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The Influence of Career-Technical Student Organizations on Non-Traditional and Traditional Community College Students

Suzanne Lee Johnson
University of Southern Mississippi

The University of Southern Mississippi

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Abstract of a Dissertation
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ABSTRACT

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Student organizations have been contributing to adult education for years. The need to recruit non-traditional students and retain them is very important to the financial support of the career and technical program. If a career-technical student organization (CTSO) can encourage retention and completion of traditional and non-traditional students in a field of study, the state might realize the need to increase the funding provided to the advisers/instructors of the CTSO and the financial support of the CTSO. This study investigated what motivates a student to become an active member in a CTSO and to what extent the CTSO contributed to non-traditional and traditional students' GPAs and completion/graduation rates.

Permission from a rural community college in MS was given to view data of career and technical students enrolled in 2006-2007, specifically CTSO membership, identification of traditional and non-traditional students, GPAs for each quarter, and graduation rates. Rosters from four CTSOs were used: Phi Beta Lambda, National-Technical Honor Society, Health Occupations Students of America, and SkillsUSA. The qualitative portion interviewed 24 students using a set of core questions that identified some of the factors that influenced them to join or not to join a CTSO, the impact the CTSO did or did not have on their

college experience, the benefits gained from being active, and the possible reasons for not joining a CTSO.

The research found that non-traditional CTSO members achieved higher GPAs and higher graduation rates than non-traditional students who were not CTSO members. Traditional CTSO members achieved higher GPAs and higher graduation rates than the traditional students who were not CTSO members. Therefore, the CTSOs were associated with higher GPAs and higher graduation rates for all members. While these variables are correlated, interviews revealed that non-traditional students were highly motivated to graduate irrelevant of CTSO membership. Non-traditional students were found to be self-motivated and would probably have completed with higher GPAs and graduation status because they attend college with a specific purpose in mind. Support through CTSO funding and CTSO recruitment strategies are recommended. Funding and recruitment programs need to be implemented to inform students of the CTSO benefits.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Background

Occurring in 1917, the Smith-Hughes Act was a major landmark in the advancement of federal centralization and vocational education. This act also created the Federal Board of Vocational Education for the training in agriculture, trades and industries, commerce, and home economics in secondary schools. Funded by federal Grants in Aid to be matched by state or local contributions, the act required that state boards submit their plans for vocational education to the board for approval, thus providing for greater federal control than previous education grants. Since that time, the Career and Technical Student Organization (CTSO) has been an integral part of vocational education. Students who participate in these organizations have an opportunity to develop leadership skills, strengthen occupations skills, develop characteristics or employability skills, and explore career pathways.

Mississippi legislation (1992), Public Law 105-332, Sec. 3(29)(30), provides that all students enrolled in vocational programs operated by institutions will have the opportunity to become members and participate in student organization activities related to their instructional programs. The CTSO will be conducted as an integral part of the program offering and will extend the student activities in the area in which the program is providing training. A Mississippi CTSO is recommended to operate as co-curricular student activities rather than extra-curricular activities. The CTSO is directed by an executive board comprised of the state officers, state program supervisor, state coordinator, and

local advisers (not to exceed the number of state officers). The local advisers are members involved in the vocational program area.

The CTSO's successful operation is contingent upon an effective and informed adviser. An adviser is responsible for recruitment, organizational management, preparation for competition, chaperoning, participation in specific functions of conferences, and fiscal management of all the CTSO. Therefore, an adviser of a career-technical student organization at the community college level in Mississippi is faced with many obstacles. The adviser is usually a teacher with a full teaching load of six or more collegiate classes in addition to leading a CTSO. With so many student organizations on one campus, career-technical advisers are challenged to compete for student membership. For a CTSO to excel, maximum recruitment techniques along with learning that captivates and retains membership are a necessity.

Surveys have shown that adult learners need to belong, to be a part of something worthwhile, and to be recognized for their accomplishments and achievements. They also need to feel that their goals make sense and are within their reach. The main purpose of a CTSO is developing leadership, citizenship, and other desirable traits in adult learners. The skills and traits in leadership, citizenship, and cooperation that students develop in a CTSO can be valuable to them in modern business and industry. The traits acquired in a CTSO can determine one's success.

This study will focus on four career-technical student organizations at a rural community college in Mississippi. The four CTSO groups to be analyzed

are Phi Beta Lambda (PBL), SkillsUSA, Health Occupations Students of America (HOSA), and National-Technical Honor Society (NTHS). If a student chooses a career-technical program of study, it is likely he/she will choose one of these organizations to join. Specific criteria must be met by each CTSO and opportunities for acquiring leadership skills must be given to students.

According to their Website, fbla-pbl.org, Phi Beta Lambda is a nonprofit education association with a quarter million students preparing for careers in business and business-related fields. PBL is the largest business career student organization in the world. The postsecondary division reaches over 11,000 college students. PBL is funded by membership dues, conference fees, corporate contributions, and grants. PBL is recognized by the Association for Career and Technical Education, International Assembly for Collegiate Business Education, National Association of Parliamentarians, National Association of Secondary School Principals, National Business Education Association, and the U.S. Department of Education. The mission of PBL is to bring business and education together in a positive working relationship through innovative leadership and career development programs.

SkillsUSA.org explains that SkillsUSA is a national nonprofit student organization serving 280,000 students enrolled in career and technical training programs at public high schools and colleges. SkillsUSA – Mississippi is the vocational student organization that is a part of National SkillsUSA. Students enrolled in a trade, technical, industry, or health related program may become members. Mississippi had over 3,700 high school and community college

members enrolled for 2004-2005. The mission of SkillsUSA is a partnership of students, teachers, and industry working together to ensure that America has a skilled workforce. SkillsUSA provides quality educational experiences for students in leadership, teamwork, citizenship, and character development. Self-confidence, work attitudes, and communication skills are built and reinforced. Total quality at work including, high ethical standards, and communication skills, lifelong education, and pride in the dignity of work are emphasized within the organization also.

According to hosa.org, Health Occupational Students of America (HOSA) "provides a unique program of leadership development, motivation, and recognition for secondary, postsecondary, adult, and collegiate students enrolled in health occupations education programs. HOSA is 100% health care!" Mississippi HOSA members have leadership opportunities at the local, district, state, and national levels. HOSA has grown steadily reaching 90,000 students through forty-four affiliated state associations with involvement in four unaffiliated states and 1,900 chapters. The Website also states, "The mission of HOSA is to enhance the delivery of compassionate, quality health care by providing opportunities for knowledge, skill, and leadership development of all health science technology education students."

National Technical Honor Society (NTHS) was founded in 1984 according to their Website, nths.org, to recognize outstanding student achievement in vocational and technical education. Over 2,940 high school and postsecondary chapters of NTHS exist across the nation. NTHS is recognized by leading

corporations as the benchmark of performance and leadership in the workplace. Mississippi currently has 41 active and 27 inactive chapters with 700 secondary and postsecondary members enrolled. The mission of NTHS is "to honor student achievement and leadership, promote educational excellence, and enhance career opportunities for the NTHS membership." Membership is by invitation extended only by NTHS chartered schools and colleges. Student candidates must meet local and national membership standards.

Vocational education is essential to the national welfare. Federal funds are needed to equalize the burden of work between states and for the success of the future workforce. The Carl Perkins Vocational and Technical Education Act (2003) was implemented to provide individuals with the academic and technical skills needed to succeed in a knowledge- and skills-based economy. The federal contribution to career and technical education is about $1.3 billion annually. The state and local funding supports the career and technical education infrastructure and pays teachers' salaries and other operating expenses. Perkins Basic State Grant funds are provided to states that allocate funds by formula to secondary school districts and postsecondary institutions. States have control over the split of funds between secondary and postsecondary levels. States must distribute at least 85 percent of the Basic State Grant funds to local programs. States may reserve up to ten percent for leadership activities and five percent (or $250,000, whichever is greater) for administrative activities. State and local funds generally are used for program improvement, development of accountability systems, integration of academic and career and technical education, ensuring access to

career and technical education, developing and improving curricula, purchasing equipment, providing career guidance and academic counseling services, providing professional development for teachers, counselors, and administrators, and supporting career and technical education student organizations. Mississippi has set forth four core indicators that postsecondary institutions must meet in order to receive funding. The core indicators are academic and technical skill attainment, completion, placement and retention, and non-traditional participation and completion. The challenge for career and technical program instructors to gain interest in student participation in a CTSO, to retain students, and to emphasize completion in a chosen program is great.

Statement of the Problem

Without fulfilling the requirements set forth by the state, the career and technical program may be at risk of closure. The career and technical instructor/adviser faces challenges every day with recruiting of non-traditional and traditional students, retainment, and graduation of these students. Determining what motivates a student to participate in a CTSO and/or measuring how and to what degree the CTSO affects the variables stated above is the subject of this study. The purpose of this study is to investigate what motivates a student to become an active member in a CTSO and to what extent the CTSO contribute to a non-traditional and traditional student's GPAs and completion/graduation rates.

Purpose of the Study

The need to recruit non-traditional students and retain them is very important to the financial support of the career and technical program. Without non-traditional students, retention within a program and completion in their field of study, funding will stop and the program will be closed. Closure of programs could be detrimental to the economy and workforce, increasing unemployment of career-technical instructors and increasing the need for workers in career and technical areas. Therefore, if a CTSO can encourage retention and completion of traditional and non-traditional students in a field of study, the state might realize the need to increase the funding provided to the advisers/instructors of the CTSO and the financial support of the CTSO. The CTSO is primarily self-sufficient with fundraising efforts mainly supporting its activities. If administrators see a relationship between retention, GPAs, and completion rates, more efforts might be made to financially assist these organizations.

Along with the research of GPA and graduation rates of both non-traditional and traditional students, interviews will be conducted with non-traditional CTSO members, non-traditional non-CTSO members, and traditional CTSO members. The feedback from the interviews may be used by advisers in recruitment strategies and organization development. In order to have a successful CTSO, the students must be active and interested in the goals of the organization. Therefore, it is crucial to identify some of the motivational factors that influence participation in the CTSO.

Hypotheses

The hypotheses developed from the problem statement and from the purpose of this study are:

H1 – There is a statistically significant difference between the GPA of traditional and non-traditional career-technical students who are members of a CTSO.

H2 – There is a statistically significant difference between the GPA of traditional and non-traditional career-technical students who are not members of a CTSO.

H3 – There is not a statistically significant difference in GPA between non-traditional CTSO members and non-traditional career-technical students who are not members of a CTSO.

H4 – There is a statistically significant difference in GPA between traditional CTSO members and traditional career-technical students who are not members of a CTSO.

H5 – There is a statistically significant difference in graduation status between traditional and non-traditional career-technical students who are members of a CTSO.

H6 – There is not a statistically significant difference in graduation status between traditional and non-traditional career-technical students who are not members of a CTSO.

H7 – There is a statistically significant difference in graduation status between non-traditional CTSO members and non-traditional career-technical students who are not members of a CTSO.

H8 – There is a statistically significant difference in graduation status between traditional CTSO members and traditional career-technical students who are not members of a CTSO.

Additionally, the qualitative aspect of research will examine what factors motivate the non-traditional student and traditional student to actively participate in a CTSO.

Definitions

A career-technical student organization (CTSO) is an organization designed for students enrolled in vocational education programs which engage the students in activities as an integral part of the curriculum or instructional program.

A non-traditional student is a term referring to students at higher educational institutions (undergraduate college or university) who fall into two categories: students who are older than the typical aged undergraduate college student (17-24 years old) and students who interrupted their studies earlier in life or students who are living independently and/or with children.

A traditional student is a term referring to students at higher educational institutions (undergraduate college or university) who are ages 17-24.

Delimitations

The delimitations of this study include the following:

1. This study is delimited to students at a rural community college in Mississippi.

2. This study is delimited to only four CTSOs at the community college level: Phi Beta Lambda (PBL), SkillsUSA, Health Occupational Students of America (HOSA), and National Technical Honor Society (NTHS).

3. This study is delimited to non-traditional and traditional students involved in a CTSO, not academic student organizations.

4. Any other subjects, variables, and/or conditions not so specified were considered beyond the scope of this study.

Limitations

Specific motivational factors, GPAs, and graduation rates of non-traditional and traditional students within a specific institution will be identified during this study. Relative to the qualitative portion, responses are restricted to the students selected for interviews of a rural community college in MS. The CTSO membership to be researched includes PBL, SkillsUSA, HOSA, and NTHS. Selection of interviewees may contain a certain amount of bias over which there is no control. Four groups will be interviewed: non-traditional CTSO members, non-traditional non CTSO members, traditional CTSO members, and traditional non CTSO members. Each group will consist of six members, three male and three female members.

Assumptions

Glover and Murrell (1998) found that progress in general academics, higher GPAs, and retention is positively associated with participation in student activities at community college campuses. Astin's Theory of Involvement (1984) stated that students learn more if they are more involved in both the academic

and social aspects of the college experience. The Glover and Murrell research provides substantial evidence that student participation in student organizations makes a difference in GPAs and retention.

Four Career-Technical Student Organizations will be researched at the community college selected, and it is assumed that the participation in a CTSO will make a difference in a non-traditional and traditional student's GPA and retention rate.

Justification

Student organizations have been contributing to adult education for years. Astin (1977) spent many years looking at the effects of student involvement on the college experience. The patterns he found provided strong support for the argument that a student's academic and personal development is enhanced by heavy involvement in college. Astin found that a student's development seemed to be facilitated if the student spent a considerable amount of time studying and attending classes, as well as engaging in related activities that required high levels of involvement. He also emphasized that the more quality resources such as a CTSO are available, the more likely CTSO-involved students will grow and develop.

Astin (1987a) looked at many aspects of what really matters to college students. He studied the environmental effects, career development, patterns of behavior, and academic and cognitive development of college students who were involved heavily with their experience and those who were not. Therefore, involvement of the non-traditional and traditional students in a CTSO and their

attitudes toward the CTSO will be examined in this study. Through interviews with the non-traditional and traditional students who are involved in a CTSO and those who are not involved, this study will explore the motivational factors that influence the student's involvement in the CTSO.

Astin (1975) earlier conducted a study identifying factors to prevent students from dropping out of college. After looking at various factors of the institution's environment, academics, and social life, the study supported the Theory of College Persistence which states that student involvement is a key factor in persistence:

> The theory holds that a student's tendency to drop out of college is inversely related to the degree of direct involvement in the academic and social life of the institution. The strong relationship between academic performance and persistence is support of the assumption that getting good grades is a sign of student involvement in the academic life and environment of the institution. (pp. 175-176)

Therefore, this study will examine the relationship between the traditional and non-traditional students' GPA and involvement in student organizations.

Further, Tinto (1993) explains that involvement is necessary for integration into the college environment, and integration increases the likelihood of determination and persistence in completion of college. Tinto (1993) developed a theory of retention that would model college drop outs. Tinto's (1993) theory was developed from Durkheim's theory of suicide which made comparisons

between committing suicide and leaving school because of a lack of integration in a social setting. Students who do not feel they are part of the social system in college will not develop a high level of commitment and are prone to drop out. Tinto (1993) describes academic and social forms of integration and the formal and informal divisions of each. He claims that these forms are interwoven and can exhibit a mutual influence. Tinto (1997) suggests that with all individual characteristics being equal, goal commitment will lead to optimal levels of grade performance and intellectual development. The theory that social interaction contributes to retention in college will be studied.

Glover and Murrell (1998) found that increased community college student involvement is correlated with self-reported gain in personal and social development. In addition, progress in general academics, higher GPAs, and retention is positively associated with participation in student activities at community college campuses. Finally, this study aspires to provide further evidence that student organizations can influence higher GPAs, retention rates, and overall progressive students. Differences between non-traditional and traditional students' GPAs and retention rates when involved in a CTSO or not will be explored by the researcher.

Why is this study important to others? Insight to college educators and administrators on motivational factors that influence traditional students and non-traditional students to join a CTSO will be given to assist with recruitment and retention efforts. Also, this study will identify any relationships that may exist between the graduation rates of traditional and non-traditional students involved

in a CTSO. Advisers may implement the factors that motivate and encourage participation which would lead to increasing membership, GPAs, retention rates, and graduation rates. For many students, a CTSO is a stepping stone in building a resume reflecting outstanding achievements, leadership abilities, and accomplishments. Also, administrators would be interested in assisting a CTSO if it increases graduation rates because graduates mean funding and job security for instructors. The economic well-being of the community is supposedly directly related to education also.

Many administrators and instructors assume that a CTSO is a social gathering for the students and not related or beneficial to a student's academic achievement. Differences in GPAs and graduation rates between traditional and non-traditional students who belong to a CTSO and traditional and non-traditional students who do not belong to a CTSO will be investigated. If a positive relationship is found between the CTSO and GPAs and graduates, then administrators and advisers can all benefit from additional funding of any CTSO.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Introduction

Very few studies have been performed within a Career and Technical Student Organization (CTSO). However, several studies in other student organizations were found that looked at motivational factors and retention in college. The purpose of this study is to investigate what motivates a student to become an active member in a CTSO and to what extent the a CTSO contributes to a non-traditional and traditional student's GPA and completion/graduation rates. To gain an understanding of funding for a CTSO from the state or federal level, the researcher reviewed the Carl Perkins Vocational and Technical Act (2003) and the role of vocational education in Mississippi community colleges to determine the many facets of funding.

Theoretical Framework

Alexander Astin's Theory of Involvement (1984) has given many educators and administrators insight concerning how to retain students and make the college experience worthwhile. Astin's Theory of Involvement focuses on the motivation and behavior of a student. The basic concept of his theory is that students learn more as they become involved in academics and social aspects of the college experience. The involved student devotes considerable energy to academics, spends a lot of time on campus, participates in student organizations and activities, and interacts with faculty more often than others. Astin also found that the more quality resources and activities given to students, the more likely

those students will mature and develop skills necessary for the work world. Therefore, instructors, counselors, and administrators should work with the same goal in mind, uniting to make students more involved in the college environment and creating overall better learners in the college. Astin (1984) also identified practical applications resulting from this theory. The most important application is that instructors focus less on the course content and their teaching techniques and put the focus on the students.

Astin spent many years researching the college environment, the educational and vocational development of college students, and the importance of creating a college experience that would make better learners and leaders. The idea of developing student values through the college experience was also researched, concluding that value education is instrumental to a successful college experience.

In the book *Four Critical Years*, Astin (1977) determines that potential students are in a continuous state of growth and change. These processes go on whether or not students attend college. The focus was to determine what difference college attendance made in the individual's overall development. Astin determined that it is possible to predict from current information what a person will be like at some later time. For example, high achievers in secondary school tend to be high achievers in college. Therefore, Astin faced the issue of whether attending a given college changed the prediction of how the student would develop. In 1966, Astin distributed a freshman survey on self-concept at college entry, and four years later he administered the same survey to identify

changes in the students' self-concept. Positive changes were found in self-esteem suggesting that college attendance may increase the individual's sense of self-worth.

Astin's research also found that college attendance increased performance on standardized tests and increased the chances of entering a high-level occupation. The study went on to determine that college-educated persons tend to be more satisfied with their jobs and lives in general than persons without college degrees. However, more in-depth studies showed that student satisfaction depended in part on the type of institution attended. Astin concluded that college attendance is associated with an increase of academics and competency across a variety of fields; students' college grades and rate of extracurricular achievement declined from those in high school. The biggest dropout rates occurred among students who initially planned careers in engineering, nursing, medicine, science, and school teaching. The careers that increased in popularity were business, college teaching, law, and homemaking (Astin, 1977).

Although students seemed to be reasonably satisfied, Astin found that between 10 percent and 30 percent of students were dissatisfied with student friendships, social life, and the college's academic reputation. Students tended to be least satisfied with the variety of courses offered, outlets for creative activities, and advice and guidance from the faculty. Again, Astin identified the factors that frustrate students and cause them to feel dissatisfied with the institution.

Astin (1977) also determined many differences between younger and older students in college. Younger students were more likely to get involved in athletics and in student government. Older students were more likely to interact with faculty, to get involved academically, and to participate in honors programs. Older students also got better grades and were more likely to graduate with honors than younger students of the same background and ability. Students with high educational aspirations at college entry are more likely to participate in honors programs, to achieve in academic and extracurricular activities, and to graduate.

Astin (1977) found that student involvement is associated with many different factors: place of residence, honors programs, undergraduate research participation, social fraternities and sororities, academic involvement, student-faculty interaction, athletic involvement, involvement in student government, and verbal aggressiveness. Residents showed slightly greater increases than commuters in artistic interests, liberalism, and self-esteem. Living on campus increased the student's chances of persisting in college and of aspiring to graduate. Residents were also more likely to succeed in extracurricular areas, particularly leadership and athletics. Honors programs contributed to student satisfaction in the quality of science programs, closeness to faculty, and quality of instruction. Research involvement strongly affected undergraduate grades, persistence, aspirations for higher degrees, and achievement in science and creative writing. Academic involvement reinforces Astin's hypothesis that students who become heavily involved with their studies tend to become isolated

and less likely to be influenced by their peers. Student-faculty interaction had a stronger relationship to student satisfaction than any other involvement variable. Athletic involvement tended to isolate students from their peer groups. Involvement in student government had a negative impact on satisfaction with the intellectual climate and no relationship to overall satisfaction. Finally, verbal aggressiveness was associated with dissatisfaction in academic reputation, intellectual environment, student-faculty relations, and administration.

Another point of interest is the impact of different types of colleges. Almost all student involvement in campus life is decreased by attending a large institution. Students at large institutions are less likely to interact with faculty, to get involved in campus government, to participate in athletics, to become involved in honors programs, and to be verbally aggressive. The only achievement facilitated at large institutions is graduation with honors. Students attending the larger institutions show greater satisfaction with social life, science programs, the institution's academic reputation, and the variety of curriculum. Astin found that community college students tend to be more satisfied with the curriculum, quality of science programs, and the social life.

Astin (1977) also explored the effect of geographical location while attending college. Surprisingly, students attending southern institutions tended to become more involved in campus government and interacted more with faculty. These southern students tended to get somewhat lower grades but were more likely to persist and get married than students in other regions. Students at

southern institutions were more dissatisfied with the institution's academic reputation and intellectual climate than students in other regions.

Astin researched the college environment and found many factors that influenced potential students. This study hopes to expand on his theory that when a student is involved with extracurricular activities such as a CTSO and the faculty (advisers) develops relationships with the students, the student will gain academic achievement and graduate. However, the study must take into account that there are many negative factors that influence students to drop out or become isolated from their peers and others.

The second theory of interest is Vincent Tinto's *Theory of College Retention* (2008). Tinto has spent many years researching the reasons students depart from higher education institutions. Tinto states that students come to an institution with a range of background traits that must be taken into account if the institution plans to retain the student in a program of study. Tinto's theory states that the greater the individual's level of social and academic integration, the greater his or her commitment to the institution and commitment to the goal of graduation. These commitments along with integration have a direct, positive influence on retention. Tinto, Goodsell, and Russo (1993) also view student departure as a consequence of the interaction of the student and the institution (as cited in Pascarella & Terenzini, 1983).

Retention programs have grown in the past few years to include improved advising, expanded orientation programs, tutoring and developmental education programs, peer mentoring, improved residence halls, and freshman seminars.

These retention programs have helped, but the long-term impact on retention has been limited. The main reason for little change is that these retention programs have done little to change the quality of academic experience, especially during the first year. Forty-seven percent of all students who start at a four-year institution will fail to earn a degree at that college. Fifty-six percent of all dropouts leave before the start of their second year. Tinto (2008) identifies seven major causes of student withdrawal: academic difficulty, adjustment difficulty, goals, commitments, finances, fit, involvement, and learning.

Two very important causes of student withdrawals are fit and involvement, which will be researched. Many students leave because they feel they do not fit in with the others or belong socially. However, Tinto, Goodsell, and Russo (1993) argue that this is a failure on the part of the institution for not providing a friendly atmosphere, not showing concern for the students' needs, and not designing better academic programs. Others leave because they feel lonely, isolated, and unable to establish connections with classmates or professors. Tinto's research and other research have repeatedly shown that student involvement or lack thereof is the single most important predictor of student persistence. Student involvement is most crucial during the first year of college when student relationships are being developed.

Tinto (2008) completes his retention study by encouraging faculty members to get involved in the first year programs and retention programs. The retention programs include initiatives that change the everyday academic experience for students. Faculty involvement is crucial for commuter students

since the classroom is often the only place where commuters engage with faculty or other students. Tinto believes that colleges must ask not what programs are needed to retain students, but how the learning environment of the first year should be constructed to promote student involvement and education.

Although this study will be focusing on career and technical students, their academic achievement (GPA), and their completion rates (graduation), it is crucial to look at the theories that may increase each of these variables. Therefore, this study will use Tinto's Theory of College Retention and Astin's Theory of Involvement as a basis for the theoretical framework in hopes to reinforce each theory and identify ways to increase membership in a CTSO and retain those students throughout their two-year program.

The areas to be discussed from the literature are grouped into the following categories: (a) CTSO's roles and funding in Mississippi, (b) non-traditional and traditional students in community colleges, (c) motivational factors to join student organizations, and (d) retention and graduation rates of CTSO members and non-members.

Two measures of effectiveness have been selected for this study. They include GPAs of non-traditional and traditional career-technical CTSO members and non-members and graduation rates of non-traditional and traditional career-technical CTSO members and non-members. The study is built upon articles through ProQuest, which includes Dissertation Abstracts International, the ERIC database, and Mississippi Department of Education handbooks and Websites. Scott and Sarkees-Wircenski (2004) state that

> Career and technical education, formerly known as vocational education, is the primary system through which youth and adults are prepared to enter competitive employment and continue lifelong learning. Career and technical education programs are designed to assist individuals in exploring career options and developing the academic and occupational skills required for work in all segments of American society. (Introduction section, ¶ 1)

The career and technical programs prepare students for over 400 occupations that require education and training below the baccalaureate level. Twenty-six thousand career and technical programs are offered in high schools, community colleges, and technical institutes.

In addition to the background and justification of career and technical programs' existence, the main theory of focus is Astin's Theory of Involvement. Also, Tinto's Theory of College Retention will be reviewed and utilized as part of the theoretical basis of this study. Chapter II contains summaries of research studies and related literature concerning student organizations in Mississippi. The material is categorized into the following sections:

- Literature related to vocational education in Mississippi
- Literature related to student organizations and the impact of the organization on students
- Literature related to non-traditional and traditional students
- Literature related to motivational factors to join student organizations

- Literature related to retention and graduation rates of student organization members

Vocational Education in Mississippi

According to the ed.gov Website, Section 3 (17) of Perkins III defines "nontraditional training and employment" as "occupations or fields of work, including careers in computer science, technology, and other emerging high skill occupations for which individuals from one gender comprise less than 25 percent of the individuals employed in each occupation or field of work" (Archived: Legislation - Carl D. Perkins Vocational and Technical Education Act of 1998, 2003). However, the funding for career and technical programs in Mississippi is based on six indicators implemented by the Tech-Prep initiative. The indicators are (1) technical skill attainment, (2) credential, certificate, or degree, (3) student retention and transfer, (4) student placement, (5) non-traditional participation, and (6) non-traditional completion in a program. According to edaccountability.net, the funding is based on a formula designed by the Mississippi State Department of Education (Archived: Legislation - Carl D. Perkins Vocational and Technical Education Act of 1998, 2003). The non-traditional participation and completion indicator uses the following formulas to distribute money to local schools: (1) the sum of males plus the sum of females participating in non-traditional programs divided by all males and females participating in non-traditional programs, (2) the sum of males plus the sum of females who completed non-traditional programs divided by all males and females who completed non-traditional programs, (3) the sum of all males plus

the sum of females participating in non-traditional programs divided by all males and females participating in non-traditional programs, and (4) the sum of males plus the sum of females who completed non-traditional programs divided by all males and females who completed non-traditional programs. Table 1 includes all the core indicators, measures, approaches, and definitions for Mississippi (State Definitions, 2000).

Table 1

Measures, Approaches, and Definitions for Mississippi

Core Indicator	Approach	Numerator	Denominator
Core Indicator 1 – Academic and Technical Skill Attainment	Program completion	(1) Completers who attain a given level on the ACT Work Keys assessment (2) Completers who attain a given level on exams/tests/profiles	(1) Completers who attain a given level on exams/test/profiles (2) Concentrators eligible to graduate
Core Indicator 2 – Completion	Program completion	Graduates	Concentrators
Core Indicator 3 – Placement and Retention	State-Developed, School - Administered Surveys/ Placement Records	(1) Those students placed in the military, advanced education, or employment (2) Completers who are in advanced education, employment, or military and remained there for a minimum of 6 months	(1) Concentrators (2) Completers who moved into advanced education, employment, or military
Core Indicator 4 – Non-traditional Participation and Completion	State/Local Administered Data	(1) The sum of males plus the sum of females participating in non-traditional programs (2) The sum of males plus the sum of females who completed non-traditional programs	(1) All males and females participating in non-traditional programs (2) All males and females who completed non-traditional programs

Note. From (State Definitions, 2000).

The edcountability site also describes a completer as a student who has completed all competencies of a defined course of study which results in a certificate or diploma from a community college. A concentrator is defined as a student who is enrolled in vocational and technical education certificate or degree programs. *The CTSO Advisors' Handbook* (2007) states that The Division of Student Organizations in the Mississippi Department of Education (MDE) Office of Vocational Education and Workforce Development (OVE & WD) is responsible for managing career and technical student organizations throughout the state. The OVE & WD office provides assistance and support to CTSO advisers by ensuring quality and relevance of CTSO activities, development of student leadership and citizenship, elimination of discrimination and stereotyping, and service to students of special populations (Student Population Definitions, 2003).

Two main avenues for funding exist in which Mississippi community colleges receive funding. The avenues are the Carl Perkins Act and Tech Prep. Each district must abide by the regulations set forth by these initiatives if the institution wants to continue to thrive and receive funding. Without this funding the career-technical programs would be eliminated, causing many voids within the economy. In 1990 the Carl Perkins Vocational and Applied Technology Act (1992) provided federal assistance to secondary, postsecondary, and adult vocational education programs. Title II of this act provided detailed information on basic state grant requirements. Title II also set guidelines that each state must use 8.5% of the funds received under the basic state grant for state programs and leadership. The activities to be funded included professional

development, curriculum development and assessment of programs receiving federal assistance. States could also provide support for promotion of business partnerships, Tech-Prep, vocational student organizations, state leadership and data collection out of these funds (American Vocational Association, 1992).

As stated above, the importance of stabilizing vocational student organizations is vital to the disbursement of funding career-technical programs. Approximately $4 million will be disbursed to each state that meets the criteria for funding. At least 75% of the funds must be used for basic programs at the secondary, postsecondary and adult education levels. Equity programs must receive 10.5% of a state's funding. At least 7% must be used for special populations or non-traditional students which include single parents, displaced homemakers, and single pregnant women. At least 3% must be used for the sex equity program, and each state may utilize the remaining .5% between the two programs as they wish. According to the American Vocational Association (1992),

> The Secretary is authorized to make grants to partnerships of local educational agencies, or area vocational schools and institutions of higher education offering vocational education programs that have proven to be successful in preventing students from dropping out of school. The Secretary is also authorized to make grants to institutions of higher education, area vocational schools, local educational agencies, secondary schools funded by the Bureau of Indian Affairs, state boards, public or private nonprofit organizations or any consortia of these groups, to

> develop, implement and operate programs using different models of curricula which integrate vocational and academic learning. (p. 35)

Title II of the Perkins Act also makes provisions that vocational schools are eligible to receive funds from the state if the school enters into a cooperative relationship with its local districts. The American Vocational Association (1992) states:

> Also, postsecondary and adult education programs will receive funding based on the proportion of Pell Grant recipients and recipients of assistance from the Bureau of Indian Affairs enrolled at each institution compared to the total number of recipients in the state. Eligible recipients may only use funds for program improvements, with the full participation of special populations. Priority must be given to sites that serve the highest concentrations of special populations. (p. 25)

Because career and technical programs consist primarily of Pell grant recipients, special populations or non-traditional students, including single parents, displaced homemakers, and single pregnant women, it is crucial to retain these students, encourage completion of the programs, and help them find work in the chosen field of study. Otherwise, funding can be cut drastically, leaving instructors without jobs and the workforce without eligible employees in specialized areas.

For many who work in career and technical fields, their livelihood is often based on many of the factors mentioned earlier. An instructor has to be responsible for the normal course load of an estimated five or six classes,

advisement of a career-technical student organization, recruitment of traditional and non-traditional students, retention, completion of the program, and placement of the student. Therefore, the stress and anxiety can become very high for the career and technical instructor. Often, these duties are overwhelming, causing burnout, job changes, and early retirement.

Student Organizations

According to the NCES (National Center for Education Statistics) 2000 report by Levesque, Lauren, Teitelbaum, Alt, Liberia, and Nelson, participation in postsecondary career and technical education increased slightly between 1992 and 1996. About half of all community college students majored in career and technical education programs. Postsecondary career and technical education students tend to be older, have family responsibilities, receive financial aid, possess a previous postsecondary degree or certificate, and report higher grade-point averages than their academic counterparts. The challenge facing the postsecondary career and technical education instructor is how to attract more career and technical concentrators following high school graduation. Postsecondary career and technical education institutions are implementing intensive recruitment programs and increasing participation in Tech Prep programs to assist with this challenge (Scott & Sarkees-Wircenski, 2004).

Today, ten national Career-Technical Student Organizations are recognized by the U.S. Department of Education (see Appendix A). After the passage of the Smith-Hughes Act of 1917 (Scott & Sarkees-Wircenski, 2004), leaders recognized the need to provide organized clubs or student organizations

for career and technical education students that would provide them with social and recreational activities, motivate them to take advantage of instructional programs, and provide them opportunities to demonstrate their skills. Table 2 includes the organizations recognized by the U.S. Department of Education.

The Perkins Act provides states with options to use federal funds to improve career guidance, support a CTSO, and support business/education partnerships. States have the flexibility of using funds to support CTSO activities, such as travel for chapter advisers and students and the purchase of instructional materials, as long as it leads to improvement of the career and technical programs. Local educational agencies have mandated the use of funds specified in the Perkins Act including strengthening the academic and career and technical skills of students and providing students with industry experience (Scott & Sarkees-Wircenski, 2004). Sarkees (1983) identified the following advantages of participating in CTSO activities that are important for learners from special populations. When students participated in a CTSO they reported having more self-confidence, better interpersonal relationship skills, and vocational related and employability skills. They also had an increased motivation for learning, valuable information about citizenship and living independently, improved leadership skills, and more effective student-teacher interaction.

Coulter, Goin, and Gerard (2004) assessed the academic needs of graduate students and looked at what determines certain perceptions of a departmental graduate student organization. The need among students for better orientation upon entry and general information pertaining to campus

resources was found to be in demand. Many of the students felt lost and alone on the campus without proper orientation and assistance. Of the 31 master's and doctoral students who were surveyed, it was found that more professional development workshops, job search strategies, student lounges, and efficient communication systems were needed. Therefore, students need to feel a sense of belonging in order to remain active in the institution.

Colleges need to make an effort to relay general information about all aspects of campus life to students before entry to the college. Many of the colleges of today are trying to do this through improved recruitment efforts, high-school preview days, higher levels of advertisements, and more summer orientations. Potential students should be contacted frequently during the month prior to entering college in order to keep the interest of potential students. Even though the contact is often done by counselors or advisers, the contact is not limited to them. The career and technical instructor is finding it more important to make the initial contact with the potential student in order to maintain active program status.

Sara Steele (1993) examined the national participation in 4-H Club activities during the 1980s. Steele used a sample population of 24,500 eighth graders from more than 1,000 public and private schools throughout the country as well as their parents and teachers. Her study established that one of every six eighth-grade students had participated in 4-H as of 1988. Nearly 10% were from the city or suburb and 5% expected to be farmers by the age of 30. Efforts to make 4-H relevant to young teens appeared more successful at the community

level rather than at the national level. Also, the parents of active 4-H participants were slightly more active in school, emphasizing the importance of parents in the recruitment process. However, the study gave little indication that participation in 4-H resulted in measurable differences in better grades, better self-esteem, or more certainty about their future.

Gordon (1995) examined the extent to which the class of 1994-95 members of the West Virginia chapter of Vocational Industrial Clubs of America (VICA), now known as SkillsUSA, participated in personal development activities. Gordon included all West Virginia VICA members who attended the state conference and used an instrument consisting of biographical information, 24 personal development skill statements organized into leadership, cooperation, self-confidence, and citizenship areas adapted from the Personal Development Inventory. The research found citizenship and cooperation to receive the highest mean scores, and leadership received the lowest mean score. Thus, positive relationships were found between teamwork skills and self-rating on the cooperation scale. Gordon's study is important in proving that self-esteem and relationships are associated with student organizations. Gordon's research reinforces Astin's Theory of Involvement (1984).

Astin (1987b) states, "Students' satisfaction with an institution's program is one of the most important indications of the institution's effectiveness" (p. 89). These key studies show that it is important to make contact with potential students early and to continue to keep them informed, by placing a large responsibility on the educational institution and instructors. The importance of

community involvement in a student organization to emphasize the benefits and leadership qualities that may be obtained from membership within the student organization is also emphasized. The importance of community involvement is addressed in almost all of the four Career-Technical Student Organizations being studied. Most Career-Technical Student Organizations have an organizational goal related to community service or involvement. If the community is aware of the CTSO or if the CTSO directly touches the community, it is more likely that the potential student will want to become active within the CTSO.

Non-traditional and Traditional Students

Donaldson and Graham (1997) conducted a new ACT College Outcomes Survey to evaluate the effects of the college environment on academic and intellectual development. A sample of 9,348 undergraduate students was surveyed. The survey compared the outcomes for adult learners (non-traditional students over 25 years old) with those of the younger students (traditional students). An index score was created to compare the progress the students reported and their assessment of the importance of development. Non-traditional students and traditional students were also compared regarding participation and involvement in the college environment. Findings indicated that non-traditional students were much less involved with campus events and much more involved in caring for their families. However, the non-traditional students reported slightly higher levels of growth on most academic and intellectual items as compared to the traditional students. The possible explanation given for this growth is that

non-traditional students can integrate their learned life experiences in place of the traditional campus involvement such as sororities, fraternities, etc.

Migler (1992) administered a study to determine the perceptions of postsecondary career and technical student organizations from four technical colleges in Minnesota. Migler's focus groups were interviewed on perceptions and views about selected research topics. One focus group from each college was interviewed along with non-traditional students aged 27 and older. The interviews were recorded on audiotape. Three factors facilitated or encouraged membership and participation in postsecondary career and technical student organizations. (1) Instructor influence was essential in recruiting and retaining interest in the organizations. (2) The opportunity to network with potential employers was important to the members. (3) Finally, the opportunity to list membership on resumes assisted with retaining the students whether they participated in events at all. Along with positive factors came three barriers to membership and participation in career and technical student organizations. (1) Members voiced that time constraints kept them from participating. (2) Family responsibilities and difficulty in finding or affording child care were reasons that the many traditional and non-traditional students could not participate. (3) The last barrier was the lack of instructor interest or commitment. Migler also noted that non-traditional students preferred activities that would enable them to network with potential employers. Younger traditional students preferred social interactions, leadership development, human relation skills, and competitive

events. However, all groups studied preferred activities scheduled during the regular school day instead of after school, nights, or weekends (Migler, 1992).

Because of the large number of non-traditional students enrolled in career and technical education and the importance of retaining non-traditional students in career and technical programs, it is very important that these three barriers be addressed in order to assist these students in participating in career and technical student organizations. Also, it is important for non-traditional students to network with potential employers; a possible solution to the retention of the non-traditional students would be to ask community businesses and others to participate in meetings and other organization-related activities. Community service projects may need to be incorporated into the goals of the organization to allow the students opportunities to network with potential employers. This responsibility will mainly be that of the career and technical organization adviser who is already working to keep the programs of study alive.

Tight (1996) defines participation as "[attending] a sequence of meetings or completing a cycle of exercises" (p. 72). More importantly, participation is among the major policy issues facing post high school education. McGivney (1993) also cites five major reasons for low participation of adults which included lack of advice and guidance, lack of part-time courses, lack of affordable childcare, the levels of fees charged, and the geographical constraints. McGivney also viewed colleges as presenting an unwelcoming environment to their non-traditional students. However, Bond, Merrill, and Smith (1997) suggest a three-stage process for recruiting adult students: discover, enroll, and start.

Bond et al. suggests using surveys to discover the potential students, harnessing the active support of the community, and developing close working relationships with the local primary schools. Tight, McGivney, and Bond et al. all saw the need to involve the community and make contact with potential students before and during the college experience.

Astin (1977) also states, "For many undergraduates, extracurricular activities provide some of the most significant consequences of college attendance. These activities offer an opportunity to develop skills that are more relevant to later life than the knowledge and cognitive skills acquired in the classroom" (p. 108). Leadership in respect to being elected to a student office and being a member of a student-faculty committee was found to be very instrumental in a positive college experience.

Motivational Factors to Join Student Organizations

Croom and Flowers (2000) investigated whether Future Farmers of America members and non-members differed in their perception of FFA programs and services. The study reviewed whether their perceptions were influenced by gender and ethnicity, enrollment choice, prior enrollment in an agriculture class, block scheduling, grade level, and extracurricular activities. A questionnaire was given to 404 first-year students in 27 high schools in North Carolina. Responses were indicated by strong agreement or disagreement with 18 statements regarding FFA's programs and services. The Pearson Product Moment Correlation and multivariate analysis was used to find that a student made decisions to join FFA based on the perception of the image of FFA

programs and services. A student's gender, ethnicity, enrollment choice, prior enrollment in a agriculture class, block scheduling, grade level, and extracurricular activities did not influence his/her perceptions of FFA programs. Students tended to join and participate in FFA when it accomplished a sense of belonging for the student. The social aspects were also motivating factors for joining FFA.

Astin (1977) identified involvement as the time and effort expended by the student in activities that directly relate to the institution and its program. He also found that students at the low end of the involvement continuum are those who live off campus, who came only to attend classes, and whose lives are concerned mainly with persons and events outside the institution. He also identified the high end of the involvement continuum as students who spend most of their time on campus, are committed to their studies, are actively involved in campus organizations, and interact frequently with faculty and other students. Further, he found that student organization membership was associated with increased interpersonal self-esteem and with decreased social liberalism. Students who stayed in college showed much larger increases in interpersonal self-esteem. Support of the idea that interpersonal self-esteem is directly attributed to the college experience is reinforced again. Finally, participating in academic honors programs was associated with positive changes on intellectual and interpersonal self-esteem.

June Chang (2002) looked at the diversity and value of student activities and programs at the four-year campuses and the community college campuses.

Community college students showed lower levels of participation in campus organizations and attendance at campus-sponsored events. Eighty percent of the student body almost never attended a club or organization meeting or student government group. However, research has shown that student involvement improves personal and social development. Chang's study examined the value of student involvement in general and traditional extracurricular activities with an emphasis on two-year campuses. The study recommended improving student involvement by customizing extracurricular activities to fit the schedules and needs of older and part-time students. Other recommendations included reexamining the focus of student activities and supporting and assessing student activities regularly to ensure quality activities. Again, the importance of scheduling and quality activities is found to be an integral part of motivational factors for joining student organizations.

Bennett and McCannon (1996) examined reasons that influenced post-secondary students to join or not to join student organizations related to their chosen field. Demographic characteristics of students were considered at two colleges in Georgia where the majority of the students surveyed did not belong to a student organization. The two main reasons students did not choose to join were lack of time due to job responsibilities, and non-awareness of the organizations. The two main reasons for joining were the ability to use the organization on a resume and the possibility of meeting people with similar interests. The study recommended that advisers be more diligent in promoting

the benefits of student membership and be more creative when scheduling events.

Four Critical Years (Astin, 1977) found that "almost all forms of student involvement in campus life are increased by attending a small rather than a large institution. Students at small institutions are more likely to interact with faculty, to get involved in campus government, to participate in athletics, to get involved in honors programs, and to be verbally aggressive in their classrooms" (p. 245). After in-depth study, Astin (1977) found that students at community colleges were more satisfied with the curriculum and the social life. Astin attributes this to community college students already knowing their fellow students, because most of these students are living at home and probably attended the same high schools. However, the negative implications were that the two-year college students are less likely to get involved in student government, to participate in athletics, to be verbal in the classroom, and to be on familiar terms with faculty in their program of study. They also tend to be less likely to attain leadership roles and continue to four-year institutions.

With these key studies of motivational factors that influence participation in career and technical student organizations, it is clear that there is a tremendous responsibility on the adviser to promote the organization, provide worthwhile activities, participate in community service work, and provide future job opportunities. Again, these motivational factors endorse the idea that advisers should be given more incentives to be involved with career and technical

organizations if the organization is to be successful and non-traditional and traditional students are to be recruited.

Retention and Graduation Rates of Student Organization Members

When asked about the type of outcome goals that institutions should seek, Alexander W. Astin replied,

> The one coming directly out of the involvement concept is retention. A healthy thing happening on campuses now is the creation of retention committees that bring together the fiscal people, who want the bodies because they bring in money; the faculty, who want some continuity with the students rather than having this revolving door situation; and the student personnel people, who are interested in retention because it reflects a culmination of their very efforts to an extent. (1986, p. 92)

When Richmond (1986) asked Astin about the role of developing students' values, he said, "We communicate values by the way we operate our institutions" (p. 92).

Tinto (1998) states, "Successful education, not retention, is the secret of successful retention programs" (p. 170). Because there is no one form of behavior, there is no prevailing type of dropout. Tinto also identifies a number of major causes of student withdrawal from colleges. Academic difficulty is described as students leaving because they are unable or unwilling to meet the minimum academic standards of the college. He goes on to identify seven causes of departure. Adjustment can cause departure resulting from the student's inability to make the adjustment to the academic and social life of the

college. The second cause is the student's goals and the extent of one's commitments to complete college. Also, the uncertainty of beginning the college career with only the vaguest notions of why they have done so is a problem. Furthermore, the commitment of college completion is often overlooked. Additionally, many students enter college underestimating the effort required to complete the program of study.

Tinto (1998) states, "One of the clearest outcomes of research on student departure is the finding that individual experiences within college after entry are more important to persistence and departure than what has gone on before entry" (p. 167). Finances influence decisions to leave college. He continues by stating, "Experiences, academic and social, which serve to integrate the individual into the life of college, also serve to heighten attachments and therefore strengthen individual commitments both to the goal of education and to the institution" (p. 168). The absence of membership undermines commitments and heightens dropout rates. Incongruence is the outcome interaction between the individual and other members of the college. The lack of membership and feeling of seclusion may cause a student to transfer to another college more suited to his/her needs or interests. Finally, isolation from the absence of significant social and intellectual contact may cause one to drop out. All of these factors encourage dropout rates and influence decisions of students to remain or drop out of an institution.

Tinto (2008) truly believes it is not solely the institution that keeps a student enrolled. The ability to establish an educational community where all

needs are met by instructors, administrators, counselors, and all divisions of the organization exemplify a successful institution. The members of an organization must continually ask themselves how their actions serve the welfare of the students. Institutions should have an educational commitment to the students and create social and intellectual communities for the students to belong. Without these commitments, the institution will continue to experience high dropout rates and high non-completion rates. Institutions should give serious consideration to changing the character of the educational experience and develop educational settings that encourage active involvement in the learning process with others. Colleges should also consider establishing freshmen year academic programs tailored to the specific educational needs of new students.

As dropout rates continue to climb, it is crucial that the career and technical programs strive to retain the students through different means of engagement. Astin (1977) defines the potential dropout as an independent, pleasure-oriented individual with low aspirations and poor grades. One of the most influential environmental factors associated with college persistence is living in a dormitory during the freshman year. If the two-year institutions provide adequate dormitories for potential students, the likelihood of the student continuing his/her education would increase. Retention was found to be enhanced by living in the dormitories, involvement in campus life, and receiving major support from parents.

Eklund-Leen and Young (1997) investigated the differences in attitudes toward campus and community involvement for student organization leaders,

members, and nonmembers. The Campus and Community Involvement Questionnaire (CCIQ) was developed for this study. The study supported the premise that involvement in student organizations assists the educational outcomes of the institution. They also found that co-curricular involvement can produce a major benefit to the community and the institution producing student leaders. At a time when leadership is in such demand, leadership should be instilled in each student of a student organization.

An article in the National On-Campus Report found that Iowa State University students responsibilities as leaders within a student organization were too demanding. Many student leaders became torn between their leadership responsibilities in the organizations and the sacrifice of academics for their out-of-class responsibilities. The recommendation was to create a culture of academic excellence among student organizations and their leaders. Integration of an organization within the academics would show students that their academics come first, and their organizational activities should enhance their class studies (2005). For the non-traditional student, this is part of the problem encountered in joining a student organization. The other responsibilities of jobs and families conflict with the time needed to become a leader of a student organization.

In a review of Evergreen's compilation of 70 assessment studies of learning communities, Gabelnick, MacGregor, Matthews, and Smith (1990) found learning communities to be very profitable to a community college or four-year institution. Learning communities begin with a block scheduling that enables

students to take courses together. Then, these learning communities link students by tying two courses together. In some institutions, the learning community may involve students sharing the entire first semester curriculum so that they study the same material throughout the semester. The basis of the learning community is to create a learning environment where students share mutual interests, experiences, and collaborations. Learning community students generally fare better academically, socially, and personally than those outside of the learning community structure. The learning community students' learning utilizes higher-level thinking skills, more complex studies, and collaborative activities that non members do not experience. Learning community faculties make significant gains in personal, social, and professional development. The integration of academic and social life gives both faculty and students a sense of community developing sensitivity to and respect for other points of view, cultures, and people.

Astin (1974) argued that grades reflect only how the student is performing at a given point in time; grades do not necessarily measure what the student has learned. Institutions continue to rely heavily on traditional letter grades to assess students' achievement. However, high school grades have been proven to be the best predictor of college grades. Apparently, Astin also found that mature students and students with high regard for their intellectual capabilities (this could be traditional or non-traditional students) do better academically in college than younger students. The younger students were defined as more pleasure-oriented with strong interests in business and making money. Women were also

found to earn better grades in college than men, even after high school grades were considered. Finally, Astin found that support from a scholarship was associated with high grades in women and students with average ability.

Awareness of the role of academic excellence among students in student organizations is a priority. Leaders of student organizations run the risk of pouring all of their energies and talents into out-of-class activities and sacrificing academic achievement. Standards of achievement need to be encouraged and emphasized within the student organization. Student organizations must embrace the idea of academics first in order to produce excellent student leaders ("Don't Let Leadership Come at Grades' Expense," 2005). Then, the leaders can embrace out-of-school activities with ease and willingness.

Discussion

Literature on Career-Technical Student Organizations is very hard to find. However, Perkins III of the Carl D. Perkins Vocational and Technical Education Act of 1998 and Tech Prep set the regulations for career and technical programs to provide these student organizations to students. Most research focuses on the academic student organizations or high school organizations, overlooking the need for student organizations in the career and technical arena of a community college. After reviewing the literature of Perkins III and Tech Prep, it appears that funding for student organizations is available, but additional funding for the leaders and administrators of these organizations is not provided. One has to wonder how the state educational department expects the advisers and administrators to spend time building the student organizations when funding is

not provided to pay them for their time. Even though the majority of the research emphasizes the importance of student involvement in college to receive certificates or degrees, much of the research does not provide means for funding.

A CTSO ("Don't Let Leadership Come at Education's Expense," 2005) has the potential for changing the retention rates of career and technical students and increasing students' GPAs. However, the funding and incentive has to be available to encourage adviser participation. Better college climates and initial contact with potential students will be crucial to the existence of a CTSO and its success. After review of the literature, at least four issues can be presented about the student organization literature in general:

(1) The advantages of participating in a student organization are highly recorded throughout the literature ranging from boosting students' self-esteem to increasing employability through networking. A CTSO appears to be very influential in creating productive leaders in our society. Sarkees (1983) identified participation as helping build self-confidence, interpersonal skills, employability skills, motivation for learning, and citizenship. However, many barriers were identified including time restraints, family responsibilities, and lack of instructor interest. More advantages than disadvantages are found in the research regarding membership in a CTSO. Therefore, the need for institutions to financially support the student organizations and the advisers should be a priority.

(2) The community involvement is an issue worth mentioning. Steele (1993) noted that efforts to make 4-H relevant to young teens were more successful at the community level rather than at the national level. She also emphasizes the importance of the parents as part of the recruitment process. Parents are a great resource in appealing to the traditional student, but it does not appeal to the non-traditional students who are independent and living on their own. Someone, other than a parent, has to reach the non-traditional student. Some studies did reveal factors that encouraged non-traditional students to become active members of the college experience. However, most of the factors were costly for the institution. One has to wonder if institutions are interested enough in recruiting to spend the money to entice these students to become part of their college and their community.

(3) Much of the research looked at the differences between traditional and non-traditional students in the college setting. The research consistently reinforced the idea that non-traditional students usually were less involved with campus events but showed stronger growth individually and academically. Other research identified the traditional student as one who was pleasure-oriented and not as serious about individual growth or academics. Surprisingly, the high school high-achievers were identified as pleasure-oriented. Astin (1977) found that most students who were high achievers in high school continued to be high achievers in college. Astin also found that different geographical areas influenced different values. If this is valid research, educators should look at the

geographical area and the high school achievement of the students before targeting a certain population.

(4) Finally, most of the research reinforced the concepts that senses of belonging and student satisfaction are essential to an institution's effectiveness. Most research cannot deny that students must feel as if they are a part of something before true success can develop. Therefore, all institutions need to develop better learning communities and student-friendly environments in order to target potentially successful students.

The fundamental question for adult educators and administrators is not how much it will cost to fund a CTSO but how important a CTSO can be to a career and technical student's success. If a CTSO can be shown to contribute to retention rates, graduation rates, and self-esteem, then adult educators and administrators might not only acknowledge the importance of the CTSO but also financially support the CTSO and adviser more abundantly.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Two major types of data are qualitative and quantitative. Qualitative research focuses on an in-depth understanding of the subject of interest through the use of case studies, interviews, and observation. Quantitative research focuses on answering questions through the collection of statistical data. This study incorporated both types of research. A qualitative research component was used to interview career and technical graduates who were members of a Career and Technical Student Organization (CTSO) and career and technical students who were not members of a CTSO. Statistical information will be instrumental in giving insight on attracting students to a CTSO and how it may or may not affect their college experience through GPAs and completion of programs. The quantitative research was collected with permission of the community college administrators and Information Systems personnel.

The study was conducted during the summer of 2008 using data from May graduates. The focus of this study was to determine factors that motivate non-traditional students and traditional students to participate in a CTSO, differences in GPAs between non-traditional and traditional career-technical students CTSO members and non-members, and graduation status between non-traditional and traditional career-technical students CTSO members and non-members. The Phi Beta Lambda (PBL) chapter reviewed has maintained the largest chapter status in the state of Mississippi for five years. National-Technical Honor Society (NTHS), Health Occupations Students of America (HOSA), and SkillsUSA have

also maintained outstanding membership and often hosted competitive events on campus. The qualitative information collected reflected current student perceptions of a CTSO and its impact on the college experience.

Participants

Overall population. The target population of this study was primarily traditional and non-traditional career and technical students who participated in a CTSO and graduated in May 2008. The targeted students were from a rural community college in Mississippi. The institution represents one community college in Mississippi that had a career and technical enrollment of 1324 students during the 2006-07 school year. The institution reported 509 females and 815 males enrolled during the 2006-07 school year. The career and technical division reported 1053 traditional (80%) and 271 non-traditional students (20%) enrolled in the career and technical division for the 2006-07 school year.

Targeted population. For the quantitative portion of this study, all students who participated in a CTSO in the 2006-07 school year and successfully completed a program of study in May 2008 were targeted. Traditional and non-traditional students were identified at the time of data collection. The total estimated population for this group, including traditional and non-traditional students, was 214 students. Sixteen percent of the total career and technical students enrolled in the 2006-07 school year were studied. The estimated membership for each organization was as follows: PBL – 59 members, NTHS – 61 members, HOSA – 30 members, and SkillsUSA – 64 members. The actual numbers were identified at the time of data collection.

For the qualitative portion of this study, 26 students were interviewed using the core questions developed by the researcher (see Appendix C). Two mock interviews were conducted to identify additional questions that were needed to be added or questions that were needed to be deleted. The core questions were then revised to improve the quality of the interviews. Four groups of six members (three males and three females) were chosen to conduct the interviews. The researcher chose each 3rd female and 3rd male on the CTSO rosters to contact for the interview. If a student could not participate or chose not to participate in the interview, the researcher contacted the next member on the list. Thus, all selected interviewees were a result of a random draw. The groups were as follows: Traditional CTSO members, Non-traditional CTSO members, Traditional non-CTSO members, and Non-traditional non-CTSO members.

Design

Procedure for Quantitative Process. Data used within this research project was collected in the following manner:

1. The researcher requested permission from the community college for permission to view data including the career and technical students enrolled in 2006-2007, specifically CTSO membership, identification of traditional (17-24 years old) and non-traditional students (25 years old and older), GPAs for each quarter, and graduation rates. The community college granted this permission accordingly (see Appendix B).

2. Permission was obtained from The University of Southern Mississippi's Human Subjects Protections Review Committee to collect data (see Appendix E).

3. The researcher contacted each advisor of PBL, NTHS, HOSA, and SkillsUSA requesting a roster from the 2006-2007 school year. The roster was then given to the Information Systems personnel.

4. The Information Systems division identified the following: (1) non-traditional students who were CTSO members in 2006-2007, and (2) non-traditional students who were not CTSO members in 2006-2007. The Information Systems division also identified the following: (3) traditional students who were CTSO members in 2006-2007, and (4) traditional students who were not CTSO members in 2006-07.

The Information Systems division used The ACCESS Group software to generate data. The ACCESS organization is located in Atmore, Alabama, with the corporate office in Jasper, Alabama. All members were identified by student ID which is given to them by the college. Therefore, privacy was given to those individuals by concealing their names, social security numbers, etc.

5. The Computer Technology staff generated a list of the following: (1) GPAs at the end of the program of study for non-traditional students enrolled in a CTSO in 2005, (2) GPAs at the end of the program of study for traditional students enrolled in a CTSO in 2005, (3) graduation status for non-traditional students enrolled in a CTSO in 2005, (4) graduation status for traditional students enrolled in a CTSO in 2005, (5) GPAs of career-technical students not enrolled in a CTSO in 2005, and (6) graduation status of career-technical students not enrolled in a CTSO in 2005.

6. Finally, the Information Systems staff ran a report of all career and technical students who completed a career and technical program without being involved in a CTSO.

7. The Information Systems staff submitted the data to the researcher in the form of an Excel Spreadsheet. The spreadsheet data displayed GPAs by semester for Fall 2006, Spring 2007, Fall 2007, and Spring 2008. The data also designated graduation status in Spring 2008 and a list of non-CTSO members.

8. The data was then analyzed using SPSS for Windows. T-tests were used to determine GPA differences and X (chi) squares were used to determine differences in graduation status.

Procedure for Qualitative Process. Data collected for the qualitative process was as follows:

1. The researcher took the list of CTSO traditional members, CTSO non-traditional members, traditional non-CTSO members, and non-traditional non-CTSO members and selected six students (3 females and 3 males) from each group.

2. The researcher compiled a set of core questions to ask each student (see Appendix C). These questions identified some of the factors that influenced them to join or not to join a CTSO, the impact the CTSO did or did not have on their college experience, the benefits gained from being active, and the possible reasons for not joining a CTSO.

3. Two mock interviews were conducted to identify additional questions that needed to be added or questions that needed to be deleted. The core questions were then revised to improve the quality of the interviews.

4. The researcher chose each 3rd female and 3rd male on the CTSO rosters to contact for the interview. If a student could not participate or chose not to participate in the interview, the researcher contacted the next member on the list. The purposeful sample was contacted via mail or phone to ask permission to interview him/her. The interviews were conducted face-to-face and recorded for submission to The University of Southern Mississippi as archived data.

5. A total of 26 students were contacted for interviewing purposes. The first two interviews were mock interviews that were not recorded. They were used for improvement of the core questions only.

6. Interviews were recorded, transcribed and reported in the research. The data from the interviews were placed in Excel spreadsheets and the SPSS program to identify any patterns or trends in student motivation to participate in a career-technical student organization. Through the responses, motivational factors were evaluated and recorded.

The hope of the researcher was that the interviews showed patterns that would help future CTSO advisers and career and technical administrators target potential successful students. Also, it was the hope of the researcher to reinforce the relevance of the CTSO's existence and the need for more funding and assistance from administrators.

Analysis of Data

Hypotheses one through three were analyzed using t-tests to determine GPA differences and X (chi) squares for graduation status. SPSS for Windows was used to analyze the data. Descriptive statistics were used to test the hypotheses.

CHAPTER IV

ANALYSIS OF DATA

This study was conducted within a rural community college in Mississippi, in the summer of 2008 using data from May graduates. GPA, retention rates, and traditional or non-traditional status information was collected from the Information Systems staff at the college. The data were then converted to an Excel spreadsheet by the researcher to be used for further analysis in the SPSS program.

The purpose of this study was to examine the differences in GPAs between non-traditional and traditional career-technical student CTSO (Career-Technical Student Organization) members and non-members, and graduation status between non-traditional and traditional career-technical student CTSO members and non-members. The relationships were measured utilizing data collection from the rural community college students within one of four groups – Traditional CTSO members, Non-traditional CTSO members, Traditional non-CTSO members, and Non-traditional non-CTSO members.

The purpose of the qualitative portion of this study was to reflect current student perceptions of a CTSO and its impact on the college experience. A set of core questions was compiled to ask each student within each group. Two mock interviews were conducted to determine if additional questions were needed or if questions were irrelevant. A total of 18 questions were asked of the students to identify patterns that motivate students to participate in CTSOs. Within this chapter, eight hypotheses are presented, along with the statistical analysis of the data supporting or not supporting each hypothesis.

Quantitative Descriptive Data

Four hundred and thirty-four students' data were analyzed from the Information Technology staff data. The descriptive statistics will be used to summarize numerical data. Table 2 provides the descriptive statistics for the GPAs of 316 traditional and 118 non-traditional students with CTSO members and non-CTSO members identified. Means ranged from 2.74 to 3.28 and standard deviations ranged from .79 to .51 for the non-traditional student CTSO members and non-traditional student non-CTSO members. Means ranged from 2.52 to 3.29 and standard deviations ranged from .80 to .41 for traditional student CTSO members and traditional student-CTSO members.

Table 2

GPA Descriptive Statistics

	Non-traditional Students			Traditional Students		
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Number	Mean	Std. Deviation	Number
Non-CTSO member	2.74	.79	83	2.52	.80	237
CTSO Member	3.28	.51	35	3.29	.41	79

Non-traditional CTSO members had higher GPAs than non-traditional non-CTSO members. Traditional CTSO members had higher GPAs than traditional non-CTSO members.

Test of Hypotheses

The results of testing each hypothesis of this study are described within this section. Each hypothesis was tested using the greater than .05 rejection level.

Hypothesis one stated: There is a statistically significant difference between the GPA of traditional and non-traditional career-technical students who were members of a CTSO. Table 2 details this hypothesis. There were no significant differences of GPA between traditional and non-traditional career-technical students who were members of a CTSO. Seventy-nine traditional and 35 non-traditional students' GPAs were analyzed. Means ranged from 3.29 to 3.28 and standard deviations ranged from .41 to .51. Therefore, hypothesis one was not supported (t (112) = .044, p = .965).

Hypothesis two stated: There is a statistically difference between the GPA of traditional and non-traditional career-technical students who were not members of a CTSO. As shown in Table 2, there were 237 traditional and 83 non-traditional students observed. Means ranged from 2.52 to 2.74 and standard deviations ranged from .80 to .79. Non-traditional non-CTSO members had higher GPAs than traditional non-CTSO members. Hypothesis two was supported (t (318) = 2.16, p = .032) with a significant difference between the groups.

Hypothesis three stated: There is not a significant difference in GPA between non-traditional CTSO members and non-traditional career technical students who were not members of a CTSO. As shown in Table 2, the GPA of

35 non-traditional CTSO members and 83 non-traditional non-CTSO members were reviewed. Means ranged from 2.74 to 3.28 and standard deviations ranged from .77 to .51. Non-traditional CTSO members received higher GPAs than non-traditional non-CTSO members. Hypothesis three was supported (t (116) = 3.78, p = <.001) with a significant difference between CTSO members and non-CTSO members.

Hypothesis four stated: There is a statistically significant difference in GPA between traditional CTSO members and traditional career-technical students who were not members of a CTSO. Table 2 shows the GPA of 79 traditional CTSO members and 237 traditional non-CTSO members. Means ranged from 2.51 to 3.29 and standard deviations ranged from .80 to .41. Traditional CTSO members achieved higher GPAs than traditional non-CTSO members. Hypothesis four was supported (t (314) = 8.20, p = <.001) with a significant difference between traditional CTSO members and traditional non-CTSO members.

Table 3

Graduation Descriptive Statistics

	Non-graduates		Graduates	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
CTSO members (Hypothesis 5)				
Traditional	31	62.0%	48	75.0%
Non-traditional	19	38.0%	16	25.0%
Non-CTSO members (Hypothesis 6)				
Traditional	208	74.0%	29	74.4%
Non-traditional	73	26.0%	10	25.6%
Non-Traditional students (Hypothesis 7)				
Non-CTSO members	73	79.3%	10	38.5%
CTSO members	19	20.7%	16	61.5%
Traditional CTSO students (Hypothesis 8)				
Non-CTSO members	208	87.0%	29	37.7%
CTSO members	31	13.0%	48	62.3%

Hypothesis five stated: There is a statistically significant difference in graduation status between traditional and non-traditional career-technical students who were members of a CTSO. Data from 114 career-technical students, both traditional and non-traditional, with CTSO membership and graduation status was reviewed. Thirty-one traditional students (62%) did not graduate and 48 traditional students (75%) graduated. Nineteen non-traditional students (38%) did not graduate and 16 (25%) non-traditional students

graduated. The chi square test showed $X^2(N = 114, df = 1) = 2.23, p = .135$. There was not a statistically significant difference in graduation status between traditional and non-traditional career-technical students who were members of a CTSO.

Hypothesis six stated: There is a statistically significant difference in graduation status between traditional CTSO members and non-traditional career-technical students who were not members of a CTSO. Data from 320 traditional and non-traditional non-CTSO members and graduation status was collected. Two-hundred and eight (74%) of the traditional non-CTSO members did not graduate and 29 (74.4%) of traditional non-CTSO members graduated. Seventy-three (26.0%) non-traditional non-CTSO members did not graduate and ten (25.6%) non-traditional non-CTSO members graduated. The chi square test showed $X^2(N = 320, df = 1) = .002, p = .964$. The results showed no statistical significant difference in graduation status between traditional CTSO members and non-traditional non-CTSO members.

Hypothesis seven stated: There is a statistically significant difference in graduation status between non-traditional CTSO members and non-traditional career-technical students who are not members of a CTSO. One-hundred eighteen non-traditional CTSO members and non-traditional career-technical students' graduation status was reviewed and 73 (79.3%) non-traditional non-CTSO members did not graduate. Ten (38.5%) non-traditional non-CTSO members graduated and 19 (20.7%) non-traditional CTSO members did not graduate. Sixteen (61.5%) non-traditional CTSO members graduated. The chi

square test showed a statistical significant difference $X^2(N = 118, df = 1) = 16.24$, $p < .001$. Non-traditional CTSO members achieved greater completion rates than non-traditional non-CTSO members.

Hypothesis eight stated: There is a statistically significant difference in graduation status between traditional CTSO members and traditional career-technical students who are not members of a CTSO. Three hundred and sixteen traditional CTSO members and traditional career-technical non-CTSO members' graduation status was collected and analyzed. Two-hundred eight (87%) traditional non-CTSO members did not graduate and 29 (37.7%) traditional non-CTSO members graduated. Thirty-one (13.0%) traditional CTSO members did not graduate and 48 (62.3%) traditional CTSO members graduated. The statistics show a significant difference $X^2(N = 316, df = 1) = 75.696$, $p = < .001$. Traditional CTSO members achieved greater completion rates than traditional non-CTSO members.

This study has shown that non-traditional CTSO members had higher GPAs than non-traditional non-CTSO members. Traditional CTSO members had higher GPAs than traditional non-CTSO members. There was not a statistical significant difference in graduation status between traditional and non-traditional career-technical students who were members of a CTSO. There is not a statistical significant difference in graduation status between non-traditional CTSO members and non-traditional non-CTSO members. Non-traditional CTSO members achieved greater completion rates than non-traditional non-CTSO members. Traditional CTSO members achieved greater completion rates than

traditional non-CTSO members. Therefore, CTSO members performed better overall and CTSO members achieved higher completion rates than others.

Qualitative Descriptive Data

Qualitative research is theory generating. Corbin and Strauss (1990) stated that analysis begins with identification of the themes emerging from the raw data, a process referred to as "open coding." The researcher identifies and tentatively names the conceptual categories into which the phenomena observed will be grouped. Words, phrases, or events that appear to be similar can be grouped into the same category. A purposeful sample of 26 students was taken to identify characteristics of students' perceptions of CTSOs and the overall college experience. Four focus groups were determined: Traditional CTSO members, Non-traditional CTSO members, Traditional non-CTSO members, and Non-traditional non-CTSO members. Interviews were conducted and recorded for validity of the study. There were three female and three male traditional CTSO members and three female and three male traditional non-CTSO members interviewed. There were three males and four females represented in the non-traditional CTSO members' group and four males and three females represented in the non-traditional non-CTSO members' group. The two additional members were volunteers who wanted to participate in the study.

Demographics of Participants. The interviewees were May, 2008, graduates from a rural community college in Mississippi. Many different programs of study were represented. Thirteen male interviewees were represented in the following programs: seven were represented in the Computer Networking

Technology program, one represented in Food Production and Management Technology, one in Diesel Equipment Technology, one in Commercial Truck Driving Technology, one in Construction Equipment Operations Technology, and one in Medical Laboratory Technology. Thirteen female interviewees were represented in the following programs: one represented Microcomputer Technology, two represented Medical Office Technology, two in Office Systems Technology, one in Billing and Coding Technology, five in Child Development Technology, and two in Medical Laboratory Technology. The traditional students ranged from 18-23 years of age. The non-traditional students ranged from 28-53 years of age. All interviewees were interviewed within two months after graduation.

Traditional CTSO Members. All traditional CTSO members belonged to NTHS (National Technical Honor Society). As a prerequisite to be invited to NTHS, members had to belong to the CTSO that accompanied their program of study. Five members belonged to PBL (Phi Beta Lambda) (83%), and one member belonged to SkillsUSA (17%). When asked why they joined a CTSO, two members said it was because it looked good on their resumes (32%), one member was advised to join a CTSO (16%), one member joined to socialize with other students (16%), one member was interested in the CTSO because it was directly related to their program of study (16%), and three members joined to become members of NTHS (20%). All members were informed of the CTSO by an instructor. Four of the members were not active in the CTSO, and two members were active in the CTSO by attending meetings regularly and

participating in group activities. There were many reasons for becoming interested in the organization. Two members were strictly interested in joining a CTSO to improve their resumes; one member was involved in FBLA at the high school level and wanted to continue in the collegiate organization; one member became interested because of the social interaction with other college students; one student only joined to be invited into NTHS; and the last student stated the following: "I joined to prove that I was successful in my technical career classes. It could possibly help with scholarships if I choose to attend a university. Furthermore, it could possibly help me find a job." The traditional CTSO members had many different interests in joining CTSOs and all traditional CTSO members wanted to be invited to NTHS.

When traditional CTSO members were interviewed concerning the college experience, there were many mixed perceptions. The activities that kept the traditional CTSO member involved in the community college were classes, attending meetings, being a part of the clubs and organizations along with interacting with teachers and other students, maintaining grades and a high GPA, being active in fundraising for the CTSO, and one member voiced the opinion that there was not an activity that kept them involved in the community college. The benefits of joining a CTSO were obvious. Three members strictly perceived the benefit as looking good on their resumes. One student felt that the CTSO encouraged attendance, and two members felt that there were no benefits of being a member of a CTSO. Four members (67%) felt that the CTSO was helpful with academics or career-technical courses. Two members (33%) felt

that the CTSO did not help with academics or career-technical courses. One member stated, "It gave me motivation to keep my grades up." In reference to the influence on retention, three members said the CTSO helped keep them in school, and two members did not feel that the CTSO helped with their attendance in college.

Finally, five of the traditional CTSO members thought the CTSO enhanced their overall college experience. One member was not sure if the CTSO enhanced the college experience. All members felt the CTSO helped them grow professionally and personally. Three members stated that the CTSO helped with their grades and developed leadership skills. All members encouraged others to join a CTSO and become involved. Traditional CTSO members were motivated by their CTSO membership.

Non-traditional CTSO Members. All non-traditional CTSO members again belonged to NTHS. Five of the members also were members of PBL. Three members joined because it looked good on their resumes, and four joined because it was a prerequisite for NTHS. One member joined because the CTSO gave important information concerning the business world. Every member was informed about CTSOs through an instructor with the exception of one who was informed by the Work-Based Learning Coordinator at the community college. Five members were not active, and two members were active in the CTSO. The interests in joining a CTSO were access to better jobs, competitive events, personal achievement, program specific topics, and better looking resumes.

When non-traditional CTSO members were interviewed concerning the college experience, there were many mixed perceptions. The activities that kept the non-traditional CTSO member involved in the community college were classes, CTSO emphasis, work, and better jobs. One member voiced the opinion that there was not an activity that kept them involved in the community college. However, one member stated, "PTK has helped me more than anything because you must maintain a certain GPA and keep it. It has been a great motivator." The benefits of being a member of CTSOs were gaining self-esteem, staying focused, maintaining a higher GPA, and finding jobs. One member stated, "The benefit is personal gain that allows me to stand out as a distinguished member of the honor society in a technical field." All members (100%) felt that the CTSO enhanced their performance in academic and career-technical classes.

Six members felt that the CTSO gave them an incentive to remain in school and enhanced the overall college experience. One member felt that the CTSO was not an influence in remaining in school or an enhancement of the overall college experience. The non-traditional CTSO members gained self-esteem and motivation by becoming a CTSO member. All members felt the CTSO helped them grow professionally and personally. One member stated, "CTSOs are very worthwhile. They help make you a better person and have better experiences. They will help you excel in everything you do." Another member states, "I recommend going into these organizations because you can meet new people and make contacts for jobs." Overall, the non-traditional CTSO

members grew from the CTSO experience and built better self-esteem for their future careers.

Traditional Non-CTSO Members. Traditional non-CTSO members did not join a CTSO because they did not have the time in their schedules, and they were not able to contribute the time required to be active in a CTSO. Five non-members were contacted by an instructor and one was contacted by a classmate.

The activities that kept the traditional non-CTSO member involved in the community college were motivation to receive a degree and the personal interest in the program of study. Four of the non-members felt there were no benefits of joining a CTSO but it would have helped with academic or career-technical classes. The other two non-members had more time to study by not joining the CTSO and did not feel the CTSO would have helped with academic or career-technical classes. One member stated, "You would be more involved in school, and if you were a member of NTHS you would have to maintain a higher GPA in order to be a member." Again, membership in NTHS requires membership in a CTSO.

Two non-members thought that membership in a CTSO would have helped them remain in school, and two members thought that membership in a CTSO would not have helped them remain in school. When the last non-member was asked if involvement in a CTSO would have helped him remain in school, he stated, "Not really, I would have still attended school."

Three of the traditional non-CTSO members felt the CTSO would have enhanced the overall college experience, and three felt the CTSO would not have made a difference in the college experience. All non-members felt the CTSO would have helped them grow professionally and personally. One non-member stated, "It would have helped me approach things in a more professional way, kept my mind sharper, and helped me find a job." Another stated, "I would have had more resources, such as references and letters of recommendation." Finally, another non-member stated, "It looks better on a resume and shows that you want to be involved. I also believe that there would be an opportunity to learn more than just regular classroom experiences." All non-members encouraged others to join to enhance the overall college experience. One final statement from a non-member was, "I wish I would have had the time to be a member. I could have possibly learned more if I would have been active in an organization."

Non-traditional Non-CTSO Members. Non-traditional non-CTSO members did not join a CTSO because they did not have time, they had families, and some were not aware of the CTSOs. Two non-members were never contacted about the CTSOs on the campus, one read about the CTSO in an article, and the others were contacted by an instructor. The reasons for non-interest in the CTSOs were mainly lack of time, family obligations, and unawareness of the CTSOs. One non-member quoted, "I was interested, but I am a single mother, and I did not have the money or time to participate."

When the non-traditional non-CTSO members were asked about activities that kept them active in college, many indicated that the motivation to obtain a degree and work were the main factors. One non-member stated, "Having a low paying job was my incentive to stay in school, so I could get a better paying job." Five non-members did not think there were any benefits of joining a CTSO, and the other two thought that having more time to study was the benefit of not joining a CTSO. Four non-members did not think that a CTSO would have helped with academic or career-technical classes. Two members thought a CTSO would have helped with academic and career-technical classes, and one did not have an opinion.

Six non-members did not think that a CTSO would have helped them stay in school. One non-member thought a CTSO might have helped them stay in school. One non-member stated, "I am self motivated and would have finished with or without them." Another stated, "I feel that it would have cost me too much time, and my grades would have suffered."

Three non-members indicated that a CTSO would have enhanced the overall college experience; two non-members indicated that a CTSO would not have enhanced the overall college experience and two non-members were undecided. Four non-members felt they would have experienced professional and personal growth through a CTSO membership. Two non-members felt they would not have experienced professional and personal growth, and one was undecided. All non-members indicated that CTSO membership would be beneficial to an incoming college student. One stated, "If you have the time and

your grades will not suffer, organizations are a good thing." Another stated, "I think it is important to make friends, and I believe that organizations give you that opportunity." Overall, the non-traditional non-CTSO members were very supportive of CTSOs.

CTSO and Non-CTSO Comparisons. The following chart shows the reasons that community college students did not participate in a CTSO based on interviews conducting in May, 2008. Sixty-one percent of students did not join because they did not have time to participate. Eight percent of students did not participate because they did not have the money to join the CTSO. Twenty-three percent of students were unaware of the CTSOs available on the community college campus. Eight percent of students were only interested in receiving an education.

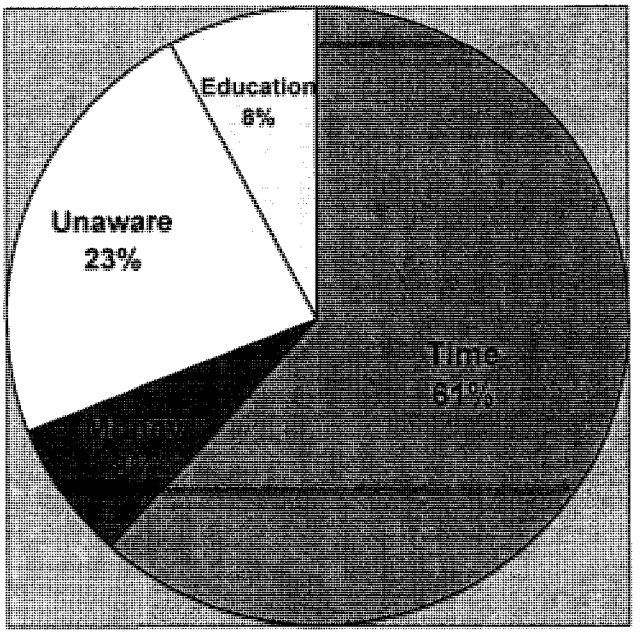


Figure 1. Reasons for Non-Participation in a CTSO

The following chart shows the reasons that community college students participate in a CTSO based on interviews conducting in May, 2008. Thirty-eight percent of students joined a CTSO because it looked good on a resume, giving the student a competitive edge in the workforce. Thirteen percent of students joined the CTSO because the topics presented at the meetings were directly associated with their program of study. Six percent of students were advised to join the CTSO. Thirty-one percent of students joined the CTSO to fulfill the prerequisite of being invited to NTHS. Six percent of students were interested in the social interaction the CTSO gave them, and six percent of students joined to improve their grades.

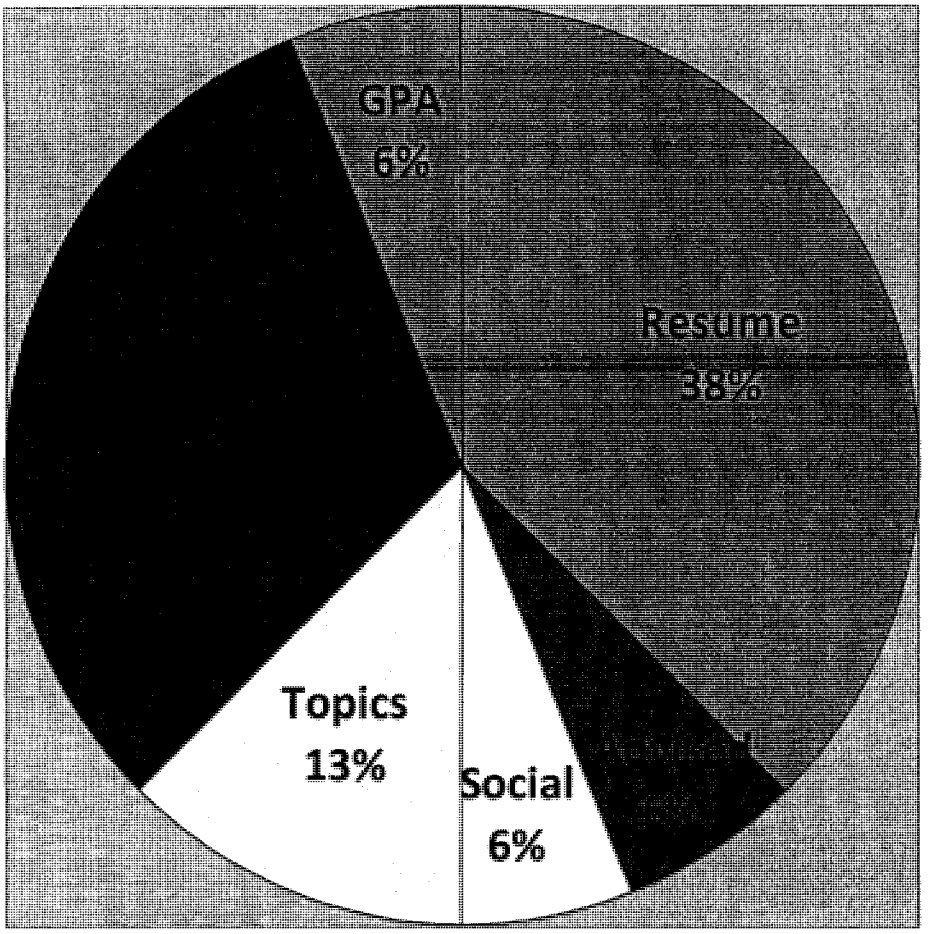


Figure 2. Reasons for Participants in a CTSO

The twenty-six students interviewed were members of three CTSOs – PBL, NTHS, and SkillsUSA. All CTSO members joined NTHS with the other CTSOs being a prerequisite to be invited to the honor society.

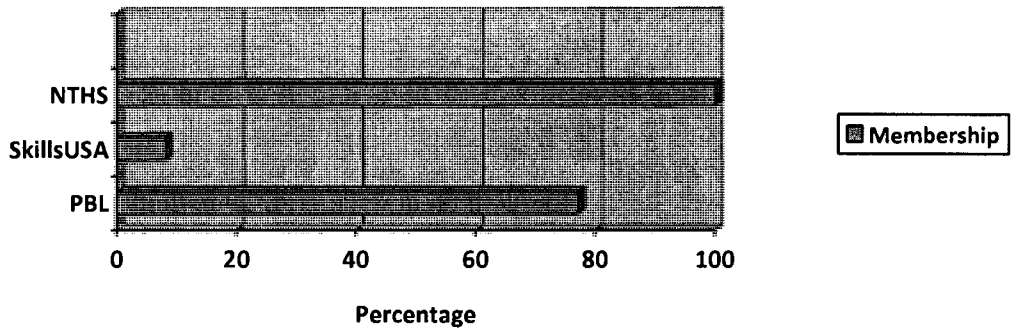


Figure 3. CTSO Membership

Traditional CTSO members joined organizations to be invited to NTHS and to enhance their resumes. This group stayed involved in school because of student organizations and felt the CTSOs helped with classes and graduation. Overall, the group felt the overall college experience was enhanced by the CTSO and promoted professional and personal growth.

Traditional non-CTSO members did not join CTSOs because of the lack of time and many were unaware of the CTSOs. Their focus was on getting a degree and did not see a benefit to joining a CTSO but saw the CTSO helping with classes. The group felt a CTSO would have enhanced the overall college experience and would have helped with professional and personal growth.

Non-traditional CTSO members joined the CTSO to improve resumes and to be invited into NTHS. However, most of them were not active in the CTSO. The group felt CTSOs helped with remaining in school, building self-esteem, and improving grades. Overall, the group felt the CTSO enhanced the college experience and assisted with professional and personal growth.

Non-traditional non-CTSO members did not join due to lack of time and awareness of the CTSO. This group focused on work and program completion. They did not see a benefit of joining a CTSO, including improving grades or graduating. After graduation, many of these members felt the overall college experience could have been improved if they would have joined a CTSO. Also, the need for professional and personal growth could have been fulfilled with CTSO membership.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

Summary

This study investigated the motives of community college students to participate in a CTSO (Career-Technical Student Organization) and measured how the CTSO affected traditional and non-traditional students' GPA and graduation rate. Without fulfilling the requirements set forth by the state, career and technical programs risk closure. Therefore, the need to recruit traditional and non-traditional students, to retain the students in the program of study, and to guide students toward graduation are crucial to the success of a career or technical program. Very few, if any, studies have been conducted in the area of CTSOs and career and technical programs in Mississippi. Because the CTSO is primarily self-sufficient, with fundraising efforts mainly supporting its activities, administration might be more willing to financially assist these organizations if a direct relationship between retention, GPAs, and completion rates were determined.

Discussion

Research question 1. Is there a statistically significant difference between the GPA of traditional and non-traditional career-technical students who are members of a CTSO? No significant differences of GPA were determined between traditional and non-traditional career-technical student CTSO members. All CTSO members (traditional or non-traditional) maintained an average GPA of 3.29. Based on previous research by Glover and Murrell (1998), progress in general academics and higher GPAs are positively associated with influences by

student organizations. In addition to the statistics, interviews of both traditional and non-traditional members found that 85% of members felt the CTSO helped them in academic and career-technical classes. The other 15% did not feel the CTSO helped with classes. These students felt they would have excelled in classes regardless of CTSO membership. Members also felt that classes and work were very influential in increasing their GPAs.

Research question 2. Is there a statistically significant difference between the GPA of traditional and non-traditional career-technical students who are not members of a CSTO? A statistically significant difference was found between traditional and non-traditional career-technical students. The non-traditional non-CTSO members had higher GPAs than traditional non-CTSO members. Astin (1977) confirmed that older students receive better grades than younger students of the same background and ability. Astin also found that older students were more likely to achieve in academic activities and to graduate. The older student tended to be more focused on education and not extracurricular activities.

The interviews of traditional and non-traditional non-CTSO members found that 62% did not join the CTSO because of lack of time, 8% did not have money to join, 23% were unaware of the organizations, and 7% were only interested in receiving an education. However, 38% stated that the motivation to receive a degree influenced better GPAs. The non-traditional non-CTSO members were consumed with juggling work and school. Once again, Astin's research was strengthened with the older (non-traditional) students who were not

CTSO members receiving a higher GPA than the younger (traditional) students who were not CTSO members.

Research question 3. Is there a statistically significant difference in GPA between non-traditional CTSO members and non-traditional career-technical students who are not members of a CTSO? There was a statistically significant difference in GPA between non-traditional CTSO members and non-traditional career-technical non-CTSO members. Non-traditional CTSO members received higher GPAs than non-traditional non-CTSO members. Astin (1977) found that students who were involved with extracurricular activities such as a CTSO developed relationships with students; the student will gain academic achievement. The research conducted found evidence through interviews and data collection that non-traditional CTSO members were very graduation-focused. The non-traditional CTSO members were interested in the CTSO because of gaining credentials on his/her resume and being invited to an honor society.

Astin (1977) found that all students with high educational aspirations at college entry are more likely to participate in honors programs. One-hundred percent of CTSO members were also National-Technical Honor Society members. Sixty-nine percent of CTSO members were not active in the organization, and 31% were active in the CTSO. Therefore, interviews confirmed that many CTSO members joined the CTSO strictly with the hope of being invited to the honors program (NTHS).

Research question 4. Is there a statistically significant difference in GPA between traditional CTSO members and traditional non-CTSO members? A statistically significant difference was found with traditional CTSO members achieving higher GPAs than traditional non-CTSO members. Astin's Theory of Involvement (1977) states that the involved student devotes considerable energy to academics, spends lots of time on campus, participates in student organizations and activities, and interacts with faculty more than others. Eighty-one percent of the interviewees were contacted by an instructor, and nineteen percent were informed by classmates, articles, or were not contacted at all about CTSO membership. All of the CTSO members were in close contact with faculty or instructors who encouraged his/her participation in a CTSO.

Research question 5. Is there a statistically significant difference in graduation status between traditional and non-traditional career-technical students who are members of a CTSO? There was not a statistically significant difference in graduation status between traditional and non-traditional career-technical students who were members of a CTSO. An estimated 62% of traditional and 62% of non-traditional CTSO members graduated in May, 2008. Astin (1977) found that students with high educational aspirations at college entry are more likely to participate in honors programs and to graduate. Although the students were chosen at random by using the rosters from each CTSO, all CTSO students interviewed happened to be members of the honors program (NTHS); by contrast, non-CTSO members cannot be members of NTHS. Vincent Tinto's Theory of College Retention (2008) states that the greater the individual's level of

social and academic integration, the greater his or her commitment to the goal of graduation. These data confirms that being a part of the CTSO was highly associated to a greater commitment to graduation.

Research question 6. Is there a statistically significant difference in graduation status between traditional CTSO members and non-traditional career-technical students who were not members of a CTSO? There was not a statistically significant difference found. Astin (1977) found that older students received better grades and were more likely to graduate with honors than younger students. These students tended to be self-motivated to graduate and acquire better jobs. Also, those who joined CTSOs were most interested in making his/her resume look more appealing to potential employers and being invited to join the honors program (NTHS).

Tinto (2008) repeatedly found that student involvement or lack thereof is the single most important predictor of student persistence. Tinto also encourages the faculty members to get involved with the students in the first year of the program of study and other retention programs. Eighty-one percent of the interviewees were contacted by an instructor about CTSO membership. This relationship was crucial to retention and completion of the program.

Research question 7. Is there a statistically significant difference in graduation status between non-traditional CTSO members and non-traditional career-technical students who are not members of a CTSO? A statistically significant difference was found with non-traditional CTSO members achieving greater graduation rates than non-traditional non-CTSO members. Non-

traditional non-CTSO members interviewed had many problems finding the time and money to join the CTSO. Nineteen percent were informed by classmates, articles, or were not contacted at all about CTSO membership. However, non-traditional non-CTSO members lacked the interaction with faculty and others to keep them encouraged to stay in school.

Research question 8. Is there a statistically significant difference in graduation status between traditional CTSO members and traditional career-technical students who are not members of a CTSO? A statistically significant difference was found with traditional CTSO members achieving greater completion rates than traditional non-CTSO members. When interviewed, 60% of the traditional CTSO members indicated that the CTSO motivated him/her to stay in school and graduate. Forty percent of traditional non-CTSO members indicated that joining the CTSO may have kept him/her motivated to stay in school and graduate.

Motivational Factors. Why do students join a CTSO? Thirty-eight percent of students joined a CTSO because it looked good on a resume, giving the student a competitive edge in the workforce. Thirteen percent of students joined the CTSO because the topics presented at the meetings were directly associated with their program of study. Six percent of students were advised to join the CTSO. Thirty-one percent of students joined the CTSO to fulfill the prerequisite of being invited to NTHS. Six percent of students were interested in the social interaction the CTSO gave them and six percent of students joined to improve their grades.

Sarkees (1983) reported that student organizations built self-confidence among members and improved citizenship and leadership skills. Part of the prerequisites to be invited to NTHS is to be recommended by an instructor regarding citizenship, leadership, and GPA. CTSO members had to possess citizenship and leadership qualities along with a high GPA in order to be recommended by the instructor; therefore, this study suggests that the CTSO may have improved and/or built the leadership and citizenship qualities by incorporating community service projects and developing leadership roles for the members. Without the CTSO, NTHS recommendations may have not been attainable.

Why do students not join a CTSO? Sixty-one percent of students did not join because they did not have time to participate. Eight percent of students did not participate because they did not have the money to join the CTSO. Twenty-three percent of students were unaware of the CTSOs available on the community college campus. Eight percent of students were only interested in receiving an education. The interview questions did not ask students if they were simply not interested in the CTSOs. Most adults make time for the things that are truly important to them. It may be possible that the students did not view the CTSO as an important part of their education; therefore, they did not want to participate. Other variables that might need to be explored are whether the students felt like the extra-curricular activities or community projects associated with the CTSOs were expected with membership. Even though two hours a week from 11:00 a.m. to 11:50 a.m. each Wednesday and Friday are set aside

for club meetings, students chose not to participate. It is possible that other extracurricular activities, such as community projects, might have been the determining factor not to participate.

Bennett and McCannon (1996) and Migler (1992) found that lack of time was the main reason students did not join student organizations. This study reinforces this finding. However, Bennett and McCannon also found that lack of awareness was also a major factor for students not joining student organizations. Many of the non-CTSO members were unaware of the CTSOs available to them. Therefore, advisers must become more vocal and reach out to these students in the first semester of college. The communication between advisers and students is very important in all aspects of their college experience.

What motivates the traditional student to join a CTSO? Because CTSO membership is a prerequisite for NTHS membership, traditional CTSO members joined organizations to be invited to NTHS and to enhance their resumes. This group stayed involved in school because of student organizations and felt the CTSOs helped with classes and graduation. Overall, the group felt the overall college experience was enhanced by the CTSO and promoted professional and personal growth.

This study found that Bennett and McCannon (1996) were correct in identifying the reasons students joined student organizations. The students interviewed confirmed that resume enhancement and networking were important to them. They also felt the CTSO gave them these opportunities.

What factors influence the traditional student not to join a CTSO? Traditional non-CTSO members did not join CTSOs because of the lack of time and many were unaware of the CTSOs. Their focus was on getting a degree and they did not see a benefit to joining a CTSO. However, they believed the CTSO would have helped them excel in classes. The group felt a CTSO would have enhanced the overall college experience and would have helped with professional and personal growth. This finding concerns the researcher because if the student did not join the CTSO but felt it would have enhanced the overall college experience, why did they not make an effort to find time during the scheduled school hours to participate? On the other hand, the researcher believes that the kind of answers given may have been socially acceptable responses desired by the interviewer.

What factors influence the non-traditional student to join a CTSO? Non-traditional CTSO members joined the CTSO to improve resumes and to be invited into NTHS. However, most of them were not active in the CTSO. The group felt CTSOs helped with remaining in school, building self-esteem, and improving grades. Overall, the group felt the CTSO enhanced the college experience and assisted with professional and personal growth.

What factors influence the non-traditional student not to join a CTSO? Non-traditional non-CTSO members did not join due to lack of time and awareness of the CTSO. This group focused on work and program completion. They did not see a benefit of joining a CTSO including improving grades or graduating. After graduation, many of these members felt the overall college

experience could have been improved if they would have joined a CTSO. Also, the need for professional and personal growth could have been fulfilled with CTSO membership.

Because the career and technical programs prepare students for over 400 occupations that require education and training below the baccalaureate level, it is crucial that funding continue to avoid future economic problems. The need for postsecondary career and technical education to implement recruitment programs and increase participation is increasing (Scott & Sarkees-Wircenski, 2004). This emphasis on participation and retention could be combined with the role of a CTSO.

Limitations

This study was limited to a specific institution in Mississippi. Responses are restricted to the key informants of the selected college CTSOs, which included members of PBL, SkillsUSA, HOSA, and NTHS. The study was designed to identify the specific motivational factors, GPAs, and graduation rates of non-traditional and traditional students within CTSO members and non-CTSO members. This may contain a certain amount of bias over which there is no control.

Conclusions

The results were clear that non-traditional CTSO members achieved higher GPAs than non-traditional students who were not CTSO members. Traditional CTSO members achieved higher GPAs than the traditional students who were not CTSO members. Non-traditional CTSO members received higher

graduation rates than non-traditional students who were not CTSO members. Traditional CTSO members also received higher graduation rates than the traditional students who were not CTSO members. Therefore, the CTSOs were associated with higher GPAs and graduation status for all members. There may be other variables that correlate with higher GPAs and graduation rates. For example, ACT scores, participation in remedial courses, and job advancements may contribute to higher GPAs and graduation rates as well. While they are correlated, non-traditional students are self-motivated and would probably have completed with higher GPAs and graduation status because they attend college with a specific purpose in mind.

Astin (1977) indicated that positive changes were found in self-esteem suggesting that college attendance increased a sense of worth. Astin also found that older students were more likely to participate in honors programs and more likely to persist if they attended a southern university. All of the results found in this study confirm Astin's findings. One might conclude that the CTSO was instrumental in increasing higher GPAs and graduation status because of its role as a prerequisite to become a NTHS member. Also, the leadership skills and social skills attained from CTSO membership may have increased the GPAs and graduation rates.

All traditional CTSO members and non-traditional members belonged to NTHS (National Technical Honor Society). Traditional CTSO members and non-traditional members joined organizations to enhance their resumes. The CTSO members felt the CTSO helped with remaining in school, building self-esteem,

and improving grades. However, the majority of CTSO members were not active in the organizations.

Based on interviews, those who did not join a CTSO because of time constraints and most of them did not see a benefit of joining a CTSO. Their focus was on getting a degree, and they were self-motivated to remain in school. However, the non-CTSO members did feel that being part of a CTSO would have enhanced the overall college experience. This conclusion is similar to Steele's 1993 study that student organizations contributed to little improvement in GPAs or self-esteem. Steele found that the organization was not influential in any of these aspects. However, this study did find that the non-CTSO member still felt that the CTSO would have enhanced the overall college experience indicating the importance of college orientation programs and their impact on the college experience. Tinto (2008) and this research concluded that faculty involvement in the first year is crucial to retention.

Recommendations

The researcher recommends that education administrators support the CTSOs investigated in this study. As the results of this research and several studies prior to this study have shown, CTSOs make a difference in a community college student's GPA and graduation rate. Support through CTSO funding and CTSO recruitment strategies are recommended. Funding alone will not help educators. Recruitment programs need to be implemented to inform students of the CTSO benefits.

Contributions to Research

This research contributes to the growing body of knowledge in the field of career and technical education and the importance of student organizations in the community college setting. The findings of this study are very encouraging to the career and technical structure and to career-technical administrators and instructors. This study provides substantial evidence that CTSOs make a difference to the overall college experience of a community college student. This study is one of the few to focus directly on CTSOs in a rural community college.

The research will be beneficial to the CTSO advisers in that they will see factors that motivate and encourage participation in CTSOs, which leads to increasing membership, GPAs, retention rates, and graduation rates. The CTSO is a stepping stone in building a resume reflecting outstanding achievements, leadership abilities, and accomplishments. Therefore, administrators may assist a CTSO if it increases graduation rates because graduates equal funding and job security for instructors. When the CTSO is being fully utilized, the CTSO members are better prepared for the workforce, the graduation rates are increasing, and GPAs are rising.

This research will add to the literature of Vincent Tinto's Theory of College Retention and Alexander Astin's Theory of Involvement. It is very supportive of both theories based on community college students' perceptions of the college experience and the influence of student organizations.

Recommendations for Future Research

For future research, it would be beneficial to expand the sample size to include more than one community college. It would be helpful to see the differences between community colleges versus four-year universities. Because Astin (1977) points out that student involvement in campus life decreases by attending a large institution, it would be beneficial to see the differences between the community college CTSO influence and the four-year university CTSO influence.

Also, this study looked at four career-technical student organizations as defined by career and technical guidelines. Educators and administrators would benefit from expanding the criteria to all CTSOs and possibly academic student organizations. This type of study would expand the research to show differences among all student organizations.

Tinto (2008) argues that it is a failure on the part of the institution for not providing a friendly atmosphere, not showing concern for the students' needs, and not designing better academic programs. Future research is needed to expand on the importance of college orientations and student involvement within the first year of college. Again, the need for an effective orientation process is the hardest to fulfill because of the different students – traditional and non-traditional.

APPENDIX A

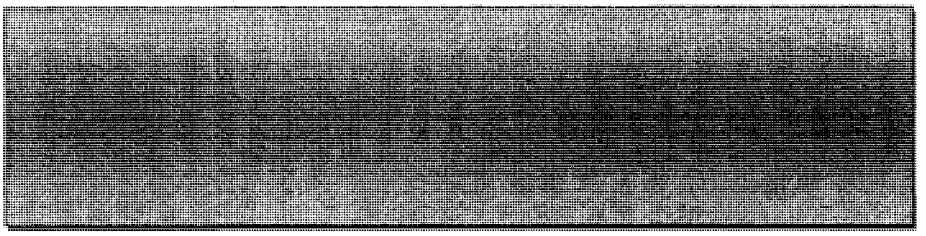
CAREER AND TECHNICAL STUDENT ORGANIZATIONS TABLE

Career and Technical Student Organizations
Business Professionals of America (BPA)
Distributive Education Clubs of America (DECA)
Family, Career, and Community Leaders of America (FCCLA)
Future Business Leaders of America (FBLA) – Phi Beta Lambda (PBL)
Health Occupations Students of America (HOSA)
National Future Farmers of America Organization (FFA)
National Postsecondary Agricultural Student Organization (PAS)
National Young Farmer Education Association (NYFEA)
SkillsUSA – formerly known as Vocational Industrial Clubs of America (VICA)
Technology Student Association (TSA)

Note: From (Scott & Sarkees-Wircenski, 2004).

APPENDIX B

COMMUNITY COLLEGE PERMISSION LETTER



March 19, 2008

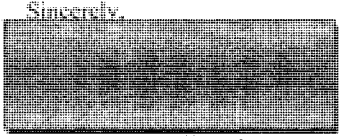
Ms. Suzanne Johnson
102 Rushing Rayborn Road
Tylertown, MS 39667

Dear Ms. Johnson:

You have the permission of the College to view data from the [redacted] Community College database concerning traditional and non-traditional students in career-technical programs. Mr. Danny Dykes, Information Systems Director, and Ms. Sheryl Montgomery, Assistant Information Director, will provide the data to you excluding confidential student information.

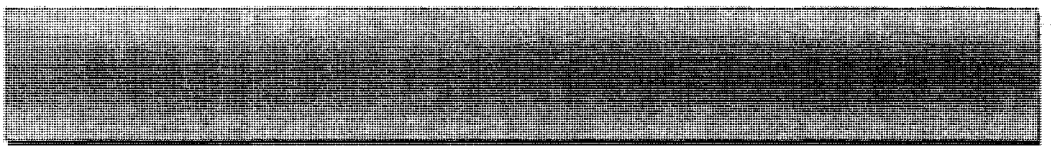
Under FERPA, Family Educational Rights and Privacy Acts, all [redacted] Community College faculty members have the right to view the data. However, all student information will remain private and confidential in data collection.

Sincerely,



Executive Vice President

REN:sla



APPENDIX C

CORE QUESTIONS

FOR A CTSO MEMBER INTERVIEW

STUDENT STATUS

1. Student's name?
2. Student's sex: male or female?
3. Student's program of study?
4. Student's age?
5. Traditional student (17-24) or Non-traditional student (25 or older)?

MOTIVATIONAL FACTORS OF CTSO INVOLVEMENT

6. Were you a member of PBL, HOSA, SkillsUSA, or NTHS?
7. Which CTSO(s) were you a member?
8. Why did you join the CTSO(s)?
9. Who first made contact with you about joining a CTSO? (classmate, instructor, counselor, or other)
10. Were you an active member of the CTSO holding officer status or other positions?
11. What interested you or did not interest you in the CTSO?

INFLUENCE ON GPA

12. What activities kept you involved in the community college?
13. What benefits of joining a CTSO did you find?
14. Did the CTSO help you in your academics or career-technical courses? If so, how did it help? Was it more helpful with academics or career-technical courses?

INFLUENCE ON RETENTION

15. Did the CTSO help you remain in school? If so, how did it help you?

OVERALL COLLEGE EXPERIENCE

16. Did the CTSO enhance your overall college experience? If so, in what way?
17. Overall, was the CTSO of any help to you for professional or personal growth? Explain.
18. Is there anything else you would like to say about your CTSO membership?

APPENDIX D

CORE QUESTIONS

FOR A CTSO NON-MEMBER INTERVIEW

STUDENT STATUS

19. Student's name?
20. Student's sex: male or female?
21. Student's program of study?
22. Student's age?
23. Traditional student (17-24) or Non-traditional student (25 or older)?

MOTIVATIONAL FACTORS OF CTSO INVOLVEMENT

24. Were you a member of PBL, HOSA, SkillsUSA, or NTHS?
25. Why did you not join a CTSO?
26. Who first made contact with you about joining a CTSO? (classmate, instructor, counselor, or other)
27. What did not interest you in the CTSO?

INFLUENCE ON GPA

28. What activities kept you involved in the community college?
29. What benefits of not joining a CTSO did you find?
30. Would a CTSO have helped you with your academics or career-technical courses? If so, in what capacity?

INFLUENCE ON RETENTION

31. Would involvement in a CTSO have helped you stay motivated to remain in school?

OVERALL COLLEGE EXPERIENCE

32. Would involvement in a CTSO have enhanced your overall college experience?
33. Overall, would the CTSO helped your professional or personal growth? Explain.
34. Is there anything else you would like to say about your CTSO non-membership?

APPENDIX E

ORAL PRESENTATION SCRIPT
By: Suzanne Johnson

Statement to be said to the subjects follows:

The purpose of this study is to investigate what motivates a student to become an active member in a Career-Technical Student Organization (CTSO) and to what extent the CTSO contribute to a non-traditional and traditional student's GPAs and completion/graduation rates. Interviews will be conducted with non-traditional CTSO members, non-traditional non-CTSO members, and traditional CTSO members.

A set of core questions have been developed. These questions will identify some of the factors that influenced you to join or not to join a CTSO, the impact the CTSO did or did not have on your college experience, the benefits gained from being active, and the possible reasons for not joining a CTSO. This interview will take approximately 10-15 minutes.

The feedback from the interviews may be used by advisers in recruitment strategies and organization development. Administrators and instructors may use this information to assist with recruitment and retention efforts of a CTSO. Administrators would be interested in assisting a CTSO if it increases graduation rates because graduates mean funding and job security for instructors.

The interviews will be recorded, transcribed, and submitted to The University of Southern Mississippi archives.

This project has been reviewed by the Human Subjects Protection Review Committee, which ensures that research projects involving human subjects follow federal regulations. Any questions or concerns about rights as a research participant should be directed to the Chair of the Institutional Review Board at 601-266-6820. Participation in this project is completely voluntary, and participants may withdraw from this study at any time without penalty, prejudice, or loss of benefits. Any questions about the research should be directed to *Suzanne Johnson* at *601-876-0272 (home) or 601-876-3661 (work).*

APPENDIX E
(Continued)

THE UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN MISSISSIPPI
AUTHORIZATION TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH PROJECT

Participant's Name _____

Consent is hereby given to participate in the research project entitled: The Influence of Career-Technical Student Organizations on Non-traditional and Traditional Community College Students. All procedures and/or investigations to be followed and their purpose, including any experimental procedures, were explained by Suzanne Johnson. Information was given about all benefits, risks, and inconveniences that might be expected.

The opportunity to ask questions regarding the research and procedures was given. Participation in the project is completely voluntary, and participants may withdraw at any time without penalty, prejudice, or loss of benefits. All personal information is strictly confidential, and no names will be disclosed. Any new information that develops during the project will be provided if that information may affect the willingness to continue participation in the project.

Questions concerning the research, at any time during or after the project, should be directed to Suzanne Johnson at 601-876-0272 (home) or 601-876-3661 (work). This project and this consent form have been reviewed by the Human Subjects Protection Review Committee, which ensures that research projects involving human subjects follow federal regulations. Any questions or concerns about rights as a research participant should be directed to the Chair of the Institutional Review Board, The University of Southern Mississippi, 118 College Drive #5147, Hattiesburg, MS 39406-0001, (601) 266-6820.

_____ _____

Signature of participant Date

_____ _____

Signature of person explaining the study Date

APPENDIX E
(Continued)

THE UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN MISSISSIPPI

Institutional Review Board

118 College Drive #5147
Hattiesburg, MS 39406-0001
Tel: 601.266.6820
Fax: 601.266.5509
www.usm.edu/irb

HUMAN SUBJECTS PROTECTION REVIEW COMMITTEE
NOTICE OF COMMITTEE ACTION

The project has been reviewed by The University of Southern Mississippi Human Subjects Protection Review Committee in accordance with Federal Drug Administration regulations (21 CFR 26, 111), Department of Health and Human Services (45 CFR Part 46), and university guidelines to ensure adherence to the following criteria:

- The risks to subjects are minimized.
- The risks to subjects are reasonable in relation to the anticipated benefits.
- The selection of subjects is equitable.
- Informed consent is adequate and appropriately documented.
- Where appropriate, the research plan makes adequate provisions for monitoring the data collected to ensure the safety of the subjects.
- Where appropriate, there are adequate provisions to protect the privacy of subjects and to maintain the confidentiality of all data.
- Appropriate additional safeguards have been included to protect vulnerable subjects.
- Any unanticipated, serious, or continuing problems encountered regarding risks to subjects must be reported immediately, but not later than 10 days following the event. This should be reported to the IRB Office via the "Adverse Effect Report Form".
- If approved, the maximum period of approval is limited to twelve months. Projects that exceed this period must submit an application for renewal or continuation.

PROTOCOL NUMBER: **28061701**
PROJECT TITLE: **The Influence of Career-Technical Student Organizations on Non-Traditional and Traditional Community Colleges**
PROPOSED PROJECT DATES: **08/01/06 to 09/30/08**
PROJECT TYPE: **Dissertation or Thesis**
PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATORS: **Suzanne Lee Johnson**
COLLEGE/DIVISION: **College of Education & Psychology**
DEPARTMENT: **Educational Leadership & Research**
FUNDING AGENCY: **N/A**
HSPRC COMMITTEE ACTION: **Expedited Review Approval**
PERIOD OF APPROVAL: **06/23/08 to 06/22/09**

Lawrence A. Hosman

Lawrence A. Hosman, Ph.D.
HSPRC Chair

6-26-08
Date

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