Access perspective on self-worth.

Overall, only 52% of faculty and Access counselors believed that students like those in the study enrolled in college to earn degrees and improve their self-worth. Upon further review, it may have been wise to word this option as the students seeking enrollment to improve self-worth and not include the phrase “to earn college degrees,” though that’s what the students reported. At first, I was concerned with the low response rate to this option that faculty and Access counselors may not have elected it because they didn’t believe students could earn degrees while still believing they were enrolling to improve self-worth. However, my concerns were assuaged to a great degree when I compared the response data to the similarly worded option of enrolling in college to earn degrees to improve employability and 88% of respondents agreed with that option, indicating that the phrase “to earn college degrees” did not dissuade more than three respondents, if any, from selecting the self-worth option, if they indeed felt it was accurate. One faculty member wrote, “I doubt that most of these students honestly expect to earn a college degree,” which illustrates the faculty member making a distinction between a student highly desiring a degree and actually believing one can earn a degree. All of the students, though, not only desired a college degree but truly believed they were capable of earning one or more.

When separated by group, the data show that the largest difference of opinion between faculty (33%) and Access (80%) is in the self-worth category. The written comments of faculty and Access counselors did nothing to reveal why this stark

difference exists. However, the faculty (66%) who are skeptical that students like those in this study would enroll in college to improve their self-worth may feel this way because they assume repeated failure in developmental reading courses would be damaging to one's self-esteem. One Access counselor shared a comment that mostly closely mirrors what many dissenting faculty probably believe and that was that she was "bothered by the idea that these students believe the experience at college will increase their confidence – I have found quite the opposite to be true."

While damage to self-esteem by enrolling beyond their abilities and failing may be the experience for many college students, Phase I students reported that self-worth was a major reason they enrolled in college and continued to enroll even after failing to progress. Most Access counselors (80%) agreed that increasing self-worth was a valid enrollment motivation, because they likely are exposed more through their more intimate counseling sessions to these students' global motivations for enrolling in college. When asked to rank the top three enrollment motivations of the five themes that they believe compelled these students to enroll in college, 30% of Access counselors assigned a top-three ranking to self-worth and 26% of faculty did (see Appendix O, p. 354), the second-lowest average of all five motivations.

3. They Enroll to Earn Degrees to Improve Their Employability

All of the students expressed a desire to become more employable by earning college degrees. Four of the six students currently hold part-time jobs and all of them are pursuing college degrees with the intent of improving their overall employability. Some of the students enrolled to earn degrees that would allow them to become qualified for employment in the fields in which they planned to enter. Scott, for instance, needs to earn

an associate's degree and/or professional certification in the EMT program in order to become an EMT. Karen is focused on first earning an associate's degree in early childcare education before planning to pursue a four-year degree in the same area. Shanice also is planning to earn an associate's degree in early childcare. Carl is planning on eventually transferring and earning a bachelor's degree in electrical engineering.

Except for Jaron, who expressed that his ultimate career goal was to be a dishwasher or busboy, the students demonstrated keen awareness of the link between employment options and other benefits that are afforded to college graduates. Karen stated that she started taking developmental courses "to see if I could cut it as a teacher," indicating that she was trying to earn a degree because "it'll help me somewhere along the line to get a bigger and better job." Carl said that he was pursuing an electrical engineering degree because without a college degree, "I'd be nowhere." When I asked him if he was more interested in currently being employed or being in college, he explained that he would rather be in college earning a degree that would lead to a better job eventually.

Despite being a student at STLCC for at least six years, Jane is still undecided as to what field of study she plans to earn a degree in. However, she is adamant that at a minimum she will earn an associate's degree and ideally she will earn bachelor's and master's degrees. Jane said she was considering going into the medical field because she would always be in demand. Because she had been in school for so long without an articulated degree plan, I asked her why she planned to earn bachelor's and master's degrees, and she said, "Because there's more doors that opens employment-wise and I will be more marketable. ...I see what happens when you have a master's degree and it

pays off.” When I asked Jane about any concerns she had of not being enrolled in college, she responded, “Not getting a good job. Not able to support yourself, not making it. You know, college opens up a lot.”

The parents’ perspective on employment.

All three parents indicated that the opportunity to increase current or future employability moderately or highly influenced the students’ decision to attend STLCC. Scott’s mother and Karen’s father reported that the opportunity to receive training for a specific job was moderately influential, though Jane’s mother indicated specific job training at STLCC did not influence Jane’s STLCC enrollment. Though parents seem to believe enrollment at STLCC may help in securing future employment for their children, they were decidedly more tepid about the idea that their children would actually earn college degrees. The parents all indicated that neither the need for their children to earn a GPA enabling transfer to a four-year school nor the opportunity to earn transfer credits influenced the decision to enroll at STLCC, which suggests they do not believe that their students will be enrolling later at a four-year institution. Scott’s mother ranked the availability of his desired program of study as the second-most important factor Scott considered when he chose to attend STLCC and the opportunity to receive training for a specific job as the second-most important benefit influencing his decision to attend STLCC. Clearly, increasing Scott’s employability was an enrollment motivation from his mother’s perspective.

The faculty/Access perspective on employment.

Strong agreement existed among faculty (93%) and Access counselors (80%) that these students likely enroll in college to earn degrees to increase their current or future employability. Enrolling for this reason was ranked among the top three motivations by 93% of faculty but only 60% of Access counselors (see Appendix O, p. 354). Oddly, on a similar construct under motivations specific to STLCC, 100% of faculty agreed that students enrolled to increase current or future employability while only 40% of Access counselors did. Seventy-three percent of faculty believed students enrolled at STLCC to receive specific job training while half of Access counselors did. One faculty member surmised that the currently high national unemployment rate and resulting competition for employment may mean that students like those in this study are unable to get jobs. This suggests not only enrollment to improve employability but also perhaps enrollment to a degree by default. One Access counselor wrote, “I think parents want their kids to be employable,” which suggests not only an enrollment to improve employability but also a belief that parents are prompting the enrollment of the students. Further explaining why students like those in this study choose to enroll at STLCC, an Access counselor stated, “So often students with serious academic challenges want to get decent jobs and believe college is the only way to do it.”

4. They Enroll Because They Are Inspired by or Prompted by Others to Do So.

Students were motivated by sources of varying influence in their lives to attend college. These sources of motivation fell into two categories: people who explicitly counseled them to enroll, and specific models who attend(ed) college that the students attempt to emulate.

Some students were specifically encouraged by others to enroll in college. Carl shared that the primary advocate and support in his life, his mother, “feels good about me attending college because I graduated from high school. ...She, um, calls for me to go to college to get me a good education.” Shanice was adamant that she did not originally want to enroll in college. “Well, I didn’t want to go to college. I *didn’t*. I wasn’t going to come to college. Huh uh. I wasn’t coming to college. ...That wasn’t my choice, but this lady at the shelter where I was staying, she told me I needed to join college. That’s what made me come to college.” Shanice could not recall any reasons why she was told by an employee at the shelter that attending college would be a good idea. However, it was clear that Shanice would not have enrolled at STLCC if not for that advice.

Most students described that they were motivated to enroll by observing college-educated people in their lives who either inspired them or simply served as a model after whom to pattern their post-secondary decisions. For instance, Scott has a friend and a brother who have completed the EMT program at STLCC, and that became his plan, too. Both of Scott’s older brothers graduated from the same private university about three hours away from St. Louis, and he had considered that school at one time but didn’t attend because his parents told him it was too expensive. Had Scott managed to gain entrance to that university, tuition alone for the 2009-2010 school year would have been over \$18,000, and Scott’s parents may have wanted to avoid investing so much in an experience they anticipated would have little or no return. Scott was encouraged by his parents to go to college, but not to the expensive, private university, like his two brothers. Scott indicated he receives strong support for attending college. Twice during the

interview he repeated this maxim his parents clearly impressed upon him: “Work hard in whatever you do and you’ll be successful doing it.”

Karen once had a co-worker who was studying to become a teacher and Karen felt inspired to enroll on the credit side of the college after conversing with that girl: “I just got to thinking about that field. I was like, ‘Hmm, maybe that’s something that I’d really like to pursue.’” As previously mentioned, Karen’s brother and sister also both have college degrees and they serve as a driving force in Karen’s decision to try to obtain a college degree so that she can be more like them. Carl was also inspired by college-educated family members; he chose to pursue becoming an electrical engineer because he believes his sister and brother-in-law are engineers.

Jane, by all indications, has a very close relationship with her mother, who is divorced from Jane’s father. Both parents have bachelor’s degrees and her mother has a master’s degree, as well. Jane vividly remembers how hard her mother worked while the family lived in married student housing with four children in a two-bedroom apartment. She shared how she and her siblings watched her parents work three jobs combined, and how her mother “graduated with her MBA...and we did that with her. ... We watched her do it all. ... I saw her struggle and she graduated with her master’s degree. I’m like, ‘I’m definitely going to school.’” Witnessing her mother struggle so hard in school does not deter Jane from attending college but instead continues to serve as a source of inspiration and encouragement. To Jane, her mother’s struggle and triumph in earning college degrees serves as a model of perseverance that communicates working hard and being committed yields success, no matter the obstacles.

Jane related that her parents both pay for her to go to college and repeatedly stated that they “won’t pay for nothing,” indicating her belief that she is achieving adequately at STLCC or she would not be allowed to continue attending otherwise. She reported that her mother tells her, “You’re doing good and you are learning to be a student.” She shared that her mother praised her for using the Access Office after Jane “stopped being proud” and accepted that she could benefit from the help they could provide. Jane’s motivation to attend college has a Horatio Alger-esque quality to it. She shared that education was always stressed in her home and that her parents explained that going to college was not even talked about in the home as an option when they were children. Her parents’ parents told them that college was “what rich people did.” Jane’s parents, however, “always stressed: ‘go to college, learn a skill, or get a degree.’ ... You know, we were...people were in school. We were studiers.”

Jane also received encouragement to attend college from several sources beyond her parents. One of Jane’s brothers attended Meramec before her and had a positive experience. Jane also has a friend who serves as a role model because that friend “went to business in community college and she didn’t go to university and she has a good job.” Finally, Jane’s high school teachers influenced her decision to attend STLCC by telling her “That’s a good college (STLCC) to go to for kids with disability.” She described her teachers as “pushing that college (STLCC).”

The parents’ perspective on inspiration/prompting by others.

Jane and Scott attended STLCC soon after graduating from high school, so the timing of their college enrollment mirrors that of many other high school graduates. Jane’s mother and Scott’s mother both reported that they, the parent(s), initiated or were

first responsible for suggesting that the student attend STLCC. Karen's father, though, said that Karen was the one who came up with the idea to attend STLCC. Though Karen had enrolled in continuing education classes for many years, her father reports she was the one who decided to seek enrollment in credit courses. Scott's mother described the final enrollment decision as made jointly between Scott and his parents, while Karen's father and Jane's mother both described the decision as mostly the student's. When asked to rank the top three most influential factors on the students' STLCC enrollment decision, out of eighteen options, all parents selected the student's desire to be a college student as the most influential factor in the enrollment decision, which reveals that parents describe themselves not as catalysts but as facilitators of the college enrollment their children strongly desire.

Parents reported significant involvement in their child's college selection process, but Karen's father did so only after Karen expressed a desire to enroll in credit classes. All three parent respondents reported availing themselves of many information resources related to selecting a college. Jane's mother, for instance, utilized at least ten different sources of information when gathering information to aid in Jane's college choice process. Scott's parent(s) were also heavily involved in gathering information to aid in Scott's college choice, and his mother reported using six different information resources. Karen's father reported using five information resources after Karen decided she wanted to go to college. While two of the parents admitted they initially suggested enrollment at STLCC and all aided in gathering information to make an informed college choice, none reported being the ultimate determiner of the student attending STLCC. Rather than

orchestrating these students' enrollments for them, parents report being supportive guides and advisors who are supporting the wishes of their children to enroll.

The faculty/Access perspective on inspiration/prompting by others.

Only one Phase III participant out of twenty-five did not believe the students in this study enrolled because they were prompted by and/or inspired by others. Ninety-two percent of all respondents also ranked this category as a top-three enrollment motivation, the highest election of any ranked category. Additionally, this category received the most #1 rankings by Access counselors. The theme of students enrolling because they were inspired by or prompted by others was the enrollment motivation faculty and Access most strongly believed in, though most comments addressing this construct reveal a shared belief that students are more likely "prompted by" others (parents, mainly) to enroll as opposed to being "inspired by" others to do so. Only one participant, an Access counselor, mentioned students enrolling by observing and imitating models: "That's what their brothers/sisters/cousins, etc. are doing." Several strongly believe parents are demanding or essentially forcing the students to enroll for a variety of reasons. Some Phase III participants reported their beliefs that parents are forcing their children to enroll in college to make a choice between either going to school or working; to ensure the student is spending time in a safe environment; to do what peers their age are doing; and to increase the student's employability. There also were several participants who stated their beliefs that the students may be required to enroll by their parents so that they can access financial aid refunds and/or maintain health insurance eligibility on their parents' policies.

5. *They Enroll to Meet Their Social Needs.*

Every student indicated he or she received social benefits from attending STLCC. When asked what they liked about attending the community college, among other things, students referred to the people they encountered every day (students, teachers, and other employees), the clubs and activities, and the general atmosphere of their campus. Both Karen and Jane were impressed by the number of clubs and activities at Meramec, but Jane was the only student in the study who had participated in an activity and that participation was short-lived. It seems the campus activity surrounding these two and the possibility of getting involved in the activities – witnessing and being a member of a vibrant campus community – greatly satisfied some of their social needs.

Scott described Meramec as a “fun place to be around.” He also shared that there were “A lot of...nice people here. You meet new people like every day, every time you come to class.” Scott expressed what he liked most about his job at the grocery store with the following: “I just like working with like with all the friends that I got. I kind of know everybody there. We all know each other. I like working with the customers and talking to them and helping them out.” His comments demonstrate that he enjoys connecting with people socially and enjoys the social opportunities afforded to him as a college student.

Karen also shared that interacting with the patients as a dietary aide in a nursing home is the part of her job that she enjoys the most. About the people at Meramec, Karen couldn't say enough: “I love the staff! I love the teachers! I love the students here! I mean, I just – I love *Meramec*! I just love everything about it! I just like being on campus with everybody!” When asked why she chose to attend STLCC, Karen said, “Cause the

campus, it just seemed they had a lot of things to offer, like clubs and activities.” Carl mentioned playing basketball in the open gym with friends as a campus activity he regularly takes part in when not in class. While it is unclear whether these students’ decisions to initially attend college were driven by a desire to meet social needs, all students reported that the social benefits they receive at STLCC influence their continued enrollment.

The parents’ perspective on social needs.

Of the two factors that relate to enrollment for the intent of meeting social needs – that the student has friends who go to STLCC, and that STLCC is a friendly and welcoming place – only Scott’s mother selected either and that was the latter. Three other perceived benefits or outcomes related to a student’s social need being met through STLCC enrollment were the opportunity to socialize with peers; the opportunity to access college facilities, like the library, fitness center, cafeteria and student center; and the opportunity to participate in student clubs and student activities. Scott’s mother indicated that all three moderately influenced Scott’s enrollment at STLCC, while Karen’s father reported that all three only slightly influenced Karen’s enrollment. When asked to explain why he was very confident that STLCC was the right decision for Karen, her father wrote that she seemed very happy attending STLCC and that “she is happy with the total environment at STLCC.” Jane’s mother said that the opportunity to socialize with peers was not only highly influential on Jane’s enrollment decision, but she ranked it as the most important reason Jane enrolled. Further, Jane’s mother admitted that, “Quite honestly, I’m mostly encouraging her to go to school...to ‘socialize’ her.”

Though not directly related to meeting the students' traditional social needs, several references to achieving personal growth and overall socialization through STLCC enrollment were reported by parents. All parents acknowledged that their children are limited in terms of socially maturity and social awareness. The opportunity to increase social maturity, the opportunity to determine a sense of direction, and the opportunity to increase self-confidence were reported by all parents as either moderately or highly influential on the students' decision to attend STLCC. Out of eighteen possible factors, all parents ranked "the opportunity to increase self-confidence" as one of the three most influential reasons their child decided to attend STLCC. Clearly, the parents expressed enrollment motivations relating to social needs being met as being of significant importance.

The faculty/Access perspective on social needs.

Only 60% of faculty believed that these students truly enrolled in college to meet their social needs compared to 90% of Access counselors. Only 24% of Phase III participants ranked this motivation in the top three, and this construct was least frequently ranked of all the five motivations. Several constructs were more or less related to meeting social needs under the motivations specific to enrolling at STLCC, and faculty and Access, respectively, agreed with these at the following rates: to increase social maturity (26%, 30%); to increase self-confidence (26%, 10%); to socialize with peers (40%, 80%); and to be able to participate in student clubs and activities (6%, 10%).

While neither faculty (6%) nor Access (40%) overwhelmingly agreed this motivation was among the top three influencing the enrollment decision, almost all Access counselors (90%) at least recognized it as a realistic motivation. It is likely that

some faculty and Access counselors have witnessed how differently and often unsuccessfully students with SCDs relate to their STLCC peers and believe that these students' social needs cannot be met positively through such experiences. However, the Phase I students may classify social benefits differently than Phase III participants, which would explain their differing beliefs. While Phase III participants may think of the traditional social benefits associated with being in college – making friends in and out of class, participating in campus clubs and activities, engaging in off-campus social events with peers, dating, etc. – most Phase I students spoke more generally of the enjoyment they receive from simply being in the presence of others on a bustling campus. Scott was the only student to claim he had multiple friends or acquaintances on campus; the others seemed to classify any and all interactions they had with classmates, teachers, Access counselors, and other STLCC employees as very meaningful social engagement.

6. They Enroll to Some Degree by Default.

Students indicated that part of their enrollment decision stemmed from not having any better postsecondary options and/or not knowing what else to do. Enrollment by some appears to have resulted partially from just following the conventional developmental arc of enrolling in college upon graduating from high school. Scott, Carl and Jaron all enrolled in college in the fall semester immediately following graduation from high school, and Shanice and Jane enrolled within a year of graduating from high school. Because going to college is what so many American students commonly do after high school, the decision to enroll for some students appears to have been a matter of participating in a common post-secondary ritual. Left with few or no other options to consider due to competitive enrollment policies, these students enrolled at STLCC

because it was most likely the only higher education institution to which they could gain admission and achieve their college enrollment goal.

Though Jaron is constantly evaluating college marketing literature for transfer, he paradoxically said, “That (STLCC) was the only college I thought of” and said he did not have any concerns over not being a college student – that if he didn’t get enrolled, he “would just let it go.” When I asked Scott about whether he had any concerns over not being enrolled in college, he said he didn’t really see any and did not have any fears over not being enrolled. When I asked Carl when in his life he knew he wanted to enroll in college, he said that he made up his mind in his last year of high school because he needed to move to a different setting due to graduation.

Shanice did not plan on coming to college but was talked into it by the employee at the shelter where she was staying at the time. Despite displaying a strong commitment to academic achievement in one part of her interview by repeatedly expressing a desire to earn a degree at STLCC, Shanice alternatively later indicated that she did not have any concerns over not being enrolled in college, saying it wouldn’t matter to her one way or the other. Jane delayed college enrollment until a year after graduating from high school and did not consider any other colleges besides Meramec. Not by choice, Jane has been unemployed for over two years and her enrollment at STLCC may be viewed partly as an activity by default, since she claims that a significant amount of her time otherwise is spent reading for pleasure and looking for jobs.

The parents’ perspective on default.

Though this was a motivation I accurately predicted and was therefore able to specifically mine for on the Phase III survey, parents indicated that default only

accounted for some of the students' decisions to enroll at STLCC. There were three factors on the Phase III survey that aimed to reveal an inclination to enrolling by default: uncertainty about a major; needing time to decide what to do; and not knowing of any better options besides enrolling at STLCC. Karen's father indicated that none of those options was considered in her decision to attend STLCC. Neither Jane's nor Scott's mothers indicated that their child enrolled because they didn't know what else to do. Jane's mother did say that Jane's uncertainty about her major was a consideration in her enrollment decision at STLCC, but that needing time to decide what to do was not. Scott's mother reported the opposite about Scott's enrollment: that he was not uncertain about his major but that he did enroll at STLCC because he needed time to decide what to do. One possible benefit or outcome – the opportunity to try college with little financial risk – could be seen to influence an enrollment decision by default, and Scott's mother reported that this consideration moderately influenced his decision to attend STLCC. Jane's mother and Karen's father reported it was slightly influential in their children's decision to attend STLCC.

The faculty/Access perspective on default.

Faculty (80%) and Access (90%) believe strongly that the college enrollment of the students in this study is due to default, identical percentages to the same construct on the enrollment motivations specific to STLCC. Seventy-three percent of faculty and eighty percent of Access counselors also ranked default as one of the top-three motivations influencing their enrollment decision. One Access counselor observed, "Because the student has no other options, he/she is driven to college by default." Still another believed that some students in this population may not qualify for other

community programs offered to persons with disabilities, such as Vocational Rehabilitation or Paraquad's College for Living program, a program in St. Louis that attends to the educational and personal growth of persons with developmental disabilities, and thus enroll out of default. A faculty member suggested college served a cooling out function for these students: "For many, simply biding time before they enter the workforce without completing college."

Six Enrollment Motivations Specific to STLCC

Students expressed six factors influenced their choice to enroll specifically at STLCC, though not all factors influenced all students or to the same degree.

1. All students chose to enroll at STLCC in part to take advantage of the extensive array of academic support services known to be offered especially at community colleges.
2. All five students still living at home chose to attend STLCC to continue benefiting from the important daily support their live-in advocates provide.
3. All students appeared to attend a specific STLCC campus because it was in close proximity to their home.
4. Some students suggested that STLCC's open enrollment policy provided their only opportunity to enroll as a college student.
5. Some students mentioned that STLCC's affordability positively affected their enrollment decision.
6. Some students mentioned the reputation of STLCC as a quality school was a factor in their decision to attend STLCC.

1. To Benefit From Supplemental Academic Services

All students indicated they enrolled at STLCC to take advantage of a number of supplemental academic support services that can be particularly beneficial to students who struggle academically and/or who have learning disabilities, such as tutoring, more individualized attention from faculty and staff, learning labs, the Access Office and its counselors, and developmental courses. Students believe the extra attention and help they receive at STLCC will give them the best opportunity to compensate for their disabilities and succeed as college students. All students reported using some auxiliary services at STLCC to increase the likelihood of their academic success.

Only Scott was not registered with the Access Office, due to being in the process of securing updated assessment and verification of his disability, and he reported the least reliance on other academic services, saying this about the environment of STLCC: that he chose to “just start off at a small college and then work up or something.” Carl claimed he wasn’t registered with the Access Office, yet Carl was nominated for the study by his Access counselor. In addition to Access services, Carl also uses a learning lab on campus to get extra help. Jaron works extensively with Access and has availed himself of tutoring, both at Florissant Valley when he attended that campus and with Forest Park at the time of his interview. Karen noted that she likes the idea of being able to benefit from “one-on-one help if I should need it” and that her Access counselor – who she describes as “a godsend” – helps guide her into appropriate courses and make judgments about course load. Karen’s dad is heavily involved as an advocate for Karen in her interactions with the Access Office. According to Karen, he goes to meetings between Karen and her

Access counselor and contributes comments like, “Now, here’s what she needs. What can we get to improve Karen?”

Shanice also works with the Access Office and besides receiving testing accommodations and assistance in choosing her classes, Shanice reported, “Anything I go to them for, they help me.” Jane’s time with Access does not mirror her entire enrollment; not wanting to be labeled as a student with a disability, she did not register with Access upon first enrolling at STLCC. Jane explains that she eventually got over being “proud,” realized the help she could receive through Access, and has worked with that office ever since, saying, “They (STLCC) have a great academic thing (Access) if you have a disability; they know how to help you.” She mentioned receiving help from Access counselors in selecting and registering for classes, determining and receiving appropriate accommodations, and in advocating for herself with her instructors. She reported that the extra help to students provided by STLCC encouraged her to enroll, explaining, “When I found out the help they (STLCC) had, I was like, ‘I think I can do this.’” Jane also works frequently with The Writing Center, The Academic Center, and in the library and campus computer labs because she likes being able to get her work done on campus. She utilizes not only the facilities but the individual attention provided by staff, as well.

The parents’ perspective on supplemental academic services.

Karen’s father and Jane’s mother indicated that their children considered the academic assistance that STLCC could provide when choosing to enroll. All parents noted the “opportunity to improve academic skills (e.g. reading writing, math)” either moderately or highly influenced their child’s decision to attend STLCC. Only Scott’s

mother ranked the opportunity to improve academic skills in the top three of fourteen other perceived benefits or outcomes that influenced his STLCC enrollment choice, and she selected it as the most important factor that influenced his enrollment.

The faculty/Access perspective on supplemental academic services.

Just over half (56%) of faculty and Access personnel believed the students enrolled at STLCC to benefit from the wide array of supplemental academic support services available; though 70% of Access counselors believed this and only 46% of faculty. A later option asked faculty and Access to judge the enrollment motivation of wanting to improve academic skills, such as reading, writing and math, and again 70% of Access believed this to be true while faculty accord swelled to 86%. Out of the twenty-two possible enrollment motivations provided that were specific to STLCC, faculty and Access responded heartily to the two aforementioned options by ranking them in the top three (see Appendix O, p. 354) at an average rate of 36% (accessing supplemental assistance) and 16% (wanting to improve academic skills). One Access counselor shared that she has “heard students say that they want to come here because they have heard from their parents and H.S. teachers that it is easier here; classes are smaller and teachers help you more than in other colleges. That is their perception.”

2. To Continue Benefiting From Support at Home

Students also chose to attend STLCC because they were able to continue living at home. The clear, overriding factor in the decision to stay home and attend STLCC was not financial but rather related to the student’s ability to continue accessing the family support system they have long relied on. With the exception of Shanice, who lives independently, all the other students expressed a strong emotional bond with at least one

parent advocate in their household. This person (or persons, in the case of Scott's parents) serves not only as a much-needed cheerleader and confidant but also aids the student in making functional decisions related to many areas of their life.

Jaron talked about how his mother helps him make decisions about selecting classes, buying books, choosing teachers, and assists him in finding new classrooms and offices on campus. Scott regularly receives homework help from his parents, something that would be difficult if he did not continue living in the home. When I asked Scott if he were responsible for filling out the paperwork for enrollment at STLCC, he laughed heartily and explained that his parents managed all of that for him. Scott's two older brothers graduated two years ago, so while he considered attending the university they did "cause they lived there," he confirmed that no longer having family in that college town three hours away negatively impacted his decision to attend. Scott said that he sometimes makes his own decisions, but that he welcomes his parents input, as well.

When her mother passed away seventeen years ago, Karen, now 44, continued living with her dad, who remains the most important person in her life. Her dad actively advocates for her at her place of employment and maintains frequent communication with her employer and job coach to ensure Karen is successful. Karen calls her dad "the biggest guidance and supporter." In the interview, I said, "So, Dad's a pretty important part of your life..." and Karen broke into a wide grin and enthusiastically replied, "Oh, yeah! Oh, yeah! I love my dad! He's the greatest guy in the whole world!"

Carl lives alone with his mother and she is a very attentive advocate. Each time I phoned to speak with Carl, his mother answered the phone and spoke with me first. Upon dropping him off for his interview, she also phoned my office and left a message to tell

me that Carl had been dropped off and would be arriving soon at our meeting place. Carl shared that he and his mother frequently sit down and discuss his “future” and “goals.” He shared that he relies on her “sometimes” to make decisions about his life, but I believe he must rely heavily on her due to severity of his cognitive disability, and his mother’s ever-present communication with me lends support to this belief.

Jane views herself as very independent and reports managing her experiences at STLCC largely on her own with Access counselors serving as her advocates instead of her mother. Jane reports that her mother is very supportive, serving more as a cheerleader and advisor when necessary. For instance, Jane said that her mother does not ask her about her grades, but she did teach Jane how to drop classes to avoid receiving “F’s” and advised her not to change degree programs anymore if she wanted to graduate. Jane, 28, referred to her mom as “mommy” at one point in the interview, and expressed confusion that all of her adult siblings “decided to leave. I don’t know why. I love home.” This demonstrates how important retaining her home environment is to Jane, who is in some ways “socially...stunted and far behind her peers,” by her mother’s description on the parent survey.

The parents’ perspective on benefiting from living at home.

Jane’s and Scott’s mothers both indicated that their children needing or wanting to live at home was a factor considered in their STLCC enrollment, and Jane’s mother ranked it as a top-three factor that influenced Jane’s enrollment decision. Karen’s father surprisingly did not elect that option. Two additional factors that are not directly related to benefiting from live-in advocates but are benefits of living at home are saving money and being able to continue working while going to school. Scott’s mother reported both

were factors in his decision to attend STLCC; Scott pays for half of his STLCC tuition and his parents pay for the other half. Karen's father reported neither were factors in her decision to enroll at STLCC, and Jane's mother indicated that her ability to work and go to school was a factor in her initial enrollment decision, though she has been unemployed for over two years now.

The faculty/Access perspective on benefiting from living at home.

More than two-thirds of faculty and Access counselors believed that students like those in this study choose to enroll at STLCC in order to maintain their family support systems while attending college. This factor received the second-highest number of top-three rankings at 40% of all Phase III participants. A faculty member commented that parents believe by sending their children to STLCC "that they can have more involvement in their student's academic experience. I often have parents call to ask a question (which I decline if it pertains to a specific student). Sometimes a parent and student both come to campus to meet with an instructor or myself." Another faculty member suggested that several features of STLCC make it an attractive college enrollment option when combined with the fact that students can benefit from continued support at home.

3. STLCC Campus is Convenient and Close to Home

Only two of the six students interviewed (Scott and Karen) are licensed drivers and have access to vehicles; the other four rely on public transportation to take them to and from their respective STLCC campuses. Only Shanice did not specifically express that convenience or close proximity to STLCC impacted her to decision to enroll, but she does live less than four miles from the Forest Park campus she attends. For Scott, who

lives less than six miles from Meramec's campus, close proximity persuaded him to choose STLCC, saying that other colleges were "too far away," which is why he attends the Meramec campus. Scott also reported that his parents like it that he is "close to home."

Carl told me that he chose to enroll at Forest Park because it is a nice college. When asked to expound on what he meant by nice, he explained that "This a nice college to go to, like, um, it ain't very far from my house." Carl lives just over five miles from Forest Park. Jane also relies on public transportation to attend STLCC, and was greatly affected by the city-wide cuts when the route she takes was suddenly dropped in the middle of the spring semester last year. Her mother shared in the parent survey that the "cut in transportation has severely hurt her – her independence and self esteem have been affected by that cut." Jane finished the semester by cobbling together rides from her mother and stepfather and lamented, "I liked my bus and I felt comfortable." She described attending the Meramec campus as "convenient" and "closer," explaining that "everything else is so far away."

Karen shared that she attended Meramec because the "campus is closer to my house." Though she enrolled at Forest Park once in an attempt to see if a developmental writing course there would be less rigorous, she returned to Meramec the next semester because of city-wide funding cuts that affected public transportation, her mode of transportation to Forest Park. Karen drives to Meramec but elected to take public transportation to Forest Park because she was uncomfortable driving to the campus. Approximating her residence from the address used on the mailings, I said, "It's pretty easy for you to get on 270 and just come right down to Big Bend probably, right?" I was

surprised when she instead described the rather circuitous route she took to Meramec, driving first in the opposite direction of campus, presumably so she could avoid the highway, since I later learned Karen is not comfortable in certain driving situations. Using Mapquest.com, I estimate that Karen's preferred alternative route adds approximately ten miles and twenty minutes to her roundtrip campus commute.

When Karen briefly attended the Forest Park campus, she opted to take public transportation instead of driving her personal vehicle because it was "too far to drive." When I asked her how she knew when something was too far for her to drive to (since the Forest Park campus is about the same distance to Meramec by the route she chooses to take), she said "Because I start panicking when I don't know where I'm at." She confirmed that her driving concerns have less to do with distance than with route familiarity and the speed of traffic. Even though she chooses to add miles and time to her Meramec commute, Karen benefits from the relatively closer proximity of Meramec, as opposed to the farther Forest Park campus, because she is more familiar with the route and does not have to drive on the highway.

The parents' perspective on proximity.

There was nothing specifically asked about or offered by parents on the Phase II survey relating to how close a student's home to the college affected the decision to enroll at STLCC.

The faculty/Access perspective on proximity.

This factor garnered the second-highest rate of agreement by Phase III participants at 96%. Twenty-eight percent of faculty and Access personnel ranked it as one of the top three factors influencing enrollment for these students.

4. Opportunity to Attend College Due to STLCC's Open Enrollment Policy.

No students articulated that STLCC's open enrollment policy afforded the only opportunity to enroll on a college campus and, thus, drove the decision to attend STLCC. However, the severity of their cognitive disabilities undoubtedly precluded them from qualifying at institutions with competitive enrollment policies, whether they realize it or not.

The parents' perspective on open enrollment.

All three parents selected STLCC's open enrollment policy as a factor that was considered in the student's enrollment decision. STLCC is the only college Jane has attended, and her mother shared in the survey that Jane's decision to attend Meramec was made "when she realized she wouldn't qualify for major universities." Neither Scott nor Karen applied to any other colleges besides STLCC, and Karen's father ranked open enrollment as the second-most influential factor considered in her enrollment decision.

The faculty/Access perspective on open enrollment.

This enrollment factor was the only one to be completely agreed upon by all Phase III participants. It was also the factor that received the most top-three rankings (68%), though faculty (73%) ranked it slightly more frequently than Access counselors (60%). It is clear that many Phase III participants believe that students like those in this study would be not be able to enroll in a college with a competitive enrollment policy. One faculty member wrote that "open enrollment (in many cases) makes this their only viable option." Another agreed: "There are no other options for these students to 'attend college' that I'm aware of." An Access counselor further confirmed the belief by adding, "They can't qualify for any other college so they come here."

5. STLCC is Affordable

Scott mentioned that attending the university his older brothers had would have been very expensive, so his STLCC enrollment suggests it is a more affordable option. Karen shared that the “books are cheaper” at STLCC. Jane repeatedly explained that her STLCC choice was affected by the fact that “It’s cheap. Meramec is one of the cheapest college.” Jane was very appreciative of the payment plan offered by STLCC, explaining, “I’m not going to write a check. I can’t afford a check for the class.”

There were other clues that helped me make general inferences about their financial abilities. For instance, from the location and disrepair of Jaron’s house and neighborhood, it is likely he and his mother have little money. I could infer nothing of substance about Carl’s financial situation from his address – only that he lives in a part of the city that is heavily populated with older, low-income housing. Shanice shared with me that her apartment is subsidized by Section 8, a federal housing assistance program for low-income families and individuals. When I asked Shanice what she liked about attending STLCC, she told me, “I like it that it’s more convenient and easier...to, um, get the classes done.” I asked her what she meant by that and she said, “They can help me pay for it” at which point she indicated that her classes at STLCC were being paid for by some sort of federal financial aid. Shanice then immediately asked whether or not financial aid was available at four-year colleges and universities.

There were only two students, Karen and Scott, who I perceived came from middle or upper class families. Perhaps not coincidentally, these were also the two students in the study who drove and had access to vehicles. On the parent survey, Scott’s mother reported an annual household income over \$100,000. Jane appears to come from

a slightly lower socioeconomic class than Karen and Scott. Her mother reported a household income in the \$50,000-\$74,999 range, and Jane's family resides in a modest condominium complex. Still, Scott, Karen and Jane appear to have a considerably higher socioeconomic standing than Jaron, Shanice, and perhaps Carl. Karen, Scott and Jane all attended the Meramec campus at the time of the interviews while Carl, Jaron and Shanice attended Forest Park, and Jaron attended Florissant Valley previously.

STLCC does not collect household income information from its students, but the socioeconomic differences between the communities in which the campuses are situated are able to be roughly quantified. The inclusion of this observation is made more valid because the students in this study live so close to the campuses they attend, suggesting that some approximation of their socioeconomic status by geographic association may be warranted. A reputable real estate service website, Zillow.com, reported the national average household income in June of 2009 as \$44,512 (Zillow, 2009). Also according to Zillow.com, the following median household incomes describe the immediate area surrounding the three STLCC campuses: Florissant Valley - \$35,647 (Jaron); Forest Park, \$26,432 (Jaron, Shanice and Carl); and Meramec - \$55,122 (Karen, Jane and Scott).

The parents' perspective on affordability.

Two factors about students' enrollment choices were presented that related to affordability – the fact that STLCC is an affordable choice and that a student couldn't afford to attend elsewhere. Jane's mother indicated that affordability was the second-most important factor influencing Jane's choice to attend STLCC. Jane's mother also indicated that Jane couldn't afford any other option and ranked it out of eighteen options as the second most influential reason Jane decided to attend STLCC. Both Karen's father and

Scott's mother indicated that STLCC's affordability was considered in their children's enrollment decision, and Karen's father ranked STLCC's affordability as the third-most influential factor in Karen's decision to enroll. Neither parent reported that the student was unable to afford enrollment at another institution, as Jane's mother did.

The faculty/Access perspective on affordability.

Eighty-four percent of faculty and Access counselors believed STLCC's affordability influences the enrollment decision of these students, and 64% believed the opportunity to try college with little financial risk factored into the students' decisions, as well. Phase III participants ranked each of these factors respectively in the top three at 24% and 16%.

6. STLCC Has an Excellent Reputation

Finally, all students referenced a variety of factors they liked about STLCC in their interviews, suggesting they were largely happy with the quality of STLCC as an educational institution. Examples of this are when Carl said, "I like to be a student here because, um, they help me and build up my working skill and what kind of work I can do good" or when Karen said she loved the staff and teachers at Meramec, though that knowledge came after enrolling and did not drive her original decision to attend. Two students, however, specifically reported their prior knowledge of STLCC's as a high-quality institution was a factor that encouraged their decision to enroll. Scott said that he chose STLCC because "I heard it was a good school," and Jane was told by high school teachers that STLCC was a good college to go to for students with disabilities.

The parents' perspective on STLCC as an institution with an excellent reputation.

Karen's father was the only parent to select a factor that indicated STLCC's excellent reputation was a factor in Karen's decision to enroll.

The faculty/Access perspective on STLCC as an institution with an excellent reputation.

Less than one-third of Phase III participants believed that STLCC's reputation for quality (24%), as a friendly and welcoming place (32%), or as having an excellent reputation (32%) influenced students like those in this study to enroll. Only one faculty member out of twenty-five Phase III participants assigned a top-three rating to one of these options, a second place vote for enrollment due to STLCC's excellent reputation. Essentially, Phase III participants did not believe that the reputation of STLCC had much influence on the students' enrollment decisions.

Additional Enrollment Motivations Suggested by Faculty/Access in Phase III

Faculty and Access counselors were asked to suggest additional enrollment motivations that they believe exist but were not reported by students and parents in Phases I and II. The desire to access financial aid and the need to stay on parents' health insurance were the two most commonly suggested additional enrollment motivations. One Access counselor mentioned that students who have divorced parents sometimes need to remain in college if their custodial parent is to continue receiving child support from the other parent.

Several commented that inaccurate student perceptions – and sometimes those of their parents – about college academic demands lead students to enroll with the belief that they can and will be successful. Phase III participants indicated these misperceptions may

be fostered by the subjective, non-mastery feedback of “success” reinforced by their K-12 IEP experiences and heavy doses of well-intentioned “You can do anything you put your mind to!” messages by those trying to help students with disabilities strive to reach their potential. “They think it is like high school,” wrote one Access counselor. A faculty member wrote, “The perception that success and progress are inevitable and attainable – for those students whose previous success in a high school program was facilitated by IEPs, academic modifications, and routine intervention by/with counselors, specialists, parents, etc., there seems at times to be a ‘disconnect’ between that ‘other-initiated and maintained’ nurturance and the independence, maturity, and self-advocacy skills needed to succeed at the college level.”

Faculty and Access Support of Various Institutional Responses to the Population

Faculty and Access counselors were provided with a range of five possible future institutional responses to this student population and asked to indicate whether or not they believed STLCC should consider each option. The provided institutional responses for consideration were as follows:

1. Nothing should change. STLCC is an open enrollment institution. We already have a reading requirement and an academic probation/suspension policy in place. These students deserve the right to try and fail.
2. A “PR” grade should not be assigned to a student who does not pass a developmental reading course when the student is judged by the faculty member as being highly unlikely to succeed upon taking the course again. Assigning a non-punitive “PR” encourages these students to stay longer at STLCC by not affecting their GPAs and, thus, delaying or not triggering at all the academic probation/suspension policy.

3. Current developmental courses should be repackaged and offered at a slower pace to accommodate student differences.
4. Since high school diplomas are not necessarily an indication of academic ability, they should not automatically qualify students for enrollment at STLCC. Instead, students should be required to demonstrate an “ability to benefit” from the curriculum by meeting set criteria on any number of standardized tests, like earning minimum scores on the ACT, SAT, Accuplacer, etc. This option could also be described as creating a “bottom” on entrance to STLCC, whereby students would have to qualify even to take developmental courses.
5. STLCC should design and offer alternative non-credit courses and/or programs that might meet these students’ needs better than college preparatory developmental courses. Such courses and/or programs might focus on meeting the expressed desires of students and their parents/guardians, like preparing the students for employment, helping them secure employment, and encouraging the development of self-esteem, self-confidence, and self-actualization.

Table 6 below shows the raw counts of support for each option by each group and aggregate, as well as the associated percentages.

Table 6.

Faculty and Access support for the range of possible future institutional responses.

	^a FACULTY	^b ACCESS	^c TOTAL
Nothing	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
PR limited	7 (46%)	4 (40%)	11 (44%)
Dev. Ed. Slowed	1 (6%)	1 (10%)	2 (8%)
Create a Bottom	7 (46%)	5 (50%)	12 (48%)
Alternatives	14 (93%)	9 (90%)	23 (92%)

^an = 15. ^bn = 10. ^cn=25.

Figure 7 below graphically presents Table 6 data.

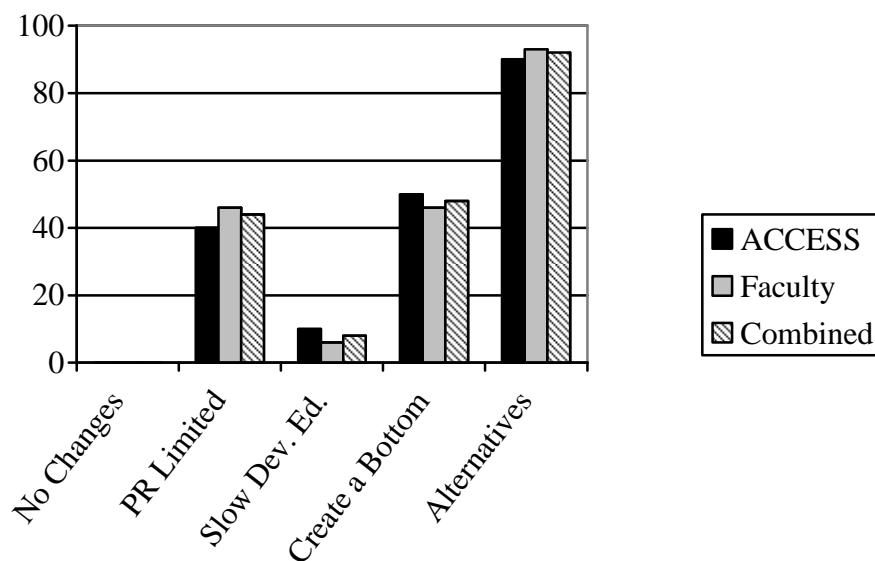


Figure 7. Percentages of Access, Faculty, and Aggregate that believe STLCC should consider the five provided options as future institutional responses to the population.

Faculty and Access counselors reported support for each option at extraordinarily similar rates. Every person surveyed supported some institutional response to this student population, thus indicating the shared belief that improvements can be made on the current situation at STLCC. Four employees did select the “No Changes” option on *Figure 7*, but then puzzlingly also indicated support for one of the remaining four options. When queried each about his or her intentions, each person clarified that they found the “No Changes” option muddled and that they were really attempting to communicate their ardent support for the latter half of the option, which supported their philosophy that STLCC should remain an open-door institution that allows all students the right to fail. Additionally, they selected other options they believed should be considered along with keeping STLCC an open enrollment institution. Three of the respondents selected the “Alternatives” option in tandem with “No Changes,” and one respondent’s additional option was the belief that developmental education should be repackaged and offered at slower rates to accommodate individual differences. Because these four respondents also selected other options along with “No Changes,” and it was verified they truly did not believe there should be no institutional response to the population, I calculated in the results only the other option(s) selected.

Finally, faculty and Access counselors were given the opportunity to suggest other possible institutional responses to this student population they believed STLCC should consider. Several respondents used this space to reiterate their support for the options already provided, such as six out of thirteen suggesting a vocational emphasis, which was covered in the “alternatives” option and four respondents – two faculty and two Access counselors – suggested the creation of a “bottom” on credit-bearing

developmental courses, which was covered in the option negating high school diplomas as proof of ability. Only one entirely unique option was suggested. Two Access counselors expressed their belief that STLCC needs to communicate strongly and more forcefully to students and the community as whole that, as one wrote, it “cannot educate everyone in the same way.” These counselors believe these messages should be delivered regularly and should be delivered kindly. Above all, faculty and Access counselors’ comments carried a respectful and supportive tone about the students they were addressing with their suggestions for institutional responses. As one Access counselor wrote, “I believe there is a place for students with developmental delays, but not in its present format.” All Phase III participants expressed the opinion that STLCC should do something different than what is currently being done in terms of addressing developmental reading course repeaters with SCDs.

Summary

In this chapter, the results and findings of the study are presented, preceded by a description of the students and my first interactions with them. Six themes explained why the students enrolled in college and continue to enroll in spite of experiencing little academic success. The six reasons are that they enroll because they believe they are intellectually capable students; they enroll to earn degrees to improve their self-worth; they enroll to earn degrees to improve their employability; they enroll because they are inspired by and/or prompted by others to do so; they enroll to meet their social needs; and they enroll to some degree by default.

Six additional themes explained the students’ choices to enroll specifically at STLCC. These reasons are as follows: to take advantage of the extensive array of

academic support services known to be offered especially at community colleges; to continue living at home and benefiting from the important daily support their live-in advocates provide; to attend a specific STLCC campus because it was in close proximity to their home; to take advantage of STLCC's open enrollment policy, since it provided their only opportunity to enroll as a college student; to take advantage of STLCC's; and to fulfill their quest for a good educational experience because they learned of STLCC's reputation as a quality school. A summary of the study and the findings supported by the literature are discussed next in Chapter Five.

CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY AND FINDINGS RELATED TO THE LITERATURE

Summary of the Study

The main purpose of this study was to investigate and uncover the enrollment motivations of STLCC students who repeatedly enroll in developmental reading courses without the likelihood of future success, as judged by their instructors and/or Access counselors. Secondary research questions were asked with the intent of discovering the educational, employment, and life goals of the course-repeating students; the influence their parents/guardians play(ed) in their child's college enrollment choice(s); and the expectations the parents/guardians have of the community college.

Because no previous studies were unearthed in my review of the literature that investigated the college enrollment motivations of students with SCDs, I took a grounded approach to allow the data to break this new ground without superimposing any substantial hypotheses on the process. A qualitative, inductive analysis was utilized on the Phase I student interviews, which yielded enrollment motivation themes through constant comparative analysis. The Phase II parent survey items themselves were coded for the themes discovered in Phase I and so were qualitative data, in addition to being analyzed for any newly emergent themes. The Phase III faculty/Access survey was created from Phase I and Phase II findings, ensuring that all enrollment motivations reported by the students and parents were presented to Phase III participants to judge for veracity. Descriptive statistics, consisting of frequencies, percentages and cross-tabulations, were used to report Phase III quantitative data. Additionally, Phase III survey items were coded using the themes yielded in Phases I and II, and qualitative data were coded in the same manner, as well as being analyzed for any additional emergent themes.

The six students interviewed in Phase I were among sixteen nominated by their reading instructors and/or their Access counselors for meeting the criteria of having repeated at least one developmental reading course at STLCC and being judged unlikely to exit the developmental sequence based on ability. Or, they could have been nominated if they were “grandfathered” in prior to the 2005 reading requirement but did not experience success in the courses in which they chose to enroll. Nominating faculty and Access counselors were thoroughly oriented by me to the study and the nomination process. They used rubrics (see Appendices A and B, p. 308-309) to determine student eligibility in a standardized way and were counseled to be conservative in their nominations. They also had the opportunity to request my consultation on any nominee being considered. Ultimately, six students were interviewed until saturation on all constructs was achieved and no new findings emerged.

Phases II and III of the study were primarily conducted to provide triangulation for Phase I findings. In Phase II, interviewed students were given the opportunity to recruit a parent to take a paper or online survey about their child’s enrollment motivations. Three parents completed surveys. In Phase III, full-time reading faculty and Access counselors from across the four-campus district were asked to participate in a survey. Fifteen reading faculty members and ten Access counselors returned completed Phase III surveys.

Six themes explaining the students' college enrollment motivations emerged from Phase I analysis:

- students enroll because they believe they are intellectually capable students;
- students enroll to earn college degrees to improve their self-worth;
- students enroll to earn college degrees to improve their employability;
- students enroll because they are inspired by and/or prompted by others to do so;
- students enroll to meet their social needs; and
- students enroll to some degree by default.

Results from the Phase II parent surveys reveal that the parents do not believe their children are destined to earn bachelor's degrees, and they do not believe their children are even average students, which differed from most of the self-judgments of the students who greatly overestimated their academic abilities compared to their previous scholastic performances. Parents reported that the opportunity for their children to increase their self-worth, to improve their employability, and to meet their social needs are indeed central reasons their students enrolled in college and continue to enroll. Rather than leading or forcing their children to enroll in college, parents described themselves as facilitators of their children's desires to attend college and even as reluctant supporters of the enrollment decisions in some cases. Some parents offered comments that suggested their children enroll in college and specifically at STLCC partly out of default, unsure of other viable opportunities.

Phase III faculty/Access survey results were mixed with faculty and Access counselors agreeing on some constructs and exhibiting differing opinions on others. Both faculty and Access counselors acknowledge the enrollment of students at STLCC who

stand little chance of success in the developmental reading classroom, so their judgment of these students' academic abilities are more in line with those of the parents' as opposed to the students'. However, it is fair to say that faculty members and Access counselors are quite confident in their judgments of the students' academic abilities; whereas, parents only suspect that success for their children in college may be unlikely. Pronounced differences exist among faculty and Access beliefs about the motivations of students enrolling to increase self-worth and enrolling to meet social needs. Many faculty members were skeptical that these motivations were true while most Access counselors correctly recognized them as powerful reasons these students are enrolling. Faculty, on the other hand, were more inclined than Access counselors to recognize the students' re-enrollment as a manifestation of their beliefs that they could succeed academically. Both faculty and Access counselors indicated strong belief that students like those in the study are enrolling for the following three additional reasons: to improve their employability, because they are inspired by – but mostly prompted by – others to do so, and out of default because they do not know of other options that are more attractive.

Six additional enrollment motivation themes were derived from Phase I data that explain why these students specifically chose to make STLCC their college of choice. Students' enrollment decisions to attend STLCC specifically were influenced by the following factors:

- to take advantage of the extensive array of academic support services known to be offered especially at community colleges;
- to continue living at home to benefit from the important daily support their lifelong, live-in advocates provide;

- because the campus they attend is in close proximity to their home;
- because STLCC's open enrollment policy provides them their only opportunity to enroll as a college student;
- because STLCC enrollment is affordable; and
- because STLCC has a reputation of being a quality institution.

Data from the Phase II parent survey indicate that parents viewed access to specialized academic support services at STLCC as influential in their children's decisions to attend. There also was some indication from parents that the benefits of continuing to live at home with their families influenced their children's decision to attend STLCC, but parents did not specifically indicate that proximity influenced the decision. Parents overwhelmingly noted that STLCC's open enrollment policy played a significant part in their children's enrollment choice, and affordability was also an important contributing factor. Only one parent indicated that STLCC's excellent reputation influenced his child's decision. When asked, only one parent suggested that STLCC could do something differently to better meet her child's needs. That parent stated her child could benefit from STLCC facilitating a smoother orientation to college and assisting her child in finding a job and preparing for employment by providing job coaching or training.

In Phase III, many faculty and Access counselors reported beliefs that students like those in this study are drawn to STLCC because of the specialized academic support services available. There was hearty support from both groups of Phase III participants for the ideas that students enrolled at STLCC to continue living at home to benefit from their long-established support system and because their STLCC was close to their home.

STLCC's open enrollment policy was the only factor 100% of Phase III participants agreed upon, and it was the factor they believed most influenced these students' enrollment decisions. Most faculty and Access counselors also agreed that STLCC's affordability influenced the enrollment decision of these students. However, there was virtually no support from Phase III participants for the idea that STLCC's reputation as a quality institution of higher education impacted these students' decisions to enroll at all. Faculty and Access personnel additionally suggested that retaining health insurance eligibility, retaining child support eligibility, and being able to access financial aid may be motivations unreported in Phases I and II that do exist and influence these students' enrollment decisions. Some Phase III participants also suggested that students and/or parents misjudging the students' academic abilities and demands of college could account for why the students enroll and re-enroll at STLCC.

Faculty and Access counselors were asked to indicate their inclination to support a range of possible future institutional responses and to suggest other options for STLCC to consider. All Phase III participants believe some institutional response to this student population is advisable – that is, continuing to allow students like those in this study to repeatedly enroll in developmental courses without any change to current STLCC practices was not endorsed by any of the participating reading faculty members (a 93% representation of all district-wide full-time employees) or the district's full-time Access counselors (100% representation of such employees).

A sizeable minority of Phase III participants believed both that high school diplomas should no longer automatically qualify students for enrollment at STLCC (48%), since the diploma no longer necessarily indicates academic ability, and that the

PR grade should not be awarded to students like those in this study who are not expected to succeed upon re-enrollment (44%). The overwhelming majority of faculty and Access counselors surveyed (93%) supported the plan for STLCC to design and offer alternative non-credit courses and/or programs that may better meet these students' needs. The courses/programs could be designed with input from the students/parents, and they may emphasize such things as employment preparation, securing employment, and the encouragement of self-esteem, self-confidence, and self-actualization. Only two participants believed STLCC should consider further slowing the current developmental offerings to better meet the needs of students like those in this study.

Findings Related to the Literature

What influences the general college and specific STLCC enrollment motivations of the students in this study is certainly complex, multi-faceted, and differs by student. In part, because no studies previously have been conducted on the college enrollment motivations of students with SCDs, I found no existing theory that directly accounts for them. Instead, several theories together aid in explaining the college enrollment motivations of this unique student cohort. The college enrollment motivation findings presented in this study (Scherer, 2010) represent an explanatory model that researchers and educators may utilize to further test and apply with community college students who possess SCDs in the future.

Bandura (1997) describes his triadic reciprocal causation model as “the transactional view of self and society” (p. 6), in which he emphasizes the complicated interplay between behavior, environment, and personal factors. Bandura cautions that it is only possible to judge the probability of effects using the triadic reciprocal model

because “most behavior is codetermined by many factors operating interactively” (Bandura, 1997, p. 7). I did find that the six general college enrollment motivations and the six specific to STLCC choice can only explain some of what motivates these students to persist in their enrollments and that the motivations cannot be all or equally ascribed to each individual.

There was evidence that the students in this study navigated the three basic stages of college choice: predisposition, search, and choice (Hossler and Gallagher, 1987). The students’ college choices were influenced strongly by elements found in the three frames that inform college choice theory: psychological, sociological, and economic (Chapman, 1981; Hossler and Gallagher, 1987; Jackson, 1982; Paulsen, 1990). In actuality, once these students committed to attending college, the choice of where to attend had in all likelihood been removed from their purview, since they most likely lacked the ability to gain entrance at any institution with a competitive enrollment policy. This is in line with sociologist’s views that students focus their enrollment efforts on particular colleges based on, among other factors, their academic abilities (Cabrera and La Nasa, 2000).

The students in this study enroll at STLCC because it in all likelihood is the only geographically convenient higher education institution that allows them to realize their dream of becoming a college student. This taps into both the psychological view of enrollment for “optimal student-institution fit” (Paulsen, 1990) and the sociological view of enrolling to gain status or approval from society in general, and/or people whose opinions of them are important, such as parents (Paulsen, 1990).

Trainor (2008) illustrates how the psychological and sociological theories of college choice are equally applicable to students with SCDs:

For many adolescents in the United States, the postsecondary transition goal to attend college after high school is an unquestioned assumption. Part of the habitus of the dominant U.S. culture is the idea that postsecondary success is defined, in part, by attending college. Adolescents commonly articulate this goal regardless of the academic struggles they face as youth with disabilities. (p. 150)

Jane's mother reported Jane's self-esteem was negatively affected when her bus route was discontinued in the middle of the spring semester because it reduced her independence, even though she was still able to attend STLCC by getting rides to school from family members. Jane's self-worth is tied not just to her identity as a college student but to self-actualizing in ways related to being a college student. Pintrich and Schunk (1996) impress that "The *process* of self-determination...is intrinsically motivating rather than the underlying need of the manifested behavior" (p. 270). In other words, engaging with one's environment, making choices, seeking challenges, and achieving goals are the natural fruits of intrinsic motivation and these activities are all an important part of exercising self-determination. Bandura (1997) further explains that "The inability to exert influence over things that adversely affect one's life breeds apprehension, apathy, or despair. The ability to secure desired outcomes and to prevent undesired ones, therefore, provides a powerful incentive for the development and exercise of personal control." (p. 2).

Students also enrolled for the practical reason of attempting to improve their employability, which encourages application of econometric models of college choice (Becker, 1993; Paulsen, 1990). They also enrolled for the less easily measured but very important reason of attempting to increase their self-worth, which is explained by the

sociological view of enrolling in college for the purpose of attaining status (Paulsen, 1990).

Several additional factors known to influence college enrollment decisions were observed in the data. Karen, Jane, Scott, and Carl all spoke about the influence that their older siblings had on their decision to enroll in college and pursue a degree. Ceja (2006 as cited in National Postsecondary Education Cooperative, 2007) confirmed that older siblings can be very influential on the college choices of younger siblings. Students are more likely to attend college when their peers plan to attend as well (Paulsen, 1990), and students like those in this study may feel the draw of the community college more because of high enrollment numbers of peers from the local feeder high schools they attended. Paulsen (1990) also found that students are more likely to enroll in college the less they are sacrificing income to do so; Jane, Shanice and Jaron all reported considerable difficulty obtaining employment at all or at the level they desired. Since they were unable to find adequate employment, their enrollment in college did not require them to sacrifice earnings.

As in Smith and Bers (1989), parents suggested that the student's overall college readiness and need to gain a sense of direction were reasons for their community college enrollment choice. The low levels of social maturity, lower academic skills, and the desire to remain living at home of several students in this study confirm Smith's and Bers' 1989 findings that such students tend to enroll more commonly at community colleges. Bers and Galowich (2002) also found students with lower academic abilities and levels of social maturity correlated with community college enrollment. Parental belief that their children's academic abilities are lower has been found to correlate with

the children's enrollment at a community college (Smith and Bers, 1989), a phenomenon observed in this study. Also, data in this study suggest reaffirmation of Smith's and Bers' (1989) finding that children of parents who rate their children's academic abilities lower tend to apply more frequently to only a community college. Bers (2005) found that parents were more likely to be completely uninvolved in the college choice process of children with high abilities, and though there was no control group in this study, the corollary is suggested by these data where parents were fairly involved in activities related to the choice process, most notably in the search stage (Hossler and Gallagher, 1987), even if they did not influence the final decision much.

Price and location have been found to be most influential factors on a community college student's choice (Bers, 1989; Cohen and Brawer, 2003; Paulsen, 1990; Somers et al., 2006). These factors were notably influential on the college choice of the students in this study, as well. High self-esteem and a positive attitude toward school are associated with increased chance of enrolling in college (Paulsen, 1990). I did not specifically inquire about the students' self-esteem and high self-esteem is not necessarily informed by self-efficacy beliefs (Schunk, Pintrich and Meece, 2008). Therefore, while the students may exhibit high academic self-efficacy, they may or may not have a high sense of self-worth or self-esteem. All students did exhibit positive attitudes toward school, though Shanice for the first time since at least middle school came to feel that way only after enrolling at STLCC.

The following factors also have been found to increase the attractiveness of a college to a student: higher admissions criteria, high quality instruction, a greater social atmosphere, and greater curriculum offerings (Paulsen, 1990). In the case of the students

in this study, all were found to be true, except higher admissions criteria. Instead, because of the inability of the students to qualify for enrollment in institutions with competitive enrollment policies, STLCC was most attractive because of its permeable admissions standards.

Faulty Perceptions of Academic Self-Efficacy

The finding that most explains the students' initial decision to enroll in college and their choice to persist after failing development reading courses is clear evidence that the students possess much higher opinions of their intellectual abilities than are warranted when compared to their prior academic performances and professional educators' observances of those performances. This chasm between the students' academic self-efficacy and the reality of their intellectual capabilities greatly helps to explain why the students seek continued college enrollment despite mounting evidence of failure. Simply put, they firmly believe they are capable, achieving college students in spite of much objective evidence that they are not. Pintrich and Schunk (1996) emphasize that "the accuracy of...perceptions in terms of their correspondence to objective measures of achievement is not as important as the fact that these perceptions do have motivational and achievement consequences" (p. 95). It doesn't matter, in other words, that these students possess SCDs when they *believe*, in fact, they are intellectually quite capable.

Possible Causes of the Students' Inflated Academic Self-Efficacy

There are several possible factors that may have contributed to the over-inflation of the students' sense of their academic abilities. First, the students' SCDs likely impinge greatly upon their ability to accurately judge their skills and abilities in relation to the goals they set. Due to severity of their cognitive disabilities, the students appear to lack

the minimally requisite combination of intellectual capacity and critical thinking skills needed to identify what skills and abilities are required to succeed as a college student and to correctly determine whether or not they possess those skills and abilities or have the capacity to obtain them. Support for the likelihood of this phenomenon occurring with this particular student population can be found in Hickson and Khemka (2001).

Similarly, Bandura's (1986) triadic reciprocal causation model addresses the influence that cognitive abilities have on human agency or action, which are classified under "internal personal factors" (p. 24). The five following areas mediate people's experiences with respect to triadic reciprocal causation: their ability to symbolize; their capability of forethought; their capability to learn vicariously; their capability to self-regulate; and their capability to be self-reflective (Bandura, 1986). All of these higher order thinking skills could be – and in the case of the students in this study most likely are – compromised in direct relation to the severity of each individual's cognitive disability, which is exactly what is described by Glick (as cited in Switzky, 2001). Correctly attributing the causes of one's successes and failures is a complex, analytical process that is more accurately accomplished by those with higher cognitive abilities and less accurately by those with lower cognitive abilities. Weiner (1989) notes that "deficiencies in the cognitive system" (p. 301) have been shown to cause persons to draw faulty correlations between variables. Hickson and Khemka (2001) similarly find that misattributing failure to external sources as opposed to their own effort or skill "may contribute to the difficulty faced by people with mental retardation in assessing the advisability of possible alternative courses of action in decision-making situations" (p. 216).

Bandura (1986, 1997) attributes what he calls *faulty self-knowledge* to errant selection of comparative models and/or a personal characteristic that mediates one's ability to accurately self-judge efficacy, such as a person possessing a cognitive disability. Misperceived causality is known to errantly inflate expectancy for success (Schunk, Pintrich and Meece, 2008), which in turn can motivate a person to persevere because they believe their success is alterable and under their control. Hickson & Khemka (2001) note the tendency of those "with mental retardation...to become causal unrealists" (p. 216).

Paulsen (1990) reports that students with higher academic aptitude and higher academic achievement are more likely to enroll in college than students not possessing those characteristics. While ability-related factors explain some of that correlation, such as performance on college entrance examinations that increases enrollment choices, it is interesting to consider that the enrollment effect remains for students like those in this study even in the absence of academic ability because they perceive themselves to be successful and capable students. Evidence suggests, then, that their high academic self-efficacy beliefs drive their enrollment behavior and not previous performance, beliefs corroborated by community colleges' non-competitive enrollment policies. Students misinterpret previous poor performances as successes, and perceive themselves to have high academic ability. Weiner (1989) cautions that when it comes to faulty attributions, "perhaps individuals should not be portrayed as rational, but rather as perceiving themselves as rational" (p. 302).

The students would classify themselves as "resolute strivers" (Bandura, 1997, p. 74) because they perceive their goals and efforts to achieve them to be realistic and

justifiable, while their instructors would describe them as “wistful dreamers” (p. 74), unrealistically clinging to unreachable goals. Some goals “might be based more on wish than reality” (Locke and Latham, 1990, p. 110) and success can still be claimed by the goal setter if an “ideal” or “hoped for goal” is not attained (Locke & Latham, 1990, p. 110; Schunk, Pintrich and Meece, 2008). Hickson and Khemka (2001) note that persons with intellectual disabilities may set particularly high goals in an attempt to evolve into the person they would like to be and distance themselves from their current level of functioning, especially in an attempt to measure up to others. Lewin et al. (as cited in Bandura, 1986) found that individuals who perform far below a normative group’s average tend to set their future goals high above their previous performance levels. Rakestraw and Weiss (as cited in Bandura, 1986) discovered that high-performing models caused observers to set higher goals than those who witnessed low-performing models. Any amount of success or even perceived success may allow a student with an SCD to distance himself or herself from their intellectual reality and align their self-image more with an ideal, which may result in the student setting even higher goals to further close the existing performance or ability gap. There was much evidence to suggest this occurrence with some students, especially those who were more self-aware of and self-conscious about their disabilities, like Jane and Karen.

Bandura (1997) identified four sources of information that together inform the development of a person’s self-efficacy and are suggestive of how the students’ self-efficacy became so misinformed:

- physiological and affective states from which people partly judge their capableness, strength, and vulnerability to dysfunction;

- enactive mastery experiences that serve as indicators of capability;
- vicarious experiences that alter efficacy beliefs through transmission of competencies and comparison with the attainments of others; and
- verbal persuasion and allied types of social influences that one possesses certain capabilities (p. 79).

1. Their Affective States Influence Their Self-Efficacy

Since I did not conduct physiological or somatic evaluation of the students in this study other than casual observation that was afforded during the interviews, I can draw no connections to the data from Bandura's findings with respect to the students' physiological states. However, several findings regarding affect and self-efficacy are applicable to this study. The mood someone is in, or their affective state, is known to serve as a source of efficacy information because current mood often reflects how one is performing or how one has performed in the past when recalling performances of earlier, similar events. Bandura (1997) noted that the mood a person is in also can dictate their global self-efficacy: a positive mood tends to evoke memories of past successes, while a negative mood of past failures. That is, a person simply tends to feel more efficacious when they are in a positive mood.

The same effect has been observed regarding self-evaluation of performance: a person tends to self-evaluate more positively when in a good mood and more negatively when in a bad mood, irrespective of actual performance. Also, current mood has been found to compel congruent, selective recall of efficacy evidence: a person in a good mood will more readily recall their past successes while repressing past failures, even if those failures were notable and should be considered in accurately judging one's efficacy.

Another finding pertinent to this study about affect and self-efficacy is that “efficacy-biasing...is especially evident when mood mismatches performance attainments” (Bandura, 1997, p. 113). A person who is happy while failing, for example, tends to overestimate their capabilities; likewise, feeling sad while achieving can cause a person to judge his or her capabilities lower than what their performance suggests. “People use their perceived affective reactions rather than recalled information to form their evaluations,” (Bandura, 1997, p. 112); in other words, they make subjective judgments about objective matters.

I can only offer my limited observation that the students during their interviews and in my interactions with them surrounding the study presented themselves as happy people. Karen is a former student of mine and I can never recall her greeting me or her classmates without a big smile on her face. She appeared overjoyed just to be included in the class, and I know her overall temperament to be generally cheerful. Faculty colleagues have observed and mused over the years that the affective presentations of their students with SCDs are remarkably similar: seemingly, because they are allowed to enroll and are very eager learners, they are very happy when they are on campus. The students’ satisfaction with and enjoyment of being in school, whether formerly in the K-12 setting or at STLCC, may be a source of happiness that could have the effect of coloring their self-efficacy.

Also, the following conditions have been found to induce people to rely on their moods as opposed to objective evidence when judging self-efficacy: when a person is required to integrate a large amount of information to formulate a judgment; when a person is making global rather than specific judgments; when a person is unable to recall

relevant evidence that objectively would inform the judgment; or when a person feels so strongly about their efficacy, one way or the other, that they are able to ignore evidence to the contrary. The most common reason that people cite affective sources when self-judging is that “using how one feels simplifies the judgmental task,” (Bandura, 1997, p. 112). The need to simplify decisions seems especially likely to exist with the students in this study, due largely to the mediating effects of their SCDs.

2. Mastery Experiences Should Serve as Indicators of Capability

“Enactive mastery experiences are the most influential source of efficacy information because they provide the most authentic evidence of whether one can muster whatever it takes to succeed” (Bandura, 1997, p. 80). The types of K-12 assessment experiences students had in their educational histories were not investigated in this study, so it is impossible to determine whether or not the students experienced enough mastery-based assessments in their educational pasts to accurately inform their self-efficacy. Mastery experiences provide important objective measures against which to measure one’s capabilities. It is possible that, especially due to the tendency of students with SCDs’ IEPs to lean more toward subjective measures and to emphasize social goals ahead of academic goals, these students may not have been provided with enough mastery assessments in their educational history, may not understand the mastery feedback they were given, or may have received positive mastery feedback based on behavioral rather than academic IEP expectations. Students have had some recent mastery experiences because STLCC’s developmental reading instructors award passing grades only to students who have met or exceeded the district-wide performance competencies in those courses and those assessment criteria are communicated to the

students in the syllabi and through individual feedback via graded assignments, tests, progress reports, and/or conferences.

The mastery feedback provided from STLCC reading faculty in the form of grades assigned to reflect the students' reading and thinking abilities does not seem to have affected their academic self-efficacy negatively. There are at least two plausible reasons for this: students may misinterpret the meaning of assigned grades so that mastery/non-mastery becomes a moot concept, or students may ignore the feedback because it doesn't support their strongly held beliefs of high academic self-efficacy. Perhaps the grades faculty members assigned to indicate non-mastery may have been errantly interpreted by the students as a sign of mastery or even judged as relative success, even though the literal meaning of the grade was understood. For instance, PRs, Ds, or even Fs (if registering a certain percentage of completion) could be interpreted as indications of success by students using different standards than their instructors. A faculty member informing a student that he had earned an F because he had registered a 36% in the course may sound like a significant achievement to one who doesn't understand the realities of a grading system and believes "36" to be a high score or to one who only earned a 28% in a previous effort. The PR grade may be particularly problematic in that it approves continuation perhaps with no real indication of failure in the mind of a student who believes he is doing well and is being encouraged to re-enroll. Students who did comprehend that they had not met the minimum competencies in a developmental reading class still could have been actively motivated by such an event.

Bandura (1997) emphasizes that some setbacks and failures teach valuable lessons that can propel one forward when it is realized that success often requires perseverance

and abilities honed over time. Even making progress toward a goal, despite ultimately failing, can be classified by some as a success (Schunk, Pintrick and Meece, 2008).

Success can be relatively judged and can be defined more by an individual's goal choice and chosen performance level than the standards imposed by others (Locke and Latham, 1990). The students in this study may be models in resiliency and perseverance in part because they have had to struggle for much, if not all, of their lives in many domains. An unusually high amount of academic failures may appear to these students to just be routine, a part of who they are as a person with a cognitive disability and no reason to disengage from an educational experience. This may be particularly true since students were required to attend in the compulsory K-12 setting and education was an arena for many years from which they could not have disengaged even if they had wished to. Students who understand their mastery feedback may have been conditioned to just expect and accept low performance in an educational setting because that was what their intellectual capabilities permitted, even with great effort, and getting half of something right may be viewed as a significant victory.

Some students in this study ignored the strong and repeated recommendations of parents, instructors, and/or Access counselors who advised them against enrollment. This is remarkable because parental encouragement is viewed as the most influential factor affecting students' aspirations to attend college (Cabrera and La Nasa, 2000; Conklin and Dailey, 1981; Hossler and Gallagher, 1987; National Postsecondary Education Cooperative, 2007). It says something about the students' commitment to enroll in college that they maintain their commitment against such strong advice. Goal commitment is observable through a person's behavior and actions, and commitment

waxes and wanes relative to self-efficacy (Schunk, Pintrich and Meece 2008). Control beliefs (Pintrich and Schunk, 1996) also affect goal commitment, because students must either feel they have some (or much) legitimate control over their enrollment outcome in order to commit so heavily, or they commit because enrollment itself is the goal. The students appear to initially enroll and continue enrolling because they strongly believe they are intellectually capable of being successful in college and because they highly value being college students and the rewards that may result from earning a degree.

It is possible that less positive, yet accurate, feedback about their academic abilities has been and continues to be ignored by the students when they do, in fact, comprehend the message being sent. For example, even when the mothers of Jane and Jaron made clear and repeated attempts to help their children recognize their academic limitations in college and adopt more realistic goals, their children strongly maintained the belief that obtaining college degrees was possible and insisted on enrolling at STLCC. Parents are, in fact, known to provide more encouragement for more academically capable students (Cabrera and La Nasa, 2000; Hossler, Braxton and Coopersmith, 1989), which may explain Scott's enrollment at Meramec while his older brothers attended an expensive, private university. Cabrera and La Nasa (2000) describe such encouragement as "conditioned by the ability and high school preparation of the child" (p. 5), among other factors. As noted in Bers and Galowich (2002), the parents of students with lower academic ability are much more likely to report financial factors as a driving motivation for community college choice, which may indicate a socioeconomic/ability link and/or a conservative parental judgment of risk/reward on investment in a college education due to student ability. The finding on the general college population that as students' income

and academic ability rise, their concern over the cost of college enrollment decreases supports this theory (Paulsen, 1990).

Weiner (1989) said that individuals can knowingly or unknowingly engage in “hedonic biases” (p. 296), which are self-serving attributions of outcomes, but just as likely are misperceptions about self-efficacy due to faulty logic concerning attribution of success or failure. People can mislead themselves in interpreting a performance by believing for and hoping for a different outcome, and/or not using all of the available information or feedback about their performance (Locke and Latham, 1990; Weiner, 1989). Bandura (1997) stresses that a person cannot simultaneously act as “a deceiver and the one deceived” (p. 78). While not classified as lying, which implies a conscious attempt to deceive, Bandura (1997) acknowledged that people can “misconstrue their performances, lead themselves astray by filtering efficacy information through biases and misbeliefs, or judge their efficacy with deficient knowledge of the types of capabilities certain activities demand” (p. 78). Jane applied a line of erroneous logic when she shared her belief that she was performing well in college since she knew her parents would not pay for her to attend otherwise. Her parents’ paying for her continued enrollment signals to her that she is succeeding. To Jane, repeatedly failing developmental reading courses is feedback that she either doesn’t understand or that she subordinates to the more appealing fact that she is allowed to enroll repeatedly at a college.

Glick (1999 as cited in Switzky, 2001) observed that the more self-aware persons with intellectual disabilities are – usually persons on the upper end of ability – the more likely they are to be aware of and anxious about the discrepancy between real and ideal self-image and attempt to obviate the reality of their disability. Jane and Karen both

showed the greatest signs of self-awareness and occasional disappointment in their inability to yet achieve what they hope to as college students. While they were governed by internal motivations, they also showed the most tendencies toward external locus of control by wanting to achieve and please others or gain approval from others. Several studies (Wehmeyer, 1993; Wehmeyer and Kelchner, 1996; Wehmeyer and Palmer, 1997) suggest that persons with intellectual disabilities tend to exhibit external loci of control because of their history of having to depend on others, attributing past failures to sources other than themselves, and not comprehending the attributes of effort, luck, and ability. Jane and Karen articulated more explicitly than the other students their combined internal motivations for enrolling in college and their external motivations associated with rewards, safety, comfort and failure avoidance as noted in Switzky and Haywood (as cited in Hickson and Khemka, 2001).

3. They Intuit Their Abilities by Comparing Themselves to Others

These students' opportunities to accurately judge their skills by comparing themselves to others in the K-12 setting may have been limited to comparisons with those who also had SCDs if they were educated principally in self-contained special education settings. Karen and Shanice attended high schools that delivered education exclusively to students with special needs. Jane attended a regular high school but seemed to receive a good deal of her education in a pull-out, resource room setting with peers who also had SCDs. Though I received no data that confirmed Jaron and Carl were educated in similar settings, due to the severity of their cognitive disabilities, they would have been likely candidates for less inclusive educational settings in their K-12 experiences. When objective performance standards are unclear, as can be the reality for a student with an

SCD and an IEP, social comparison tends to become an important source of performance feedback (Schunk, Pintrich, and Meece, 2008). Additionally, when people find themselves in performance situations without good feedback, self-efficacy beliefs tend to be higher than they should be (Bandura, 1986). Further, the more variation students experience in their educational settings, such as the typical experience in middle school and high school for students to change classrooms and teachers throughout the day, the more opportunities they theoretically have to triangulate their abilities compared to others (Schunk, Pintrich & Meece, 2008); less variation, then, would predictably relate inversely to accurate self-appraisal by peer comparison.

In these students' opportunities to compare themselves to others academically, not only may the real and wide performance gap between them and at least average students have been obscured by the homogeneous comparison population that was available to them, but they may have even come to believe that they are as intellectually capable as, if not more so, than their peers. Additionally, even if opportunities existed where they could compare their academic performances to those of students who did not have SCDs by observing others' performances vicariously or through direct comparison, it is still highly possible that the students lacked the intellectual capacity to logically analyze and comprehend the feedback they were being provided or were able to ignore it in favor of their preferred paradigm.

4. They Receive Verbal Persuasion and Social Feedback that Convinces Them They are Academically Capable

In addition to possessing SCDs, possessing a positive affect and/or a positive attitude about school, and perhaps being sequestered from average and above-average

peer groups against which they might have compared themselves to objectively evaluate aptitude, the students may have been subjected to a great deal of hyper-inflated and/or sanitized feedback about their academic abilities by trusted sources because of their status as persons with SCDs. Prolonged and exaggerated praise from advocates for mere participation that was cloaked and represented as high performance, would have fostered the illusion of competence in students. Boundless positivism for any level of performance, showered on them by parents, educators and other members of society with good intentions would have enhanced the students' egos while undermining their ability to form accurate perceptions of their self-efficacy. This is one explanation for how intellectually low-functioning students like Carl and Jaron honestly believe they are outstanding honors students while Jane, a student with comparatively higher intellectual capacity and much greater self-awareness, accurately placed herself in the Remedial/Special Assistance Needed category when self-assessing academic ability. Ultimately, the students in this study may have received inflated feedback over many years about their academic ability from trusted authority figures all while lacking both the capacity to accurately self-evaluate and access to models outside their low-ability peer group for comparative purposes.

If these students repeatedly received verbally and socially persuasive messages from important and trusted guides in their lives throughout their K-12 experience who convinced them they were intelligent, capable students, students would reasonably be lead to believe they are qualified and even destined for postsecondary enrollment. Atkinson and Feather (1966) found, in fact, that “*expectancy of success is a manipulable (sic) motivational variable*” (p. 347) and in particular that people can be convinced to

commit to unreasonably high goals by persons in authority and/or those they want to please. The students' academic self-efficacy would be especially susceptible to manipulation if they lacked the intellectual capacity to objectively interpret their own performances, were denied access to comparative models that did not possess SCDs, and/or were not given mastery feedback. All of these scenarios reasonably could have occurred if their K-12 experiences consisted primarily of resource room settings filled with subjective, non-mastery-based feedback that was either purposely repackaged by those delivering the mastery feedback or was misinterpreted by the students as objective, mastery feedback.

I observed some evidence of truth softening in the Phase I and Phase II data. For example, I confidently judge the label *learning disability* to be consistently misused by the parents I spoke with (Jane's, Carl's and Jaron's) and some students in this study, because it inaccurately and euphemistically describes the students' SCDs. This judgment assumes that these students' parents are aware of and understand the accurate diagnosis of their children's disabilities and are electing to assign another label for some benefit. The *learning disability* label is sometimes preferred by family members of persons with intellectual disabilities as a more socially acceptable and en vogue stand-in because of the stigma that can be projected onto the person with an intellectual disability by society. With respect to labeling those with intellectual disabilities for legitimate, diagnostic reasons, America has a long history of terminology revolution, which has included such labels as "mental retardation, idiocy, feeble-mindedness, mental deficiency, mental disability, mental handicap, and mental subnormality" (Schalock, Luckasson & Shogren, 2007, p. 117), among others. Each time a new term is introduced, some in the general

population appropriate the latest term to use pejoratively against those with and without intellectual disabilities, continually causing advocates for those with disabilities to adopt new terms in an attempt to respectfully address those with intellectual disabilities.

The parents' use of the term *learning disability* can be viewed as an economical way (in terms of saving both time and ego) to communicate the sensitive and complicated, but important, message that their child has a cognitive disability of some sort to an outsider they wish to enlighten. I also understand parents ordinarily may use more accurate labels with people they have an established relationship with as opposed to me, a relative stranger and researcher. In addition to the mothers of Jane, Jaron and Carl erroneously labeling their children as having learning disabilities, both Karen and Jane used the term to self-describe the nature of their disabilities. Karen and Jane either choose to use or have been taught to use the term *learning disability* to self-describe. While well-intentioned family members may elect to use the *learning disabled* label to reduce societal prejudice and unwanted attention, it could be misleading to the students if they observe peers who truly possess learning disabilities and equate their intellectual abilities to be one and the same. If not done to lessen the blow to ego, parents might be using the term *learning disability* instead because it is a catch-all that their children more easily understand, given their cognitive deficits, than more complex – yet accurate – diagnoses.

Schunk, Pintrich and Meece (2008) emphasize the importance of educators providing accurate feedback so that students develop reasonably accurate judgments of their abilities. In the experience of the students in this study, the traditional academic feedback loop may have been short-circuited by the routine positive feedback they received, regardless of their actual performance. This would have served to reinforce

their beliefs that they are highly capable students and is directly at odds with Ford's Feedback Principle and Principle of Direct Evidence (as cited in Pintrich and Schunk, 1996). These principles, respectively, emphasize the importance of providing accurate and meaningful feedback. Bandura (1997) explains that people's entire lives are guided by their perceptions about what they believe they can achieve. High self-esteem alone, though, is not enough to cause a person to exhibit agency; a person must truly believe he or she has a chance of success before engaging in a course of action. Bandura counsels that individuals exercise influence on their choice of future activities by "the alternatives they consider; how they foresee and weigh the visualized outcomes, including their own self-evaluative reactions; and how they appraise their abilities to execute the options they consider" (Bandura, 1997, p. 7). Simply put, if a person does not believe he or she can achieve a desired outcome through his or her actions, it is unlikely he or she will attempt to do so (Dembo, 1994; Schunk, Pintrich and Meece, 2008). The students in this study, as evidenced by their enrollment actions and interview data, believe strongly that they will succeed as college students.

Some important people in these students' lives, like family members and educators, may have felt compelled to provide a great deal of positive reinforcement for effort and any accomplishments. Anticipating the lifelong obstacles these students will face, knowing how very important every accomplishment is in terms of improving the students' independence and self-reliance, and not wanting to inadvertently limit what these students might be able to accomplish by introducing any negativity are a few of the reasons that may cause this approach to be taken by the advocates in these students' lives.

Much research correlates greater quality of life with enhanced self-determination skills (Bartlett, Etscheidt, and Weisenstein, 2007; Carter, Lane, Pierson and Stang, 2008; Jameson, 2007; Lachappelle et al., 2005; Marks, 2007; Nota, Ferrari, Soresi, and Wehmeyer, 2007; Wehmeyer and Schwartz, 1997; Wehmeyer, 2004; Zhang, 2005); the more a person with an SCD interacts with the world and self-actualizes, the more independent he or she will be and the greater his or her chances will be at living life to the fullest. Assor and Connell (as cited in Pintrich and Schunk, 1996) note that students are likely to be more engaged and achieve more when they overrate their abilities, which is exactly the effort/engagement effect the trusted adults in the students' lives would have been angling for if they elected to provide inaccurately high performance feedback. One reason trusted adults may avoid invoking the spirit of Ford's Feedback Principle and Principle of Direct Evidence is that their experiences with some students with SCDs have proven that no amount or type of accurate feedback can alter the students' tendency to self-judge hyper-positively. So, while Ford's principles may be applicable and wise to employ with students of average to above-average intelligence, it is possible that students with SCDs may not be sensitive to such feedback. Regardless, it removes even the chance that students may more accurately self-judge if truthful information is purposely withheld, especially by adults the students trust.

One verifiable piece of potentially misleading academic feedback from the students' K-12 experiences that could be responsible for eliciting an illusion of competence is that every student in the study claimed to have earned a regular high school diploma from the state of Missouri. This is probably true for all but Karen, who was unlikely to have received a regular diploma in 1984 from a high school designated

specifically for students with special needs. (It is more likely that she received a certificate of completion from the state of Missouri, which she believes to be a regular high school diploma, since at that time students with special needs typically were only awarded regular diplomas when they met the state's requirements while using approved accommodations.) Especially for the other students who did receive regular high school diplomas for meeting their IEP goals – and even for Karen because she believes her diploma is a regular diploma – being awarded the same diploma as those who met the regular curriculum standards no doubt sent messages of intellectual equality and ability to the students in this study.

Two of STLCC's current institutional practices, in particular, appear likely to perpetuate the students' inaccurately high perceptions of academic efficacy that seem to have been first cultivated prior to their STLCC enrollment. As a result of gaining admission to STLCC, the students view themselves as "college students," even while their enrollment is limited to pre-collegiate, or developmental, courses. In the Phase III survey, one faculty member captured the essence of the motivational boon to these students that accompanies admission to STLCC: "Students sometimes do not seem to fully realize that the developmental courses are not college-level. They seem to feel that they are 'in college' and that progress and success in 016, 020, etc. affirms their ability to continue to succeed at the 100+ level." Another faculty member observed, "I believe [the students'] motivation to persist is based on recognizing the progress they make, even if they need to repeat the class, as a sign of improvement in their academic skills. They use this recognition as motivation to persist." This faculty member displayed superb instincts about the possibility of students routinely judging their successes at STLCC by standards

that not only differ from letter grades but also in reality have little to do with measuring academic achievement, such as having the ability to enroll at the college. While a college student may reasonably draw the conclusion that continued ability to enroll at an institution with a competitive enrollment policy is an indication of past success – in the event he or she did not understand the meaning of letter grades or GPA he or she earned – such permission to continue at an open-door institution cannot be correlated automatically with academic success.

The students in this study, however, do not seem to make this discrimination. Mere extension of enrollment to STLCC communicates to students that they are successful college enrollees, though they may have “qualified” only for the lowest developmental courses by producing a high school diploma and taking the Accuplacer placement test. No Accuplacer score is too low to deny entrance to STLCC’s developmental courses, however, because the cornerstone of the STLCC admissions policy is the anachronistic 1960s assumption that holders of high school diplomas have demonstrated intellectual ability that at least minimally equates to being within striking distance of college readiness. As a result, students with a wide range of abilities and academic readiness populate the lowest developmental courses, from those who are capable of benefiting from instruction to those who are not, yet who are allowed to enroll by virtue of the present admissions policy. When students are allowed to enroll repeatedly at STLCC, no matter their previously earned grades, they can claim the title of “college student.” And “college student” is the ultimate designation/destination that many seek and equate with success because they understand college to be where intelligent

people go and these students do not perceive much intellectual difference, if any, between themselves and others without SCDs.

The second institutional practice at STLCC that could be abetting the students' mistakenly high perceptions of academic efficacy is the act of faculty generously assigning the PR grade, instead of an "F," to students who are judged to have little likelihood of succeeding upon taking the very same course again. The PR grade, which stands for "Progress, Re-enroll," is a grade unique to STLCC that was first introduced as a "P" in 1976 and changed the following year to "PR" (St. Louis Community College, 1976; St. Louis Community College, 1977). To combat the historical and banal catalog language available on the PR and to better understand the nuanced and unrecorded politics of the time surrounding the introduction of the PR, I corresponded with Dr. Wil Loy, a highly respected former Meramec English professor and former Vice President for Academic Affairs at STLCC-Wildwood. Dr. Loy recently retired after being with the college since 1970 and many at STLCC view him as a *de facto* college historian. According to Dr. Loy, the PR was created at the behest of faculty teaching developmental courses who believed "students taking developmental courses ought not be penalized with an F grade for attempting but not succeeding at meeting the performance outcomes" (personal communication, October 8, 2009).

Originally, the "P" or "PR" grade was restricted to assignment in developmental courses (St. Louis Community College, 1976), but the argument was made soon after its introduction that all STLCC writing courses are developmental and that the PR grade therefore should be available for assignment to other students as well (W. Loy, personal communication, October 8, 2009). Presently, the PR grade is available for assignment on

STLCC's web-based grading platform to all faculty who ultimately may elect to use it at their discretion, though certain departments may have internal policies that prohibit or limit the PR from being used by their instructors in either some or all of that department's courses. The short and otherwise unremarkable description of the PR in the current STLCC catalog specifically reserves eligibility for the grade to "students who make progress in a course, but do not complete *the predetermined minimum amount of course work*" [Scherer's italics] (St. Louis Community College, 2008). The current STLCC PR policy appears to confirm that the grade should not be used in place of an "F" but rather to avoid penalizing students who have accomplished a predetermined amount of progress in the course, yet did not pass, and who could benefit from taking the course an additional time.

Dr. Loy shared that STLCC faculty of developmental courses in the 1970s believed their goal "was to take (students) from where they are and help them move toward agreed-upon academic exit competencies for developmental courses and entry-level readiness for the next stage toward college-level work" (personal communication, October 8, 2009). The PR was intended as an alternative to the non-passing grade of F that could be awarded to students who had made progress but were not yet ready to exit the course. Dr. Loy used a telling word in his explanation that confirmed to me the message of encouragement that was intended to be communicated when a PR is assigned. Dr. Loy elaborated by explaining that "The R means the student is *urged* [Scherer's italics] to re-enroll in the course" (personal communication, October 8, 2009).

I label the PR grade a "Gentleman's F" when assignment is not reserved exclusively for students who would likely succeed upon a second enrollment, as was

essentially intended when the PR was created and is emphasized in the current college catalog. A PR is not the same as an Incomplete, which is also a grade available at STLCC. Accompanying an Incomplete is a contract that specifies what minimal work must be completed by the student, the standards of the work required and the timeline by which it must be done; whereas, a PR is a final grade for the course. A student must register and pay again for a course in which a PR was assigned in order to attempt to earn credit for it.

Because a PR has no impact on a student's GPA, the reprieve may serve to artificially extend enrollment opportunities to students whose academic performance otherwise may have tripped an institutional response in the form of individualized counseling attention, academic probation, or financial aid ineligibility, for example. One faculty member on the Phase III survey recognized this as a potential problem and warned that the practice "gives (the students) misleading information about their performance and perceived ability." Some students may interpret the PR grade they receive to mean "Please, re-enroll" when that may not be the intended message by a kind-hearted faculty member simply trying to lessen a blow to self-esteem. For these reasons, faculty may unintentionally and inadvisably encourage students to re-enroll who are unlikely to succeed upon reenrollment. One reason faculty members may feel more inclined to assign a PR rather than an F to students with SCDs is that they may sense students with SCDs are faultless in their enrollment and re-enrollment activities and may not understand the consequences that accompany their actions. Pintrich and Schunk (1996) agree: "If the student's failure is due to causes that are not under the student's

control (low ability), then the teacher may be likely to feel sympathy and be more willing to help the student” (p. 323).

STLCC district-wide three-year averages (2005-2008) of PR assignment by developmental reading level at STLCC reveal that the highest percentage of PRs was assigned at the lowest reading level (RDG 016/017) offered at the three campuses attended by this study’s participants (Data provided by STLCC Institutional Research, 2009). While the percent range of “F’s” assigned for RDG 016/017, RDG 020, and RDG 030 during 2005-2008 was similar across those courses (spanning 15% - 15.6%), the three-year averages for the PR grade in RDG 020 and RDG 030 were 3.33% and 3%, respectively – half of the 6.6% three-year average for RDG 016/017. PRs in the lowest reading course were assigned during 2005-2008 at twice the rate of those in the higher developmental reading courses, while the percentage of Fs assigned was essentially the same at all three levels, meaning that a much higher proportion of students in RDG 016/017 – those who may be least likely to accurately interpret the faculty’s intended meaning of assigned the PR – received a grade that easily could be misinterpreted as an invitation to re-enroll and one that had no negative impact on their GPA or academic standing with STLCC.

Possible Explanations for the Students’ Persistence

Greatly impacting a person’s goal selection and commitment is the perceived value of the reward attached to achieving the goal (Atkinson and Feather, 1966; Locke and Latham, 1990; Schunk, Pintrich and Meece, 2008). When an individual’s perceived value attached to achieving a goal is very high, it may cause the person to ignore signs of inadequate efficacy in order to have even a chance to reap the benefits associated with

achieving the goal. Even when an individual believes his or her odds of success are low, he or she may feel compelled to try anyway because the rewards associated with success are too great to not try (Atkinson and Feather, 1966; Locke and Latham, 1990). Many benefits have long been documented to an individual who earns a college degree – both tangible and intangible (Barton, 2008; Horn, Berkold and Bobbitt, 1999; Kolesnikova and Shimek, 2008; Leef, 2006; Price-Ellingstad and Berry, 2000; Quick, Lehmann and Deniston, 2003; Rosenbaum, Redline and Stephan, 2007; Stodden and Dowrick, 2000; Trainor, 2008), which may compel the students to enroll in college, in part, to avail themselves of the opportunity to live “the good life,” since they understand possessing a college degree to be the ticket of admission. In fact, “the desire to do better *may* lead the individual to choose a future goal that is based more on wish than capability” (Locke & Latham, 1990, p. 113). This may be increasingly true if the goal pursued is one that is highly valued by society (Moulton, 1966), such as earning a college degree. Such an important achievement may be perceived less as a goal choice than a societal mandate, whether one possesses the capability to achieve or not.

Even in the few instances where students admitted the impact of their disability on their academic capabilities, the students never wavered in their commitment to being college students because of the value to them of that prize. The benefits afforded a college student and/or a degree holder are perceived by these students to be so great that it seems they feel failure to try would be a greater transgression against self than to try and fail. Bandura (1997) quoted T. S. Eliot when philosophizing on what motivates persons to try in the face of a seemingly insurmountable obstacle: “Only those who will risk going too far can possibly find out how far one can go” (p. 77). Another familiar

quotation comes to mind, which emphasizes the residual benefits of putting forth maximum effort, even if failure is the result in the end: “Shoot for the moon. Even if you miss, you’ll land among the stars” (Brown, 2009).

CHAPTER SIX: JUSTIFYING THE COMMUNITY COLLEGE RESPONSE

The Negative Effects of Social Promotion Beyond High School

To be certain, K-12 students with disabilities should be allowed and encouraged to participate in as much of the regular curriculum and school-related activities as they are capable of benefitting from when their participation does not compromise the fundamental educational rights of their classmates. However, high school administrators should reconsider awarding regular diplomas to students with IEPs when those students' IEP goals do not meet the same minimum academic standards required for students without IEPs to earn a regular diploma. This practice permits some students entry into one sector of higher education without the ability to qualify for college-level work, and it appears to encourage an expectation that earning a college degree is a realistic goal.

There are appropriate ways to include high school students with SCDs with their peers without neutralizing the academic achievements of students who meet the state standards for a regular high school diploma and without engendering false hope. Kaitlyn's Law, signed in May 2009 by Missouri governor Jay Nixon in time for that spring's high school graduations, serves as a model of sensitivity and common sense in educating and accommodating students in the K-12 system with special needs. Kaitlyn's Law allows students with IEPs who will continue to receive Section 504 services beyond their first four years of high school (IDEA allows services to be extended up to age 21 when necessary) to participate in their high school's graduation ceremony and all related graduation activities alongside the peers with whom they entered high school. Two stipulations of Kaitlyn's Law specify that the student must be making satisfactory progress on his or her IEP and that participation in the graduation ceremony and related

activities is deemed appropriate by the student's IEP planning team (Missouri House of Representatives, 2009). Kaitlyn's Law endeavors to reduce the stigma felt by students with disabilities who need to continue working in high school on IEP goals past the traditional four years by allowing them to celebrate the important social milestone of high school graduation with their same-age peers. It seems unlikely that other students would be negatively impacted when students with IEPs who otherwise meet the law's criteria are allowed to participate in the graduation ceremony and related celebrations with their peers.

Awarding regular high school diplomas to students who meet their IEP goals, if the IEP goals do not at least equal the state's minimum graduation requirements of students without IEPs, on the other hand, is an inappropriate act of deference to the demands of the students with disabilities and their advocates. Whereas Kaitlyn's Law addresses the social needs of students with disabilities in a reasonable manner and does not in any discernible way negatively affect other students, the awarding of regular high school diplomas to students who meet their IEP goals unjustly benefits one group of students at the expense of another, the majority, in two important ways.

First, the accomplishments of high school students who earned their diplomas by meeting the minimum requirements set forth by the state in which they reside become meaningless when the same diploma is able to be procured by students who did not meet those same requirements. This now-widespread phenomenon (at least 34/50 states in America) has done nothing less than simultaneously nullify the worth of a regular high school diploma and contribute to degree inflation as employers who once could rely upon a high school diploma to communicate a minimal level of intellectual ability and

academic skill now struggle to verify those capacities in potential employees. The seriousness of this problem is evidenced by the fact that ACT has successfully developed and marketed WorkKeys, a comprehensive job skills assessment system that both profiles specific jobs, identifies the skills required for them, and assesses potential employees for those skills (ACT, 2009). The conception and development of WorkKeys was largely inspired by the void created when high school diplomas became less reliable over time as a means to certify the minimal academic abilities of diploma holders, according to former regional WorkKeys manager, Barbara Halsey (personal communication, October 4, 2006).

Secondly, the enrollment of students with SCDs at the open-door community college and their attendance in developmental courses, made possible only because they are being awarded regular high school diplomas, often diminishes the educational experiences of students enrolled without SCDs. For its first thirty years, STLCC effectively admitted students who had demonstrated a much more reasonable likelihood of benefiting from the curricula because they possessed a standards-based high school diploma or its equivalent. Unfortunately, the long-standing practice of STLCC extending enrollment to students who possess high school diplomas or an equivalent now results in enrolling some students with SCDs who do not have a legitimate chance of exiting the developmental reading sequence and qualifying for college-level courses. These exceedingly divergent interests have now coexisted at STLCC for approximately twenty years, since the awarding of regular high school diplomas to students with SCDs led them to qualify for enrollment at STLCC beginning in the early 1990s. At that point, STLCC's open enrollment policy was transformed from what many had long-hailed as a most

positive feature of the college to a veritable Achilles' Heel when the negative effects associated with extending college enrollment to students who have not demonstrated minimal command of even high school material began to build, as discussed in Chapter 1 (see also: Berger, 1997; Cohen and Brawer, 2003; Hadden, 2000; McCabe, 2000; Mitchell, 1989; Morante, 1989 Mitchell, 1989; Roueche and Roueche, 1999; Traub, 1994; and Zeitlin and Markus, 1996).

Awarding regular high school diplomas in this non-judicious manner grants access at open-door community colleges to students with SCDs so severe that they are unable to succeed in low-level developmental reading courses. This ability to enroll in college, in turn, stokes students' self-efficacy, which causes them to re-enroll because they often are allowed and actively encouraged by their advocates to do so. The federal government, for its part, now provides access to Title IV money so students with intellectual disabilities have the ability to pay for and enroll in higher education settings. The government has provided grants to entities like The Institute for Community Inclusion, which created thinkCollege!, an initiative whose name reveals the group's primary intent: to literally get students with intellectual disabilities and their advocates to consider college enrollment with appeals such as the following, directed at the parents of students with intellectual disabilities.

So, let's begin by saying, "Why not college?" Hearing ourselves say these words may sound awkward at first, but after awhile we will become accustomed to having college as a possibility. Then, when we hear our sons and daughters talk about going to college, we will start saying, "Yes, our son will be going to college

next year. Let's figure out how to make it happen!" (The Institute for Community Inclusion, 2009, b, Think College section)

The primary purpose of the increasingly organized efforts to include students with developmental disabilities on college campuses, sought by their advocates and now financially and ideologically sustained by the federal government, is to gain access to more societal venues where these students can exercise self-determination and self-actualize. On the Institute for Community Inclusion's webpage directed at the family members of persons with intellectual disabilities, the following explains the initiative's perspective on the benefits of going to college for students with intellectual disabilities:

As for others, the benefits of attending college for individuals with intellectual disabilities can be measured in their growth in a number of areas, including academic and personal skill building, independence, self-advocacy, and self-confidence and new friendships. For individuals with disabilities, this growth is also reflected in increased self-esteem, when they begin to see themselves as enjoying what their same age peers without disabilities are experiencing. Being part of campus life, taking classes (whether auditing or for credit), joining student organizations, and learning to navigate a world of high expectations leads to the development of skills and confidence needed for successful adulthood. (The Institute for Community Inclusion, 2009b, Benefits of College section)

In this college-going benefits description, the institute's emphasis is heavily and clearly on the social and self-determination opportunities that students with intellectual disabilities – the term the institute confirms on its website is “the currently preferred term for the disability historically referred to as mental retardation” (The Institute for

Community Inclusion, 2009c, intellectual disability section) – can gain by being on college campuses. What has developed at STLCC, and is by all evidence occurring at many community colleges with similar enrollment policies across the nation, is a classic case of competing interests. At odds are the educational philosophies of the community colleges that offer intensive, developmental courses for the express purpose of remediating students to matriculate into college-level curricula and students with SCDs and their advocates who understandably view the community college as an attractive forum the students can utilize to best reach their potential in life, irrespective of their ability to ever qualify for college-level courses. More simply stated: students with SCDs enroll in open-door community colleges and reap, in reality, what are largely social or non-academic benefits, often at the educational expense of their classmates.

Why Community Colleges Must Address the Enrollment of Students with SCDs

The findings of this study suggest that a significant reason students with SCDs seek continued college enrollment and their advocates support that enrollment is so that the students may collect important social benefits related to self-determination. They also enroll in pursuit of degrees to increase their employability and self-worth. But because these students with SCDs are unlikely to qualify for the college-level curriculum, much less earn college degrees, and because enrollment in higher education settings for purely social reasons in intensive developmental settings is inappropriate for all the reasons previously delineated, community colleges should take steps to restrict or eliminate such enrollments. If community colleges can find ways in their institutional responses to also address the social, educational, and employment goals of students with SCDs, this would

be ideal. However, failure to address this issue altogether makes these institutions complicit in the deterioration of the quality of their educational offerings.

There are four important reasons that community colleges should address the repeated enrollment in developmental courses by students with SCDs in some manner. First, these colleges never adopted open enrollment policies with the intent of enrolling and educating students with SCDs in the developmental classroom, yet such students now routinely enroll. Second, if the integrity of college-level courses and concern for student success is important enough to protect with mandatory assessment and placement, surely the integrity of the developmental courses and the successes and futures of both capable, at-risk students and students with SCDs are as important. If the range of abilities in the offered developmental courses is not controlled to a reasonable degree and students are allowed to enroll in academic experiences with little to no ability to benefit academically, the colleges' message is that the educational pursuits in developmental classrooms are expendable, unimportant, and superfluous and, therefore, the efforts of the students and faculty in those classrooms are as well.

Third, it is questionable stewardship to accept tuition from and extend repeated enrollment to students when professional educators judge them to have effectively no chance of future success. When asked to comment freely about any of the issues addressed by this study, one Access counselor agreed and opined, "It is unethical to be placing these students into the developmental sequence of classes, knowing they will not succeed. Not only is it unfair to the students and faculty, it is a waste of taxpayers' money." One might argue that if the student is paying tuition, tax dollars are not wasted, but tuition at a community college assumes only 17% of all educational costs (American

Association of Community Colleges, 2009c). Significant financial assistance is directly underwritten by the state and local community in which the college is situated, a combined 59%, not to mention the 15% subsidized by federal funds (American Association of Community Colleges, 2009c). This ethical enrollment dilemma appears to be particularly heart-wrenching for counselors and advisors. While they might personally disagree with the enrollment practice, they may have no other choice under current enrollment policies but to advise students with regular high school diplomas about the courses in which they are eligible to enroll, even when no chance of success is predicted.

Finally, of those currently responsible for enrolling these students, the community college must be the party that makes a change in policy because it is unlikely that the other four entities that could alter the enrollment behavior of students with SCDs in developmental courses will take action. Though an ideal solution, it is unlikely that K-12 schools in the thirty-four states highlighted in *Figure 4* (p. 66) will ever revert back to requiring students with IEPs to demonstrate, with appropriate accommodations, mastery of the curriculum at least at the minimum level required of students without IEPs. That political battle in the K-12 environment where inclusion is supremely valued by the students and their advocates may have been lost for good, and community colleges do not have any real or political power to change that policy. Still, community colleges should consider contacting the special school districts that serve their local feeder high schools, and perhaps their state's board of education, to impress upon those in power the extraordinary burden the community college bears when students are awarded regular high school diplomas for meeting IEP goals that are not at least minimally equivalent to those the state requires for the diploma to be awarded to students without IEPs. Perhaps if

those responsible for this practice in the K-12 system fully understand the ramifications beyond their domain, it may prompt discussions and policy changes at that level.

Additionally, if a community college does issue an institutional response to the population, the institution should inform the local school districts of any policy change(s) that may affect their students.

It is also highly unlikely that community colleges will be able to convince K-12 counselors, advisors, teachers and administrators to refrain from recommending open-door community colleges as a viable post-secondary option for students with SCDs unless the colleges change their policies in such a way that it discourages this recommendation. A student's IEP team is legally mandated to assist the student with transitioning to post-secondary life. Even though IEP team members may wholly understand the community college does not offer suitable academic programs that address the educational needs of their advisees with SCDs, with few postsecondary options more attractive, they will continue to recommend enrollment at the community college. Some students in this study reported having been counseled by K-12 employees to enroll at STLCC, and their parents may have received similar counsel because those employees either truly believe or hope STLCC can meet these students' needs or they are suggesting the only opportunity they know of for these students to continue their education. This may be the case particularly when a student does not possess a developmental disability diagnosis, one that usually qualifies them for many community programs that serve adults, but instead is in the category of Borderline Intellectual Functioning (BIF). Persons with BIF diagnoses register IQs between 71-84, or just above the 70 or below designation required to be diagnosed with mental retardation (American

Psychiatric Association, 2000), yet they frequently do not qualify for the bevy of community programs and funds reserved for adults with developmental disabilities.

It is highly unlikely that the parents of students who possess SCDs and want to enroll can be convinced to actively prevent their children from enrolling. Parents believe access to the community college experience is overwhelmingly beneficial for their children on many levels, even if it turns out the students do not profit much, if at all, from the experience academically. The parents probably are unaware of and/or do not concern themselves with the impact their child's enrollment has on their child's classmates and/or instructors. In a world with few options as attractive, they are pleased their child has found, if by no other measure than its enrollment policy, an accepting environment in the open-door community college.

It can be difficult for parents to accurately judge the intellectual capacity of their children with SCDs if they are not professional educators. Parents often lack either accurate diagnostic data on their child and/or the skills to interpret the data. In one study, the parents of community college students were found to have only a "general awareness of their students' academic skills" (Bers, 2005, p. 424) while overestimating the students' abilities as compared to their placement test results. Bers and Galowich (2002) found parents to hold unrealistically high expectations of their children's potential to move through the community college with specific regard to the students' high need for remediation and the reality that most community college students don't earn Associate's degrees. College counselors and advisors anecdotally reported that such expectations among parents of community college-bound students are common (Bers and Galowich, 2002). While parents may readily admit their child possesses an SCD, if their child has

been awarded a regular high school diploma – even if the parent fully understands that their child’s IEP goals were not equivalent to the regular high school curriculum – they may believe that a community college may have programs that will accommodate their children similarly. More than anything, parents will not definitively know whether or not there is a place for their child at the community college unless the student enrolls and tries, and trying at STLCC, for instance, starts at less than \$250 per 3-credit-hour course. The worst that can happen is failure and dismissal, which can take two years or more if enrollment is unnaturally extended by the student strategically withdrawing or if, in the case of STLCC, PR grades are awarded when grades of F should have been assigned.

Parents seem especially inclined to seek college enrollment for students with SCDs if it is strongly desired by the students, because it is a parent’s natural inclination to be their child’s greatest ally, advocate, and cheerleader. Jane’s mother provided a glimpse into the delicate balance a parent of a child with a significant cognitive disability must strike between hope and reality: “While I pray she goes far, I think she has limitations others don’t face.” Because the parent/child relationship will continue long into the future, if the child is to be denied college enrollment or opportunity in an area of life, it will be at the hands of others in society, not because the parents didn’t support their children’s quest to self-actualize. There is evidence in the data that suggests that some parents of students with SCDs might prefer their children were not able to enroll at community colleges because they find it very difficult to deny their children available opportunities. When the students are eligible to enroll, it seems some parents are inclined to begrudgingly relent when their children do not.

All three parents in Phase II indicated through their write-in comments that they are somewhat uncomfortable putting limitations on their children because they are not entirely sure what they are and are not capable of academically achieving. Scott's mother said that "We feel working toward an Associate's degree is a good start for Scott." Jane's mother indicated that Jane wants to earn a college degree because she understands how important a college education is, but she "is just now coming to terms with her limitations." This statement suggests that while Jane's mother was aware of Jane's academic limitations, she may prefer Jane receive feedback about them from an objective source and not have to be the bearer of that news. Karen's father said that she is "limited in her level of achievement. However, she has achieved beyond what I believed she was able to achieve. I try not to put a limitation on her." It is the nature of parenting to want the best for one's children, and in an oft-cruel world sometimes parents provide the only soft place for a child to retreat. Parents not only do not wish to limit their children and curtail possible opportunity, they also do not want to be anything less than a positive source of encouragement. It seems that the combination of not wanting to risk limiting their children who have strong desires to attend college leads to the parents supporting enrollment at open door community colleges, since an enrollment opportunity is available.

Finally, the students will continue to seek enrollment as long as it is available to them. Every student in this study has either been targeted with some aggressive counseling against enrollment/re-enrollment and/or been sent the same message through the grades they earned, but to no avail. "For many people, participation in the college experience represents the American dream. Higher education is viewed by most as the

ultimate educational experience” (Wehman and Yasuda, 2005, p. 3). While probably thousands of high school graduates with SCDs across the nation every year make the decision not to enroll, a considerable number of students each year will continue to enroll even when others attempt to persuade them not to.

History Repeats Itself

In 1964, a committee on the Forest Park campus piloted a program called the General Curriculum Program (GCP) to address the enrollment of students who were stunningly similar to those in this study in the sense that they, too, were identified by college representatives as being unlikely to benefit from the courses STLCC offered. If a reader were unaware that the description of this program was of one offered in 1965 on the Forest Park campus, one could easily mistake it for the current state of affairs at STLCC and indeed at many community colleges across the nation. In describing the GCP’s targeted student population, the study’s author, Duane Anderson (1969) wrote, “There is little evidence...to support the belief that any remedial treatment covering one, two, or four semesters, will accomplish to any degree the task of preparing the academically handicapped students for a traditional college program” (p. 43). Forest Park developed and offered the program because “the popularization of higher education (had) resulted in an influx of students whose achievement and ability levels (were) lower than those traditionally accepted for college work” (Anderson, 1969, p. 1).

Due to the widening pool of abilities presented by students seeking enrollment at Forest Park, administrators found they had to make “value judgments...concerning what constituted a legitimate program responsibility of the college” (Anderson, 1969, p. 4). As a result, during the fall semester of 1965, 133 students on the Forest Park campus were

either required or strongly encouraged to enroll in either the GCP or nothing at all, and the GCP was run alongside a comparison group of 150 comparably weak students in the traditional STLCC curriculum to determine whether a specialized curriculum better satisfied “the needs of academically handicapped students who aspired to education beyond high school at the Forest Park Community College campus” (Anderson, 1969, p. 1). The striking similarities between 1965 STLCC and STLCC in 2009 continue. The GCP was created out of “concern of administrators and faculty for a community colleges’ social responsibility to provide universal educational opportunity” (Anderson, 1969, p. 4). The program consisted of a non-credit, personal enrichment, general education program, with individualized instruction on basic skills, and “a structured counseling and guidance program designed to assist students in developing goals consistent (sic) with their tested abilities” (Anderson, 1969, p. 2). The GCP was created with the intent of providing the students with a stimulating, successful educational experience “under the guidance of an instructor who possessed a real interest in low ability students and who also had demonstrated competency in a subject-matter field” (Anderson, 1969, p. 12-13).

The students were referred to as “academically handicapped” because their low scores on standardized test and past poor performance in high school put them at risk. I have no reason to infer that these students were as intellectually low functioning as those in this study, especially since the GCP students had earned high school diplomas prior to their 1965 STLCC enrollment. The issue of mismatch between curricular expectations and student abilities is one that STLCC and many other community colleges have contended with for over forty years and the gulf created by that mismatch, without a doubt, has only deepened over time.

The following are some of Anderson's prescient assumptions surrounding his 1969 study at Forest Park that ring true at STLCC thirty years later and surely do for many other community colleges that are struggling to more appropriately address the repeated enrollment of students with SCDs in developmental courses without progress:

- The desire and need for some form of post-high school education, in order to compete successfully in the social and vocational world, will increase in the years ahead.
- With a greater percentage of each year's college age population enrolling in some form of post-high school educational institution, a greater number of students with lower academic aptitude will be present in the college population.
- Four-year colleges and universities will become more selective as applications for admissions increase, therefore the open-door community college will be assigned a larger responsibility for the less able student.
- Students with academic handicaps will not be able to compete successfully in traditional college transfer, or technical program at any post-high school institution.
- The present programs, in which the "academically handicapped" students are enrolled, are not adequate to the task.
- The attitudes expressed by "academically handicapped" students toward the programs provided for them are important to the effectiveness of these programs. (Anderson, 1969, p. 7-8)

As community colleges consider viable institutional responses to the student population studied herein, it would be wise to heed some lessons from Anderson's critical findings in regard to the GCP, which apparently was only offered during the 1965-1966 academic year. First, one year after the study, more students originally enrolled in the GCP were found in an educational setting while more from the comparison group were employed. A reader can reasonably infer this finding to mean that GCP students were more likely to be artificially sustained and motivated to remain in an educational setting *because* of the inclusive, special GCP program, while the comparison group divorced from formal education after floundering in the regular curriculum. In other words, any specialized educational program, including developmental education, serving a population *not expected to be remediated* toward the regular curriculum will have the tendency of retaining those students for multiple semesters, which Anderson determined "could be both advantageous and detrimental to the best interest of the student and society" (p. 92).

Student attitudes about GCP revealed that any alternative, specialized program must offer real value to the student to evoke a commitment similar to that of a student choosing to enroll in the credit-bearing curriculum. GCP was non-credit and while earlier Anderson (1969) described students' enrollment as being "strongly encouraged" (p. 9), he later characterized them as enrolling in "a program that was forced upon them" (p. 93). Two other notable findings as they apply to community colleges' consideration of any alternative program development for the student population being studied are that the GCP program lacked parental support because it did not award college credit, and GCP

students – because of the specialized attention they received – recognized that their instructors cared greatly for their success.

CHAPTER SEVEN: RECOMMENDATIONS

Considerations for Evaluating Potential Institutional Responses

In *What Works: Research-Based Best Practices in Developmental Education*, thought of by many in the field as *the* guide on creating quality developmental education programs, Boylan (2002) imparts that “when all those involved in a developmental education program are guided by a holistic developmental philosophy” they “not only ‘talk the talk’ but also ‘walk the walk’” (p. 62) and make decisions with the best interests of students in mind at all times. Unlike many factors that threaten student learning on a daily basis and are out of the community college’s control, this is one issue community colleges have the power to address and improve. Community colleges should be compelled to respond to this challenge presented by student diversity by the same reasoning that led Jacobs-Biden (2006) to state: “The diverse nature of the students dictates that the original mission of the community college changes as the nature of the community college metamorphoses” (p. 3). While Jacobs-Biden’s reference to diversity assumed all imaginable categories of diversity and was not restricted to diversity of academic ability, her point captures perfectly the need for community colleges to appropriately respond to the increasing enrollment of students with SCDs because that enrollment negatively affects the quality of instruction proffered, the principal reason for the institution’s existence.

Community colleges fully committed to cultivating academic environments that maximize student success must do nothing less than address the issue of students with SCDs repeatedly enrolling in courses in which they are unlikely to succeed. Community colleges must not lose sight of the primary function the developmental courses were

created to serve: to prepare students to enroll in the college-level curriculum. Community colleges should respect and appreciate the needs of students with SCDs as valued community members. As well, these institutions should demonstrate no less respect and appreciation of the needs of their classmates who have a reasonable opportunity to succeed and who endeavor to receive an adequate educational experience in return for their tuition and time.

Developmental education cannot accommodate persons of every ability level who may seek enrollment. Boylan (2002) imparts that “Best practice institutions go to substantial lengths to make sure that everyone understands what developmental education can and cannot do” (p. 14). A growing movement over the past ten years (see McCabe and Day, 1998; McCabe 2000; National Center on Education and the Economy, 2007; Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, 2009; The Lumina Foundation, 2009), including most recently President Barack Obama’s American Graduation Initiative (Brandon, 2009), has extolled the dire need for America to increase its number of college graduates and citizens with postsecondary education in order to remain competitive in an increasingly global economy. Many of these entities are rightly focused on improving the effectiveness of community colleges and developmental education because community colleges educate nearly half of all undergraduate students (American Association of Community Colleges, 2009b) and because nearly 60% of those students enroll in developmental courses, according to a report from Jobs For the Future (as cited in The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, 2009). It is implicitly understood that the work of community colleges and developmental education is vitally important to the overall health of America. America has, as the title of McCabe’s 2000 report to the nation’s

stakeholders and community college leaders succinctly states, *No One to Waste*. It is imperative that the developmental courses designed to prepare students for the college-level curriculum are as strong and academically sound as possible so that our nation's intellectual talent can be properly cultivated.

Anderson's 1969 study on the '64-'65 alternative GCP program at Forest Park concluded that "the overriding question of the appropriateness of the inclusion of special programs for academically handicapped students in the offering of the community-junior college remains unsettled" (p. 91). While the question of appropriateness about the inclusion of students with SCDs on a community college campus is still debatable, Phase III participants in this study unequivocally agree that it is inappropriate to extend repeated enrollments to students with SCDs when success upon future enrollment is unlikely. While some faculty and Access counselors favored a more aggressive institutional response, like moving the lowest level reading courses (and the students that test into them) out of the credit side of the college and into Continuing Education, others felt strongly that open access to credit-bearing courses at STLCC should remain at all costs and that students deserve the opportunity to succeed or fail. Many in this latter group, though, also expressed their attendant opinion that the current academic monitoring system is dysfunctional in that it allows too many re-enrollments for some students who have been judged likely not to succeed upon re-enrollment. Their philosophy is that initial access must be honored, but that re-enrollment should be limited when future success is not predicted.

Overly-aggressive action taken to address the student population being studied must be cautioned against, because it easily could have the unintended result of limiting

access to students who are capable of navigating the developmental reading sequence. STLCC institutional data from the Fall 2006 cohort of new, first-time students across the district reveal that four students out of the 371 who initially tested into RDG 016/017 earned associate's degrees at STLCC in under three years (data provided by STLCC Institutional Research, 2009). This case in point illustrates the spread of student ability that exists in RDG 016/017 because the range of Accuplacer scores that qualifies a student is 0-40, while RDG 020 is much narrower at 41-56. It is not inconceivable that a student legitimately could test in at the high end of the RDG 016/017 range, benefit greatly from the developmental reading offerings, enroll in the college curriculum and earn an associate's degree in a reasonable period of time. District-wide, 86 of the 371 students (23%) in the Fall 2006 cohort who initially tested into RDG 016/017 succeeded in exiting the developmental sequence at some point within three years and became eligible for the college-level curriculum (data provided by STLCC Institutional Research, 2009). These students exemplify those that the graded developmental reading sequence was designed to serve from the beginning.

It is important to keep in mind when considering all the iterations of potential institutional responses that the community college extends crucial higher education access by serving so many students who are only able to participate, at least initially, by way of the community college. A reasonable response to the student population studied will require finesse and an understanding that no action can result in community colleges confidently predicting which incoming students will be successful in developmental coursework and which are unlikely to benefit from it. This is why any institutional action considered must be conservative enough to ensure that initial access is maintained for all

who demonstrate the slightest chance of benefitting from the curricula while bold enough to make a difference. Even by taking a conservative approach to policy revision, community colleges can achieve great gains in addressing the needs of all students who enroll in developmental courses.

While I do reference supportive comments for recommendations in this chapter by colleagues, these final recommendations are mine alone. Phase III participation should not be viewed as an endorsement by those colleagues of my recommendations, except where my recommendations mirror data collected in the Phase III survey. Furthermore, while many individuals at STLCC and beyond provided me with assistance during the research and writing of this dissertation, especially many who are referenced in the acknowledgments section (see p. v), my acknowledgment of their assistance does not imply that they approve of my findings and recommendations either, though they may.

I have chosen to present options that I believe community colleges should consider in choosing to address the repeated enrollment of students with SCDs in developmental courses while believing that any final determination should not be made unilaterally and without open discussion, since there is no one “correct” answer to what is ultimately a matter of values. Above all, two ideals should guide future discussion of any institutional response to the student population addressed in this study: the intended purpose of the developmental course sequence to remediate students toward college-level courses and the moral obligation of professional educators to ensure that all of their students’ unmet educational needs are addressed appropriately.

Recommendations

Five recommendations are being issued as a result of this study. The first three are global in nature and will apply to all community colleges wishing to address the repeated, yet unsuccessful, enrollment of students with SCDs in developmental courses at their institutions. The final two recommendations specific to some of STLCC's unique policies will be useful to community colleges with similar policies.

1. Scrutinize enrollment procedures to ensure students are correctly enrolling for the developmental courses into which they placed and not enrolling in higher-level courses.

One of the easiest and most important steps institutions can take to improve their educational offerings is to ensure, without exception, that students are only allowed to enroll in courses for which they are eligible to enroll. In short, faculty, staff and administrators must enforce the policies that exist and must critically examine existing enrollment procedures to identify and close any loopholes that may allow erroneous enrollment. Students who are able to enroll in developmental courses beyond their proven abilities not only compromise their own likelihood of success but that of their classmates, as well.

2. Consider developing non-credit, alternative programs to credit-bearing developmental courses specifically for students with SCDs.

As one STLCC faculty member wrote, "I believe the institution must offer an alternative for this population as a response to the institution's mission statement." It can be argued that STLCC has a moral obligation to better address this student population with alternatives because the college admits students with SCDs and because the college's own mission statement reads in part: "We create accessible, dynamic learning

environments focused on the needs of our diverse communities” (St. Louis Community College, 2008). Students with SCDs certainly bring diversity from the community to the community college campuses, and they should not be valued less than any other member of the community because they possess SCDs. In 1970, founding president of the St. Louis JCD, Joseph Cosand said, “If colleges are to open their doors to all students, they must offer something that will benefit all of them (in Warren, 1998, p. 307). An Access counselor wrote, “The College needs to do something in response to these students. The college is the place they want to be, so we need to meet their needs.”

Contrary to what some may believe, in my professional judgment STLCC and other community colleges would display greater stewardship toward to their students with SCDs by thoughtfully addressing their unique educational needs as opposed to continuing to allow them repeated access to developmental courses in which they ultimately are not successful. The ethical imperative remains that students should only be granted access to academic settings at community colleges from which they can be reasonably expected to benefit academically. It is entirely sensible to debate whether or not community colleges should offer the kind of mission-broadening programs many believe students like those in this study may most benefit from. As one Access counselor admitted, “I am not 100% certain about the role of the community college in this regard.” However, the issue of institutional mission creep by offering specialized programs to students who cannot benefit from the developmental offerings is no more important to debate than the issue of how instructors can be expected to address the current breadth of abilities that exists in the developmental classroom.

Offering an alternative program on campus, designed to maximize each individual's potential, may be one way to better meet the needs of students with SCDs at community colleges. A major reason students with SCDs appear to be drawn to the community college, especially when they do not avail themselves of other community-based options, is because they are in pursuit of the social opportunities and campus environment that the college experience uniquely offers. Within a year of the 2005 reading requirement going into effect, STLCC assigned a district assessment committee to study course repeaters at STLCC and to determine what, if any, institutional actions should be considered. In its Spring 2007 final report (see Appendix P, p. 365), the first recommendation handed down by STLCC's district-wide Developmental Education Assessment Committee was that the college establish a district-wide task force to specifically "design and implement alternative academic/life skills coursework and/or career pathways for students who place into RDG 020 or below and are not likely to succeed (especially course repeaters)" (Appendix P, p. 368, ¶1).

STLCC Professor of English Christine Carter and I were funded by the college to research and design an alternative, non-credit program that endeavors to increase the communication skills, life skills, and career skills of students who might struggle with satisfactorily completing college preparatory or developmental courses on the credit side of the college. STLCC has undergone administrative, structural, and financial changes since supporting the creation of that program, called Pathways to Success or PTS (see Appendix Q, p. 369), and the college is in the process of identifying adequate funding to properly administer the program out of Continuing Education as a pilot program on the Meramec campus. STLCC is poised to join the ranks of forty-seven other institutes of

higher education across the nation that offer substantially separate programs for students with SCDs or intellectual disabilities (The Institute for Community Inclusion, 2009a), though PTS also will be available to students who do not possess cognitive disabilities yet who believe they could benefit from the program's offerings.

If non-credit programs like PTS are available at community colleges, students with SCDs will have the option to enroll in those programs as opposed to initially enrolling in or re-enrolling in developmental reading courses with no notable progress. If PTS develops into a successful program at STLCC in the future, IEP transition teams from feeder high schools, as well as Access counselors and advisors at STLCC, will have an on-campus alternative to offer for the consideration of parents and students. PTS is designed to culminate in an employment internship and a certificate of workplace readiness for students who meet the program's requirements. These two programmatic features address the attractiveness issue that Anderson (1969) raised with the non-credit GCP program at Forest Park in 1965.

In part, the extreme rarity for community college instructors to hold special education degrees or any meaningful preparation in teaching students with SCDs compromises the effectiveness of addressing those students' needs. Therefore, any alternative programs created to address the needs of students with SCDs must be properly staffed with professionals who are capable of addressing the unique needs of these students. The success of students with SCDs in programs like PTS would also likely be enhanced if students can be encouraged to share their most recent diagnostic paperwork and IEPs with the educational professionals working directly with them and not just with the counselors who facilitate and support their enrollment. Special educators who are

aware of a student's specific diagnosis and past IEP contents will have a greater opportunity to design and deliver a successful educational experience than will college faculty with no special education preparation and no more information about a student with an SCD than the boilerplate accommodations they have been instructed to extend.

Two colossal deterrents associated with enrolling in non-credit courses that would have kept many students in the past from considering a program like PTS were that students were required to enroll in credit courses both to maintain eligibility for health insurance through their parents' policies and to qualify for financial aid. Fortunately, momentous changes in both of those arenas should make PTS a more attractive choice as long as STLCC students, parents, counselors and advisors are aware of the changes. Regarding health insurance eligibility in the state of Missouri, House Bill 818 went into effect on January 1, 2008, and has significant ramifications for the college enrollment choices of students who in the past had to register and pay for at least twelve credit hours each semester to remain covered under their parents' health insurance policy. HB 818 revised existing Missouri insurance law as it applies to dependent children and it effectively removed college enrollment altogether as an eligibility criterion for all dependent children whose parents who receive their coverage through an employer that is not self-insured. However, dependents must meet the following criteria to be eligible: they must be unmarried, under the age of 25, Missouri residents, and ineligible for insurance from another source, such as through their own place of employment (Department of Insurance, Financial Institutions & Professional Registration, 2009). To be sure, the benefits of HB 818 will not extend to all students in Missouri with SCDs because not all will meet the outlined criteria, but it is a change that affects many

traditional, college-aged students and may allow them now to consider an alternative program like PTS. Furthermore, the 2008 revisions to HB 818 specifically require health managed organization (HMO) plans to continue coverage to dependent children who reach the limiting age (25) “while the child is and continues to be both incapable of self-sustaining employment by reason of mental or physical handicap and chiefly dependent upon the enrollee for support and maintenance” (Department of Insurance, Financial Institutions & Professional Registration, 2009, ¶1). States besides Missouri may also have similar insurance laws that will benefit students with SCDs in those states who wish to enroll at community colleges. More to the point, however, it is not the community college’s expressed mission to extend enrollment to students for the purpose of ensuring students’ continued health insurance eligibility.

The key in Missouri will be to educate community college students, parents, advisors and faculty members about the recent insurance change so that they can determine whether or not to consider alternatives to credit courses. Five participants in Phase III offered their beliefs that students like those in this study may be motivated to enroll to maintain health insurance eligibility, and for some students that need will remain. Conversations with colleagues revealed that these recent, critical insurance changes are not well-known among key college representatives like Access counselors, STLCC advisors, and faculty. Until an Access counselor tipped her hand on the Phase III survey that insurance eligibility would have *formerly* been a motivational factor, I did not know the long-standing minimum twelve credit-hour enrollment requirement had changed, which is what led me to investigate it at all. During a PTS informational presentation, I shared these recent changes in health insurance eligibility for dependents

with the audience and an STLCC advisor threw her hands up in the air and exclaimed with relief, “Well, that changes *everything!*” (personal communication, August 20, 2009), suggesting both that the changes would alter how she could advise students who were motivated to enroll primarily for health insurance eligibility and that she had not known of the changes prior to the presentation.

Federal financial aid eligibility requirements also previously may have deterred students from considering non-credit college options as an alternative to the credit side of the college, since financial aid did not apply to non-credit courses. However, with the August 14, 2008 reauthorization of the Higher Education Act of 1965, or Higher Education Opportunity Act (HEOA or P.L. 110-315), Title IV funds are now available to students with intellectual disabilities to pursue a “comprehensive transition and postsecondary program” (110th Congress of the U.S.A., 2008, Sec. 760, p. 285), which applies to pursuit of a degree, a certificate, or a non-degree program at higher education institutions. In particular, HEOA provides Title IV funds to those with intellectual disabilities enrolled in either academic, career and technical programs on college campuses that are expected to be parlayed later into paid employment or enrolled in programs that facilitate “independent living instruction” (110th Congress of the U.S.A., 2008, Sec. 760, p. 285). In other words, federal financial aid, just as it will continue to apply to college credit courses, now applies to programs like PTS for students with intellectual disabilities. On-campus alternatives to traditional developmental coursework like PTS need to be considered to meet the needs of students who want to continue their education beyond high school but who do not find an intensive academic experience designed to prepare them to succeed in college-level courses profitable. Most assuredly,

without options students with SCDs will continue to enroll in credit-bearing developmental courses if allowed and those courses represent the students' only choice.

3. Consider adopting a more responsive and stringent re-enrollment policy that emphasizes faculty input for all students who seek repeated enrollment in developmental classes when a second attempt does not yield success.

Current STLCC policy governing the repeatability of courses, for example, puts the power of allowing a third enrollment in the same course solely in the hands of STLCC counselors and advisors (St. Louis Community College, 2008, p. 11). Two features of this policy are particularly flawed because they decrease the institution's responsiveness to students whose future success with a repeated enrollment is effectively nil. The students' instructors are not consulted about the likelihood of the students' success upon re-enrollment, and three enrollments in a single class are excessive when any future enrollment is not expected to yield a different outcome than did previous enrollment(s). While counselors' and advisors' perspectives about students' academic abilities to succeed in future course enrollments are certainly valuable, the judgment of the students' instructors, who in many cases have spent sixteen weeks working closely with these students in an academic setting, should be considered equally important, if not more so, than their advisors' or counselors'.

First, when a student's instructor confidently judges the student's intellectual abilities will preclude him or her from passing that same developmental course upon any future re-enrollment, the student should be assigned an "F" not a PR. It is also suggested that a notification form be filed with advising (see Appendix R, p. 382 for the suggested form), even if the student withdraws from the class. Upon being referred by two of the

student's instructors for the same developmental class, that student's enrollment rights on the credit side of the college should be rescinded, except for courses outside the developmental curriculum to which the reading requirement does not apply. To do anything less is to knowingly re-enroll and accept tuition from students with SCDs in exchange for an educational experience they will not profit from.

An appeals process should exist for students with extenuating circumstances about which the instructor may not have been unaware, like Scott whose recent academic performance may have been the product of a severe learning disability that was not properly accommodated. Students are responsible for providing the proper paperwork to allow Access to determine and assign appropriate accommodations; were Scott to submit diagnostic paperwork after being referred away from the developmental curriculum, he should be allowed to appeal on that basis and should be granted another enrollment opportunity. If upon enrolling with appropriate accommodations the same determination is made by more than one instructor about the same course, then permission for Scott to enroll on the credit side of the college again should be denied, except for courses outside the developmental curriculum to which the reading requirement does not apply. Incidentally, at the time of this writing, Scott is currently registered for the third time in RDG 020.

Designated advisors and/or counselors should provide exit counseling to restricted students about their remaining enrollment options at STLCC and any appropriate options that exist beyond the college, and the students should invite any advocates they wish to attend that session. Students would benefit more from personalized exit counseling and from learning about alternative services than from being allowed to re-enroll multiple

times when faculty judge students to have a discrepancy between intellectual ability and the demands of the curriculum that cannot be successfully accommodated. Many faculty members and Access counselors favor students like those in this study being referred to various on-campus and community programs that may better meet their needs, and favor STLCC cultivating closer ties with Missouri's various state-funded agencies that provide services to adults with cognitive disabilities in particular, like Vocational Rehabilitation. Parents of students who did not possess knowledge about the array of community services available to their son or daughter prior to enrolling at the community college may have sought or supported community college enrollment partly out of default, because they either did not know of existing alternatives or did not have or take the time to research the specifics of each program. Because these former credit students would continue to be valued members of our community, the tenor of such a consultation should sensitively emphasize transition to more appropriate settings within or outside the college, as opposed to termination with the college.

While some may view this recommendation as particularly objectionable because it appears to run counter to access, arguably the community college's most sacred value, I offer two points for contemplation. First, specifically in the case of STLCC, the tenets of the college's open-door policy, employed since opening in 1962, were largely governed by Senate Bill 7 of 1961, which allowed for any school district or districts in Missouri to create a junior college district if standards set forth by the State Board of Education were met (Warren, 1998). One of the principal accreditation standards that Missouri has applied to junior colleges since the early 1900s was that only students who were high school graduates were allowed to enroll. The 1961 legislation was informed by the long-

standing practice in the state of Missouri of requiring junior college or community college enrollees to be high school graduates in order to be considered for admission because the curriculum offered was intended to be post-high school or the first two years of a baccalaureate (Warren, 1998). Many community colleges require a high school diploma or equivalent for enrollment privileges to be extended, as well.

When students with IEPs are awarded regular high school diplomas without being required to demonstrate minimum command of the state's standards for a diploma to be awarded to a student without an IEP, they qualify for enrollment at community colleges with enrollment policies like STLCC by way of semantics only, having procured access under false pretense. As a result, these institutions are well within their rights – and are ethically obligated – to issue an institutional response when the principle of extending enrollment in credit classes only to those who possess a high school diploma or its equivalent has so clearly been violated. There are fundamentally sound reasons that for over 100 years a high school diploma or its equivalent has been required in the state of Missouri, and is required in many other states, as well, for the extension of community college enrollment to be considered. The spirit of that requirement should either be honored or the policy should be abandoned, since in all likelihood it denies or at least limits enrollment for intellectually capable dropouts who also did not earn high school diplomas but are more likely to benefit academically than the students with SCDs currently being admitted.

Secondly, until an infallible way exists to verify the academic abilities of students with regular high school diplomas, which is what the diploma is supposed to do but no longer does in so many states, all graduates should continue to be allowed the opportunity

to enroll at open door community colleges. Access to higher education is critically important and requiring postsecondary assessment data in addition to a high school diploma, such as ACT and/or SAT scores to aid in verifying abilities, will complicate the registration process and undoubtedly discourage enrollment by imposing financial and other hardships on interested students. However, also knowing that some students with SCDs are commonly granted enrollment privileges by their possession of a regular high school diploma without having the ability to independently complete their own admissions applications, for instance, institutions must reserve the right to restrict re-enrollment when professionals at the college determine it is appropriate to do so.

In a speech given at the JCD's first staff orientation in 1963, Joseph Cosand said, "This 'open door' policy permits a student to try – it does not permit him a two-year lease on a classroom seat. It is utterly ridiculous to believe that all students should be enrolled in classes of similar academic rigor" (as cited in Warren, 1998, p. 283). The founding president of STLCC felt confident asserting this claim in an era when STLCC only admitted high school graduates or their equivalent peers in the 1960s. Institutions like STLCC should not balk at being asked to consider restricting extraneous enrollment opportunities for students like those in this study who are not expected to succeed upon re-enrollment. Because such an easily observable gap exists between the intellectual abilities of students with SCDs and what is required to succeed in even the lowest developmental courses, refusing to re-extend enrollment privileges is not denying access. It is, more accurately, refusing excessive enrollment to individuals who gained questionable access by presenting a high school diploma in name only and then repeatedly failed to succeed in the college's most fundamental developmental courses.

Such an institutional response should not be seen as denying opportunity; it must be seen as *preserving* opportunity, since all eligible students would still be given the opportunity to enroll, especially if more appropriate educational alternatives are offered through the college, and because the educational experiences of those who can benefit from the courses will be better preserved.

4. Consider developing an informational campaign aimed at STLCC faculty that clearly communicates the college's original interpretation and intention of the PR grade, as well as the unintended consequences that can occur when it is not assigned in the manner intended.

Every year, fewer STLCC faculty members teaching at the institution in 1976 when the P grade was installed (changed in 1977 to a PR) remain, and it seems some faculty may have reinterpreted the grade for uses beyond what was originally intended when it was adopted. Therefore, the college at large should expend some collective effort revisiting the original intent of the grade. Faculty of developmental courses should commit to assigning PRs only to students who have accomplished a considerable amount of a course, but not enough to pass, *and who they believe could be successful upon a second enrollment in that course.* To do otherwise is to contribute to the re-enrollment problem by artificially extending enrollment opportunities to students who do not show an ability to benefit from the course offerings.

5. Consider redefining success in developmental courses as completing a course with a grade of B or better, or critically redefine grading rubrics so that a C grade insures some likelihood of passing successive courses.

STLCC should restrict the movement of marginal students through the developmental curriculum by drawing a lesson from the well-conceived and data-driven recommendation of the 2007 district-wide STLCC developmental taskforce, which found that students who earn “Bs” or higher experience a much greater likelihood of success in the succeeding developmental course or in the college-level curriculum (see Appendix P, p. 365). Changing the exit requirement of developmental education courses to align with this finding would ensure only students capable of demonstrating at least 80% competency on the curricula are allowed to move forward in the sequence. “This could be accomplished by changing course prerequisites to ‘completion with a B,’ by defining the lower end of C work in developmental courses as 80%, or by moving toward mastery testing based on specific competencies” (Appendix P, p. 365).

The logic behind this – and institutional data show it to be true – is this: If a student cannot earn at least a “B” in a low-level developmental course, what is the likelihood they will earn a “C” or above in the next course? A positive by-product of raising the exit standards in the lowest reading courses is that capable students will be more motivated to undertake their developmental studies more seriously and perform at levels they are capable of because this structural device will motivate them to apply themselves in classes that students sometimes choose to invest in lightly. Community colleges must make every possible effort to ensure that exit criteria and entry requirements for all of the stepwise courses within the developmental sequence and the

college-level courses that developmental students move into are aligned. Failure to do so is “one of the biggest mistakes a developmental program can make” (Boylan, 2002, p. 89).

What Will Success Look Like?

Community colleges will need to closely monitor the effects of any policy changes they make, and all features that should be measured cannot be predicted in advance of such changes. However, one obvious piece of data that will inform community colleges of the success of their actions is an increase in successful completion of the developmental courses. Fewer developmental sections may be needed if the college’s actions are effective, since students with SCDs should not be repeatedly re-enrolling at will after unsuccessful attempts and others may avail themselves of alternative non-credit programs, like PTS. On the other hand, retention of capable students who previously were inclined to withdraw may offset the enrollment reduction of students with SCDs. Success may be measured by a reduction in withdrawals and overall retention and progress of students in the developmental sequence. Increased enrollment in alternative programs, like PTS, may be seen as an indicator of improvement, but only if students eligible to enroll in credit-bearing developmental courses are electing to enroll in the alternative programs as opposed to the programs simply attracting more students from the community with SCDs. At STLCC, an indication of institutional improvement, especially in RDG 012 and RDG 016/017, will be the anticipated negative change in the ratio of PRs to Fs assigned.

Recommendations for Future Studies

Results obtained support the decision that conducting a grounded theory study was the best research strategy to take in collecting the first data about the general college and community college enrollment motivations of students SCDs. However, now that research exists about the basic enrollment motivations of this student population, some complementary investigative approaches in the future could aid in supporting the current findings or adding to them. For instance, a case study approach on students in the same population would allow for further verification of this study's findings as would a study that hypothesized these enrollment motivations would be found in the same population but on a larger scale. A larger, quantitative study conducted on the enrollment motivations of this study's population would enable more involved statistical analyses and increase the ability of findings to be applied and generalized. It may be fruitful to model a study after the 1989 Smith and Bers study, which looked at parent involvement and influence on the choices of community college students, but to do so nationwide on this student population. It also would be useful to survey key community college personnel, like those in the Phase III survey, to more substantially document the educational issues associated with the enrollment of students with SCDs in developmental courses. It also may be helpful to further study which group of participants in Phase II and Phase III in this study – parents of students with SCDs versus faculty and counselors who work specifically with students with disabilities – more accurately judges the students' enrollment motivations overall and on what constructs. Doing so may provide a wealth of information about how well or poorly those groups tend to relate to, understand, and effectively advocate for students with SCDs, which

ultimately could cause both groups to become more educated and improve their current advisement strategy or other actions.

I regret that I didn't recognize in time for the Phase III survey the students' motivation of enrolling because they believe they are intellectually capable students. It would have been very interesting to see what percentages of faculty and Access counselors would have agreed with this motivation or claimed that there was no way students with SCDs could possibly think they could become or already were successful students. I suspect the latter may be how many Phase III participants would have responded, since colleagues often describe the "ruse" they believe parents sometimes engage in when they enroll their children with SCDs – the idea that no one, not even the student, believes the enrollment will yield academic success. Even I was surprised at the complete confidence students had in their abilities to achieve and earn college degrees. I thought perhaps some students may have been more self-aware and just wanted to be present on campus for non-academic reasons, but I found them all to be very serious about their studies. Therefore, I would like to see this motivation presented to key community college employees, like those in Phase III, to see what their reaction is to it. I would also like to include that motivation for their consideration as they rank the top three college enrollment motivations out of the six produced, to see how important they believe it to be relative to the others, since that was not accomplished in this study.

Concluding Thoughts

Though understandably not the first observation others may make, striking similarities exist between the students with SCDs in this study and high-achieving, successful college students. Both are admirably committed to a quest for higher education

and greater self-knowledge, and both are willing to invest everything they have to become better people today than they were yesterday. These three values influence the educational philosophy I have long subscribed to in both of my roles as student and instructor. As much as anything else, it also explains why I elected to study this issue: I simply wish for *every* community college student to have the best opportunity to achieve his or her personal potential, and I believe community colleges can adopt changes to increase this likelihood. Because so many students begin their postsecondary educations at community colleges, sometimes not by choice but because their options are limited for a variety of reasons, it remains my professional vow to ensure that all community college students have appropriate educational experiences of the greatest possible quality.

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APPENDIX A

NOMINATING FACULTY MEMBER NAME & CAMPUS:

_____ FP FV M W (circle one)

Student Nomination Checklist for Juliet Scherer's Study

For each student you nominate, please use this form to determine the student's eligibility for the study.

Students will choose whether or not to participate in the study, so you *will not submit the names* of nominated students to me. Rather, you will give nominated students a letter from me informing them of their eligibility to participate in a study investigating community college enrollment motivations. Students will then choose whether or not to contact me and indicate their interest in participating in the study.

Submitting this nomination checklist to me for each of the students you nominate will help me understand why students are being nominated and how many students faculty intend to inform about the study. These sheets will also effectively enter every nominating faculty member into a drawing for the \$50, which I offer as a sign of my appreciation for your time (and as a fairly boldfaced effort to encourage your participation!). The drawing will be conducted after the deadline for nominations.

1) One of the following two must be checked for the student to be eligible.

_____ Student has repeated at least one developmental reading course at STLCC.

_____ Student is "grandfathered" in before 2005 and is not required to demonstrate reading proficiency, but is being nominated for meeting other criteria.

2) Factors that impact my belief that this student is unlikely to establish reading proficiency in the future (please check all that apply):

_____ Ability to meet/exceed competencies established for current reading class.

_____ Grades earned on assignments/tests this semester in reading class.

_____ Standardized reading test scores, such as the Nelson-Denny, Gates-MacGinitie, etc.

_____ Ability to effectively participate in class and/or group work.

_____ Ability to independently manage schedule: homework, tests, attendance, etc.

_____ Ability to communicate effectively with the professor when necessary.

_____ Other, please explain:

APPENDIX B

NAME & CAMPUS OF NOMINATING ACCESS PERSONNEL:

_____ FP FV M W (circle one)

Student Nomination Checklist for Juliet Scherer's Study

For each student you nominate, please use this form to determine the student's eligibility for the study. Submitting this nomination checklist to me for each of the students you nominate will help me understand why students are being nominated and how many students Access personnel intend to invite to the study. These sheets will also effectively enter every participating Access member into a drawing for the \$50 gift card to a bookstore, which I offer as a sign of my appreciation for your time (and as a fairly boldfaced effort to encourage your participation!). The drawing will be conducted after the deadline for nominations.

Students will choose whether or not to participate in the study, so **you do not have to submit the names of nominated students to me**. Rather, you may hand-deliver or mail nominated students a letter of invitation to the study from me, which invites them to participate in a study investigating community college enrollment motivations. Or, if you prefer, you may give me the name and address of the student you are nominating and I will send the letter of invitation to him or her. **Students will then choose whether or not to contact me and indicate their interest in participating in the study.**

Please send your checklists in paper form to: Juliet Scherer (CN 121) at Meramec or electronically to jscherer@stlcc.edu.

1) **One of the following two must be checked** for the student to be eligible.

_____ Student has repeated at least one developmental reading course at STLCC.

_____ Student is "grandfathered" in before 2005 and is not required to demonstrate reading proficiency, but is being nominated for meeting other criteria.

2) **Factors that impacted my decision to nominate the student for the study (please check all that apply):**

_____ Ability to meet/exceed competencies established for current reading class.

_____ Grades earned in classes at St. Louis Community College.

_____ Placement test scores.

_____ Ability to effectively participate in class and/or group work.

_____ Ability to independently manage schedule: homework, tests, attendance, etc.

_____ Ability to communicate effectively with the professor when necessary.

_____ Other, please explain:

APPENDIX C

June 22, 2009

Dear St. Louis Community College Student,

I am a faculty member at St. Louis Community College and a PhD candidate at the University of Missouri – St. Louis, and I am conducting a study to learn more about why students take classes at community colleges.

The purpose of this letter is to learn about how many students are interested in volunteering for this study.

Directions and Study Description

If you are interested, you should check “yes” on the back of this letter and provide your home mailing address so that an invitation may be mailed to your house if you are selected for the study. If you are interested and selected to participate, you will be asked to take part in one interview with me, which is expected to last no longer than one hour. The interview will take place at a time that is convenient for you on whichever St. Louis Community College campus you would prefer: Florissant Valley, Forest Park, Meramec or Wildwood.

Study Reward

Students who are selected to participate will be eligible for two \$50 drawings to be held at the end of the interviews.

Thank you for considering the opportunity to participate in this exciting research project.

Sincerely,

Juliet K. Scherer

Please print clearly and indicate your interest in being considered for this study. By checking "YES," you are not committing to the actual study. And, if you are selected for the study in the future, you can always withdraw at any time without penalty if you change your mind.

CHECK ONE OPTION BELOW

First Name: _____ Last Name: _____

_____ YES, I am interested in participating.

_____ NO, I am not interested in participating.

If you selected YES, please provide your home mailing address. Thank you!

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____

Zip: _____

APPENDIX D

May 27, 2009

Dear _____,

Congratulations! You have been selected to participate in my study about student enrollment at St. Louis Community College. Thank you for earlier expressing your interest in being included in the study.

If you are still interested in participating, please contact me as soon possible by phone at: 314-984-7852 or by e-mail at jscherer@stlcc.edu so that we may arrange your 1-hr. interview on the St. Louis Community College campus of your choice. Please clearly leave your name and phone number so that I may return your message.

Once you complete your interview, **you will be eligible for two \$50 drawings** to be held at the end of the study. The total number of students in the study is not expected to be greater than 15.

For your review, I have included a copy of the informed consent you will need to read and sign in order to participate. If you agree to participate, you may bring this to our interview, or I will have another copy there for you.

If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to contact me.

Thank you for considering the opportunity to participate in this exciting research project.

Sincerely,

Juliet K. Scherer
Associate Professor of English

APPENDIX E

June 20, 2009

Dear _____,

I am writing to let you know that you are still eligible to participate in my study about student enrollment at St. Louis Community College. Course offerings and student services at St. Louis Community College are directly influenced by the valuable opinions and ideas only students can provide. You expressed earlier interest in being included in the study, but did not contact me after the first mailing. Therefore, I want to invite you one more time to participate. There is limited space left in the study, so please respond quickly if you are still interested in being included.

You may contact me by phone at 314-984-7852 or by e-mail at jscherer@stlcc.edu so that we may arrange your 1-hr. interview on the St. Louis Community College campus of your choice. Please clearly leave your name and phone number so that I may return your message.

Once you complete your interview, **you will be eligible for two \$50 drawings** to be held at the end of the study. The total number of students in the study is not expected to be greater than 15.

For your review, I have included a copy of the informed consent you will need to read and sign in order to participate. If you agree to participate, you may bring this to our interview, or I will have another copy there for you.

If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to contact me.

I am looking forward to meeting you to hear about your experiences at St. Louis Community College.

Sincerely,

Juliet K. Scherer

Associate Professor of English

APPENDIX F

Appointment Reminder

Dear _____,

I am looking forward to meeting you for our upcoming interview! If you cannot keep our meeting, please leave a message at 314-984-7852 or e-mail me at jscherer@stlcc.edu

Thanks, Juliet Scherer

DATE OF MEETING: Tuesday, June 9, 2009

TIME: 1 p.m.

MEETING PLACE: The lobby of the library at Forest Park.

APPENDIX G


Department of Educational Leadership & Policy Studies

8001 Natural Bridge Road
 St. Louis, Missouri 63121-4499
 Telephone: 314-516-5944
 Fax: 314-516-5942
 E-mail: farnsworthk@umsl.edu

Informed Consent for Student Participation in Research Activities

Enrollment at the Community College: Motivations and Goals (PHASE I)

Participant _____ HSC Approval Number: 090430S

Principal Investigator: Juliet K. Scherer PI's Phone Number: 314-984-7852

Why am I being asked to participate?

You are invited to participate in a research study about why students choose to enroll at the community college conducted by Juliet K. Scherer at the University of Missouri-St. Louis and St. Louis Community College. You have been asked to participate in the research because you are enrolled at St. Louis Community College and may be eligible to participate. We ask that you read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in the research. Your participation in this research is voluntary. Your decision whether to participate will not affect your current or future relations with the University or St. Louis Community College. If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw at any time without affecting that relationship.

What is the purpose of this research?

The purpose of this research is to understand more about why students choose to enroll in community colleges.

What procedures are involved?

If you agree to participate in this research, you can expect:

- To be interviewed once by Juliet Scherer about your experiences at St. Louis Community College.
- The interview will be conducted on the campus of St. Louis Community College that you are most comfortable with and at a time that fits your schedule. The interview is expected to last approximately one (1) hr.

- To be able to refuse to answer any question in the interview and still continue participating in the interview.
- If you are willing to be contacted at a later time, Juliet Scherer may do so to present her interpretation of your answers and allow you to confirm, disconfirm or clarify anything.

Approximately 10-20 people may be involved in this research at the University of Missouri-St. Louis. In Phase I of the study, students from St. Louis Community College will be eligible to participate, and the population is expected to be between 5-10 students. In Phase II of the study, parents/guardians of the students interviewed will be eligible to participate in a survey; therefore, this population is expected to be between 5-10 parents/guardians.

What are the potential risks and discomforts?

- There are no anticipated risks beyond day-to-day activities associated with this research.

Are there benefits to taking part in the research?

By participating in this study, you will be helping administrators and faculty at community colleges better understand their students' goals for enrolling at a community college. Your participation will help community colleges design programs that better meet their students' needs.

Will I be told about new information that may affect my decision to participate?

During the course of the study, you will be informed of any significant new findings (either good or bad), such as changes in the risks or benefits resulting from participation in the research, or new alternatives to participation, that might cause you to change your mind about continuing in the study. If new information is provided to you, your consent to continue to participate in this study will be re-obtained.

What about privacy and confidentiality?

The only people who will know that you are a research subject are members of the research team. No information about you, or provided by you during the research, will be disclosed to others without your written permission, except:

- if necessary to protect your rights or welfare (for example, if you are injured and need emergency care or when the University of Missouri-St Louis Institutional Review Board monitors the research or consent process); or
- if required by law.

When the results of the research are published or discussed in conferences, no information will be included that would reveal your identity. Audiotapes will be used for educational purposes, your identity will be protected or disguised. Any information that is obtained in connection with this study, and that can be identified with you, will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission or as required by law.

The interviews will be audio recorded only for the purpose of transcription. Never will the interviewees' voices be replayed for any other purpose or audience. Interview participants will

retain the right to review the tapes and transcripts for up to one year after the interview is conducted. The recordings will be used only for educational purposes. One year after the interview, the audio files will be destroyed.

All recorded material will be securely kept in locked storage to prevent access by unauthorized personnel.

The research team will use and share your information until June 1, 2010. At that point, the investigator will remove the identifiers from your information, making it impossible to link you to the study.

Do you already have contact restrictions in place with UM-SL? Yes No
(Example: no calls at home, no messages left for you, etc.)

Please specify any contact restrictions you want to request for this study only.

What are the costs for participating in this research?

There are no costs associated with participating in this research.

Will I be paid for my participation in this research?

Each subject will be entered into two drawings for \$50 each. Subjects must complete the interview to be eligible for the drawing. The drawing will be conducted after all interviews have been conducted, which will be less than one year after the first interview in the study takes place and will occur directly after the last interview takes place.

Can I withdraw or be removed from the study?

You can choose whether to be in this study. If you volunteer to be in this study, you may withdraw at any time without consequences of any kind. You also may refuse to answer any questions you do not want to answer and still remain in the study. The investigator may withdraw you from this research if circumstances arise which warrant doing so. If you decide to end your participation in the study, please complete the withdrawal letter found at <http://www.umsl.edu/services/ora/assets/WithdrawalLetter.doc>, or you may request that the Investigator send you a copy of the letter.

Who should I contact if I have questions?

The researcher conducting this study is Juliet Scherer. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, you may contact the researcher at 314-984-7852.

What are my rights as a research subject?

If you have any questions about your rights as a research subject, you may call the Chairperson of the Institutional Review Board at (314) 516-5897.

What if I am a UMSL student?

You may choose not to participate, or to stop your participation in this research, at any time. This decision will not affect your class standing or grades at UM-SL. The investigator also may end your participation in the research. If this happens, your class standing will not be affected. You will not be offered or receive any special consideration if you participate in this research.

What if I am a UMSL employee?

Your participation in this research is, in no way, part of your university duties, and your refusal to participate will not in any way affect your employment with the university or the benefits, privileges, or opportunities associated with your employment at UM-SL. You will not be offered or receive any special consideration if you participate in this research.

Remember: Your participation in this research is voluntary. Your decision whether to participate will not affect your current or future relations with the University or St. Louis Community College. If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw at any time without affecting that relationship.

You will be given a copy of this form for your information and to keep for your records.

I have read the above statement and have been able to express my concerns, to which the investigator has responded satisfactorily. I believe I understand the purpose of the study, as well as the potential benefits and risks that are involved.

All signature dates must match.

Participant's Signature

Date

Participant's Printed Name

Researcher's Signature

Date

APPENDIX H

Student Interview Questions

1. What year did you graduate from high school and from what high school?
2. How old are you?
3. Tell me about your experiences as a student in high school.
4. Please describe the nature of your IEP, if you had one, or any special services or accommodations you received in high school.
5. How would you characterize your academic skills?

- | |
|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> Honors/outstanding<input type="checkbox"/> Above average<input type="checkbox"/> Average<input type="checkbox"/> Below average<input type="checkbox"/> Remedial needs/Special assistance needed |
|--|

6. Tell me about any other options you seriously considered other than enrolling in college after high school.
7. When in your life did you know you wanted to enroll in college?
8. Tell me about any experiences you had with attending colleges prior to St. Louis Community College.
9. Tell me about why you chose to attend St. Louis Community College.
10. How do get to and from campus?
11. Have you attended other campuses in STLCC besides _____? Why or why not?

12. Tell me about any other colleges or universities you considered attending, if any.
13. Describe how you work with the Access Office on campus, if at all.
14. Tell me what you like about attending St. Louis Community College.
15. Please, talk about how you spend your time when you are on campus but not in class.
16. What things are you most interested in studying or learning about and why.
17. Tell me about any plans you have to earn any college degrees.
18. Tell me about any concerns you have of *not* being enrolled in college.
19. Help me understand how your parent(s) or guardian(s) feel about you attending St. Louis Community College.
20. Tell me about how much and in what areas your parents (or guardians) help you make decisions about your life in general.
21. Tell me what your parents or guardians have encouraged you to do with your future.
22. Tell me about any employment experiences you've had since graduating from high school.
23. Tell me about what kind of work do you want to do after college. Do you have a career in mind?
24. Is there anything else you would like to share with me about any of the topics we have discussed today?

APPENDIX I

Dear St. Louis Community College Parent or Guardian:

My name is Juliet Scherer and I am an English Department faculty member at St. Louis Community College and PhD candidate at the University of Missouri - St. Louis. I would like to invite you to participate in a research project designed to learn more about student enrollment behavior, parental guidance on enrollment, and how St. Louis Community College might better meet the needs of the students who enroll. If you decide to take part in this project, I will ask that you complete a survey either online or in paper form. I anticipate that it will take approximately 10-20 minutes of your time to complete the survey.

Completing the survey will make you eligible for two \$50 drawings to be held after the survey closes, anticipated to be held no later than May 1, 2010.

If you do want to participate, I have included a paper copy of the survey, two copies of informed consent form that need to be signed and dated if you choose to do the paper version of the survey, and a stamped envelope, which you can use to return the survey and signed informed consents to me. I will sign the informed consent forms and return one copy to you for your records.

If you would prefer instead to take the survey online, please access the survey at the following web address: <http://studentvoice.com/stlcc/parentguardiancollegechoice09>

Taking the survey indicates your acceptance of the conditions outlined in the enclosed letter of consent. As a participant you may refuse to answer any particular question(s) and still continue with the research. You may stop participating online at any time by closing the browser window. To provide the most accurate information, please do not complete more than one survey. Also, only one parent or guardian of the student interviewed should take the survey.

If you do NOT want to participate in the project, simply ignore this request and do not complete the survey.

If you have any questions about this research project, please feel free to contact me either by e-mail, or telephone. I appreciate your consideration of this important study.

Sincerely,

Juliet K. Scherer
Associate Professor of English
(314) 984-7852
jscherer@stlcc.edu

APPENDIX J


Department of Educational Leadership & Policy Studies

8001 Natural Bridge Road
 St. Louis, Missouri 63121-4499
 Telephone: 314-516-5944
 Fax: 314-516-5942
 E-mail: farnsworthk@umsl.edu

Informed Consent for Parent Participation in Research Activities
 Enrollment at the Community College: Motivations and Goals (PHASE II)

Participant _____ HSC Approval Number: 090430S

Principal Investigator: Juliet K. Scherer PI's Phone Number: 314-984-7852

Why am I being asked to participate?

You are cordially invited to participate in a research study about enrollment at the community college conducted by Juliet K. Scherer at the University of Missouri-St. Louis and St. Louis Community College. You have been asked to participate because your son or daughter is enrolled at St. Louis Community College and he/she is participating in the study. Your participation in the study is requested by extension through your son or daughter.

Your participation in this research is voluntary. Your decision whether to participate will not affect your or your son or daughter's current or future relations with the University or St. Louis Community College. If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw at any time without affecting that relationship.

We ask that you read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in the research.

What is the purpose of this research?

The purpose of this research is to understand more about why students choose to enroll in community colleges.

What procedures are involved?

If you agree to participate in this research, you can expect:

- To participate only in a survey either online or in paper form, depending upon what is most comfortable for you.

- The survey to take approximately 10-20 mn.
- There will be no requests for further information after you participate in the survey.

What are the potential risks and discomforts?

- There are no anticipated risks beyond day-to-day activities associated with this research.

Are there benefits to taking part in the research?

By participating in this study, you will be helping administrators and faculty at community colleges better understand what goals students and their parents/guardians possess when enrolling the student at a community college. You may also help administrators and faculty at community colleges better understand what the parents/guardians of children who attend community colleges expect from the institution. Your participation may help community colleges design programs that better meet their students' needs.

Will I be told about new information that may affect my decision to participate?

During the course of the study, you will be informed of any significant new findings (either good or bad), such as changes in the risks or benefits resulting from participation in the research, or new alternatives to participation, that might cause you to change your mind about continuing in the study. If new information is provided to you, your consent to continue to participate in this study will be re-obtained.

What about privacy and confidentiality?

The only people who will know that you are a research subject are members of the research team. No information about you, or provided by you during the research, will be disclosed to others without your written permission, except:

- if necessary to protect your rights or welfare (for example, if you are injured and need emergency care or when the University of Missouri-St Louis Institutional Review Board monitors the research or consent process); or
- if required by law.

When the results of the research are published or discussed in conferences, no information will be included that would reveal your identity. Audiotapes will be used for educational purposes, your identity will be protected or disguised. Any information that is obtained in connection with this study, and that can be identified with you, will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission or as required by law.

The PI will use and share your information until June 1, 2010. At that point, the investigator will remove the identifiers from your information, making it impossible to link you to the study.

Do you already have contact restrictions in place with UM-SL? Yes No
(Example: no calls at home, no messages left for you, etc.)

Please specify any contact restrictions you want to request for this study only.

What are the costs for participating in this research?

There are no costs associated with participating in this research.

Will I be paid for my participation in this research?

Each subject will be entered into two drawings for \$50 each. Subjects must complete the survey to be eligible for the drawing. The drawing will be conducted after all surveys have been collected, which will be less than one year after the first survey in the study is disseminated.

Can I withdraw or be removed from the study?

You can choose whether to be in this study. If you volunteer to be in this study, you may withdraw at any time without consequences of any kind. You also may refuse to answer any questions you do not want to answer and still remain in the study. The investigator may withdraw you from this research if circumstances arise which warrant doing so. If you decide to end your participation in the study, please complete the withdrawal letter found at <http://www.umsl.edu/services/ora/assets/WithdrawalLetter.doc>, or you may request that the Investigator send you a copy of the letter.

Who should I contact if I have questions?

The researcher conducting this study is Juliet Scherer. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, you may contact the researcher at 314-984-7852.

What are my rights as a research subject?

If you have any questions about your rights as a research subject, you may call the Chairperson of the Institutional Review Board at (314) 516-5897.

What if I am a UMSL student?

You may choose not to participate, or to stop your participation in this research, at any time. This decision will not affect your class standing or grades at UM-SL. The investigator also may end your participation in the research. If this happens, your class standing will not be affected. You will not be offered or receive any special consideration if you participate in this research.

What if I am a UMSL employee?

Your participation in this research is, in no way, part of your university duties, and your refusal to participate will not in any way affect your employment with the university or the benefits, privileges, or opportunities associated with your employment at UM-SL. You will not be offered or receive any special consideration if you participate in this research.

Remember: Your participation in this research is voluntary. Your decision whether to participate will not affect your current or future relations with the University or St. Louis Community College. If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw at any time without affecting that relationship.

You will be given a copy of this form for your information and to keep for your records.

I have read the above statement and have been able to express my concerns, to which the investigator has responded satisfactorily. I believe I understand the purpose of the study, as well as the potential benefits and risks that are involved.

All signature dates must match.

Participant's Signature

Date

Participant's Printed Name

Researcher's Signature

Date

APPENDIX K

From: Trudy Bers [mailto:tbers@oakton.edu]

Sent: Monday, August 24, 2009 12:05 PM

To: Scherer, Juliet K.

You have my permission to use the survey I previously provided to you in its entirety or alter it for the purposes of your dissertation. However, if you alter the survey I ask that you make note of this in your dissertation and any other articles or papers.

Trudy Bers

Executive Director, Research, Curriculum & Planning

Oakton Community College

1600 E. Golf Rd.

Des Plaines, IL 60016

Phone 847-635-1894

Fax 847-635-1997

APPENDIX L

This survey is for the parents or guardians of students who are currently enrolled at St. Louis Community College.

The survey is divided into three parts, and it asks you to provide information about you and the student who is now attending St. Louis Community College of whom you are a parent or legal guardian.

The answers that you provide are completely confidential. The survey information is password-protected and information you share will not be linked to you or the student by anyone other than the principle investigator and only during the research process. Any and all written reports will be reported in a grouped manner so that individuals cannot be singled out, and when reference to individual cases is made, pseudonyms will be used and no personally identifying information will be used.

The information you provide will be used to assist St. Louis Community College in improving its programs and services.

Thank you in advance for your participation. If you have any questions, please contact the principle investigator, Juliet Scherer, at 314-984-7852 or jscherer@stlcc.edu

NOTES:

"Student" refers to your son or daughter who is now enrolled at St. Louis Community College.

"STLCC" refers to St. Louis Community College and includes any campus or satellite location within the system.

"Mother" and "Father" refer to the parents or guardians of this student.

1. What is the complete name (first and last) of your son or daughter who is enrolled at St. Louis Community College?
-
2. From what high school did the student graduate? (Please write in as much of the formal name as you remember.)

3. Which of these statements **best describes** when the student decided to attend college (college in general, not a specific college)? **Choose only one.**

- Student always planned on attending college
- Student became serious about attending college early in high school (Freshman/sophomore year)
- Student became serious about attending college later in high school (junior/senior year)
- Student became serious about attending college the summer after high school graduation
- Other (please specify)

4. Students have many alternatives after high school other than college. To what extent did the student consider each of the following alternatives?

	3 = Seriously Considered		
		2 = Somewhat Considered	
			1 = Did not consider at all
	<u>3</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>1</u>
The military	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Vocational School	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Full-time employment	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Part-time employment without college enrollment	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

5. What is the highest level of education you believe the student is capable of attaining?

Choose only one.

<input type="checkbox"/>	Earning developmental or pre-college credit only
<input type="checkbox"/>	Earning some college credits (100-level courses and above)
<input type="checkbox"/>	Earning an Associate's degree (a 2-year degree)
<input type="checkbox"/>	Earning a Bachelor's degree (a 4-year degree)
<input type="checkbox"/>	Earning a Graduate degree
<input type="checkbox"/>	Other (please specify)

6. Please explain your answer to the previous question.

7. When did you (or your spouse/partner) start getting involved in the student's college selection process? **Choose only one.**

- Did not get involved at all; the decision was completely up to the student
 - Early in the student's high school years (freshman/sophomore)
 - Later in the student's high school years (junior/senior)
 - After the student's high school graduation

8. There are many activities related to selecting a college in which parents or guardians may engage. Please indicate which of the following you and/or your spouse/partner have participated in these activities as the student was making decisions about college. **Check all that apply.**

- Visited college websites
- Read college brochures or catalogs
- Talked to high school counselors/teachers
- Attended a college night at the high school
- Talked to parents of other students who had attended or were planning to attend STLCC
- Attended an open house or information session provided by a college
- Visited college campuses
- Talked to college admissions staff
- Talked to college faculty
- Talked to a private college counselor
- Talked to personnel in the college office that supports students with disabilities
- Other (please specify

9. Which of the activities listed above was the **most** helpful to you in learning about colleges?

Choose only one.

- Visited college websites
- Read college brochures or catalogs
- Talked to high school counselors/teachers
- Attended a college night at the high school
- Talked to parents of other students who had attended or were planning to attend STLCC
- Attended an open house or information session provided by a college
- Visited college campuses
- Talked to college admissions staff
- Talked to college faculty
- Talked to a private college counselor
- Talked to a private college counselor
- Talked to personnel in the college office that supports students with disabilities
- Other (please specify)
- None of the above were helpful

10. Did the student apply to colleges other than STLCC?

- Yes
- No

Part II: About STLCC

11. Which statement best describes when your student decided to attend STLCC
Choose only one.

- Student always planned on attending STLCC
- Student decided to attend STLCC early in high school (freshman/sophomore year)
- Student decided to attend STLCC later in high school (junior/senior year)
- Student decided to attend STLCC the summer after high school graduation
- Other (please specify)

12. Who **initiated** or **was first responsible** for the idea of the student attending STLCC?
Choose only one.

- Student
- Parent(s)/guardian(s)
- Brother/sister of student
- Other family member(s)
- Student's friend(s)
- High school teacher or counselor
- Other (please specify)

13. Which of the following factors were considered when the student decided to attend STLCC? (check all that apply)

- a. Student wants or needs to live at home
- b. Student wants to be a college student
- c. Student can combine work and school
- d. Student is unsure about a major
- e. Student wants to save money
- f. Student has friends who go to STLCC
- g. Student needs time to decide what he or she wants to do
- h. Student needs academic assistance that STLCC can provide
- i. STLCC has an excellent reputation
- j. STLCC has an open enrollment policy
- k. STLCC has desired program of study
- l. STLCC is affordable choice
- m. Student couldn't afford to go elsewhere
- n. Other family members have gone to STLCC
- o. STLCC is a friendly and welcoming place
- p. Student needs to be in college to stay on parents' health insurance
- q. Student didn't know of any better options besides enrolling at STLCC
- r. Other (please specify)

14. List the three factors from the previous question that were most considered (in order of importance) when the student decided to attend STLCC. Please write in a letter (a-p) from the previous page.

1.
2.
3.

15. How would you describe the student's decision to attend STLCC?
Choose only one.

<input type="checkbox"/> Entirely the student's decision
<input type="checkbox"/> Mostly the student's decision
<input type="checkbox"/> A joint decision (parent(s)/guardian(s) and student)
<input type="checkbox"/> Mostly a decision made by parent(s)/guardian(s)
<input type="checkbox"/> Entirely a decision made by parent(s)/guardian(s)

16. The following is a list of benefits or outcomes that students may obtain from attending STLCC. Please indicate how each of the following benefits or outcomes influence the decision for the student to attend STLCC:

	4 = Highly influenced enrollment at STLCC 3 = Moderately influenced enrollment at STLCC 2 = Slightly influenced enrollment at STLCC 1 = Did not influence at all			
	4	3	2	1
a. Opportunity to earn an Associate's degree	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b. Need to earn a grade point average that will enable him/her to transfer to a four year school	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c. Opportunity to increase social maturity	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d. Opportunity to improve academic skills (e.g. reading, writing, math)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
e. Opportunity to receive training for a specific job	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
f. Opportunity to increase self-confidence	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
g. Opportunity to determine a sense of direction	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
h. Opportunity to earn credits that will transfer	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
i. Opportunity to try college with little financial risk	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

	4	3	2	1
	4 = Highly influenced enrollment at STLCC 3 = Moderately influenced enrollment at STLCC 2 = Slightly influenced enrollment at STLCC 1 = Did not influence at all			
j. Opportunity to increase current or future employability	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
k. Opportunity to socialize with peers	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
l. Opportunity to access federal financial aid or other money	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
m. Opportunity to access college facilities, such as the library, fitness center, cafeteria, and student center	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
n. Opportunity to participate in student clubs and student activities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

17. Which of the three gains or outcomes, in order of importance, previously listed are the most important gains or outcomes you want the student to achieve at STLCC? Please write in a letter (a-n) from the previous question.

1.	
2.	
3.	

18. How confident are you that attending STLCC was the right decision for the student?

- Extremely
- Very Confident
- Moderately confident
- Slightly confident
- Not at all confident

19. Please explain your answer to the previous question

20. Do you feel that STLCC provided you, as parents/guardians of an incoming student, with adequate information about the college?

- Yes
- No (what information would you have liked?)

21. What was the approximate high school class rank of the student?

- Top quarter (highest)
- Second quarter
- Third quarter
- Fourth quarter (lowest)

22. How would you characterize the student's academic skills?

- Honors/outstanding
- Above average
- Average
- Below average
- Remedial needs/Special assistance needed

23. How would you characterize the student's level of maturity?

- Very mature
- Somewhat mature
- Neutral
- Somewhat immature
- Very immature

24. Please explain your answer to the previous question

25. To the best of your knowledge, please estimate what percentage of the student's college costs (e.g., tuition, fees, books, supplies, incidentals) are being paid by each of the following: (Total should equal 100%)

_____ % Parents/guardians

_____ % Student

_____ % Scholarship(s) (please specify below)

_____ % Other financial aid (i.e., loans, grants)

_____ % Other (please specify below)

__100%__ TOTAL

26. Is your student on the A+ Scholarship?

- Yes
 - No

Part III: About You and Your Family

27. What is your relationship to the STLCC student?

- Mother
 - Father
 - Legal guardian
 - Other (please specify)

28. What is the highest level of education completed by the student's mother and father:

Mother

- Elementary or high school
- Some college
- Associate's degree
- Bachelor's degree
- Graduate professional degree (e.g. master's or doctorate)

Father

- Elementary or high school
- Some college
- Associate's degree
- Bachelor's degree
- Graduate professional degree (e.g. master's or doctorate)

29. What range best describes the annual household income of the parents/guardians? (optional)

- \$100,000+
- \$75,000 - \$99,999
- \$50,000 - \$74,999
- \$25,000 - \$49,999
- \$24,999 or below
- I prefer not to respond

30. What language is normally spoken in your home?

31. What is your racial or ethnic identity? (optional)

- White
- Black, Non-Hispanic
- American Indian or Alaskan Native
- Hispanic
- Asian or Pacific Islander
- Other (please specify)
- I prefer not to respond

32. Please add any comments you would like to make about STLCC.

33. Please describe any programs or courses not already offered by STLCC that you believe would benefit your son or daughter.

APPENDIX M


Department of Educational Leadership & Policy Studies

8001 Natural Bridge Road
 St. Louis, Missouri 63121-4499
 Telephone: 314-516-5944
 Fax: 314-516-5942
 E-mail: farnsworthk@umsl.edu

Informed Consent for STLCC Employee Participation in Research Activities
 Enrollment at the Community College: Motivations and Goals (PHASE III)

Participant _____ HSC Approval Number: 090430S

Principal Investigator: Juliet K. Scherer
 314-984-7852

PI's Phone Number:

Why am I being asked to participate?

You are cordially invited to participate in a research study about enrollment at the community college conducted by Juliet K. Scherer at the University of Missouri-St. Louis and St. Louis Community College (STLCC). You have been asked to participate because you are either a fulltime reading faculty member or a fulltime Access personnel member at STLCC.

Your participation in this research is voluntary. Your decision whether to participate will not affect your current or future relations with the University or St. Louis Community College. If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw at any time without affecting that relationship.

We ask that you read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in the research.

What is the purpose of this research?

The purpose of this research is to understand more about why students choose to enroll in community colleges.

What procedures are involved?

If you agree to participate in this research, you can expect:

- To participate only in a survey.
- The survey to take approximately 10-20 mn.
- There may be a follow-up request for further information after you participate in the survey if the PI needs to seek clarification for write-in answers.

What are the potential risks and discomforts?

- There are no anticipated risks beyond day-to-day activities associated with this research.

Are there benefits to taking part in the research?

By participating in this study, you will be helping administrators and faculty at community colleges better understand what goals students and their parents/guardians possess when enrolling the student at a community college. Your participation may help STLCC and other community colleges better meet their students' needs.

Will I be told about new information that may affect my decision to participate?

During the course of the study, you will be informed of any significant new findings (either good or bad), such as changes in the risks or benefits resulting from participation in the research, or new alternatives to participation, that might cause you to change your mind about continuing in the study. If new information is provided to you, your consent to continue to participate in this study will be re-obtained.

What about privacy and confidentiality?

The only people who will know that you are a research subject are members of the research team. No information about you, or provided by you during the research, will be disclosed to others without your written permission, except:

- if necessary to protect your rights or welfare (for example, if you are injured and need emergency care or when the University of Missouri-St Louis Institutional Review Board monitors the research or consent process); or
- if required by law.

When the results of the research are published or discussed in conferences, no information will be included that would reveal your identity. Audiotapes will be used for educational purposes, your identity will be protected or disguised. Any information that is obtained in connection with this study, and that can be identified with you, will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission or as required by law.

The PI will use and share your information until June 1, 2010. At that point, the investigator will remove the identifiers from your information, making it impossible to link you to the study.

Do you already have contact restrictions in place with UM-SL? Yes No
(Example: no calls at home, no messages left for you, etc.)

Please specify any contact restrictions you want to request for this study only.

What are the costs for participating in this research?

There are no costs associated with participating in this research.

Will I be paid for my participation in this research?

Each subject will be entered into two drawings for \$50 each. Subjects must complete the survey to be eligible for the drawing. The drawing will be conducted after all surveys have been collected, which will be less than one year after the survey is disseminated.

Can I withdraw or be removed from the study?

You can choose whether to be in this study. If you volunteer to be in this study, you may withdraw at any time without consequences of any kind. You also may refuse to answer any questions you do not want to answer and still remain in the study. The investigator may withdraw you from this research if circumstances arise which warrant doing so. If you decide to end your participation in the study, please complete the withdrawal letter found at <http://www.umsl.edu/services/ora/assets/WithdrawalLetter.doc>, or you may request that the Investigator send you a copy of the letter.

Who should I contact if I have questions?

The researcher conducting this study is Juliet Scherer. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, you may contact the researcher at 314-984-7852.

What are my rights as a research subject?

If you have any questions about your rights as a research subject, you may call the Chairperson of the Institutional Review Board at (314) 516-5897.

What if I am a UMSL student?

You may choose not to participate, or to stop your participation in this research, at any time. This decision will not affect your class standing or grades at UM-SL. The investigator also may end your participation in the research. If this happens, your class standing will not be affected. You will not be offered or receive any special consideration if you participate in this research.

What if I am a UMSL employee?

Your participation in this research is, in no way, part of your university duties, and your refusal to participate will not in any way affect your employment with the university or the benefits, privileges, or opportunities associated with your employment at UM-SL. You will not be offered or receive any special consideration if you participate in this research.

Remember: Your participation in this research is voluntary. Your decision whether to participate will not affect your current or future relations with the University or St. Louis Community College. If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw at any time without affecting that relationship.

You will be given a copy of this form for your information and to keep for your records.

I have read the above statement and have been able to express my concerns, to which the investigator has responded satisfactorily. I believe I understand the purpose of the study, as well as the potential benefits and risks that are involved.

All signature dates must match.

Participant's Signature

Date

Participant's Printed Name

Researcher's Signature

Date

APPENDIX N

**FULLTIME READING FACULTY & ACCESS COUNSELOR SURVEY
Phase III**

This survey asks you to judge the accuracy of the college enrollment motivations reported by students and parents during Phases I & II of this study. The purpose of the study is to uncover the enrollment motivations of both STLCC students who repeatedly enroll in developmental reading courses without making progress and those who were “grandfathered” in before the 2005 reading requirement but do not make progress in their courses. As a St. Louis Community College (STLCC) reading faculty member or Access counselor, your perspective on the enrollment motivations of these STLCC students will serve as an important data point that will lend support and/or question the enrollment motivations reported by students interviewed in Phase I and their parents surveyed in Phase II.

Thank you in advance for your participation. If you have any questions, please contact the principal investigator, Juliet Scherer, at 314-984-7852 or jscherer@stlcc.edu

IMPORTANT NOTES:

The answers that you provide are completely confidential. The information you share will not be linked to you by anyone other than the principal investigator and only during the research process. Any and all future written reports will be reported in a grouped manner, such as “Access counselors report” and “reading faculty members report” so that individuals cannot be singled out. To further ensure anonymity for participants, data will not be separated by campus. When it is necessary to make the distinction about who contributed certain data, individual answers may be attributed only to “an Access counselor” or “a reading faculty member” but never will an individual’s answers be associated with a particular campus.

"Students" refers to those who were nominated and/or interviewed for Phase I of this study.

"STLCC" refers to St. Louis Community College and includes any campus or satellite location within the system.

“Parents and/or Guardians” refer to the parents/guardians of the students interviewed in Phase I.

Upon completion, please return this survey to Juliet Scherer (Meramec – ENG) in the addressed envelope that arrived with this survey.

So that I may easily contact you to verify my interpretation of any write-in answers if I am uncertain of your intended meaning, please provide the following information:

Your name:

Campus (circle one): Florissant Valley Forest Park Meramec Wildwood

E-mail address:

Phone extension:

I am a (circle one): fulltime reading faculty member Access counselor

I. GENERAL COLLEGE ENROLLMENT MOTIVATIONS

In Phase I of this study, the **students interviewed reported the following motivations** for choosing to enroll in college. From your perspective as a reading faculty member or Access counselor, please check all of the motivations below that ***you agree*** accurately represent their reasons for choosing to become college students.

- A. They enrolled in college to meet their social needs.
- B. They enrolled in college because they were inspired by or prompted by others to enroll.
- C. They enrolled in college to earn college degrees to improve employability.
- D. They enrolled in college by default – they did not know what else to do.
- E. They enrolled in college to earn college degrees to improve their self-worth.

1. **In order of importance** and using the letters that correspond to the options above (A-F), please rank the **top three reasons you believe students like those in this study initially choose to enroll** in college:

2. Please **list/describe any additional reasons** you believe students like those interviewed in this study have for enrolling in college.

II. ENROLLMENT MOTIVATIONS SPECIFIC TO ST. LOUIS COMMUNITY COLLEGE

The students interviewed in Phase I and their parents surveyed in Phase II separately reported the following **reasons for the student making STLCC their college choice**. Not all reasons listed were provided by both parents and students, though some were. From your perspective as a reading faculty member or Access counselor, please check all of the motivations below that *you agree* are valid reasons **students like those in this study make STLCC their college choice**.

Students like those in this study choose to enroll at STLCC...

- A. to benefit from the wide array of supplemental academic support available at STLCC, such as Access services, academic centers, more individualized help, tutoring, etc.
- B. in order to remain living at home and benefiting from their family support system.
- C. because the STLCC campus they attend is close to home and therefore convenient.
- D. because they believe STLCC is a quality institution of higher education.
- E. because STLCC has an open enrollment policy which provided their only option to be a college student.
- F. because STLCC is an affordable higher education option.
- G. to earn a GPA that will allow them to transfer to a four-year institution.
- H. to increase their social maturity.
- I. to improve their academic skills (eg. reading, writing, math, etc.).
- J. to increase their self-confidence.
- K. to determine a sense of direction in life.
- L. to try college with little financial risk.
- M. to increase their current or future employability.
- N. to socialize with peers.
- O. to access such college facilities as the library, fitness center, cafeteria, student center, etc.
- P. to be able to participate in student clubs and student activities.
- Q. because STLCC is a friendly and welcoming place.
- R. by default – they did not know what else to do so they enrolled at STLCC.
- S. in order to combine work and school.
- T. because STLCC offered the student's program of study.
- U. because STLCC has an excellent reputation.
- V. in order to receive specific job training.

1. **In order of importance** and using the letters that correspond to the options above (A-V), please rank what you believe to be the **top three reasons** these **students like those in this study** choose to enroll at STLCC.

ST. LOUIS COMMUNITY COLLEGE ENROLLMENT MOTIVATIONS, Cont.

2. Please **list/describe any additional reasons** you believe exist that compel students like those in this study and their parents/guardians to make STLCC their college choice.

III. SUGGESTIONS FOR THE FUTURE

Regarding students who repeatedly enroll in developmental reading courses without making progress and “grandfathered” students who do not make progress in their chosen courses, **please check all courses of action you believe STLCC should consider** in response to this student population.

- A. Nothing should change. STLCC is an open enrollment institution. Besides, we already have a reading requirement and an academic probation/suspension policy in place. These students deserve the right to try and fail.
- B. A “PR” grade should not be assigned to a student who does not pass a developmental reading course when the student is judged by the faculty member as being highly unlikely to succeed upon taking the course again. Assigning a non-punitive “PR” encourages these students to stay longer at STLCC by not affecting their GPAs and, thus, delaying or not triggering at all the academic probation/suspension policy.
- C. Current developmental courses should be repackaged and offered at a slower pace to accommodate student differences.
- D. Since high school diplomas are not necessarily an indication of academic ability, they should not automatically qualify students for enrollment at STLCC. Instead, students should be required to demonstrate an “ability to benefit” from the curriculum by meeting set criteria on any number of standardized tests, like earning minimum scores on the ACT, SAT, Accuplacer, etc. This option could also be described as creating a “bottom” on entrance to STLCC, whereby students would have to qualify even to take developmental courses.
- E. STLCC should design and offer alternative non-credit courses and/or programs that might meet these students’ needs better than college preparatory developmental courses. Such courses and/or programs might focus on meeting the expressed desires of students and their parents/guardians, like preparing the students for employment, helping them secure employment, and encouraging the development of self-esteem, self-confidence, and self-actualization.
- F. Other (please use the space on the next page to describe any other institutional responses to this student population you believe STLCC should consider).

Please use this space to describe any other institutional responses to this student population you believe STLCC should consider.

Please write any additional comments you would like to make about the issues addressed in this study.

APPENDIX O

PHASE III DATA TABLES AND CHARTS

Table 7.

Faculty and Access rate of agreement with the five motivations students shared in Phase

I.

	To meet social needs	Inspired/ prompted by others	Desire to increase current or future employability	Default	To increase self-worth
^a Faculty	9	15	14	12	5
percent	60%	100%	93%	80%	33%
^b Access	9	9	8	9	8
percent	90%	90%	80%	90%	80%
^c Total	18	24	22	21	13
percent	72%	96%	88%	84%	52%

^a $n = 15$. ^b $n = 10$. ^c $n = 25$.

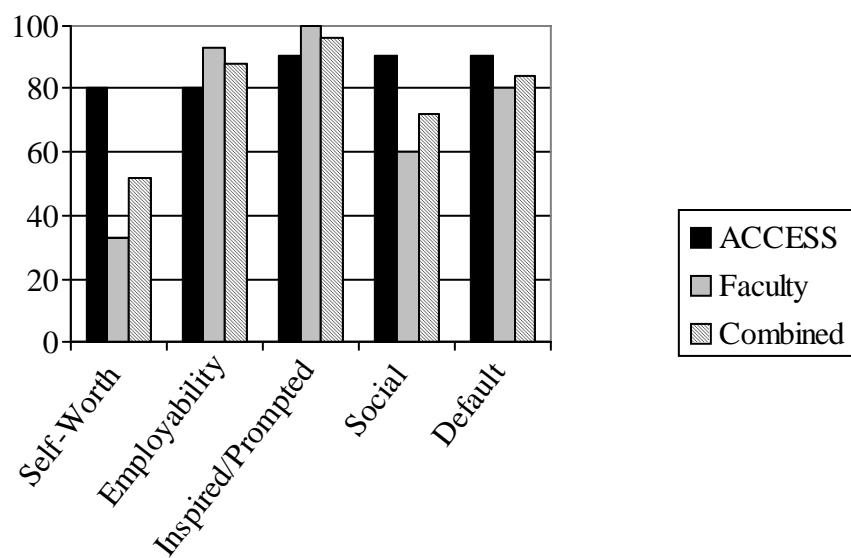


Figure 8. Faculty, Access, and Combined rate of agreement with the five motivations students shared in Phase I.

Table 8. Top 3 Rankings of Motivations by faculty, Access and Aggregate.

	Social needs	Inspired/ prompted by others	Employability	Default	Self-worth
^a FACULTY RANK OF TOP 3	2 1=0 2=1 (6%) 3=0 1 (6%)	22131321 3223133 1=4 (26%) 2=5 (33%) 3=6 (40%) 15 (100%)	1132211 1131211 1=9 (60%) 2=3 (20%) 3=2 (13%) 14 (93%)	321323 33123 1=2 (13%) 2=3 (20%) 3=6 (40%) 11 (73%)	3222 1=0 2=3 (20%) 3=1 (6%) 4 (26%)
^b ACCESS RANK OF TOP 3	32213 1=1 (10%) 2=2 (20%) 3=2 (20%) 5 (50%)	11131112 1=6 (60%) 2=1 (10%) 3=1 (10%) 8 (80%)	332232 1=0 2=3 (30%) 3=3 (30%) 6 (60%)	23221231 1=2 (20%) 2=4 (40%) 3=2 (20%) 8 (80%)	133 1=1 (10%) 2=0 3=2 (20%) 3 (30%)
^c TOTAL Percent	1=1 2=3 3=2 6 (24%)	1=10 2=6 3=7 23 (92%)	1=9 2=6 3=5 20 (80%)	1=4 2=7 3=8 19 (76%)	1=1 2=3 3=3 7 (28%)

Note. 1 = #1 ranking, 2 = #2 ranking, 3 = #3 ranking.

^an = 15. ^bn = 10. ^cn=25.

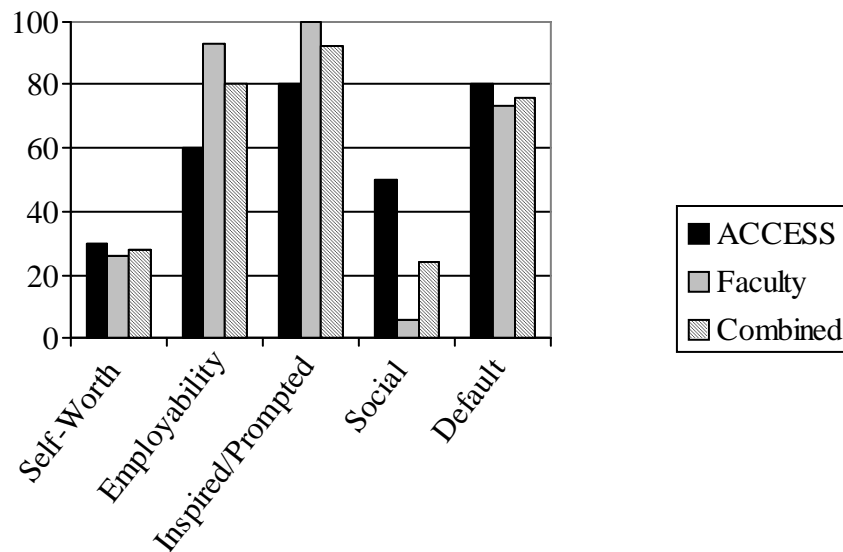


Figure 9. Percentage of Access, Faculty and Combined that ranked a theme as one of the top three reasons they believe the students in the study chose to become college students.

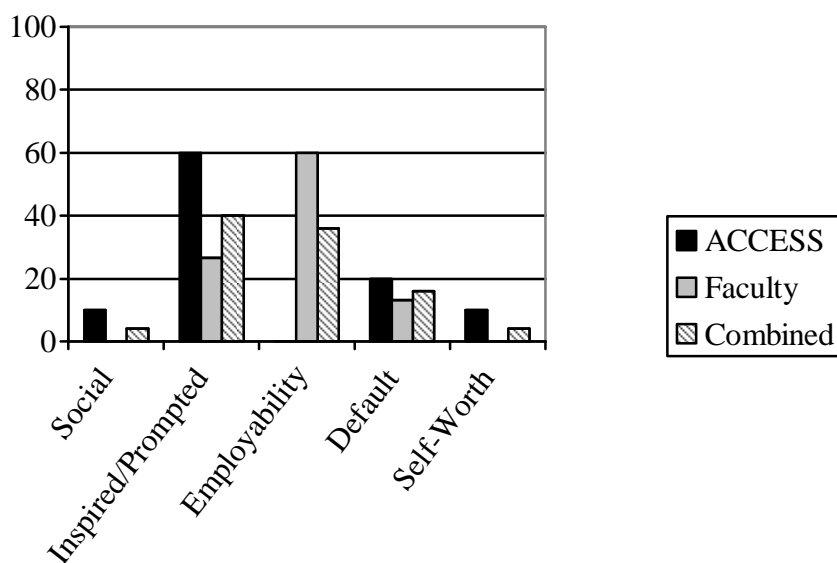


Figure 10. Percentage of Access, Faculty, and Combined that ranked a theme as the #1 reason students like those in this study enroll in college.

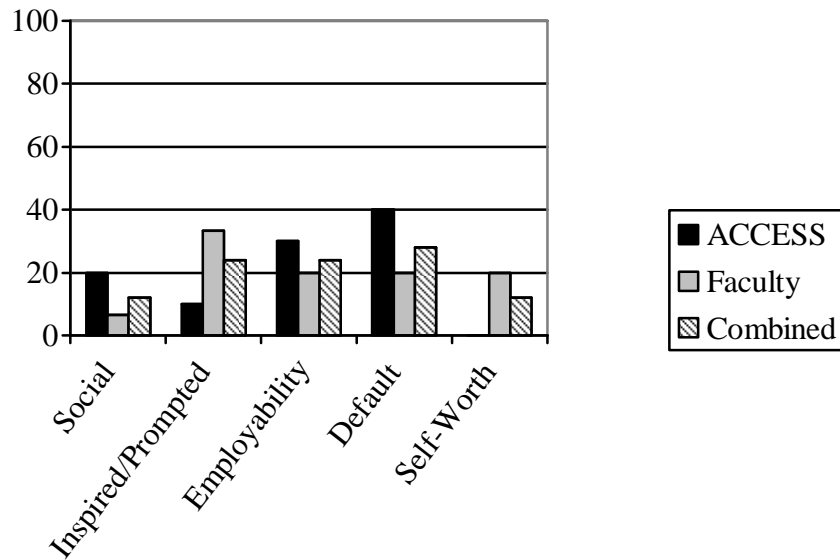


Figure 11. Percentages of Access, Faculty, and Combined that ranked a theme as the #2 reason students like those in this study enroll in college.

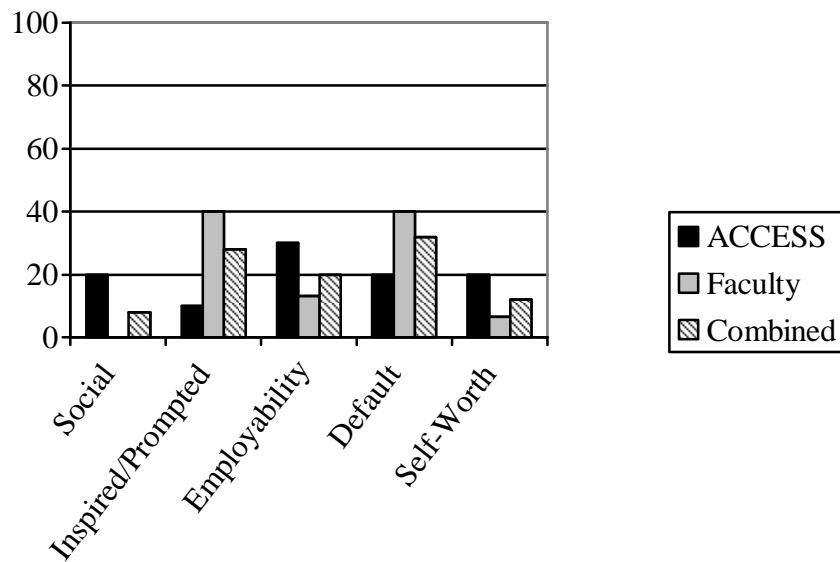


Figure 12. Percentages of Access, Faculty, and Combined that ranked a theme as the #3 reason students like those in this study enroll in college.

Table 9.
Faculty and Access Agreement on Motivations Specific to STLCC.

		^a FACULTY	^b ACCESS	^c TOTAL
A	To benefit from the wide array of supp. academic support services at STLCC, like Access, centers, tutoring, etc.	7 (46%)	7 (70%)	14 (56%)
B	In order to remain living at home & benefiting from their family support system.	12 (80%)	7 (70%)	19 (76%)
C	Because the STLCC campus they attend is close to home and therefore convenient.	14 (93%)	10 (100%)	24 (96%)
D	Because they believe STLCC is a quality institution of higher education.	2 (13%)	4 (40%)	6 (24%)
E	Because STLCC has an open enrollment policy which provided their only option to be a college student.	15 (100%)	10 (100%)	25 (100%)
F	Because STLCC is an affordable higher education option.	14 (93%)	7 (70%)	21 (84%)
G	To earn a GPA that will allow them to transfer to a four-year institution.	6 (40%)	2 (20%)	8 (32%)
H	To increase their social maturity.	4 (26%)	3 (30%)	7 (28%)
I	To improve their academic skills (eg. reading, writing, math, etc.)	13 (86%)	7 (70%)	20 (80%)
J	To increase their self-confidence.	4 (26%)	1 (10%)	5 (20%)
K	To determine a sense of direction in life.	9 (60%)	6 (60%)	15 (60%)
L	To try college with little financial risk.	11 (73%)	5 (50%)	16 (64%)
M	To increase their current or future employability.	15 (100%)	4 (40%)	19 (76%)
N	To socialize with peers.	6 (40%)	8 (80%)	14 (56%)
O	To access facilities, like the library, fitness center, cafeteria, student center, etc.	2 (13%)	2 (20%)	4 (16%)
P	To be able to participate in student clubs and student activities.	1 (6%)	1 (10%)	2 (8%)
Q	Because STLCC is a friendly and welcoming place.	3 (20%)	5 (50%)	8 (32%)
R	By default – they did not know what else to do, so they enrolled at STLCC.	12 (80%)	9 (90%)	21 (84%)
S	In order to combine work and school.	6 (40%)	0 (0%)	6 (24%)
T	Because STLCC offered the student's program of study.	5 (33%)	2 (20%)	7 (28%)
U	Because STLCC has an excellent reputation.	4 (26%)	2 (20%)	6 (24%)
V	In order to receive specific job training.	11 (73%)	5 (50%)	16 (64%)

^an = 15. ^bn = 10. ^cn=25.

Table 10. Top 3 Ranked Reasons Students Attend STLCC.

^an = 15. ^bn = 10. ^cn=25.

Note. 1 = #1 ranking, 2 = #2 ranking, 3 = #3 ranking.

		^a FACULTY RANK OF TOP 3 and %	^b ACCESS RANK OF TOP 3 and %	^c TOTAL and %
A	To benefit from the wide array of supp. academic support services at STLCC, like Access, centers, tutoring, etc.	1321 1=2 (13%) 2=1 (6%) 3=1 (6%) 4 (26%)	21221 1=2 (20%) 2=3 (30%) 3=0 5 (50%)	1=4 (16%) 2=4 (16%) 3=1 (4%) 9 (36%)
B	In order to remain living at home & benefiting from their family support system.	313211 1=3 (20%) 2=1 (6%) 3=2 (13%) 6 (40%)	3312 1=1 (10%) 2=1 (10%) 3=2 (20%) 4 (40%)	1=4 (16%) 2=2 (8%) 3=4 (16%) 10 (40%)
C	Because the STLCC campus they attend is close to home and therefore convenient.	32312 1=1 (6%) 2=2 (13%) 3=2 (13%) 5 (33%)	32 1=0 2=1 (10%) 3=1 (10%) 2 (20%)	1=1 (4%) 2=3 (12%) 3=3 (12%) 7 (28%)
D	Because they believe STLCC is a quality institution of higher education.	0	0	0
E	Because STLCC has an open enrollment policy which provided their only option to be a college student.	22222113113 1=4 (26%) 2=5 (33%) 3=2 (13%) 11 (73%)	122331 1=2 (20%) 2=2 (20%) 3=2 (20%) 6 (60%)	1=6 (24%) 2=7 (28%) 3=4 (16%) 17 (68%)
F	Because STLCC is an affordable higher education option.	33131 1=2 (13%) 2=0 3=3 (20%) 5 (33%)	3 1=0 2=0 3=1 (10%) 1 (10%)	1=2 (8%) 2=0 3=4 (16%) 6 (24%)

G	To earn a GPA that will allow them to transfer to a four-year institution.	1 1=1 (6%) 2=0 3=0 1 (6%)	0 0	1=1 (4%) 2=0 3=0 1 (4%)
H	To increase their social maturity.	3 1=0 2=0 3=1 (6%) 1 (6%)	0 	1=0 2=0 3=1 (4%) 1 (4%)
I	To improve their academic skills (eg. reading, writing, math, etc.)	22 1=0 2=2 (13%) 3=0 2 (13%)	33 1=0 2=0 3=2 (20%) 2 (20%)	1=0 2=2 (8%) 3=2 (8%) 4 (16%)
J	To increase their self-confidence.	0	0	
K	To determine a sense of direction in life.	3 1=0 2=0 3=1 (6%) 1 (6%)	2 1=0 2=1 (10%) 3=0 1 (10%)	1=0 2=1 (4%) 3=1 (4%) 2 (8%)
L	To try college with little financial risk.	13 1=1 (6%) 2=0 3=1 (6%) 2 (13%)	21 1=1 (10%) 2=1 (10%) 3=0 2 (20%)	1=2 (8%) 2=1 (4%) 3=1 (4%) 4 (16%)
M	To increase their current or future employability.	1232 1=1 (6%) 2=2 (20%) 3=1 (6%) 4 (26%)	0	1=1 (4%) 2=2 (8%) 3=0 1 (12%)

N	To socialize with peers.	0	1 1=1 2=0 3=0 1 (10%)	1=1 (4%) 2=0 3=0 1 (4%)
O	To access facilities, like the library, fitness center, cafeteria, student center, etc.	0	0	
P	To be able to participate in student clubs and student activities.	0	0	
Q	Because STLCC is a friendly and welcoming place.	0	0	
R	By default – they did not know what else to do, so they enrolled at STLCC.	32 1=0 2=1 (6%) 3=1 (6%) 2 (13%)	111 1=3 (30%) 2=0 3=0 3 (30%)	1=3 (12%) 2=1 (4%) 3=1 (4%) 5 (20%)
S	In order to combine work and school.	0	0	
T	Because STLCC offered the student's program of study.	0	0	
U	Because STLCC has an excellent reputation.	2 1=0 2=1 (6%) 3=0 1 (6%)	0	1=0 2=1 3=0 1 (4%)
V	In order to receive specific job training.	0	0	

Note. 1 = #1 ranking, 2 = #2 ranking, 3 = #3 ranking.

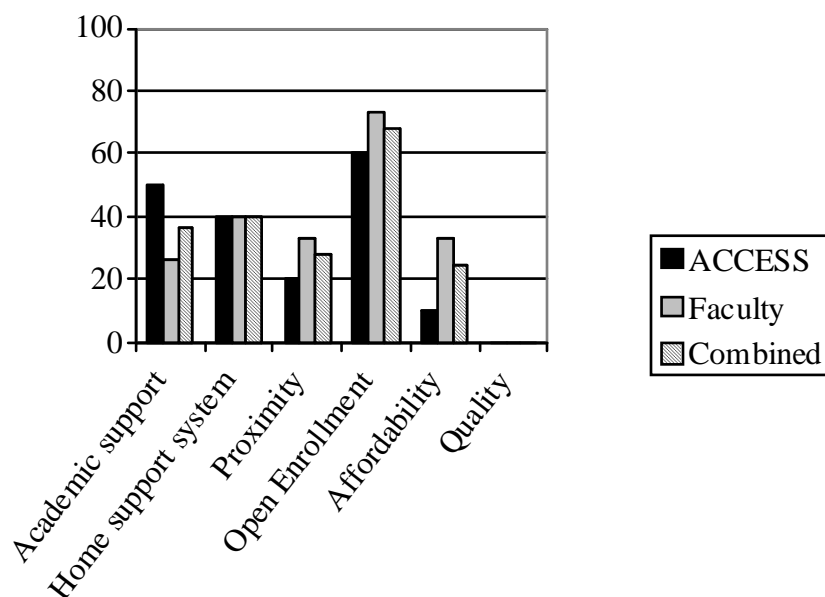


Figure 13. Percentages of Access, Faculty, and Combined that ranked a theme as one of the top three reasons they believe the students in the study chose to enroll at STLCC.

Table 11. Faculty and Access Support for Future Institutional Responses.

	^a FACULTY	^b ACCESS	^c TOTAL
A. NOTHING	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
B. PR	7 (46%)	4 (40%)	11 (44%)
C. Dev. Ed. Slowed	1 (6%)	1 (10%)	2 (8%)
D. NO HS Dip accepted for entrance	7 (46%)	5 (50%)	12 (48%)
E. Alternatives	14 (93%)	9 (90%)	23 (92%)
F. Other	5 (33%)	7 (70%)	12 (48%)

^an = 15. ^bn = 10. ^cn=25.

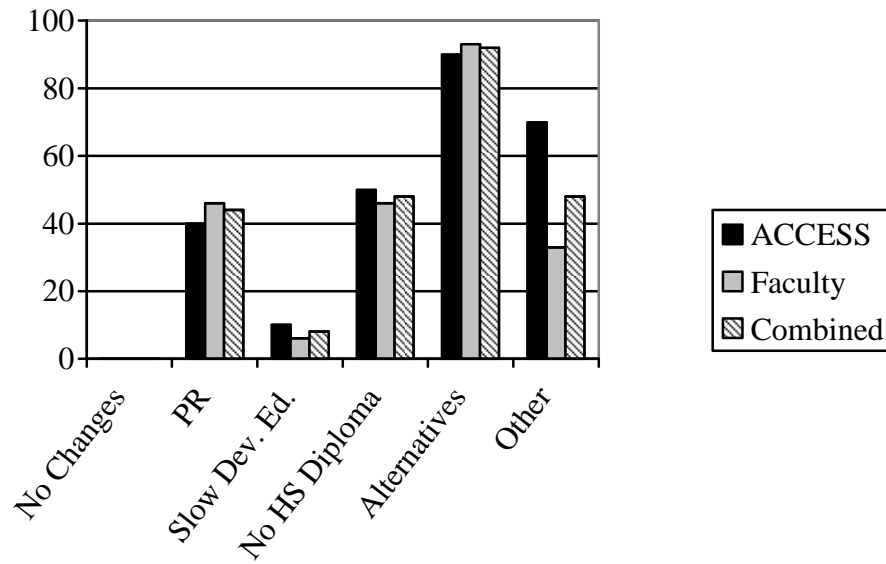


Figure 14. Percentages of Access, Faculty, and Combined that believe STLCC should consider the six provided options as a future institutional response to the population.

APPENDIX P

The District Developmental Education Assessment Committee: Report, spring 2007

Otis Beard, Christine Carter, Ana Coelho, Donna Dare, Lorna Finch, Lynda Fish, Tom Flynn, Becky Helbling, Denice Josten, Vernon Kays, Mary Askew Richmond, Lillian Seese, Deneen Shepherd, Richard Tichenor, Linda VanVickle.

Mission-Based Assessment Plan**Inquire:**

Can we identify diagnostic criteria for that cohort of students who are unlikely to be successful in base-level developmental courses (defined as attaining a grade below “B” in that/those courses)? The intent is to be able to provide early support and advising and to offer additional/alternative educational options to meet the needs of those students.

Discover:

Institutional data was examined for students who test into and begin their SLCC experience in baseline developmental courses. Data was examined for the following groups of students:

A. All students who were enrolled in one or more base-level developmental courses (Rdg 016/017, 020, Math 020, Eng. 020) during the period summer 2001- fall 2006 grouped by the number and specific combinations of base-level courses taken.

The data examined for these students included:

- Course success rates with success defined as a grade of C or Better
- Course success rates with success defined as a grade of B or Better
- Number of times courses were repeated
- Cumulative GPA
- Cumulative hours earned
- Cumulative hours attempted
- Enrollment and success rates in 030 level courses.

B. Cohorts of students who made their first attempt at RDG: 020, MTH: 020, or ENG: 020 in fall 2002.

These cohorts were tracked for a 4-year period with respect to the following data:

- Course success rates on first attempt with success defined as a grade of C or Better
- Percentage of unsuccessful students repeating the course within the 4-year period.
- Percentage of repeaters ultimately receiving a C or Better within the 4-year period.
- Ultimate course success rate by the end of the 4-year period
- Enrollment rates and the four items above for the corresponding 030 courses
- For English and Math, enrollment rates and the same four items for ENG: 101 and MTH:140, respectively.
- Last term enrolled during the 4-year period
- Last term completed during the 4-year period
- Cumulative GPA at end of 4-year period
- Cumulative hours earned during the 4 year period.
- Graduation rates for those declaring intent to receive an SLCC degree

Interpret:

If we assume that all students who test into Reading 020 (or lower) and/or Math 020 and/or English 020 are academically at risk, what academic or personal features/strategies/steps seem to separate those who eventually move into college-level work, from those who don't make the transition?

The committee worked to identify characteristics that predict academic success and lack of success in developmental students, currently as demonstrated in the developmental (rather than college-level) hierarchy.

After looking over the data provided by the Office of Institutional Research, we have drawn the following conclusions that are relevant to our committee's work:

- Students who place at the 020 level or below in 3 areas have a very high probability (62%) of not succeeding in at least one class.
- Students enrolled in ENG.020 have a 21% chance of (1) not completing their first term of enrollment, (2) not enrolling in a second term, or (3) enrolling in a second term and not completing it.
- Students enrolled in MTH.020 have a 23% chance of (1) not completing their first term of enrollment, (2) not enrolling in a second term, or (3) enrolling in a second term and not completing it.
- Students enrolled in RDG.020 have a 25% chance of (1) not completing their first term of enrollment, (2) not enrolling in a second term, or (3) enrolling in a second term and not completing it.
- Students who place at the 020 level or below in Reading and enroll in English or Math classes as well as reading have a high probability (about 53%) of not passing English or Math with a grade of C and a very high probability (at least 78%) of not passing English or Math with a grade of B.
- Students who place at the 020 level in Reading and/or English have a very high probability (44% to 71%) of having to repeat Math 020 classes.
- The combined cumulative hours earned and cumulative GPA data in the 4 year tracking for the 200230 cohorts reveals that, after 4 years, 40% of the MTH:020 cohort; 45% of the ENG:020 cohort; and 46% of the RDG:020 cohort had earned less than 30 hours and had a cum GPA below 2.00.
- Based on the comparison of the data regarding success in subsequent courses, it is clear that students who earn grades of B or better in developmental work at SLCC are more successful in future courses than students who earn grades of C.

Develop

We recommend:

(A) The establishment of a college-wide task force to design and implement alternative academic/life skills coursework and/or career pathways for students who place into RDG 020 or below and are not likely to succeed (especially course repeaters).

Possible paths of intervention for at-risk students at SLCC:

- Alternative Academic Life-skills Programs
- Sustained Orientation/First year experience curricula and support services
- Workforce Literacy programs with certification in job-readiness skills
- Individual attention/Individual Case Management intervention support for at-risk students
- Directed advising and enrollment protocol and support procedures
- Service-learning instructional and job-readiness curricula with work-based internships
- Learning communities for at-risk students

(B) Departments offering developmental courses should act on the following:

- **At some future time, data should be reviewed to address the potential need for English pre-requisite and/or co-requisites for Mathematics courses above MTH 030 and a Reading pre-requisite or co-requisite for MTH.030.**
- **Success in a developmental class should be defined as completing a course with a grade of B or better. This could be accomplished by changing course prerequisites to “completion with a B,” by defining the lower end of C work in developmental courses as 80%, or by moving toward mastery testing based on specific competencies.**

APPENDIX Q

PATHWAYS TO SUCCESS

at

ST. LOUIS COMMUNITY COLLEGE - MERAMEC

Pathways to Success is a 3- or 4-semester series of non-credit courses for individuals interested in developing and sharpening skills in preparation for entering the workforce as well as engaging in personal growth. Upon successful completion of the program's requirements, students will earn a Certificate of Workplace Readiness from St. Louis Community College. Pathways to Success courses are offered through Continuing Education, and draw from three essential areas of personal, academic and workplace-readiness development: communication skills, life skills and career skills.

Students who might benefit from this program include high school graduates in need of an alternative to traditional college-level academics, as well as students who may have or might struggle with satisfactorily completing college preparatory or developmental courses on the credit side of the college.

Interested persons must attend an orientation program prior to enrolling in courses.

Courses are offered in the following core areas:

- **Communication Skills**
- **Life Skills**
- **Career Skills**

Communications Skills developmental courses focus the student on the reading, writing, speaking, listening and critical thinking skills necessary for workplace and interpersonal communication at an informed level.

Life Skills courses optimize the student's facility with coping strategies necessary for independent living, through exploration of financial, consumer, health and personal development issues in an applied framework.

Career Skills courses focus on the development of ability in workplace settings, and include job application, interviewing, workplace soft skills, and resume-development skills through effective identification and employment of appropriate business behaviors and attitudes.

Students are required to take 2 Communication Skills courses, 2 Life Skills courses and 4 Career Skills courses in partial fulfillment of the Workplace Readiness certificate. Additionally, students must enroll in the cornerstone course, *PTS 150: Exploring Employment*, during their first semester, as well as the capstone course, *PTS 160: Pathways Portfolio*, near the end of the program. Following the completion of coursework, students must complete a minimum two-month internship, *PTS 170: Pathways to Employment I* and/or *PTS 180: Pathways to Employment II*, wherein students apply skills learned in the program to a workplace setting, arranged by himself or herself with support from an advisor from the Pathways Program. Upon program completion, students will be awarded a Certificate of Workplace Readiness.

FAQs

1. What is the Pathways to Success Program at Meramec?

Pathways to Success is a 3- to 4-semester series of non-credit courses for individuals interested in developing and sharpening skills in preparation for entering the workforce as well as engaging in personal growth. These courses draw from three essential areas of personal, academic and workplace-readiness development: communication skills, life

skills and career skills. The program culminates in a workplace-based internship experience.

2. *Who is an ideal candidate for the program?*

Students who might benefit from this program include high school graduates in need of an alternative to traditional college-level academics, as well as students who may have or might struggle with satisfactorily completing college preparatory or developmental courses on the credit side of the college.

3. *I have a disability. With whom should I speak to determine if any appropriate accommodations are necessary?*

PATHWAYS Program Administrator Ann Marie Schreiber is a disabilities support specialist in Continue Education. She may be reached via e-mail at **aschreiber@stlcc.edu** or by phone at 314-984-7777.

4. *How do I get started with the program?*

Interested persons must attend an orientation program prior to enrolling in courses. Students who decide to enroll will work with an advisor to plan coursework and, ultimately, an on-site internship in an area business or agency. For more information, please contact Ann Marie Schreiber via e-mail at **aschreiber@stlcc.edu** or by phone at 314-984-7777.

5. *How long will it take to complete the program?*

This program is new, but it is anticipated that students will typically finish Pathways to Success in 3-4 semesters. Ten courses plus an internship are required. Depending on a student's schedule and time available to devote to his or her studies, the program can be completed in a year's time (fall, spring and summer semesters). However, the program can also accommodate students who wish to progress at a less-intense pace.

6. *What degree will I earn if I complete the program?*

Upon program completion, students will be awarded a Certificate of Workplace Readiness. In addition, students may work towards a WorkKeys certificate of completion, with the consent of an advisor.

7. *Can I transfer my courses or certificate to another college or apply credits toward a degree at St. Louis Community College?*

No. Pathways to Success is a non-credit-bearing program offered through Continuing Education. It is not available for college credit, and there is no curriculum alignment between completion of Pathways to Success and taking developmental courses in the college.

8. *How will Pathways to Success help me gain employment after completing the program?*

Students are required to enroll in *PTS 160: Pathways Portfolio*, which is the capstone experience for Pathways to Success. This course allows a student to develop an employment portfolio to enable demonstration of skills necessary for employment. Additionally, with the help of an advisor, each student is required to participate in a two-month internship where skills learned in the program are put to use in an authentic work setting. Such experience allows direct transfer of skills to the workplace as well as creates networks and connections for further employment.

9. *When does the program take place?*

The Fall 2009 semester will see the launch of this exciting new program at the Meramec campus. Classes will be offered during early to late afternoon time blocks on Monday, Wednesday and Fridays. In future semesters, the program may offer alternative times and locations.

10. *Where does the program take place?*

The classes will take place at Meramec's main college campus at 11333 Big Bend Road in Kirkwood. Specific room assignments will be made clear to registered students before classes start. Please consult with an advisor for further information.

11. *How big are the classes?*

The size of each class varies according to enrollment numbers. However, rest assured that class sizes will be kept small to provide an optimum learning environment.

12. *How do I get to the college to take the classes for which I enroll?*

Students are responsible for arranging transportation. Public transportation does run outside the Meramec campus. For more information, please contact the Metro Transit Information Group at 314-231-2345, TTY 314-982-1509, or e-mail questions to transitinformation@metrostlouis.org

13. *What are the goals of the program?*

Pathways to Success is designed to maximize the potential of each student so he or she can enter the workforce as a productive and informed citizen, armed with the knowledge and skills necessary for success at work and in important areas of independent living, in general.

14. *How does the program fit in to the St Louis Community College mission?*

Mission statement: St. Louis Community College expands minds and changes lives every day. We create accessible, dynamic learning environments focused on the needs of our diverse communities.

Pathways to Success Program addresses the needs of our student community. This program, along with all offered at St. Louis Community College, offers you the opportunity to explore your interests, examine your options, and expand your mind.

Program Specifics

Students will work with an advisor to plan coursework. Pathways to Success coursework is generally taken over three to four semesters. Students are required to enroll in the cornerstone class, *PTS 150: Exploring Employment*, in the first semester as one of their four courses.

To earn a Certificate of Workplace Readiness from Pathways to Success, successful completion of at least 10 courses, including a minimum two-month internship (PTS 170 or PTS 180), is required. Required course composition is as follows: *PTS 150: Exploring Employment*; two Communications Skills courses; two Life Skills Courses; four Career Skills courses; *PTS 160: Pathways Portfolio*; and PTS 170 or 180. PTS 120 and/or 121: Keyboarding Basics/Computer Fundamentals, is strongly recommended for students who need to develop the necessary keyboarding skills to succeed in other courses in the Career Skills block.

Courses are offered in the following three essential areas of personal, academic and workplace-readiness development:

COMMUNICATION SKILLS (courses are numbered in the 100-106)

LIFE SKILLS (courses are numbered 110-116)

CAREER SKILLS (courses are numbered 120-128)

Communication Skills Block

PTS 100 Fundamentals of Communication

Develop and improve fundamental and effective communication skills. An emphasis is on effective interpersonal communication, active listening, and interpreting and using non-verbal communication. **Prerequisite:** Acceptance to the program, PTS 150 or co-enrollment in PTS 150

PTS 101 Workplace Communication 101

Practice assertive communication and speaking effectively in a variety of work situations. **Prerequisite:** PTS 100 or permission of instructor

PTS 102 Great Learners

Learn about and practice a variety of techniques for remembering information and multi-step procedures. Learn to organize study time and space, and interpret written directions, charts, and pictures. **Prerequisite:** PTS 150 or co-enrollment in PTS 150

PTS 103 Emphasis on Ability

Learn about the characteristics, effects, and gifts of different life challenges. Learn about successful individuals with disabilities and why they have been successful. Develop self-awareness and confidence through identifying one's strengths. **Prerequisite:** PTS 150 or co-enrollment in PTS 150

PTS 104 Teamwork

Work in various team sizes to solve problems. The focus will be on developing effective group communication skills, leadership skills, and a willingness to be a team player. **Prerequisite:** PTS 150 or co-enrollment in PTS 150

PTS 105 Achieving Healthy Relationships

Explore and practice healthy conflict management. An emphasis is on appropriate behavior in a variety of settings, including social and workplace environments. Learn how your choices impact relationship development and maintenance. **Prerequisite:** PTS 150 or co-enrollment in PTS 150

PTS 106 Critical Thinking

Identify and practice critical thinking strategies. Students analyze, research, and debate current social issues and common workplace problems that often require employees to exercise judgment. **Prerequisite:** PTS 100, 101 or permission of the instructor.

Life Skills Block

PTS 110 Personal Health & Fitness

Examine essential concepts of nutrition as they apply to personal health, wellness, and safety. Investigate a variety of fitness options for adults. **Prerequisite:** PTS 150 or co-enrollment in PTS 150

PTS 111 Health & Fitness for Life

Builds on the concepts covered in PTS 110 to develop personal dietary and fitness strategies for a healthy lifestyle. Course explores the relationship between diet, exercise, and health. **Prerequisite:** PTS 110 or permission of instructor.

PTS 112 Human Sexuality & Responsibility

Explore gender and sexual attitudes, beliefs, and stereotypes within the context of culture. Learn about adult lifestyles, reproduction, birth control, sexual abuse, and responsible sexual behavior. **Prerequisite:** PTS 110, 111 or permission of the instructor.

PTS 113 You & Your Money I

First in a series of three courses covering personal finance. Examine your personal relationship with money; learn about common banking terms and account types; and learn to avoid money scams. **Prerequisite:** PTS 150 or co-enrollment in PTS 150

PTS 114 You & Your Money II

Second in a series of three courses covering personal finance. Learn about credit and debit cards, identify theft and money scams. Learn to write a check; learn to conduct basic banking transactions online; learn how to communicate with your bank, and learn to read a paycheck. **Prerequisite:** PTS 113 or permission of instructor.

PTS 115 You & Your Money III

Third in a series of three courses covering personal finance. Examine paycheck information; learn to read consumer applications and contracts; learn to distinguish between needs and wants; learn to make a personal budget; and learn basic household financial organization. **Prerequisite:** PTS 114 or permission of instructor.

PTS 116 The Global Citizen

Learn about core democratic values; learn about the laws, rights and responsibilities of American citizenship. Connect important historical socio-economic and political stages and events in America to the current state of our nation, and understand America today in a global context. **Prerequisite:** PTS 150 or co-enrollment in PTS 150.

Career Skills Block

PTS 120 Keyboarding Basics

Learn proper hand positioning and improve typing speed. Develop basic skills in keyboarding and data entry for personal and workplace use. **Prerequisite:** PTS 150 or co-enrollment in PTS 150

PTS 121 Computer Fundamentals

Learn about basic hardware and software components, the Windows operating system, and word processing. Learn to create and manage electronic files, and learn to apply those skills to solve commonly-encountered assignments in the workplace. **Prerequisite:** PTS 120 or permission of instructor.

PTS 122 General Office Procedures

Briefly review the keyboard and mouse. Learn to e-mail using proper “netiquette”; manage electronic calendar and contacts; troubleshoot and fix common computer errors; and apply those skills to solve workplace challenges. **Prerequisite:** PTS 121 or permission of instructor.

PTS 123 The Skilled Office Worker

Learn about typical office procedures and customer service skills. Includes filing, following written and oral directions, faxing, copying, e-mail and telephone etiquette, ten-key data-entry, and handling money. **Prerequisite:** PTS 122 or permission of instructor.

PTS 124 Customer Service

Encounter common challenging scenarios in the workplace. Emphasis is on developing quality customer service skills through role-playing appropriate communication strategies with customers, as well as with co-workers and authority figures in the workplace. **Prerequisite:** PTS 100, 101, or permission of instructor.

PTS 125 Self-Advocacy

Learn to advocate for yourself in your personal life and in the workplace. Learn to recognize and appropriately respond to situations that require perseverance and self-confidence. Develop confidence and value in your abilities, and learn to market yourself to others. **Prerequisite:** PTS 150 or co-enrollment in PTS 150

PTS 126 Self-Advocacy in the Workplace

Inventory your strengths, skills, and abilities for tactful and effective self promotion in job interviews, in the workplace, and in the community. Emphasis is on public speaking and being comfortable answering questions. Participate in mock interviews and other challenging workplace conversations. **Prerequisite:** PTS 125 or permission of instructor.

PTS 127 Solving Problems in the Workplace

Become familiar with appropriate and common social interactions in the workplace. Learn about proper business behavior, dress, and decorum, and rehearse appropriate responses to common encounters. **Prerequisite:** PTS 100, 101 or permission of instructor.

PTS 128 WorkKeys on WIN

Prepare to retake the WorkKeys assessment aided by WIN software and with access to an instructor. **Prerequisite:** PTS 150 or co-enrollment in PTS 150 or permission of instructor.

Required Courses:

PTS 150, the cornerstone course, is required in the first semester of enrollment.

PTS 150 Exploring Employment

Assess your interests, skills, and strengths through a variety of methods, including completion and evaluation of the WorkKeys assessment; research jobs and learn to create effective job-search materials.

Prerequisite: Acceptance to the program.

PTS 160, the capstone course, is required in the last semester of enrollment.

PTS 160 Pathways Portfolio

Develop, select, and organize critical elements of a portfolio. Students may choose to develop an electronic portfolio as a cumulative experience. Develop necessary job-search skills as well as techniques to interact and succeed in job applications, interviews and orientations. **Prerequisite:** Successful completion of the 10 required courses (see page 2 for details on composition of program).

One of the following two internships is required at the end of Pathways to Success:

PTS 170 Pathways to Employment I •

Learn how to search for jobs or internships while assessing your strengths and interests; learn what jobs match your strengths and interests, and attempt to obtain a job or internship. Retake the WorkKeys Assessment, if a higher score is desired.

Prerequisite: *PTS 150, PTS 160* and required coursework, or permission of instructor.

PTS 180 Pathways to Employment II •

Learn how to search for jobs or internships while assessing your strengths and interests; learn what jobs match your strengths and interests, and attempt to obtain a job or internship. Retake the WorkKeys Assessment, if a higher score is desired.

Recommended for students who do not obtain a job or internship in *PTS 170*.

Prerequisite: *PTS 170* or permission of instructor.

SUGGESTED ENROLLMENT SEQUENCE FOR PTS

First Semester (4 courses)

PTS 150: Exploring Employment

One Communication Skills course

One Life Skills course

One Career Skills course

Second Semester (4 courses)

One Communication Skills course

One Life Skills course

Two Career Skills courses

Third Semester (2-3 courses)

PTS 160: Pathways Portfolio

Choose at least one extra Career Skills course.

PTS 170: Pathways to Employment (second half of semester) or

Fourth Semester

PTS 170 Pathways to Employment

APPENDIX R

Date of referral: _____

Notification of Referral for Developmental Education Exit Counseling

Student name: _____ **UIN:** _____

Mailing address: _____

Phone: _____ **STLCC e-mail address:** _____

Referring instructor: _____

Course number and section: _____

Student's letter grade and percentage earned: _____

Please check all of the following that contributed to the referral:

- _____ Instructor's judgment that any future re-enrollment will not yield success.
- _____ Inability to meet/exceed course competencies established for current class.
- _____ Grades earned on assignments/tests this semester.
- _____ Inability to effectively participate in class and/or group work.
- _____ Inability to independently manage schedule: homework, tests, attendance, etc.
- _____ Inability to communicate effectively with the instructor when necessary.

This section is for counselor or advisor use upon a second referral for the same class.

Appointment date/time for exit counseling: _____

Counselor or advisor: _____

Guests invited by the student who were present at the meeting: _____

Student will initial all applicable blanks below to confirm receipt of described information.

_____ Student has been advised of his or her right to appeal the restricted enrollment decision.

_____ Student has been apprised of his or her remaining enrollment options within the college.

_____ Student has been counseled about appropriate postsecondary options beyond STLCC.

NOTES

APPENDIX S

From: Scherer, Juliet K.
Sent: Wednesday, October 28, 2009 9:19 AM
To: Cosgrove, John J.; Kays, Vernon M.
Subject: requesting permission to use a report

Hi, John & Dr. Kays,

Below I have pasted in the 2007 District Dev. Ed. Assessment Report, which I would like to use as an appendix in my dissertation. Some of the committee's recommendations have not been implemented, and that is something I'm pointing out. Since there are other people's names on the report, do you think I should contact each person to see whether or not they want their name included in this manner in my dissertation? Or, is this considered an institutional report that one of you can give me permission to use?

Thanks, Juliet

From: Kays, Vernon M.
Sent: Wednesday, October 28, 2009 9:21 AM
To: Scherer, Juliet K.
Subject: RE: requesting permission to use a report

This is an institutional report and you have permission to use it.
 Vernon

From: Scherer, Juliet K.
Sent: Wed 10/28/09 9:21 AM
To: Kays, Vernon M.
Cc: Cosgrove, John J.
Subject: RE: requesting permission to use a report

Beautiful – thank you so much for the quick response. CC-ing John so he knows you have granted this permission. Juliet

From: Scherer, Juliet K.
Sent: Wednesday, October 28, 2009 10:31 AM
To: Cosgrove, John J.
Subject: FW: requesting permission to use a report

Since you sent your last e-mail, were you able to read my original explanation for wanting to include the report as an appendix, and do you agree with Vernon's permission to use it below? I don't want there to be mixed messages. Thanks, Juliet

From: Cosgrove, John J.
Sent: Wed 10/28/09 10:56 AM
To: Scherer, Juliet K.
Cc:
Subject: RE: requesting permission to use a report

Fine with me