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**Variables influencing recent high school graduates' choice of postsecondary proprietary schools or community colleges: A study of business administration and related curricula at the Virginia Beach campuses of Commonwealth College and Tidewater Community College**

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Community College**

**De Weese, Bill Carl, Ed.D.**

**The College of William and Mary, 1989**

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VARIABLES INFLUENCING RECENT HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATES' CHOICE OF  
POSTSECONDARY PROPRIETARY SCHOOLS OR COMMUNITY COLLEGES:  
A STUDY OF BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION AND RELATED CURRICULA  
AT  
THE VIRGINIA BEACH CAMPUSES OF  
COMMONWEALTH COLLEGE  
AND  
TIDEWATER COMMUNITY COLLEGE

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A Dissertation  
Presented to  
The Faculty of the School of Education  
The College of William and Mary in Virginia

---

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

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by  
Bill Carl De Weese  
April 1989

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by


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#### DEDICATION

This manuscript is lovingly dedicated to my parents, Gertrude Richardson De Weese and James Robert De Weese, for their love, sacrifices, constant support, confidence, and understanding in all the ways that matter--and without whose positive influence during my entire lifetime this research would never have been successfully accomplished.



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## Chapter 1

### INTRODUCTION

Proprietary schools (for-profit institutions) have existed at least since the eighteenth century, according to Katz (Juhlin, 1976, p. 29). In the United States, proprietary institutions have been actively offering instruction to prepare their constituents with marketable skills since the nineteenth century (Wilms, 1983, p. 7) and, in some instances, offer two-year degrees that include courses which may transfer to baccalaureate institutions (Harris & Grede, 1979). A more recent institution, the community college, has existed since the early twentieth century (Cohen and Brawer, 1984, p. 1). Since their inception and continuing to the present time, postsecondary proprietary institutions have been devoted to occupational-technical training. Public community colleges have always offered occupational-technical training, among other types of programs, to their service areas. According to Friedlander (1982, p. 2) and others, postsecondary proprietary institutions are--as a result of the 1972 Higher Education Amendments--part and parcel of the higher education spectrum. Community colleges, as they are known today, came into being as a result of the President's Commission on Higher Education for Democracy, 1947 (Hofstadter and Smith, 1961, p. 985) and are, indeed, also

undeniably a segment of the higher education sector.

#### Significance of the Research

Paulter, Roufa, and Thompson (1988, p. 63) stated that "The 1985 edition of The Condition of Education reported '3.7 million persons were enrolled in some type of postsecondary vocational education program. . . .'" These statistics include both public and private institutions and speak to the healthy, existing population of students pursuing vocational-technical education in this country during contemporary times. However, research data do not indicate a comprehensive understanding of this large number of students who attend higher education institutions providing vocational-technical programs, especially why they choose an institution or choose one type of institution over another. This kind of information is imperative to a comprehensive understanding of students attending an institution. It is also essential information for institutions to possess in order for their students to access programs and services. However, the information has not been available. More than a decade ago, Trivett (1974) pointed out the insufficiency of literature necessary to study proprietary schools, programs, and enrollments and indicated the reasons:

the historical lack of official interest in gathering proprietary school data, and the fact that no organization or agency has been willing to

attempt the major task of synthesizing available data and standardizing definitions. . . [, and] the possible reluctance on the part of some schools to publish precise enrollments, due to competitive reasons. (Friedlander, p. 6)

Even more specific to this discussion, Trivett (1974) further asserted:

The value of proprietary school education to its students ought to be more directly assayable than the value of other forms of postsecondary education. But a careful weighing would demand better description of the students and what happens to them than is available now. (p. 26)

Trivett's argument certainly spoke to the need for more comprehensive information about postsecondary proprietary students, given the context of the Higher Education Amendment of 1972--its provision for public funding both for private and public institutions and the resulting possibility for competition between the two types of institutions. To be certain, the research on proprietary institutions indicates that some kinds of information about its students does exist. But that information does little to promote a specific--or even general--understanding of the reason why students choose to attend a proprietary institution.

For example, Belitsky (1969), Clark and Sloan (1966),

and Erwin (1975), notable researchers during the two decades prior to the 1980's, principally categorized proprietary institutions by the types of programs they offered: everything from trades to business and related fields to health sciences to fields of study so diverse as to be labeled miscellaneous. These highly informative studies certainly promoted a general understanding of the postsecondary proprietary sector, but--on the other hand--did little to directly increase an understanding of the students generally, or their choices of institutions specifically. Juhlin (1976) studying postsecondary proprietary institutions in Illinois and Wolman et al. (1972) basically used student demographics, statewide and nationwide respectively, in order to promulgate a better understanding of students but, once again, did not succeed in directly highlighting students' choices of institutions.

Friedlander (1980, 1982) again used nationally based demographics--among other things--in order:

1. To add to the literature on proprietary school students by describing the general type of clientele attracted to these schools, what factors contribute to their school choice, and how they finance their studies.
2. To determine if and in what ways proprietary school students differ from community college students by comparing student background

characteristics, high school preparation, career goals and values, students' estimates of success in their careers and educational aspirations, and factors influencing institutional choice. (p. 9)

Friedlander's research demonstrated commitment to cultivating an understanding of proprietary students' choice of institutions, more than community college students' choice. In fact, her research heralded the beginning of a new type of study for the reasons that it did, indeed. Give emphasis to students' choice and did essentially compare students attending two categories of institutions similar--to a degree--in mission. However, she, like others before her, basically used demographics collected nationwide and collected ten years before the completion of her study.

Levin (1985), likewise, used national data, but his study differed from Friedlander's in that he collected data in 1973 from students who were in high school in 1972 and who during 1973 reported matriculation in a proprietary institution or a community college. The purpose of his study was to:

- 1) measure selected characteristics of postsecondary proprietary school students;
- 2) compare those students to students at public community colleges, area vocational-technical institutes, and similar tax-funded institutions;
- and 3) evaluate the claim by proprietary school

spokesmen that they are competing with public institutions. (p. iii)

Though Levin concluded that there is little reason to assume competition between proprietary institutions and community colleges for recent high school graduates on a national level, he suggested that his study does not nullify the possibility of competition for students on the local level and further suggests the efficacy of that type of investigation (p. 125).

Mortorana and Sturtz (1973), when conducting research on the community college, used broadly selected demographics when describing the populations of community colleges. They, like Trivett (1974) when writing about proprietary institutions, concluded that information is practically non-existent relative to community college students. Further, the dearth of information regarding community college students is supported by other prominent researchers of the community college. That is, Cohen and Brawer (1984), using data collected from a broad geographical base, described community college students in terms of their pragmatic attitudes toward their occupations and making money. Cohen and Brawer qualified this utilitarian description of community college students with the statement that ". . . large numbers of community college students attend for reasons having nothing to do with jobs" (p. 52). To be sure, these perceptions based upon research implied reasons

for community college students' choice of an institution, but the perceptions did not promote a thorough understanding of the reasons for choice on national or local levels. Perhaps a greater implication is the need for research and study that does indeed advance such an understanding.

Though Tillery, Deegan and Associates (1985) offered the caveat that there is a tendency "toward incorporating general learning into occupational programs with further blurring of the occupational-academic distinction," they also postulated that among community college students there is a growing interest in "occupational rather than academic fields" (p. 64). Their generalization was based on two California studies (Renkiewicz et al., 1982 and Sheldon, 1983) and a national report (Astin, Hemond, and Richardson, 1982). Further, these data reflected the choice of students already enrolled in or graduated from the two types of institutions, a fact which left student choice unexamined at a point in time before the students chose the institution which they would attend. But the fact is that essentially the same can be said for students enrolled in four-year colleges and universities.

It was not until the present decade and particularly not until after the completion of the FIPSE-funded CHOICE project (1977-80) and studies completed by other prominent researchers that data were available to promulgate an understanding of why it is that students choose to attend

particular institutions of higher education. The CHOICE project and subsequent research focused on recent high school graduates' choice of four-year colleges and universities, thus bringing educators closer to an understanding--on a national basis--of students' choice of those institutions. Researchers found that the following variables--significant persons, relatively fixed institutional characteristics, and other institutional characteristics--in addition to an interactive, sequential deliberation, or choice behavior,\* of students making the choice with significant persons and both sets of institutional characteristics to contribute to an understanding of students' choice of institutions (Lewis and Morrison, 1975; Kotler, 1976; Gilmour, Dolich, and Spiro, 1978; MacPhearson, 1978; David Chapman, 1979 and 1981; Hanson and Litten, 1982; Jackson, 1982; Larry Litten et al., 1983; Hossler, 1984; and Randall Chapman and Jackson, 1987).

The CHOICE project once again confirmed that trends in thinking about higher education are frequently set by baccalaureate institutions or that research which sets

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\*Choice behavior is a term used by Marci Cox Friedlander in her report, Characteristics of Students Attending Proprietary Schools and Factors Influencing Their Institutional Choice. Research Monograph 501. Cincinnati, OH: South-Western Publishing Co., 1980. The term is also used by Randall G. Chapman and Rex Jackson in their report, College Choices of Academically Able Students: The Influence of No-Need Financial Aid and Other Factors. Research Monograph No. 10. New York: College Entrance Examination Board, 1987. The term is used when appropriate throughout this study.



national trends frequently uses data associated with those institutions. In this instance, the application of theory resulting from the CHOICE project to other higher education institutions is indeed cogent because the variables-- significant persons, relatively fixed institutional characteristics, and other institutional characteristics-- addressed by the researchers involved--are by nature peculiar to all students in the process of choosing to matriculate at an educational institution. To date, no research has applied to proprietary institutions and community colleges the theory that significant persons, relatively fixed institutional characteristics, and other institutional characteristics are the key factors used by students in their deliberation to choose an institution at which to matriculate.

The literature on proprietary institutions indicates a perception that competition does exist between those institutions and community colleges. Levin (1985, pp. 20-25) comprehensively surveys the literature which confirms a perception that competition for students does exist between the two types of institutions (Braden and Paul, 1971, p. 204; Wilms, 1973a, p. 83-84 and 1973b, p. 80; Wilms, 1974; Juhlin, 1976; Jung, 1980, p. 11). From his review it is not Levin's perception that community colleges generally perceive a similar competition from the proprietary institutions (Tonne and Nanassy, 1970, p. 386; Hosler, 1971;

Miller, 1971; Wolman et al., 1972, p. 72; Shoemaker, 1973; Hyde, 1976; and Nolfi et al., 1978).

The literature, however, is punctuated by advocates of the community college with reports confirming that the proprietary institutions do provide competition. Once again, Levin notes two researchers who affirm that competition occurs (Shoemaker, 1973 and Peterson, 1982) over public funds made available to students of both public and private sectors as a result of the Higher Education Amendments of 1972 (p. 23). During the present decade, it has been noted that postsecondary proprietary institutions provide competition to community colleges for students as well.

In his study that examined the possibilities for job training and economic development by the proprietary vocational schools in the Commonwealth of Virginia, Richard Moore (1986) noted that--on a national basis--proprietary institutions are frequently ignored in the development of public policy. He specifically notes that proprietary institutions in Virginia are not mentioned in "the two documents that guide postsecondary training policy: The Virginia Plan for Higher Education, 1983, and the Virginia Community College System Master Plan of 1982-1990." His study has led him to conclude:

In an era of declining state and federal resources for higher education and for job training, it is

surprising that policymakers continue to overlook this sector, which can do much to complement public-sponsored training. One reason for this exclusion is the lack of information about private career schools that will allow policymakers to include private career schools with public programs in state planning. (p. 1)

Further, Johnson and Bromley's "A Descriptive Assessment of Recent Community College Enrollment Changes: Phase I" (1986) was prepared as a result of declining enrollments at some institutions. "[T]he VCCS commissioned this study as an external descriptive report of factors influencing recent changes in community college enrollments in Virginia" (p. i). After much analysis from another study by Wilms (1983), the report asserted:

There is no way to know how proprietary schools compared with other institutions prior to the early 1980's or how they compare on important dimensions in 1985. More importantly . . . , there is no information to suggest how Virginia's proprietary schools compare with those sampled nationally for Wilms' analysis. Are Virginia proprietary schools similar to those nationwide? What do we know about proprietary schools in the Commonwealth?" (p. 45)

As stated earlier Levin concludes in his own study that on a

national basis competition does not exist between the two types of institutions, but he does not deny that the probability may exist on a local basis--thus, in part, justifying a study of that nature.

In summary, the literature, first, reveals insufficient information about postsecondary proprietary institutions and community colleges in a general sense. Second, the literature does not adequately address proprietary school and community college students' choice of these two types of institutions. No studies to date concentrate on the possible variables that influence most significantly students' choices of institutions at the time that the choice is made. Third, and more specific, these choice variables have not been applied to local institutions. Fourth, consideration of these choice variables relative to the possible competition on a local basis between proprietary institutions and community colleges has not been adequately addressed.

#### Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this research is to investigate the reasons why recent high school graduates choose to attend a postsecondary proprietary institution or a community college. More specifically, the purpose is to investigate the most important variables in recent high school graduates' choice of the associate in applied science degree in business administration or related associate of applied

science degree programs at a postsecondary proprietary institution or comparable programs at a community college.

### Conceptual Framework

The concept supporting this study is synthesized from student choice models presented by David Chapman (1981), Litten et al. (1983), Hossler (1984), and Randall Chapman and Jackson (1987). They suggest that in the process of choosing a college or university recent high school graduates are most influenced by the variables--significant persons (parents, peer, high school teachers, and high school counselors), relatively fixed institutional characteristics (location, cost, financial aid, and programs to include academic, counseling, and placement), and other institutional characteristics (methods of communication to include institutional catalogs, print advertising, and electronic advertising as well as recruitment efforts to include off-campus site visits by institutional representatives and on-campus site visits by students). The theory, thus, is that these same variables that influence student choice of four-year colleges also influence recent high school graduates' choice of postsecondary institutions and community colleges.

### Main Research Question

What are the most important variables influencing recent high school graduates' choice of programs at a postsecondary proprietary institution or comparable programs

at a community college? How do these variables differ for students enrolling in the two institutions?

Subsidiary Research Questions

- I. What is the influence of significant persons in recent high school graduates' choice of postsecondary proprietary institutions or community colleges?
  - A. What is the influence of parents?
  - B. What is the influence of peers?
  - C. What is the influence of high school teachers?
  - D. What is the influence of high school counselors?
- II. What is the influence of relatively fixed institutional characteristics in recent high school graduates' choice of postsecondary proprietary institutions or community colleges?
  - A. What is the influence of location?
  - B. What is the influence of cost?
  - C. What is the influence of financial aid?
  - D. What is the influence of programs?
    1. What is the influence of academic programs?
    2. What is the influence of counseling programs?
    3. What is the influence of placement programs?
- III. What is the influence of other institutional characteristics in recent high school graduates' choice of postsecondary proprietary institutions or community colleges?
  - A. What is the influence of methods of communication?

1. What is the influence of institutional catalogs?
  2. What is the influence of print advertising?
  3. What is the influence of electronic advertising?
- B. What is the influence of recruitment efforts?
1. What is the influence of off-campus site visits by institutional representatives?
  2. What is the influence of on-campus site visits by students?

#### Definition of Terms

For the purpose of consistency, operational definitions of the key terms used throughout this study have been developed. These terms are used to specify the main research question and subsidiary research questions.

Community college: This is a complex postsecondary educational institution with four foci: (1) the vertical focus or the transfer function (2) the horizontal focus or the commitment to linkages with its service area (3) the integrated focus or provision of general education to all students in attendance (4) the developmental focus or the provision of instruction necessary for developing in students the skills necessary to perform college-level work. (See Cohen, Arthur M. and Florence B. Brawer. The American Community College. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1984. See

also Deegan, William L., Dale Tillery and Assoc. Renewing the American Community College. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1985.)

Postsecondary institution: This is an educational institution attended by students after they have attended or graduated from high school. Proprietary institutions, community colleges, and four-year colleges and universities are postsecondary institutions. For enrollment in a proprietary institution or a community college, it is not necessary for students to have obtained a high school diploma or a general studies diploma (GED) before being admitted to and attending--thus the term open-admissions institution.

Proprietary institution: Levin (1985) summarizes Fulton (1969) to report that no one existing definition suffices. Levin, however, paraphrases Mortorana and Sturtz (1973) for a working definition that suffices for the purposes of this study: "A proprietary institution is one which 1) is privately owned; 2) provides one or more programs whose primary goal is training for immediate employment, rather than general education; 3) provides less than four years of postsecondary education; 4) requires no more than high school graduation for admission; and 5) is not oriented primarily toward transfer to a degree-granting institution" (p. 6).



Fixed institutional characteristics: These are characteristics controlled by the mission of an institution to such an extent that they are not likely to change. Chapman (1981) indicates that cost, financial aid, location, and availability of programs are relatively fixed college characteristics (pp. 495-97). He uses the qualifying term relatively when identifying these terms and does, by virtue of that term, vindicate his argument for those characteristics as being fixed. Hossler (1984) sees institutional characteristics as being either fixed or fluid. Fixed characteristics include such factors as ownership or sponsorship, general tuition levels, location, and academic program orientation (liberal arts versus polytechnical).

Fluid institutional characteristics: These are characteristics of an institution that may be changed. Chapman (1981) by implication and Hossler (1984) by his own statement agree that three basic, fluid institutional characteristics are pricing policies, institutional programs, and methods of communication (pp. 32-33).

Recent high school graduates: These are students in the 18-21 year old age group who have been enrolled in a postsecondary proprietary institution or community college curriculum at some point since fall 1986.

Student choice: This is the process (constituted by many variables indigenous to both the student and the

institution) of making the decision to attend a higher education institution.

#### Limitations of the Study

This study is limited to a comparison of two Tidewater Virginia postsecondary institutions. Further the study is limited to students who chose the associate in applied science degree in business and selected related curricula at those two institutions. Thus, the subjects were limited to 22 students at the Virginia Beach Campus of Commonwealth College and thirty students at the Virginia Beach Campus of Tidewater Community College during the spring of 1988 who had graduated from high school during the spring of 1986 or 1987. Because this research population reflects a group of students in a geographical area different both in industrial/business/technological composition and community college system composition from other geographical areas, generalizations concerning their reasons for institutional choice must be made cautiously.

#### Overview of the Study

The related literature is reviewed in Chapter 2. First, an overview of student choice models is introduced followed by the examination of a model which focuses on student characteristics and external characteristics which are represented by the influence of significant persons, fixed college characteristics, and colleges' attempts to communicate with students (Chapman, 1981). This model is

static. It presents characteristics of students, other individuals, and institutional characteristics; but it does not address the process necessary for analyzing the characteristics in order for one to make a choice. Outlined next are models that focus on the deliberations of students or the decision-making process that students go through (student choice behavior) prerequisite to actually making the choice--but in tandem with their own characteristics and external characteristics. And, last, models that consider all aspects of choosing an institution--student characteristics, external characteristics, and student choice behaviors--are presented. This section is concluded by a summary and analysis.

Chapter 3 outlines the methodology of the study. In Chapter 4 the survey and interview results are presented and analyzed. The study's results in relationship to the research questions are discussed in both of these chapters. The conclusions of the research are discussed in Chapter 5 and their implications for future policy and practice as well as research provided.

## Chapter 2

### REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The review of related literature addresses choice models which depict both the factors that recent high school graduates must consider when choosing a college or university and the process they go through to incorporate these factors into the choice decision. Specifically, this review scrutinizes a model that focuses on student characteristics and external characteristics which are represented by the influence of significant persons, fixed college characteristics, and colleges' attempts to communicate with students (Chapman 1981). This model is static. It does not address the process that prospective college students go through in order to finally choose an institution. Next, models are presented that focus on the decision-making process, or choice behavior, of students prerequisite to actually making the choice, but in tandem with their own characteristics and external characteristics. Finally, models are presented that incorporate all aspects of choosing an institution--student characteristics, external characteristics, and student choice behaviors. This section concludes with a summary and analysis.

#### Choice Models

Choice models delineate the variables influencing student selection of colleges or universities. That is,

choice models indicate how students actually choose one institution over another. That knowledge is, of course, important because it indicates the necessary sequencing of institutional marketing efforts that may be exerted to convince students to enroll (Litten, 1983, p. 28).

A model focusing on student and external characteristics

David Chapman (1981) envisions recent high school graduates choosing colleges and universities based upon a set of student characteristics (socioeconomic status or SES, aptitude, level of educational aspiration, and high school performance) in tandem with an external set of characteristics (significant persons, fixed college characteristics, and colleges' efforts to communicate with students), and in tandem with the institutions' efforts to communicate with students. Chapman's model addresses variables similar to those in other student choice models. He readily admits that the limitations of his model are that the sets of variables therein apply to the traditional aged, prospective high school graduate/college student (18-21 years old) and do not necessarily reflect the variables incumbent upon the decisions of older college students (p. 492).

Models focusing on the decision-making process (student choice behavior)

Larry Litten et al. (1983) survey the literature on student choice models to determine how models can augment marketing efforts. They indicate that a number

of writers have envisioned the student choice process taking the shape of a funnel in which students pass through five stages: from that of prospectives to inquirers to applicants to admitted applicants to matriculants. A liberal explanation of the funnel concept is that of students passing through the funnel

having all postsecondary institutions as options in which to enroll to finally matriculating in a single institution. Such a conception of the process is an exceptionally unrealistic abstraction, however, since no student has all institutions as an option except when he or she sits down with a published college guide in hand; natural ignorance of most of these options exists, and given human information storage and processing capacities, that is not surprising. (pp. 28-29)

Nor can one ignore the conclusions of David Reisman in his "Foreword" to this book by Litten et al. He makes what might be considered a startling statement about student choice behavior:

[A]t least 80 percent of the students in the United States do not make multiple applications and may not even make a single one; they show up at the nearest "available college," be it a community college, a four-year state college, or an open-admissions private college (the great

majority of which have today virtually no selectivity); they do not make a conscious college choice. (p. xx)

Reisman (1980) references Alexander Astin and others who have done considerable research on providing information to guide student choice--who say that from 10 to 25 percent of students make an active choice, a small majority indeed. Further, he indicates that the only variable that would slightly increase this percentage is the "additional number who, having started at the local 'available college,' transfer to an institution more suitable to their developing skills and aspirations" (p. 226).

Litten et al. believe that Lewis and Morrison (1975) offer the most comprehensive model of an individual student's behavior when choosing a postsecondary institution. This model consists of thirteen steps: first, a student consults a source (a person, print, or electronic media having information about the institution); second, the source provides the name of a college or university; third, the source provides information about the suggested college or university; fourth, the student evaluates the source and the information given him about the source; fifth, the school is added to the student's list of institutions; sixth, the characteristics of the institution are compared against the student's criteria for the institution in which he will eventually enroll; seventh, the school is evaluated

for application; eighth, the school is dropped from the list of schools; ninth, the student makes application to a school; tenth, the student is accepted at the school; eleventh, the student is rejected at a school; twelfth, the student makes a decision to attend a particular institution; thirteenth, the student makes a decision not to attend a particular institution or institutions to which he previously applied (p. 29).

Further, Litten et al. report that Kotler (1976) identified a six-step process: desire to attend--with a corollary decision to apply for aid, followed by application for aid and the granting of aid; decision (plans) to attend; investigation of institutions; applications for admission; admission; and enrollment. According to Litten et al., Gilmour, Dolich, and Spiro (1978) confirmed the essence of Kotler's six-step model in their interview with and empirical analysis of the choice activities of college freshmen. This confirmed model has been further consolidated by Hanson and Litten (1982) himself and Gregory Jackson (1982) into three basic stages: stage one consisting of desire to attend and decision (plans) to attend; stage two consisting of investigation of institutions; and stage three consisting of applications for admission, admission, and enrollment (pp. 29-30).



Models incorporating student characteristics, external characteristics, and the decision-making process (student choice behavior) Litten et al. (p.32) also schematically depict a model incorporating the models of David W. Chapman (1979); Gilmour, Dolich, and Spiro (1978) and MacPherson (1978). This expanded model incorporates the following steps: college aspirations, decision to start the process, information gathering, application to the institution, and enrollment. But it also takes into account the influence of variables about which a great deal of research has been done: student background (race, income, SES, parents' education, family culture, parents' personalities, religion, and sex); personal attributes (academic ability, self-image, personal values, benefits sought, personality/lifestyles); students' home environment (occupational structure, economic conditions, and cultural conditions); high school attributes (social composition and quality); students' performance (class rank, curriculum); influences/media used (parents, counselors, peers, publications, college officials, and other media); public policy and aid (amount/eligibility); college actions (recruitment, activities, and academic/admissions policies); college characteristics (price, size, programs, ambience, and control); and college actions (admittance/denial and aid-granting).

Thus far, the noted studies of student choice models advance an understanding of the choice process by displaying

in common two concepts: first, the process that begins with the decision to attend college and ends with matriculation at a particular institution and, second, the influences augmenting the steps within the process. The steps in the process are variously termed, but the process is essentially the same. The influences are somewhat more consistently identified by the studies than are the steps of the process and indeed suggest the choice variables for examination in this study. The variables are the roles of significant persons; relatively fixed institutional characteristics; and other institutional characteristics, including methods of communication and recruitment efforts.

Don Hossler (1984) describes Gregory Jackson's (1982) three-stage student choice model in which the enrollment decision is "interactional" (p. 32) with student characteristics--the basis of stages one and two of Jackson's model--and stage three, the student's evaluation of the institution. The salient point that Hossler makes about Jackson's model relative to the choice process is that student "personological variables" and institutional variables interact to impel choice. The "personological variables" are ability, SES, significant others, aspirations and values, demographic characteristics, residence characteristics, high school characteristics, and expectations of college (p. 31). The first stage of Jackson's model is dominated by "personological variables,"

thus creating a preference for a higher education institution. Hossler records Jackson's belief that the most important variables in this stage are academic achievement, significant others, and family background. In the second stage, the variables of the first stage begin to interact with both fixed and fluid institutional variables, thus creating a tendency in the student to exclude institutions not in keeping with the preferences resulting from the "personological variables." Hossler again records Jackson's belief that the most important institutional variables at this stage are location, second only to information about the institution. The third stage is exemplified by a "choice set," the most important institutional variables being net cost, academic programs, and other environmental characteristics. The actual choice is not a stage unto itself but a natural outgrowth of the "personological variables" and institutional variables "interactional" among the three stages of the model (p. 32).

Randall Chapman and Rex Jackson (1987) have also constructed a student choice model which is comprised of three interrelated stages: perception judgment formation, preference judgment formation, and choice. It is presumed that perception formation is greatly influenced by two sets of variables, the actual physical institutional characteristics and the quality of information available to students about the institutions. It is also presumed that

prior to choice, which occurs after perception formation and preference formation, that another set of variables, situational constraints--which may include such elements as cost, financial aid, and parental income level--is greatly influential. Of course, student personal attributes are another set of variables which directly influence the first set of variables--physical institutional characteristics, quality of information, and situational constraints. Likewise, personal attributes influence directly perception formation, preference formation, and choice. The model can safely be compared to an overlay of transparencies sequentially projected onto a screen using the capability of an overhead projector. A transparency showing the model consisting of perception formation, followed by preference formation, followed by choice is first placed on the screen. Then, a transparency showing the influence of the first two variables--physical college characteristics and quality of information--of the first set of variables on perception formation is placed on the screen. Finally, a transparency showing the influence of the second set of variables--students' personal attributes--on the first set of variables and on the model itself is placed on the screen. The result is a depiction of two things: the influence of students' personal attributes simultaneously on the first set of variables and on the individual stages of the model itself and the influence of the first set of variables on the first

stage of the model, perception formation, and the third stage of the model, choice.

### Summary

What then do these models have in common? First, they emphasize the behavioral process indigenous to students' choice of postsecondary institutions. In these models students' choice is not seen wholly as a simple reflection of students' characteristics and/or institutional characteristics but as an interactive, sequential deliberation, appropriately termed choice behavior, involving both sets of characteristics. Second, whatever the configurations of the choice models, the two sets of characteristics--students' and institutions'--are important in varying degrees, given the purpose(s) of the studies out of which they grew. Also, many of the same student and institutional characteristics are examined by each of the studies. Some of the student characteristics repeatedly referred to are: SES, aptitude, level of educational aspiration, high school performance--basically those characteristics listed in Chapman's model but important in varying degrees in each of the studies. Some of the institutional characteristics repeatedly referred to are: the relatively fixed ones--location, cost, financial aid, and availability of academic programs; methods of communication; and recruitment efforts--basically those characteristics listed in Chapman's model but important in

varying degrees in each of the studies. Of course, cost always has been and always will be an important variable. Given that fact, it is impossible to discuss cost without also discussing financial aid. And since the time of the Kotler study (1976), financial aid has been recorded as an institutional variable important to students' choice. But it was not until the publication of Chapman's (1981) model that the literature began to emphasize the importance of institutions' attempts to communicate with prospective students.

In summary, the choice variables that emerge from this portion of literature review concerning student choice models are essentially those suggested by Chapman (1981): student characteristics (SES, aptitude, level of educational aspiration, and high school performance) in tandem with an external set of characteristics (significant persons and fixed college characteristics), and institutions' efforts to communicate with students. Further, Litten et al. (1983) record student background variables of race, income, parents' education, family culture, parents' personalities, religion, and sex; personal attributes (academic ability, self-image, personal values, benefits sought, personality/lifestyles); students' home environment (occupation structure, economic conditions, and cultural conditions); and high school attributes (social composition, quality); and students' performance (class rank and

curriculum). Each of these sets of variables easily equates with the set of variables, student characteristics, used by Chapman (1981). That is, each of these sets of variables contributes to students' personal profiles before they begin to interact with a higher education institution. The difference is that Litten et al. have used greater detail and, at times, different terms to identify this set of characteristics. Litten et al. (p. 32) record another set of variables: influences/media used--parents, counselors, peers, publications, college officials, and other media. This set of variables equates with Chapman's external set of characteristics, to include both fixed and fluid college characteristics and institutions' efforts to communicate with students: public policy and aid (amount/eligibility); college actions (recruitment, activities, and size, programs, ambience, and control); and college actions (admittance/denial); and aid (granting of and amount awarded). Hossler (1984) while describing Jackson's (1982) model records the variables of ability, SES, significant others, aspirations and values, demographic characteristics, residence characteristics, high school characteristics, and expectations of college, location of the institution, information about the institution, cost of attending, academic programs, and other environmental characteristics of the institution (pp. 31-32). The similarity of these variables to the sets of variables in David Chapman's model

(1981) and in Litten et al.'s chronicling of others' models is evident. The variables of ability, SES, aspirations and values, expectations of college, and demographic characteristics equate to student characteristics as exemplified by both Chapman and Litten et al. Residence characteristics, high school characteristics, location of the institution, information about the institution, cost of attending, academic programs, and other environmental characteristics of the institution equate to external characteristics or the influence of significant persons, fixed college characteristics, and college' attempts to communicate with students. Randall Chapman and Rex Jackson's model (1987) incorporates the sets of variables: student personal attributes; actual physical institutional characteristics and quality of information available to students about the institutions; and situational constraints (cost, financial aid, and parental income level). Again, these sets of variables are reflections of the characteristics recorded by David Chapman, Litten et al., and Hossler. It is important to note that each of the four studies highlighted here discuss choice variables not as isolated factors but in relationship each other. In effect, the common student choice variables demonstrated in these models are: student characteristics--to include SES, aptitude, educational expectations or aspirations; significant persons--to include parents, peers, high school



teachers, and high school counselors; relatively fixed institutional characteristics--to include location, cost, financial aid, and programs (academic, counseling, and placement); and other institutional characteristics--to include methods of communication and recruitment efforts.

What then is the relationship of these models for the purposes of the study? The models seem to confirm the need to continually study various aspects of the choice process as the conditions influencing choice change. There exists no equal, thoroughly researched body of literature relative to recent high school graduates who attend a postsecondary proprietary institution or a community college. So it is partially through examination of choice models relative to recent high school graduates who attend a college or university that this study will be given a theoretical base for answering the main research question: What are the most significant variables in recent high school graduates' choice of an associate in applied science program in business administration at a postsecondary proprietary institution or the associate of applied science degree program in business administration at a community college, and how do they differ?

## Chapter 3

### METHODOLOGY

It is the purpose of this study to explore the reasons why recent high school graduates choose to attend a postsecondary proprietary institution or a community college. More specifically, the purpose is to investigate the most important variables in recent high school graduates' choice of the associate in applied science degree in business administration or related associate of applied science degree programs at a postsecondary proprietary institution or comparable programs at a community college.

This chapter chronicles the population studied and the research instruments used, specifically relative to the subsidiary research questions. First, the sample population is described. This description is followed by discussions of sample selection, including selection of participants in relationship to the colleges' service areas, and of data collection procedures and ethical safeguards. Next, the instrumentation section is comprised of a description of the questionnaire, a statement on the validity of the questionnaire, a summary of the survey data analysis procedure, and a description of the interview schedule and data analysis. The chapter concludes with a summary.

Description of the Sample

This study is exploratory in nature. The subjects were recent high school graduates at the Virginia Beach Campuses of Commonwealth College and Tidewater Community College. The following criteria were necessary for all students participating in the study:

1. They had to have graduated from high school during the spring of 1986 or 1987.
2. They had to be enrolled in an associate degree program in business or related curricula.
3. They did not have to be enrolled full-time.

During the fall term 1987, the Records Office at Commonwealth and the Institutional Research Office at Tidewater Community College were requested to produce printouts of the students who met the criteria. Initially at Commonwealth College, the names of students in the following associate in applied science degree programs were requested: business management, computer assisted accounting, computer information specialist, computer science, executive office administration, health office management, legal office administration, medical administrative assistant, and medical office administration. This printout yielded the names of eighteen students who completed high school in 1986 and fifteen students who completed high school in 1987 and had enrolled in Commonwealth College during one or both of those two years.

Eventually the travel and hospitality management program was added to the list of selected programs. (See Selection of the Sample below.)

At Tidewater Community College, the names of the students in the following associate in applied science degree programs were requested: medical records technology, accounting, data processing, banking and finance, management, business administration, office systems technology (executive, legal, medical, and word processing being the four options in this degree), and secretarial science (which was a previous designation for the present office systems technology program and retained in the college records for those not having officially updated their records to reflect the new designation of office systems technology, to include one of the four options-- executive, legal, medical, and word processing). This printout yielded the names of 208 students who completed high school in 1986 or 1987 and had enrolled in Tidewater Community College during one or both of those two years.

#### Selection of the Sample

It was decided that thirty students from each of the institutions would participate in the study. This decision was made on the basis of the number of students enrolled in the selected degree programs during the 1987 fall term at Commonwealth College. Essentially, the number of students expected to participate in the study had to be dictated by

the available population at Commonwealth College if the number of students surveyed and interviewed at the two institutions were to be equivalent because that college's entire student enrollment is less than one-fourth that of Tidewater Community College; and thus the available number of students in the selected degree programs considerably less at Commonwealth than at Tidewater.

Commonwealth College        The data collection took place in the spring 1988 term. By that time at Commonwealth College, the ostensible number of students available to participate in the study was 31. This number included the students enrolled in the travel and hospitality management degree program. (See Description of the Sample above.) This program was included in the list because it required as many core courses in business as did the other associate in applied science curricula in business or related curricula. However, by the time that the data collection was actually instrumented, only 22 students in all the business and related curricula--to include travel and hospitality management--were regularly attending classes on site at the campus and could participate in the study.

Tidewater Community College        Since there were 208 students at Tidewater Community College who ostensibly could participate in the study, it was decided that thirty students would indeed constitute that sample. That sample was chosen in the following manner: the first name on the

printout was chosen as the first participant and every seventh name thereafter was chosen until the sample of thirty was obtained. After the first thirty names were chosen, class schedules of the students were obtained from the appropriate program of the computerized Student Information System (SIS) by using social security numbers. Because the attempt was not made to obtain this information until early April 1988 after students had registered and begun to attend classes in early January 1988, expected attrition had naturally occurred. Thus, several attempts at selection had to be made before the sample population of thirty was obtained. In order to objectively and methodically choose other names to constitute the sample of thirty, the next name on the list was chosen at the appropriate seventh interval until the population of thirty names was obtained. Only one student refused to participate in the study, indicating a schedule too restricted in terms of the time it took her to commute from classes to her work place. The name of that student, therefore, was replaced with the next name on the list.

Selection of Participants in Relationship to the Colleges' Service Areas

In addition to the campus in Virginia Beach, Commonwealth College has campuses in Norfolk and Hampton as well. The participants from Tidewater Community College did not necessarily live within the campus' service area--the

City of Virginia Beach, sections of the Norfolk Naval Base, and Portsmouth and Chesapeake when the Virginia Beach Campus can offer courses or programs in those two cities not offered by the other two campuses respectively. Twenty-one students lived in Virginia Beach, four in Norfolk, three in Chesapeake, and one elsewhere.

The main service region(s) of both colleges is urban. In addition, at both institutions some students were enrolled full-time and others part-time. Thus, generalizations made as a result of this study regarding the reasons why students choose to enroll in a postsecondary proprietary institution or a community college, locally or nationally, should be made cautiously.

#### Data Collection

Commonwealth College Students' schedules were obtained from the Records Office and the questionnaires distributed to each participant individually in the same office of the campus' one building at a time agreed upon by the researcher and the participant. The surveys were completed between May 4 and May 9, 1988.

Subsequently, the names of the five Commonwealth College students to be interviewed after completing the questionnaire were chosen randomly. On June 9, 1988, the five students were interviewed by the researcher who, with the permission of each of the participants, recorded the responses in writing and on tape. The interviews were fully

transcribed on the two days subsequent to the interview meetings. Each interview was conducted and completed within twenty minutes in the same office of the campus' one building at a time agreed upon by the researcher and the participant.

Tidewater Community College      The questionnaires were distributed to each participant individually in the same office of the same campus academic building at the time agreed upon by the researcher and the participant. The surveys were conducted and completed between April 15 and May 13, 1988.

Subsequently, the names of the five Tidewater Community College students to be interviewed were chosen randomly. Between May 20 and 26, 1988, the five students were interviewed by the researcher who, with the permission of each of the participants, recorded the responses in writing and on tape. These responses were fully transcribed immediately after each of the interviews was completed. Each interview was conducted and completed within twenty minutes in the same office in one of the campus' academic buildings at a time agreed upon by the researcher and the participant.

Ethical safeguards and considerations      Permission to conduct and complete the research was granted by the College of William and Mary's School of Education Committee for Research on Human Subjects and by the same university-wide



committee, by the Vice President of Commonwealth Colleges, by Tidewater Community College's Dean-Instructional and Student Services. Each participant signed approved consent forms for both the survey and interview. Both forms guaranteed confidentiality, voluntary participation, and the option to withdraw without penalty from the study at any time.

### Instrumentation

Description of the questionnaire      The purpose of this exploratory study is to determine the reasons why recent high school graduates' choose programs at a postsecondary proprietary institution or comparable programs at a community college and if, indeed, the reasons differ for students enrolling at the two institutions. The survey began with nine questions that supplied necessary demographic data such as name, address, telephone number, birth date, date of high school graduation, area of residence, employment data, and date of enrollment in the institution. The tenth question asked the students to record the number of credits for which they were enrolled. In order to ascertain the reasons for enrolling, the remainder of the survey consisted of a Likert-type instrument using fifteen questions concerning factors that influence students' choice of a college. The final question provided the opportunity for comments not addressed by the previous questions. The survey used at both institutions is included

in Appendix B.

Validity of the questionnaire      The survey instrument was pilot tested to determine its content validity. Five students in degree programs at Tidewater Community College were asked to complete the instrument for the purpose of determining the readability and the clarity of questions. The verbal comments of these students and the researcher's analysis of their written responses led to the revision of only one question for necessary clarity.

Survey data analysis      The data collected as a result of the responses to the questionnaire were analyzed by use of a one-way analysis of variance to investigate the differences between the two institutions. The Office of Institutional Research at Tidewater Community College's District Office used the Statistical Analysis System (SAS) and performed an ANOVA procedure designating as independent variables the two institutions and the variables in questions 11-25 as dependent variables. Statistically significant results were established at the .05 level of confidence. The comments made by participants after each of the questions (11-26) were included in the analysis as appropriate by the researcher to enrich the statistical data.

Description of the interview schedule and data analysis

An interview schedule was developed to further delineate the data collected from the survey. A copy of the six interview questions is presented in Appendix C.

Selected responses from this body of interview data illuminated the survey findings. These selected responses enriched the study in that they gave greater insight into the process of selection.

#### Summary

A sample population of 52 students was methodically chosen from the available participants at the Virginia Beach Campus of Commonwealth College and from the possible participants at the Virginia Beach Campus of Tidewater Community College. A 100 percent response rate from the 52 initial participants and the ten randomly selected interviewees was possible because each student was approached in person on the campus where he or she regularly attended classes for the purpose(s) of effecting the surveys and interviews. The information gathered from the 52 questionnaires was statistically analyzed using the ANOVA procedure. The information gathered from the ten interviews was analyzed and incorporated into the study by the researcher when it embellished the data collected in the survey. The inclusion of that enriched data promoted an understanding of students' selection of the associate in applied science degree in business administration and related curricula at a postsecondary proprietary institution or a similar program at a community college.

## Chapter 4

### ANALYSIS OF SURVEY AND INTERVIEW RESULTS

#### Introduction

As indicated previously, the purpose of this study was to investigate the reasons why recent high school graduates choose to attend a postsecondary proprietary institution or a community college. More specifically, the purpose was to investigate the most important variables in recent high school graduates' choice of the associate in applied science degree in business administration or related associate of applied science degree programs at a postsecondary proprietary institution or comparable programs at a community college. Data collected through the distribution of a questionnaire and the use of an interview schedule at the Virginia Beach Campuses of both Commonwealth College (CC) and Tidewater Community College (TCC) are analyzed in this chapter. A summary concludes the chapter.

#### Sample Data Analysis

The questionnaire was distributed to 22 selected students at CC and 30 selected students at TCC. Questions (11-26) of the questionnaire asked for responses on a five point scale indicated as follows: 1 = Critical, 2 = Very Important, 3 = Important, 4 = Slightly Important, and 5 = Not Important.

The response rate was 100 percent. Responses to the

questionnaire were analyzed at TCC's District Office in the Office of Institutional Research using the Statistical Analysis System (SAS) and performing an ANOVA procedure designating as independent variables the two institutions and the variables in questions (11-26) as dependent variables. Statistically significant results were established for each of the independent variables at the .05 level of confidence. The following sections of this chapter present the results of the data analysis and include comments from the questionnaire and from the interviews that meaningfully enrich that data. The data were organized using the targeted variables in questions (11-26), which were the same variables addressed in the subsidiary research questions, and which appear in the same sequence as they occurred both in the subsidiary research questions and in the questionnaire.

Influence of Significant Persons on Recent High School Graduates' Choice of Postsecondary Proprietary Institutions or Community Colleges

The first group of four variables in the study included significant persons in recent high school graduates' choice of postsecondary proprietary institutions or community colleges. Specifically, these variables were the influence of (1) parents, (2) peers, (3) high school teachers, and (4) high school counselors in students' choice of an institution. These variables were essentially those

suggested in the student choice model by David Chapman (1981). The student making the decision to attend a postsecondary proprietary institution or a community college comes into contact with these variables very early in the decision-making process.

Variable 1: Influence of parents on the decision to attend

Long-standing research on four-year colleges and universities has indicated that the expectations and the encouragement of parents together constitute the greatest influence among recent high school graduates in their decision to enroll in college (Trent and Medsker, 1968; Soper, 1971; Tillery, 1973; Harnqvist, 1978; and Conklin and Dailey, 1981). Hossler (1984) indicated that the influence of parents is greater than that of "other family members, friends, teachers, counselors, and admissions counselors . . . . These are the 'significant others' of the enrollment decision" (p. 36). Chapman (1981), whose research was based on the choice behavior of recent high school graduates seeking admission to four-year colleges and universities, has said:

In selecting a college, students are strongly persuaded by the comments and advice of their friends and family. The influence of these groups operates in three ways: (1) their comments shape the student's expectations of what a particular college is like; (2) they may offer direct advice

as to where the student should go to college; and (3) in the case of close friends, where the friends themselves go to college will influence the student's decision. (pp. 494-95)

A summary of the responses to the question concerning parents' influence in the enrollment decision at CC and TCC is presented in Table 1. Consistent with the predictions of the literature on recent high school graduates who sought to matriculate at a four-year college or university, the findings suggest that parents did play an "Important" role in the decision to attend either type of institution. The

Table 1. Respondent Sample: Influence of Parents on Decision to Enroll

	N	Mean
CC	22	2.9
TCC	30	2.6
TOTAL	52	2.8

F = 1.4  
P ≤ 0.2381

mean score of CC students was 2.9, which means they regarded their parents as an "Important" factor in their decision to attend CC. Similarly, the mean score for TCC students was 2.6, indicating that parents were also "Important" in the college choice of these students. Analysis of variance comparing the two groups in terms of parental influence on

college choice showed no significant difference. In other words, parents played an "Important" role in the college choice of students at both types of institutions.

Levin (1985) referenced Berdie and Hood (1965), Kandel and Lesser (1970), and Williams (1972) who indicated parental influence to be strong among proprietary school students in the choice process (pp. 61-62). Table 1, of course, supports these researchers' conclusions.

Variable 2: Influence of peers (friends or classmates) on the decision to attend

Hossler (1984) referred to Coleman (1966) and Tillery (1973) who studied four-year college and university students and indicated that peers may be almost as influential as parents (p. 37). As mentioned before, Chapman (1981) contended that "students are strongly persuaded by the comments and advice of their friends and family" (p. 494), but Hossler indicated that the influence of parents is greater than that of "other family members, friends, teachers, counselors, and admissions counselors . . . (p. 36). Nonetheless, students who enroll in proprietary schools and community colleges may be different from their counterparts who enroll in a four-year colleges or universities. As can be seen from Table 2, peers were "Slightly Important" in the decision of students to attend either type of institution. The mean score of CC students was 4.22, indicating that they considered peers as "Slightly Important." And the mean score at TCC was 4.07,



likewise indicating that peers were a "Slightly Important"

Table 2. Respondent Sample: Influence of Peers (Friends or Classmates) on Decision to Enroll

	N	Mean
CC	22	4.22
TCC	30	4.07
TOTAL	52	4.13

$$F = 0.34$$

$$P \leq 0.5608$$

influence. Comparison by analysis of variance showed no significant difference in how the two populations regarded peer influence on college choice.

Friedlander (1980) in her comparative study of proprietary school and community college students revealed that fifteen percent of proprietary school students and fifteen percent of community college students were not influenced by friends (p. 34). Williams (1972) pointed out a negligible influence by peers on proprietary school students (Levin, p. 61). The comments of two TCC students supported the findings of Friedlander and Williams. The first student who indicated that the influence of peers in the decision to attend TCC was "Slightly Important" commented that "I really didn't care what other people think[.] I came here to get a good education." The second

student responded that the influence of peers was "Not Important" and commented, "There is a great deal of peer pressure in high school as to what college you go to but name is not important to me[.] [It's] what the college offers."

Variable 3: Influence of high school teachers on the decision to attend The responses of CC and TCC students to the influence of high school teachers is shown in Table 3. Teachers' influence was "Slightly Important" in the

Table 3. Respondent Sample: Influence of High School Teachers on Decision to Enroll

	N	Mean
CC	22	4.4
TCC	30	3.9
TOTAL	52	4.1

F = 2.6  
P < 0.1122

decision of students to attend each type of college. The mean score of CC students was 4.4, illustrating a perception of teachers as a "Slightly Important" factor in their decision to enroll at CC. The mean score for TCC students was 3.9, which also illustrates that teachers were "Slightly Important" in the choice of these students. Analysis of variance comparing the two populations relative to teachers'

influence on college choice denoted no significant difference. These data are consistent with Hossler's (1984) statement that the influence of parents is greater on the choice of recent high school graduates than that of "other family members, friends, teachers (italics mine) . . . (p. 36). As mentioned previously, Williams (1972), writing about students who were considering enrolling in a proprietary institution, concluded that "teachers [were] intermediate" when compared to the strong influence of parents and the negligible influence of peers (Levin, p. 61). And, Friedlander (1980) indicated that both proprietary school and community college students did not find high school teachers to be influential since only four percent of her proprietary school population and also four percent of her community college population responded that teachers were influential (p. 34).

Variable 4: Influence of high school counselor(s) on the decision to attend Hossler (1984) in the literature on recent high school graduates aspiring to attend a four-year colleges or universities referenced Tillery (1973) and indicated that ". . . high school counselors can (italics mine) . . . affect the plans of high school students" (p. 37). Chapman (1981) stated that one study by Tillery (1973) showed that only 22 percent of the respondents indicated that high school counselors had influenced them in their choice of institutions (p. 495).

The responses of CC and TCC students to the influence of high school counselors on their choice of institutions is revealed in Table 4. The influence of high school

Table 4. Respondent Sample: Influence of High School Counselors on Decision to Enroll

	N	Mean
CC	22	4.4
TCC	30	3.9
TOTAL	52	4.1

F = 3.0  
P  $\leq$  0.0908

counselors was "Slightly Important" to CC students when making their college choice, as shown by the mean score of 4.4. The mean score for TCC students was 3.9, pointing out that counselors were a "Slightly Important" influence in the college choice of these students. Analysis of variance comparing the two groups in terms of high school counselors' influence on college choice suggested no significant difference. Friedlander (1980) found only four percent of proprietary school students and ten percent of community college students to be influenced by counselors (pp. 33-34).

Influence of Relatively Fixed Institutional Characteristics  
on Recent High School Graduates' Choice of Postsecondary  
Proprietary Institutions or Community Colleges

The second group of four variables was classified as relatively fixed institutional characteristics. It included variables (5-10) of the study. Specifically, they were the influence of (5) location, (6) cost, (7) financial aid, (8) academic programs, (9) counseling programs, and (10) placement programs at CC and TCC. These variables have been of long-standing, great concern to researchers of the literature on both four-year colleges and universities and on proprietary institutions and community colleges.

Variable 5: Influence of location on the decision to attend

Several researchers of four-year colleges and universities-- Willingham (1970); Anderson, Bowman, and Tinto (1972); and Harnqvist (1978)--have indicated that accessibility/nearness to home is an enduring, cardinal element in students' choice of an institution (Hossler, 1984, p. 39). Chapman (1981) recorded Ihlanfeldt (1980), who said that more than one-half of beginning freshmen attend college within fifty miles of their homes (p. 497). Anderson, Bowman, and Tinto (p. 9), according to Hossler (p. 39), contended that "Students who live within a 20-mile radius of a college are more likely to attend a college or university. Moreover, Chapman has pointed out that, according to Ihlanfeldt, this attendance pattern is based upon the density of colleges within a

geographical area. It stands to reason that the more colleges within an area, the less likely one is to venture more than fifty miles. But the choice of a college in proximity to one's home is also dependent upon other variables such as "academic ability and family financial strength." That is, "High ability students with no financial need consider a wider range of colleges than less able students who need financial assistance" and vice versa (p. 497). Hossler (1984) recorded Peterson and Smith's (1979) suggestion that "90 percent of all students enrolled in public colleges and universities are attending institutions in their home state" (p. 39). Nationally, this percentage of in-state enrollment has been growing rapidly since 1958.

The responses to the question of the role of location in CC and TCC students' choice to attend is shown in Table 5. The influence of location was "Important" in the decision of students from each type of college. The mean score of CC students was 2.6; so, they considered location an "Important" factor in their decision to attend CC. Likewise, the mean score for TCC students was 2.9, which means that they perceived location as an "Important" factor in their decision to attend TCC. Analysis of variance disclosed no significant difference between the two groups about the influence of location on college choice. Therefore, location was "Important" in the college choice of

Table 5. Respondent Sample: Influence of Location on Decision to Enroll

	N	Mean
CC	22	2.6
TCC	30	2.9
TOTAL	52	2.8

F = 0.8  
P ≤ 0.3882

students at both types of institutions.

Friedlander offered the most comprehensive statement regarding proprietary school students and community college students' attitudes toward proximity of location as a determining factor in school selection. Thirty-six percent of her proprietary school respondents and 38 percent of her community college respondents lived ten miles or fewer from their schools and resided with their parents as well. Further, 31 percent of proprietary school students and 32 percent of community college students lived between eleven and fifty miles from their schools and resided with their parents (pp. 34-36). These data are, of course, consistent with the data on four-year college and university students. Proximity to home, however, seemed to be more important to community college students as a choice factor than it did to proprietary school students (Friedlander, pp. 34-36). Cross (1970) asserted that "research is virtually unanimous in

concluding that students give 'nearness to home' as a primary reason for attending community colleges" (p. 182). Cross' statement coincides with the testimony of the Vice President of Commonwealth Colleges who indicated that the majority of that college's students lived within a five mile-radius of the college (Personal interview. 4 May 1988).

Variable 6: Influence of cost on the decision to attend

One caveat regarding cost is that the relatively fixed factor of financial aid was inherently related to cost. However, financial aid is discussed in this section only as it is appropriate, since it the focus of the following section. The literature on student choice in four-year colleges and universities demonstrated the importance of cost.

David Chapman adequately surveyed the literature on cost and reported the conclusions of a number of researchers. These conclusions fell into two categories. For example, Tillery and Kildegaard (1973) and Mundy (1976) suggested that cost influenced attendance itself more than it influenced attendance at a particular institution. However, Davis and Van Dusen (1975) discovered that cost deterred students from attending their favored institution (Chapman, p. 496).

Hossler (1984) analyzed cost and determined that "The notion that students carefully weigh the net price [cost] of several institutions before determining which college they



will attend is a myth" (p. 51). He referenced Corwin and Kent (1978, p. 3) who said that not even a third of the college applicants choose from more than one option (pp. 51-52). This evidence rang familiar with the statement of David Reisman:

[A]t least 80 percent of the students in the United States do not make multiple applications and may not even make a single one; they show up at the nearest "available college," be it a community college, a four-year state college, or an open-admissions private college (the great majority of which have today virtually no selectivity); they do not make a conscious college choice. ("Foreword," Litten et al., 1983, p. xx)

The College Board (1976), Corwin and Kent (1978), Elliott (1980), and Reisman implied, then, that students are not in a position to make a conscious choice based on cost but more than likely make a decision based upon their perception of cost--that is, the amount of tuition, or price, of individual aspects of the higher education milieu.

According to Jackson and Weathersby (1975), Hyde (1977), Hearn (1980), and Elliott (1980), students are more likely to be affected in their choice decision by tuition than by financial aid or net cost (Hossler, 1984, p. 52).

However, Jackson (1978) and Hearn (1980) found evidence that students do indeed weigh the factor of cost when they

choose between two or more schools. In this type of choice, students are more likely to consider financial aid. Jackson found that simply receiving aid is more important than the amount of aid (Hossler, p. 52). Proprietary school and community college students nationwide may respond differently. Table 6 illustrates how the CC and TCC

Table 6. Respondent Sample: Influence of Cost on Decision to Enroll

	N	Mean
CC	22	3.3
TCC	30	2.7
TOTAL	52	2.9

F = 2.7  
P < 0.1071

students considered the influence. Cost was an "Important" variable in their decision to enroll. The mean score of CC students was 3.3, showing that they regarded cost as an "Important" factor in their decision to enroll in CC. Too, the mean score for TCC students was 2.7, which said that cost was also "Important" in the decision of these students. The two groups were compared by analysis of variance to find the influence of cost on college choice. No significant difference was found. Cost, then, was "Important" in the college choice of students at both types of institutions.

Friedlander (1980) predicted that the influence of

cost, specifically low tuition, would be greater for community college students than for proprietary school students since tuition is significantly higher at proprietary institutions than at community colleges (p. 33). As it can be seen from Table 6, the findings of this study support that conclusion. When asked to comment on the influence of cost, one CC student responded by asking the question: "How can you put a price on a good education??!!" When asked to comment likewise, TCC students made clear their convictions about the influence of cost at that type of institution. One student said: "I can start working on my degree here for a smaller amount of money and get the same type of education." Another said: "I think it[']s ridiculous to spend . . . [\$]80.00 or more per credit just to go to an 'in' school when there are perfectly good ones for less." Yet another student testified:

I wanted to go to a four[-]year college. My parents couldn't afford it. I was turned down for financial aid. I had to go to school. Tidewater was the only school that I [could] afford to attend.

Thus, CC and TCC students' responses were consistent with the responses in the literature of their counterparts.

Variable 7: Influence of financial aid on the decision to attend This section of the study does not delineate the types of financial aid available to students, i.e.,

scholarships, grants, loans, work-study programs. Ultimately, its purpose is to address--in general--the influence of financial aid on both proprietary school and community college students. Thus, specific kinds of financial aid are mentioned only as appropriate.

According to the literature on four-year colleges and universities, financial aid was an important factor. In fact, according to Jackson (1978) and Manski and Wise (1983), receiving aid was much more important than the amount of aid received (Hossler, p. 52). Jackson and Randall Chapman and Jackson (1987) concluded that "students choose colleges primarily on the basis of their prior preferences, and that aid plays a role in the choice process, especially guaranteed renewable scholarship aid" (p. 54). In accordance with Chapman and Jackson's conclusion, one TCC student affirmed that she was able to attend TCC because the college provided her with a renewable merit scholarship. Table 7 demonstrates the responses of CC and TCC students on the variable of financial aid. Financial aid was "Important" in their decision to enroll. The mean score of CC students was 3.3, which means they regarded financial aid as an "Important" factor in their decision to enroll. The mean score for TCC students was 3.8, also indicating that financial aid was "Important" in the college choice of those students. Analysis of variance comparing the two populations of students regarding

Table 7. Respondent Sample: Influence of Financial Aid on Decision to Enroll

	N	Mean
CC	22	3.3
TCC	30	3.8
TOTAL	52	3.6

$$F = 1.2$$

$$P < 0.2877$$

financial aid on college choice yielded no significant difference.

The literature on proprietary institutions offered interesting observations. Friedlander (1980) said that "proprietary schools are more likely than community colleges to be selected for their offers of financial assistance." Further, referencing her own study, she stated that

. . . over one-fourth of the proprietary school student sample (26%), compared to only 14 percent of the community college respondents, indicated the importance of financial aid offers in their decision to enroll. (p. 34)

Accordingly, two CC students spoke to the efficacy of financial aid relative to their own situations. The first student said, "I couldn't have afforded to go to school if it were not for the financial aid." And the second one echoed the statement of the first: "Financial aid was a

great help to me. I would not have been able to do it on my own." Yet another reported that the only reason she decided to enroll in CC was "because of the scholarship."

The impact of financial aid on the choice of community college students has been examined extensively by Hossler (1984). It is concluded by Manski and Wise (1980) that generally community college students do not need to apply for financial aid (Hossler, 1980, p. 55). But, with regard to the interrelationship between cost and financial aid, Manski and Wise and Zucker and Nazari-Robati (1982) discovered that "the positive value of financial aid is worth considerably more than the negative value of increased tuition," and thus concluded that financial aid is important to community college students (Hossler, p. 53). Thus, one TCC student reported that "it [financial aid] was the only way I could get an education" and another said ". . . if I didn't get financial aid[,] I wouldn't be at Tidewater now." More specifically, The Carnegie Council on Policy Studies on Higher Education (1979) and Manski and Wise (1983) suggested that of the types of financial aid, Pell Grants seemed to have the greatest influence on students' choice to attend community colleges. In fact Manski and Wise recorded a "59 percent increase in the enrollment rates of low-income students and a 12 percent increase in the college-going rates of middle-income students" resulting from the award of Pell Grants (Hossler, p. 55).

Variable 8: Influence of the quality of academic programs on the decision to attend Chapman and Johnson (1979) and Davis and Van Dusen (1975) reported that recent high school graduates planning to matriculate at a four-year college or university selected an institution because of the benefits they could receive, i. e., "to enter graduate school or to get jobs," from courses offered at the institution (Chapman, p. 497). However, Feldman and Newcomb (1973) contended that college choice is predicated upon ". . . some vague notion of academic excellence" (Hossler, p. 40). But Hossler, himself, concluded that academic programs coupled with location and cost are probably the most important factors in the college choice decision (p. 42). For the most part, Chapman and Jackson (1987) agreed with Hossler, especially concerning students' perceptions about academic programs.

Students' responses to the question of whether academic programs affected their decisions to enroll at CC or TCC are presented in Table 8. The influence of academic programs was "Very Important" in the decision of students from CC and "Important" for TCC students. The mean score of CC students was 2.0, illustrating that they viewed academic programs as a "Very Important" factor in their decision to attend CC. However, the mean score for TCC students was 2.6, which means that academic programs were "Important" in the college choice of these students. Analysis of variance comparing the two populations relative to the influence of

Table 8. Respondent Sample: Influence of the Quality of Academic Programs on Decision to Enroll

	N	Mean
CC	22	2.0
TCC	30	2.6
TOTAL	52	2.3

$$F = 5.6$$

$$P < 0.0215$$

academic programs produced a score of 0.0215, which meant that there was a significant difference between the two groups concerning the influence of academic programs.

Perhaps, the explanation to the significant difference in responses between the two populations regarding this variable may be attributed to a couple of reasons--neither of which can be directly related to quality but to the availability and advertisement of academic programs--and both of which are suggested by Wilms (1987). First, proprietary schools'

"survival hinges on schools' abilities to stay attuned to both employer and student markets . . . . [T]he schools add new programs chiefly because employers ask for them. Similarly, they drop programs when students fail to enroll. A recent study in Virginia's proprietary schools . . . indicated that schools quickly drop programs



when student demand slackens and when job placement becomes difficult. (p. 13)

Not only do proprietary schools find curricular needs and fulfill them but they also market the curriculum once it is established (p. 14). Proprietary schools are more likely to be selected for their "reputations and educational programs than are community colleges" (Friedlander, p. 33) with the caveat that the phrase "academic reputation" should not be used when describing proprietary schools and community colleges since these types of institutions usually do not have selective admissions (p. 34).

Variable 9: Influence of counseling programs on the decision to attend The responses to the question of the influence of counseling programs on the enrollment decision at CC and TCC is presented in Table 9. The influence of counseling was "Important" in the decision of students from

Table 9. Respondent Sample: Influence of Counseling Programs on Decision to Enroll

	N	Mean
CC	22	3.0
TCC	30	3.7
TOTAL	52	3.4

F = 4.8

P < 0.0325

CC and "Slightly Important" in the decision of students from TCC. The mean score of CC students was 3.0, signifying that they regarded counseling programs an "Important" factor in their decision to attend CC. But, the mean score for TCC students was 3.7, illustrating that the counseling program at that institution was "Slightly Important" in their college choice. Analysis of variance comparing the two groups in terms of counseling programs yielded a score of 0.0325, which denoted a significant difference between the two groups.

The comments of one CC student supported the influence of counselors at that institution:

The admissions counselor was really great. She influenced me a lot because of her attitude toward the school as a whole and the way she felt. You believe in yourself more than you did before.

Statements of other students replicated the previous statement, for example, "My counselor was very kind and gave me support to try." Another student reported that "My counselor really helped me in deciding what I really wanted to do."

Some discussion of the different counseling practices of the two institutions may help to explain the differing student assessments. At CC, there are basically two kinds of counseling, admissions counseling and campus counseling of "high risk" students after enrollment. Students see an

admissions' counselor prior to enrollment. Their meeting with this counselor at CC may result from referral by a peer, by someone at the job-site, or from the their own interest in the school. The admissions counselor helps the student determine what career he/she is suited for, if the career has not already been chosen. Then, the counselor encourages the student to pursue that career within the context of programs offered by CC. Thus, for prospective CC students, institutional choice can indeed be affected by the admissions counselors.

Essentially, no such counseling is done for students who may be considering TCC as a possible college choice. In fact, students do not see a counselor until after they have taken the math and English placement tests. Then they are given an appointment with a counselor who helps them make up their schedules.

Variable 10: Influence of job placement programs on decision to attend The responses to the question of the influence of job placement programs on the enrollment decision of CC and TCC students are presented in Table 10. The influence of job placement programs was "Important" in the decision of students from CC and "Slightly Important" in the decision of students from TCC. The mean score for CC students was 2.6, which means they regarded job placement as an "Important" factor in their decision to attend CC. Yet, the mean score for TCC students was 4.0, meaning that job

placement was "Slightly Important" in the college choice of

Table 10. Respondent Sample: Influence of Job Placement Programs on Decision to Enroll

	N	Mean
CC	22	2.6
TCC	30	4.0
TOTAL	52	3.5

F = 15.3  
P < 0.0003

these students. A comparison by analysis of variance of the two groups in regard to job placement programs produced a score of 0.0003, indicating a significant difference between the two populations.

Wilms (1987) has concluded:

Job placement is the acid test for proprietary schools. Either a school's graduates get the jobs they want or they do not. . . . [T]hey usually give high priority to job placement. (p. 15)

Thus, CC students believed that they would be able to get a job through the college's job placement office when they graduated. One student remarked: "When I graduate[,] I know there will be a job for me." Another said: "I knew they would help me get a quality job. (I needed the help.)" A third student indicated that he/she "wanted to make sure I would be employed . . . ." And, a fourth student observed:

"They have an impressive job placement program."

Job placement is handled differently at the two institutions, a fact which may help to explain the different student responses. At CC, for example, the Dean of Student Services is responsible for job placement. That person takes job leads from prospective employers, visits prospective employers, and surveys the colleges' graduates/alumni to ascertain where they are employed. Each of these activities is performed in order to maintain a pool of available jobs for students and graduates and to match up students and their qualifications with jobs available in the pool. According to the Commonwealth College 1987-89 Catalog, the college also "conducts seminars on resume writing, interviewing techniques, personal appearance, and proper attire. Each student is required to attend at least two of these sessions prior to graduation" (p. 13). Recently, the college has been placing graduates in jobs with a 97 percent success rate (Heffernan, March 22, 1989).

On the other hand, students at TCC are not placed but are referred to prospective employers by the Student Employment Services Office. The secretary in that office posts job listings if they are called in to her by employers. Job listings are not solicited in any formal manner. The job referral service at TCC is in no way as formalized or well-staffed as the placement program at CC, which may--in part--explain the different responses of

students at the two institutions.

Influence of Other Institutional Characteristics on Recent High School Graduates' Choice of Postsecondary Proprietary Institutions or Community Colleges

This last group of five variables influencing students' choice of schools is called other institutional characteristics. This group contained variables (11-15) which are influence of (11) institutional catalogs, (12) print advertising, (13) electronic advertising, (14) off-campus site visits by institutional representatives, and (15) on-campus visits by students. These variables were addressed because institutions need to communicate as clearly as possible their benefits to prospective students, thereby positively influencing their choice decisions.

Variable 11: Influence of information in college catalogs on the decision to attend Chapman (1980) concurred with admissions professionals that printed materials are an important influence (p. 7). Johnson and Chapman (1979) asserted that catalogs for all types of higher education institutions are written on a reading level too difficult for students to understand. They further stated that the influence of catalogs comes late in the decision-making process but does help to confirm students' choice decisions (Chapman, 1981, p. 502).

But Litten et al. (1983) have researched extensively and suggested that higher education institutions should

adopt practices used in the private sectors of business and industry--i.e., market research and application of that research--in order to clearly and comprehensively communicate the positive qualities of institutions to students involved in choosing institutions in which to enroll. If colleges and universities adopted such an approach, then obviously a great deal of the updated, better-focused information would be printed in college and university catalogs. Further, Chapman (1980) emphasized that attention be given to the following aspects of college catalogs if these documents are to clearly communicate necessary information to students involved in the college choice process:

1. Content. A catalog should provide relevant, accurate, and complete information so that students can make well-informed decisions.
2. Format. A catalog should be attractive, appealing, and effective in communicating the intended message. This is often the thrust of a "marketing approach" to catalog revision.
3. Process. Information in a catalog should emerge from a systematic process that emphasizes broad participation in reviewing existing literature in light of the claims and goals of the institution. (p. 119)

A summary of the responses to the question concerning the influence of the information in college catalogs on the enrollment decision of CC and TCC students is presented in Table 11. The influence of institutional catalogs was

Table 11. Respondent Sample: Influence of Information in College Catalogs on Decision to Enroll

	N	Mean
CC	22	3.1
TCC	30	2.8
TOTAL	52	4.2

F = 2.7  
P < 0.3588

"Important" in the decision of students from each college. The mean score of CC students was 3.1, which meant they considered their institution's catalog an "Important" factor in their decision to attend CC. The mean score for TCC students was 2.8, indicating that they, too, considered their college's catalog an "Important" factor in their decision to attend TCC. The two groups were compared by analysis of variance to discover the influence of information in college catalogs on college choice. No significant difference was found.

Two CC students responded affirmatively concerning the influence of that college's catalog on their decision to enroll. The first student said that he/she "did not have



access to a college catalog before I came here [to talk with the admissions counselor]. I took a catalog away with me. That did influence me." The second student stated that "it [the information in the college catalog] was good for decision making."

In similar fashion, one TCC student chronicled his/her introduction to the catalog and its effect:

My dad picked up the student handbook [catalog], and I read that. The student handbook [catalog] information on [name of program] did not present the program as being too hard, and the program did look interesting. . . . The visit to the campus was not as influential as the information in the handbook [catlog] and finding out that TCC did have a [name of program] program so that I could go to school and still live at home.

Variable 12: Influence of newspaper and other kinds of print advertising on the decision to attend As stated previously, Litten et al. (1983) have written extensively about the necessity for higher education institutions to market the quality of their programs and services to students making college choice decisions. Of course, not the only way--but certainly a widely used method of communicating the positive, competitive aspects of an institution--is the use of print media. Chapman and Johnson (1979) indicated that printed materials only helped to

confirm enrollment decisions that had already been made (Chapman, 1981, p. 501).

As already pointed out, Chapman (1980) generalized that printed materials are indeed important--but are considered more important by admissions representatives than by students (p. 7). Chapman and Litten et al. were, of course, talking about prospective four-year college and university students in both sources. Chapman (1981) concluded that printed materials have a "moderate influence on students' college selection" (p. 502). The literature on four-year college and university students' institutional choice did not specifically mention newspaper advertising.

Table 12 presents a summary of the responses for CC and TCC students on the influence of newspaper and other kinds

Table 12. Respondent Sample: Influence of Newspaper and Other Kinds of Print Advertising on Decision to Enroll

	N	Mean
CC	22	4.0
TCC	30	4.3
TOTAL	52	4.2

F = 2.7  
P < 0.1066

of print advertising on their decision to enroll. The influence was "Slightly Important" for students from both

colleges. The mean score of CC students was 4.0, revealing that they considered newspaper and other kinds of print advertising a "Slightly Important" factor in their choice of CC. The mean score for TCC students was 4.3, also revealing their like-mindedness regarding newspaper and other kinds of print advertising in their choice of TCC. Comparison by analysis of variance showed no significant difference in how the two populations regarded the influence of newspaper and other kinds of print advertising on college choice. Therefore, newspaper and other kinds of print advertising were a "Slightly Important" influence of students at both types of institutions.

Responses of students from both populations were generally consistent with the literature on four-year colleges and universities, proprietary institutions, and community colleges that advocated market research and application of that research. Wilms' (1987) article reported that the strategic marketing of proprietary institutions is tantamount to successful recruiting. And, as with the four-year institutions, marketing in proprietary institutions is extensively manifested in print advertising.

Variable 13: Influence of radio and television advertising on the decision to attend

The influence of radio and television advertising can best be understood when discussed within the context of Litten et al.'s (1983) study on the efficacy of market research and application. Just as

marketing research can be applied through print advertising, so it may be applied through radio and television advertising. Table 13 provides a summary of the responses of CC and TCC students on the influence of radio and television advertising on students' decision to enroll. The

Table 13. Respondent Sample: Influence of Radio and Television Advertising on Decision to Enroll

	N	Mean
CC	22	4.2
TCC	30	4.7
TOTAL	52	4.5

F = 7.0  
P < 0.0107

influence of radio and television advertising was "Slightly Important" for CC students and "Not Important" for TCC students. The mean score for CC students' was 4.2, which meant they regarded radio and television advertising as a "Slightly Important" influence in their decision to attend CC. But the mean score for TCC students was 4.7, which pointed out that radio and television advertising was "Not Important" in their college choice. Analysis of variance comparing the two groups in terms of the influence of radio and television advertising on college choice produced a score of 0.0212, thus revealing a significant difference.

Public institutions cannot use public funds for

advertising in the Commonwealth of Virginia. Local funds are quite limited in the VCCS. Thus, advertising via radio and television is almost non-existent promotional activity with TCC. CC is a private college and may allocate its funds for advertising differently from TCC. The knowledge of this basic difference between the two institutions may help to explain why students responded in a significantly different manner regarding the influence of radio and television advertising on their decision to enroll. This difference, too, places TCC at a distinct competitive disadvantage.

Variable 14: Influence of visits by college representatives to high schools on the decision to attend      Table 14

illustrates how CC and TCC students responded to the

Table 14. Respondent Sample: Influence of Visits by College Representatives to High School on Decision to Enroll

	N	Mean
CC	21*	4.4
TCC	30	4.0
TOTAL	51*	4.2

F\* = 1.4  
P ≤ 0.2505

\*One respondent in the CC sample did not respond to this item on the questionnaire.

question regarding the influence of visits by college

representatives to high schools on college choice. The visits were "Slightly Important" in the decision of students from each college. For example, the mean score of CC students was 4.4., thus indicating their assessment of these visits as "Slightly Important" in their decision to attend CC. In like manner, the mean score for TCC students was 4.0, illustrating these students assessment of visits as "Slightly Important." Analysis of variance which compared the two groups relative to the influence of visits by college representatives to high schools on college choice yielded no significant difference. Then, the influence of visits by college representatives to high schools on college choice was "Slightly Important" to students at both types of institutions. One TCC student, however, did respond by saying, "My interest in TCC really peaked after a visit of one of the counselors to [(name of school) High School]."

Variable 15: Influence of students' visits to college site prior to enrollment on the decision to attend Randall

Chapman and Jackson (1987), while doing research with high school students who intend to matriculate at a four-year colleges or universities, have concluded, "The . . . effects of campus visits . . . on choice is uncertain" (p. 90).

Table 15 sums up the responses of CC and TCC students concerning the influence of students' visits to the college site prior to enrollment. The influence for the CC sample was "Important" and for the TCC sample "Slightly Important."

The mean score of CC students was 2.9, denoting that they considered visits to be "Important" in their choice of that institution. The mean score of TCC students was 3.7, denoting that they considered visits to be "Slightly Important" in their college choice. A comparison by

Table 15. Respondent Sample: Influence of Students' Visits to College Site Prior to Enrollment on Decision to Enroll

	N	Mean
CC	22	2.9
TCC	30	3.7
TOTAL	52	3.4

F = 5.7  
P ≤ 0.0212

analysis of variance of the two populations relative to the influence of campus visits on college choice produced a score of 0.0212, which showed a significant difference.

Two CC students remarked positively about the influence of campus visits. The first student said, "Coming to the college was a greater influence than was the representative coming to my high school." The second affirmed, "Prior visits made me feel more relaxed about my decision."

The statistically significant difference between the two populations on the influence of students' visits to the campus sites may be explained thusly. Students who choose

to attend CC have more contact with that institution before registering for classes than do students who attend TCC. Prospective CC students see an admissions counselor prior to enrollment. TCC students, especially part-time students who do not intend to take English or math courses and, hence, do not have to take a required placement test, likely have no contact with a counselor--and thus, the institution--before they register. The required contact with the admissions' counselor for each student who enrolls at CC and the possible lack thereof at TCC may, then, explain the statistically significant difference between the two samples on the influence of students' visits to the campus site. This explanation is analogous to the possible reasons why there was a statistical difference between the two groups of students on the influence of counseling programs on the decisions to enroll.

#### Summary of the Analysis of Survey and Interview Results

This section summarizes the statistical analysis of the variables studied in the previous sections. First, Table 16 is presented, which summarizes the influence of all fifteen variables considered in the study. Then, the individual fifteen individual variables will be considered within the groups into which they were placed for analysis. These groupings have been noted several times in the previous sections above. Hence, the variables are categorized under the headings: significant persons, fixed institutional



characteristics, and other institutional characteristics. These variables were analyzed to answer the main research question: What are the most important variables influencing recent high school graduates' choice of programs at a postsecondary proprietary institution or comparable programs at a community college? How do these variables differ for students enrolling in the two institutions? Table 16 gives a summary and overview of the influences of all the variables in the study. This table and the following discussion help to answer the main research question. It is obvious that no variable was considered "Critical" to students at either type of institution. The highest response given was "Very Important", the lowest response "Not Important". In fact, of the possible five responses, students responded to "Important" or "Slightly Important" the most. Because this is an exploratory study, the analysis is descriptive. Definitive conclusions cannot be drawn. However, valid generalities can be made concerning the most important variables influencing high school graduates' choice of programs at a postsecondary proprietary institution or comparable programs at a community college and how the variables differ for students enrolling in the two different institutions. The findings generated by this study are more thoroughly analyzed in the following three sections.

Table 16. Summary of Students' Responses to All Variables

	1	2	3	4	5*
Parents			CC/TCC		
Peers				CC/TCC	
High School Teachers				CC/TCC	
High School Counselors				CC/TCC	
Location			CC/TCC		
Cost			CC/TCC,		
Financial Aid			CC/TCC		
Quality of Academic Programs		CC	TCC		
Counseling Programs			CC	TCC	
Job Placement Programs			CC	TCC	
College Catalogs			CC/TCC		
Newspaper/Print Advertising				CC/TCC	
Radio/TV Advertising				CC	TCC
College Rep. Visit to High Schools				CC/TCC	
Student Visits to Colleges			CC	TCC	

\*1 = Critical; 2 = Very Important; 3 = Important;  
4 = Slightly Important; 5 = Not Important

Group 1: Influence of significant persons      The first group of variables analyzed in this chapter were those labeled significant persons. These variables were influential to the students at CC and TCC--regarding their college choice, in varying degrees of importance. Table 17 illustrates the summary of student responses at the two institutions. Each sample of students considered parents to

Table 17. Summary of Students' Responses to the Influence of Significant Persons

	1	2	3	4	5*
Parents			CC/TCC		
Peers				CC/TCC	
High School Teachers				CC/TCC	
High School Counselors				CC/TCC	

\*1 = Critical; 2 = Very Important; 3 = Important;  
4 = Slightly Important; 5 = Not Important

be "Important" and peers, teachers, and high school counselors to be "Slightly Important." Analysis of variance for each of the variables--peer, teachers, and high school counselors--indicated no significant difference between the populations of the two types of institutions. In terms of significant persons, the study showed that parents were more important than peers, teachers, and high school counselors at both institutions, within the scope of responses ranging

from "Important" to "Slightly Important."

Group 2: Influence of fixed college characteristics As it has been previously shown with the influence of significant persons, the variables grouped under the heading of fixed institutional characteristics were influential in varying degrees of importance to CC and TCC students as well. Table 18 shows the similarities and differences of students' responses. Location, cost, and financial aid were

Table 18. Summary of Students' Responses to Fixed Institutional Variables

	1	2	3	4	5*
Location			CC/TCC		
Cost			CC/TCC		
Financial Aid			CC/TCC		
Quality of Academic Programs		CC	TCC		
Counseling Programs			CC	TCC	
Job Placement Programs			CC	TCC	

\*1 = Critical; 2 = Very Important; 3 = Important;  
4 = Slightly Important; 5 = Not Important

"Important" in the choice of students from each type of college. The influence of quality academic programs on CC students was "Very Important" but "Important" for TCC students.

Comparison by analysis of variance indicated a significant difference in how the two populations perceived the quality of academic programs with regard to their decision to enroll. Hence, quality of academic programs was considered more important by CC students than by TCC students, within a scope of responses ranging from "Very Important" to "Important."

Analysis of variance comparing the two groups indicated a significance difference between them on the variable of counseling programs. The influence of counseling programs was "Important" in the decision of students from CC and "Slightly Important" in the decision of students from TCC. Nonetheless, counseling programs were perceived to be more important to CC students than to TCC students, within a scope of responses ranging from "Important" to "Slightly Important". However, the two institutions differ greatly with regard to counseling programs, which may help to explain this difference.

At CC, all students are heavily counseled by an admissions counselor before they enroll. That counselor helps them plan their entire program. "High risk" students are counseled after enrollment. But, at TCC, students do not see a counselor until after they have taken the math and English placement tests. Then, they are given an appointment with a counselor who helps them make up their schedules.

Analysis of variance comparing the two institutions indicated a significant difference between students at the two institutions on the variable of job placement. Job placement was "Important" to CC students and "Slightly Important" to TCC students in the decision to attend. Job placement programs, then, were seen as more important to CC students than to TCC students, within a range of responses from "Important" to "Slightly Important." But again, job placement is handled differently at the two institutions, a fact which may help to explain the different student responses.

At CC the Dean of Student Services is responsible for a comprehensive range of job placement procedures, from identifying jobs to placing students in the jobs. Also, each student is required to attend at least two special sessions devoted to skills necessary for acquiring a job. TCC students are not placed but are referred to prospective employers by the Student Employment Services Office. The job referral service at TCC is in no way as formalized or well-staffed as the placement program at CC, which may--in part--explain the different responses of students at the two institutions.

Group 3: Other institutional characteristics As it has been previously shown with the influence of significant persons and fixed institutional characteristics, the variables grouped under the heading of other institutional

characteristics were also influential in varying degrees of importance to CC and TCC students. Table 19 summarizes the similarities and differences of student responses. College catalogs were thought to be an "Important" influence in the enrollment decision of students at each college. Newspaper and other kinds of print advertising and visits by college

Table 19. Summary of Students' Responses to Other Institutional Variables

	1	2	3	4	5*
College Catalogs			CC/TCC		
Newspaper/Print Advertising				CC/TCC	
Radio/TV Advertising				CC	TCC
College Rep. Visit to High Schools				CC/TCC	
Student Visits to Colleges			CC	TCC	

\*1 = Critical; 2 = Very Important; 3 = Important;  
4 = Slightly Important; 5 = Not Important

representatives to high schools were thought to be "Slightly Important."

The two groups were compared by analysis of variance to discern the difference between CC and TCC students on the influence of radio and television advertising. A significant difference was found. This influence was "Slightly Important" for students at CC and "Not Important"

for TCC students; so, the influence of radio and television advertising on the decision to enroll was more important for CC students than for TCC students, within a range of responses from "Slightly Important" to "Not Important." Public institutions cannot use public funds for advertising in the Commonwealth of Virginia. Thus, radio and television advertising is an extremely limited promotional activity with TCC. CC is a private college and may allocate its funds for advertising quite differently from TCC. The knowledge of this basic difference between the two institutions may help to explain why students responded in a significantly different manner regarding the influence of radio and television advertising on their decision to enroll.

Analysis of variance comparing the two colleges showed that CC students found the influence of their visits to that college to be "Important" in their decision to enroll. TCC students said that visits to their school were "Slightly Important." Therefore, visits to the prospective college campus were more important to CC students than to TCC students, within a scope of responses ranging from "Important" to "Slightly Important."

The conceptual framework supporting this study was that proprietary school students and community college students choose their institutions for some of the same reasons that four-year college and university students do. For certain variables, the responses of CC and TCC students to the



questionnaire and interview items bear out the efficacy of this theory. Consistent with the literature of students in the process of making the choice to attend a four-year institution, CC and TCC students identified parents, location, cost, availability of financial aid, and college catalogs as "Important" in their college choice decision.

In sum, the data generated by this study are valuable because they bring perspective to the reasons why students choose to enroll in a postsecondary proprietary institution or a community college, particularly why they choose Commonwealth College or Tidewater Community College. As shown previously, the data indicate that students from both populations were similar and dissimilar from each other in a number of respects and likewise similar and dissimilar in a number of respect from their counterparts in four-year colleges and universities.

From prior research of the literature on students' choice of four-year colleges and universities and from the data analysis of from this study, it is apparent that the three groups--recent high school graduates who choose to matriculate at a four-year college or university, at a proprietary institution, or at a community college--are more similar than dissimilar. To be more specific, they are similar with regard to the influence of three classifications of significant persons: parents, teachers, counselors; three classifications of relatively fixed

college characteristics: location, cost, and financial aid; and two classifications of other institutional characteristics: college catalogs and newspaper and other kinds of print advertising.

The three groups of students are different with regard to the influence of peers. Studies indicate that recent high school graduates who choose to attend four-year colleges or universities are strongly influenced by their peers. Students who chose CC and TCC indicated that the influence of peers was "Slightly Important." Four-year college students and proprietary school students are similar in terms of their demand for quality academic programs. In that respect, however, those two populations are different from the students who enroll at community colleges. That is, CC students indicated that quality of academic programs was "Very Important," while TCC students indicated that the influence of the same variable was "Important."

It cannot be determined if four-year college and university students are similar to or different from either proprietary school students or community college students regarding three variables--the influence of counseling, job placement programs, and visits by college representatives to high schools--because the literature of the four-year college students did not address those variables. Nor can it be determined if the three groups of students are similar to or different from the other two groups relative to the

variable of radio and television advertising because the literature of four-year college students did not address the variable from the viewpoint of students but from the perspective of market analysts.

## Chapter 5

### SUMMARY

#### Summary

This study focuses on the most important reasons why recent high school graduates choose to attend a postsecondary proprietary institution or a community college. The concept supporting this study is that, in the process of choosing a college or university, recent high school graduates are most influenced by the variables of significant persons, relatively fixed institutional characteristics, and other institutional characteristics. The theory, thus, is that these same variables which influence students' choices of four-year colleges and universities also influence recent high school graduates' choices of postsecondary institutions and community colleges.

Recent high school graduates at the Virginia Beach Campuses of Commonwealth College and Tidewater Community College described their reasons for choosing the colleges which they attended by completing a questionnaire. Participants were asked about people and institutional characteristics which may have influenced them to attend their college. Five students from each sample were interviewed. The information from the interviews was used to enrich the survey data.

Students' responses to questionnaire items concerning reasons why students choose a postsecondary proprietary institution or a community college were analyzed by use of a one-way analysis of variance. Statistically significant results were established at the .05 level, of confidence. The main objective of the analysis was to understand the reasons why students choose one type or institution or the other. The analysis of data was done to determine how the choice variables differed for students enrolling in the two institutions.

### Conclusions

Based upon the survey and interview findings, the following conclusions can be made about the three groups of variables analyzed in the study.

1. Significant persons influenced students to enroll in CC and TCC. Parents were an "Important" influence. Peers, high school teachers, and high school counselors were "Slightly Important" influences. No significant difference was found between students' responses from both institutions on significant persons.

2. Relatively fixed college characteristics also influenced students from both institutions to enroll. Location, cost, and the availability of financial aid were equally important to students from each college. A significant difference was found in how students perceived the quality of academic programs, counseling programs, and

job placement programs with regard to their decision to enroll. CC students found the quality of academic programs to be "Very Important," but TCC students found that same variable to be "Important." A significant difference was indicated between the two populations on the variables of counseling programs and job placement programs. CC students responded that counseling and job placement programs were "Important". TCC students said they were "Slightly Important." Institutional differences in counseling and job placement concepts and procedures may have accounted for the different perceptions of the students.

3. Other institutional variables, likewise, influenced students from each type of college to enroll. College catalogs were considered "Important" by students from CC and TCC. Newspaper/print advertising and visits to high schools by college representatives were considered "Slightly Important." A significant difference was indicated on the issues of radio/television advertising and of student visits to the college sites. The influence of radio and television advertising may be perceived differently by students from each of the institutions because CC, a private college, can use funds for advertising as it determines necessary. TCC, a public college, is restricted from using public funds for advertising. Students' visits to the college sites were seen as "Important" to CC students and "Slightly Important" to TCC students. That difference may be attributed to the

fact that CC students scheduled an appointment and interview with an admissions' counselor before enrollment. No such procedure is required or generally followed by TCC students before enrollment.

4. CC and TCC students, like students attending four-year colleges and universities, identified parents, location, cost, availability of financial aid, and college catalogs as generally important factors in their college choice decisions. And, like their counterparts at four-year institutions, CC and TCC students acknowledged--in varying degrees--the efficacy of quality in academic programs.

The results of this study suggest that students seeking to matriculate at postsecondary proprietary institutions and community colleges are influenced by numerous factors in their choice behavior. The responses on the scale were rated as follows: 1 = Critical, 2 = Very Important, 3 = Important, 4 = Slightly Important, and 5 = Not Important. On this scale of (1-5), students did not once indicate that any single variable was "Critical." In addition, only one variable was considered "Very Important." That consideration was given by CC students. On the other end of the scale, only one variable was considered "Not Important." That consideration was given by TCC students. Certainly, the majority of responses were either "Important" or "Slightly Important." Thus, according to Reisman, these students may echo their counterparts whose goal it is to attend four-year

colleges and universities. Reisman took the position that [A]t least 80 percent of the students in the United States . . . show up at the nearest "available college," be it a community college, a four-year state college, or an open-admissions private college (the great majority of which have today virtually no selectivity); they do not make a conscious college choice. ("Foreword," Litten et al., 1983, p. xx)

Further, Reisman (1980) references Astin and others who have done considerable research to obtain information that guide students' choice of institutions. The consensus is that from 10 to 25 percent of students make an active choice, a small number indeed. Reisman also indicated that the only variable that would slightly increase this percentage is the "additional number who, having started at the local 'available college,' transfer to an institution more suitable to their developing skills and aspirations" (p. 226).

The results of this study also suggest that competition between the two types of institutions in the Tidewater area is, indeed, not certain. For example, none of the verbal responses to items on the questionnaire or responses to items during the interviews indicated any noticeable degree of dissatisfaction on the part of students with the institution that they had chosen. Nor did responses on the



same items indicate that students had applied to both the CC and to TCC. Only two TCC students interviewed considered CC a possible choice. However, neither of these two students actually applied to CC. Further, one CC student who lived a great deal closer to TCC than to CC did not consider enrolling at TCC.

These data disagree generally with the research findings of Levin (1985) who found perceptions that competition for students does exist between the two types of institutions (Braden and Paul, 1971, p. 204; Wilms, 1973a, p. 83-84 and 1973b, p. 80; Wilms, 1974; Juhlin, 1976; and Jung 1980, p. 11). However, these perceptions seemed not to be formulated from the viewpoint of students but from the viewpoint of officials at the two types of institutions and, more specifically, with regard to the 1972 Higher Education Amendments, which essentially made public funds accessible to students of both public and private institutions. Levin, further, stated:

Most claims about competition do not reference specific data. When they do reference specific data, the data are sometimes irrelevant. . . . The [issue of competition] is probably due to a shortage of pertinent data. The conflict may also be related to the biases of the authors. (p. 21)

Though Levin, himself, concluded that there was little reason to assume that competition between proprietary

institutions and community colleges exists on a national level, he did suggest the possibility of competition on local and regional levels. He, therefore, suggested the efficacy of studies such as this one (p. 119). However, this study does not suggest that such competition exists.

#### Implications of the Study

This research has analyzed three groups of variables concerning students' choice of postsecondary proprietary institutions and community colleges. Although the study's conclusions are derived specifically from data collected at a postsecondary proprietary institution and at a community college, the conclusions should be considered by higher education generally because, essentially, the same factors influence the choice of either type of school.

Theoretical implications      Studies that focus on the choice behaviors of students who intend to matriculate at four-year colleges or universities are plentiful. Yet, the same type of studies for students who intend to enroll at a postsecondary proprietary institution or community college are not available. Thus, it is difficult to assess whether students who choose to attend proprietary schools or community colleges do so for the same reasons that students who choose four-year colleges and universities. But, the results of this study indicate that proprietary school and community college students do enroll in their institutions for some of the same reasons that four-year college and

university students enroll in their institutions. These findings should enhance an understanding of the most important reasons why students choose a postsecondary proprietary institution or a community college.

Implications for policy and practice As the numbers of postsecondary proprietary school students and community college students increase and as both types of institutions become more visible in the literature of higher education legislatures, state regulatory boards, and communities, secondary schools and higher education institutions must evaluate their programs and policies regarding these students. The findings of this study have implications for the way higher education institutions respond to recent high school graduates making the choice to attend one of these types of institutions.

Marketing and recruitment. Chapman (1980) and Litten et al. (1983) have determined that students' choices of institutions can be enhanced by market analysis and application of market findings. In order to make choices that are appropriate to themselves as individuals, students must be made aware of the benefits which institutions can provide them. Information is already being distributed to prospective students through college catalogs, newspaper/other print advertising, visits to high school by college representatives, and students' visits to college campuses. However, data from this study indicate that

information must be more accurately collected and appropriately presented to meet the needs of students. Thus, readability of college catalogs should be considered. Indeed, as Chapman (1980) has suggested, the writers of college catalogs must focus on content and format (p. 119) in order to meet students' needs for information about higher education institutions.

Second, the influence of newspaper and other kinds of print advertising on the decision to attend should be considered by institutions as tantamount to the recruitment process and, thus, the success of an institution. If students do not consider newspaper and other kinds of print advertising to be successful, then it is not the shortcoming of students but the responsibility of college officials to devise materials that attract and convince prospective students to enroll in their institutions.

Radio and television advertising is also an appropriate mode of promoting curricula in higher education institutions. If, indeed, students do not perceive the efficacy of this type of promotion, culpability on their part is not the issue. If an institution is allowed by its funding structure to buy air time, that effort must successfully represent the mission of the specific college to the end of eliciting positive choice responses from students. Because advertising cannot be paid for with

public funds in the Commonwealth of Virginia, state-supported community colleges are placed at a competitive disadvantage with proprietary institutions--who can allocate fund for advertising in whatever manner they see appropriate.

Financial aid. Financial aid is, as the result of the 1972 Higher Education Ammendments, available to both private and public education sectors. Data generated by this study indicate that financial aid is important to both proprietary school and community college students. The Carnegie Council on Policy Studies on Higher Education (1979) and Manski and Wise (1983) have suggested that financial aid [Pell Grants] has increased the enrollment rates of low-income students by 59 percent and of middle-income students by 12 percent (Hossler, p. 55). Institutions should investigate the possibilities for informing students' about how to procure financial aid not only through Pell Grants but also through other forms of financial aid. Moreover, not only should funding levels be maintained at the present level but also increased so that both low-income and middle-income students can qualify for and receive the level of aid they need to maintain their enrollment in college until the successful completion if their programs.

Articulation between different types of institutions. For those proprietary schools and community colleges within the same geographical region and with equal accreditation,

it would be wise for them to articulate with each other in order to cut down on duplication of courses. Since it has been shown that competition between the two types of institutions is not substantial, proprietaries and community colleges could complement each other in a number of ways. For example, the proprietary schools could provide certain types of technological training to both their own and community college students. The community colleges could provide the general education core of the curricula necessary for graduation. These arrangements could be articulated in much the same way that community colleges articulate courses and programs with both secondary schools and other higher education institutions.

Counseling. This study has shown that counselors are not always as influential with students as they should be. The study has also shown that at both types of institutions, counseling is an "uneven" type of activity. That is, at different colleges counselors spend a great deal of time with students at certain stages of the enrollment process and hardly any time at other stages.

The argument for more comprehensive counseling services is especially valid when consideration is given to the growing variety of students who enroll in colleges and universities. Many of these institutions do not have selective admissions policies and procedures. Many of the students enrolling in these institutions have

unsophisticated study skills, unimpressive grade point averages, uncertainties about their own abilities to successfully complete courses of study, and learning disabilities.

Job placement services. The results of this study show that job placement is influential for students. Job placement in colleges and universities could be even more important if efforts were made to formalize and strengthen the existing procedures used.

It might be that job placement could be made a specific role of counseling services. In any event, students should be taught how to write resumes, fill out job applications, and dress and deport themselves appropriately for interviews because these activities are appropriate training for students. When students have refined these activities, the result is better communication skills and a more complete sense of how a content area/major can be applied in the workplace.

#### Implications for Future Research

This document constitutes an exploratory study of the most important reasons why recent high school graduates choose to attend postsecondary proprietary institutions or community colleges. The findings explain, in part, why it is that students choose one institution or another.

Generalizations made as a result of this study are limited because the samples of students who were surveyed

and interviewed attended institutions in a unique urban area. Similar studies should be done in other urban and rural areas. Collectively considered, such studies would allow for more representative conclusions to be drawn regarding why students choose one type of institution or another.

The basis of this research was drawn from models of student choice. But, those models are focused on recent high school graduates whose institutional choices were either four-year colleges or universities. This study has sought to change that focus to recent high school graduates whose institutional choices were either a postsecondary proprietary institution or a community college. Specifically, this study concentrated on two local institutions with regard to students' choice to enroll in one of the institutions. Moreover, many more local and/or regional institutions across the country must be involved in research efforts of this sort so that the raison d'etre of students' choices may be obtained. These research efforts will benefit higher education in general and planners, developers, and student recruiters in proprietary schools and community colleges in specific.

The results of this study also indicate that no single variable analyzed was "Critical" to either sample of students. In fact, most responses were moderate in nature. Consistent with the postulation of David Reisman (1983) that



"[Students] do not make a conscious college choice" ("Foreword," Larry Litten et al., p. xx), studies should be done that compare the choices of postsecondary proprietary school students and community college students with the choices of four-year college and/or university students in the same geographical area. Such information would benefit higher education in general and planners, developers, and student recruiters. In addition, representative information about the differences and similarities between two-year college students and baccalaureate students would be gained.

In summary, the use of the three sets of variables: significant persons, relatively fixed institutional characteristics, and other institutional characteristics has yielded important information about why it is that recent high school graduates choose to attend a proprietary institution or a community college. This information should benefit students, faculty, and administrators of these two important types of higher education institutions and other types of higher education institutions as well.

**APPENDICES**

**APPENDIX A**  
**CONSENT FORM FOR QUESTIONNAIRE**

**CONSENT FORM FOR QUESTIONNAIRE**

This questionnaire is being used to collect information concerning why students enroll in a postsecondary proprietary institution or a community college. It should take no longer than fifteen minutes to answer all the questions. Your individual answers will be kept confidential. An analysis will be made of all the data collected and compared with the data collected at (Name of the College). Participation is voluntary and you may withdraw at any time with no penalty to yourself personally or professionally.

Thank you very much for your cooperation.

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**SIGNATURE OF CONSENT**

Signature of Consenting Participant \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

**APPENDIX B**  
**QUESTIONNAIRE**

## QUESTIONNAIRE

Your answers to the items on this questionnaire will supply the data necessary to complete a study addressing why students choose the schools they attend. Your cooperation is very much appreciated. Thank you.

Directions: Some of the following questions will call for a check mark or a circle to indicate your answer. Other questions are less structured and you can answer them as appropriate. Use extra space if it is needed.

1. Name (Optional): \_\_\_\_\_
2. Address (Optional): \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_
3. Telephone number (Optional): \_\_\_\_\_
4. Date of Birth: \_\_\_\_\_  
month day year
5. Did you graduate from high school? yes/no
6. Date of High School Graduation: \_\_\_\_\_  
month year
7. Area of Residence  
\_\_\_\_ Chesapeake  
\_\_\_\_ Norfolk  
\_\_\_\_ Portsmouth  
\_\_\_\_ Suffolk  
\_\_\_\_ Virginia Beach  
\_\_\_\_ Other
8. Are you currently employed? yes/no  
Please check one.  
\_\_\_\_ Part-time  
\_\_\_\_ Full-time  
\_\_\_\_ Other
9. When did you enroll in this school? \_\_\_\_\_  
month year
10. How many credits are you taking this term? \_\_\_\_\_

The rest of the questions address the reasons you enrolled in the school you are now attending. Please circle one number for each of the following questions to show how important each item was to your decision to attend this school. You may also provide additional information in the space provided.

11. How important were your parent(s) in your decision to attend this school?

1	2	3	4	5
Critical	Very Important	Important	Slightly Important	Not Important

Comment: \_\_\_\_\_

---

12. How important were your peers (friends or classmates) in your decision to attend this school?

1	2	3	4	5
Critical	Very Important	Important	Slightly Important	Not Important

Comment: \_\_\_\_\_

---

13. How important were your high school teachers in your decision to attend this school?

1	2	3	4	5
Critical	Very Important	Important	Slightly Important	Not Important

Comment: \_\_\_\_\_

---

14. How important was your high school counselor(s) in your decision to attend this school?

1	2	3	4	5
Critical	Very Important	Important	Slightly Important	Not Important

Comment: \_\_\_\_\_

---

15. How important was the location of (Name of the College) in your decision to attend this school?

1	2	3	4	5
Critical	Very Important	Important	Slightly Important	Not Important

Comment: \_\_\_\_\_

---

16. How important was cost in your decision to attend this school?

1	2	3	4	5
Critical	Very Important	Important	Slightly Important	Not Important

Comment: \_\_\_\_\_

---

17. How important was the availability of financial aid in your decision to attend this school?

1	2	3	4	5
Critical	Very Important	Important	Slightly Important	Not Important

Comment: \_\_\_\_\_

---

18. How important was the quality of the program you wanted to study in your decision to attend this school?

1	2	3	4	5
Critical	Very Important	Important	Slightly Important	Not Important

Comment: \_\_\_\_\_

---



19. How important was the counseling program at (Name of the College) in your decision to attend this school?

1	2	3	4	5
Critical	Very Important	Important	Slightly Important	Not Important

Comment: \_\_\_\_\_

---

20. How important was the job placement program in your decision to attend this school?

1	2	3	4	5
Critical	Very Important	Important	Slightly Important	Not Important

Comment: \_\_\_\_\_

---

21. How important was the information in the school's catalog in your decision to attend this school?

1	2	3	4	5
Critical	Very Important	Important	Slightly Important	Not Important

Comment: \_\_\_\_\_

---

22. How important were newspaper and other kinds of print advertising in your decision to attend this school?

1	2	3	4	5
Critical	Very Important	Important	Slightly Important	Not Important

Comment: \_\_\_\_\_

---

23. How important was radio and television advertising in your decision to attend this school?

1	2	3	4	5
Critical	Very Important	Important	Slightly Important	Not Important

Comment: \_\_\_\_\_

24. How important were visits by representatives of (Name of the College) to your high school in your decision to attend this school?

1	2	3	4	5
Critical	Very Important	Important	Slightly Important	Not Important

Comment: \_\_\_\_\_

25. How important were visits to (Name of the College) prior to enrollment in your decision to attend this school?

1	2	3	4	5
Critical	Very Important	Important	Slightly Important	Not Important

Comment: \_\_\_\_\_

26. Please supply additional information about how you made your decision to attend this school?

Comment: \_\_\_\_\_

**APPENDIX C**  
**INTERVIEW SCHEDULE**

## INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

Your answers to the items in this interview will supply the data necessary to complete a study addressing why students choose the schools they attend. Your cooperation is very much appreciated. Thank you.

1. When did you enroll in this school?
2. Did you consider enrolling in other schools or colleges?
  - 2.1 What were they?
3. Did any people in particular help you decide which institution to attend?
  - 3.1 What was the nature of their influence?
4. What characteristics of this institution helped you make the decision to attend?
5. How did the college communicate its benefits to you?
  - 5.1 To what extent did these efforts influence you to attend?
6. Do any other factors stand out as influential in your decision to attend this school?

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## Abstract

VARIABLES INFLUENCING RECENT HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATES' CHOICE OF POSTSECONDARY PROPRIETARY SCHOOLS OR COMMUNITY COLLEGES: A STUDY OF BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION AND RELATED CURRICULA AT THE VIRGINIA BEACH CAMPUSES OF COMMONWEALTH COLLEGE AND TIDEWATER COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Bill Carl De Weese, Ed.D.

The College of William and Mary in Virginia, April 1989

Chairman: Roger G. Baldwin

The purpose of this study was to investigate the reasons why recent high school graduates choose to attend a postsecondary proprietary school or a community college. Choice models based on the choices of prospective four-year college and university students provided the basis for the study. Three sets of variables--significant persons, relatively fixed institutional characteristics, and other institutional characteristics--were analyzed in order to determine students' choice of the two types of institutions.

The populations of this study were a group of 22 students in business and related curricula at the Virginia Beach Campus of Commonwealth College and a group of thirty randomly selected students in similar curricula at the Virginia Beach Campus of Tidewater Community College. The participants had to have graduated from high school during the spring of 1986 or 1987 and had to be enrolled in an associate degree program in business or related curricula. They did not have to be enrolled full-time. These participants responded to a survey addressing variables which caused them to choose a postsecondary proprietary institution or a community college. Interviews were conducted with five survey respondents from each of the populations.

Data were analyzed using a one-way analysis of variance to investigate the differences between the two institutions. Statistically significant results were established at the .05 level of confidence. The results support the theory that recent high school graduates planning to matriculate at four-year colleges and universities choose their institutions for some of the same reasons that students planning to enroll in proprietary institutions or community colleges choose their schools. Differences were also identified.

Future research on student choice in higher education is needed in localities across the country. More information is essential regarding students who intend to

enroll in local/regional proprietary schools and community colleges so that institutions may respond to the needs of prospective students.