An Instrumental Case Study on Declining Enrollment Conditions for an Associate of Arts in Early Childhood Degree Program Within a Private University

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An Instrumental Case Study on Declining Enrollment Conditions for an Associate of Arts in Early Childhood Degree Program Within a Private University

by
Alcee L. Hastings, II

An Applied Dissertation Submitted to the Abraham S. Fischler School of Education in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Education

Nova Southeastern University
2014
Approval Page

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Acknowledgments

I would like to thank my dissertation chair, Dr. Elizabeth Brennan, for her guidance, knowledge, and dedication toward assisting me in achieving the goal of completing my dissertation. It has been a privilege to work with her on this project. A special thank you to Jill Woolf and Joan Nigen for their love and support. I would also like to thank my Mom and Dad for their support and love throughout this dissertation process. My mom has been a great source of inspiration and motivation all of the time. Finally, I greatly appreciate the Abraham S. Fischler School of Education family for its commitment to me and the doctoral students in the program. In loving memory of my Aunt Rachel Horton and Grandma Mildred Hastings.
Abstract

An Instrumental Case Study on Declining Enrollment Conditions for an Associate of Arts in Early Childhood Degree Program Within a Private University. Alcee L. Hastings, II, 2014: Applied Dissertation, Nova Southeastern University, Abraham S. Fischler School of Education. ERIC Descriptors: Declining Enrollment, Distance Education, Early Childhood Education, Recruiting

This study addresses the declining enrollment conditions for an Associate of Arts Program at a private university. The problem this dissertation will address involves a need for increasing enrollment in the Associate of Arts (AA) in Early Childhood Education. The information about the program is currently not reaching the targeted population in order to raise awareness and in turn increase the enrollment in the program. The purpose of this project is to enable the enrollment service representatives, with the aid of their knowledge of recruiting the potential student population and information about the Associate of Arts in Early Childhood Education Degree (AA/ECE). The enrollment services representatives should be able to recruit and enroll new students in the program. The recommendations to effect dramatic enrollment changes in the program consist of the following: registration initiatives designed to focus on prospective students interested in the program, such as, recruiting calls from staff and offering direct assistance with registration, the development of a new database specially targeting prospective students, and a marketing and advertising campaign using traditional and social media to find new applicants. It also seeks to assess the impact the marketing and recruiting training will have on the staff and on the AA/ECE program.
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Chapter 1: Introduction

It is the intent of the researcher through this study to examine, analyze, synthesize, and evaluate the enrollment and admissions procedures associated with a degree program at a private university. The program is the Associate Arts Degree Program with an emphasis in Early Childhood Education (AA/ECE). The courses and learning experiences for the degree are presented by means of online delivery only. The researcher will examine and explore the existing enrollment conditions with a focus on the current recruiting process in order to enhance recruiting efforts and to make recommendations for improving enrollment.

A goal of the early childhood program at the target institution is to increase student enrollment and to enhance the quality of instruction. According to Ackerman (2004),

An institution’s ability to offer classes in the field of early childhood education should help toward producing an advanced skilled labor pool in the field. In order to become a qualified teacher it does not only require obtaining a college degree and meeting specific objectives. Basically, the first criteria entail intense training in relevant studies and modern day teaching practices that meet current requirements. (p. 13)

Staff advancement is an important subject in early care and learning structures. A subtle mechanism of research has been established pertaining to the connection with early childhood teacher education, training experiences, and classroom practices. Researchers presently concentrating on this capacity of importance have specified a significance in assignments and detailed preparation in the region of youth progress and early education child care, but have not made any relevant input in professional standards or teaching methods (Bordin, Machida, & Varnell, 2000).

Another milestone in the AA/ECE program would be to work to establish a
national program that will meet the standards of nationwide regulation aimed at Head Start and other early educational entities that get government resources and funding for programs. This mandated legislation (Head Start Act, 42 U.S.C. 981, 1998) stated that by September 30, 2003, at a minimum, half of all Head Start teachers in center-based programs must have an associate, baccalaureate, or advanced degree in early childhood education or a degree in a related field, with preschool teacher experience. In Florida, the solitary standard for caring for early childhood students is an age stipulation. Specifically, it is required that these early childhood educators be at least 18 years old. Detailed preparation and instruction are vital to the requirement of excellent service (Dwyer, Chait, & Mckee, 2000). Politicians started debating teacher qualifications in 2002 as part of the Voluntary Universal Prekindergarten legislation. Basically, there is still room for research to decide to the overall accessibility of early childhood education, the process of how it is delivered, who should receive it, and whether or not the required courses are going to be equivalent to a college degree (Birken, 2004).

**Statement of the Problem**

The problem this dissertation addresses is a need for understanding and then, respond to enrollment goals in the AA/ECE program. Information about the program is not reaching the targeted population, and they are not responding and enrolling as expected. This lack of awareness has caused lower than ideal enrollment in the program. According to the Office of Institutional Effectiveness, there have not been any increases in cluster sites for this program. The cluster sites are in various locations throughout the state of Florida in order to allow for outreach in the program. It is beneficial to offer the program to students throughout the state. At this time, there is only one site in the state of
Florida (2012). This site is located on the main campus of a university in south Florida. Private 2-year colleges are more expensive, with net tuition (that is, published tuition minus financial aid) exceeding that of public 2-year colleges by more than $4,000 in the 1995–1996 academic year in national comparisons (Bailey, Badway, & Gumport, 2002).

According to Rosenbaum, Amen, and Person (2006), surprisingly, private colleges do not draw students from more advantaged backgrounds. In part, this is because they aggressively use state and federal funding for students. Analyses of national data (NELS) find that public and private 2-year colleges enroll students who are not significantly different in test scores or grades, SES background, or in a wide range of other attributes (Stephan & Rosenbaum, 2006).

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this project was to provide the enrollment service representatives, with the aid of their knowledge of the potential student population, with detailed program information and marketing tools to better serve potential student candidates for the AA/ECE program. The current enrollment conditions are well below the expected enrollment goals. At the present time, there are only 20 students enrolled in the program. The goal for enrollment is to have approximately 75 students per term. The recommendations to effect dramatic enrollment changes in the program consist of the following: registration initiatives designed to focus on prospective students interested in the program, that is, recruiting calls from staff and offering direct assistance with registration; the development of a new database specially targeting prospective students; and a marketing and advertising campaign using traditional and social media to find new applicants. The recommendations also seek to assess the impact the marketing and
recruiting training will have on the staff and on the AA/ECE program. Providing the staff with the knowledge and the resources of this prospective population and having them disseminate marketing materials in a strategic manner should have a positive impact on student enrollment in the school of education. Obtaining a feasible marketing budget to ensure that there will be materials to distribute to the appropriate prospective audiences is critical. Training and learning interventions could be created to increase enrollment in the AA program. An advising and recruitment team can implement the necessary steps regarding increasing enrollment in the program. They could address misconceptions and incorrect information, as well as facilitate a dialogue that will include individuals interested in contributing to the program’s outcomes. Additionally, a new team could be assembled to address recruiting issues specifically, and they could be using a new database of prospective students that could be designed by the technology team at the school.

The intervention strategies that can be planned to increase enrollment in this program initially begin with equipping the staff with adequate resources so that they are able to overcome insufficient directives critical to the program. In this case, that would be the enrollment services representatives in the Office of Student Services at the school. Second, enhancing their communication skills and opening a dialogue would be essential when they are recruiting and promoting the program. Third, empowering the enrollment services representatives to play an active role in any of the curriculum changes or updates, faculty additions, research developments, and any marketing campaigns which are going to be conducted regarding the program vis-à-vis through the director or marketing associate are also essential.
Ultimately, the outcomes that the researcher hopes to achieve include specific understanding and explanations of the current recruitment and enrollment conditions so that increased enrollment and awareness about the degree offerings and its capabilities toward improving the child care providers who choose this career pathway can be applied to solutions. Furthermore, achieving enrollment success with this program hinges upon human capital support at every level of the organization. The success of these programs hinges on the support it receives from the staff, as well as their overall commitment. The results of this study will have a significant impact on enrollment conditions for students. It will also assist the administration in making effective decisions regarding enrollment at the University.

**Phenomenon of Interest**

One of the key elements in strategically marketing the AA/ECE program is to establish a leader who can implement reasonable and obtainable goals. There is evidence that suggests teachers with BA degrees have more success in the classroom than those without the degree. It is imperative to point this out to prospective students without diminishing their self-esteem because they have not obtained a BA degree as of yet. Recruiters should be sensitive to the concerns and questions of prospective students and should be able to communicate clearly and honestly with a student about the policy changes and legislation that will affect teachers in the field of early childhood education. It is important that teachers understand that these policy changes are going to benefit their profession and that it is imperative that they obtain the appropriate credentialing for themselves. Furthermore, it is critical to be able to efficiently meet the needs of these prospective students with programs that are affordable and conducive to their work
schedules. This can be established by conducting some sort of informal poll as to the most feasible way for these teachers to achieve these goals and continue to be successful in the profession.

**Background and Justification**

The clear vision and unique design of a program may become an entirely new undertaking that will empower employees with complete autonomy in the design, creation, and implementation of the AA/ECE program, hopefully evoking a sense of pride. In other words, the belief in the program and the fact that the leadership is empowering the employees is an excellent approach for a new degree program at the university level.

The AA/ECE program faces several hindrances, which can be overcome with a sound communication component through a transformational period that is clearly defined in a fundamental way. There are various tools of communication to share success such as newsletters, email blasts, webinars, trainings, and seminars for administrators and employees. It is important that there is not an overstated or saturated approach with promoting success about a new program. Basically, to maintain a high level of enthusiasm to work on the project, employees have to sense a genuine and straightforward managerial style. Empowering the staff to develop motivation and pride for a project is an essential aspect to retain buy-in and to sustain high morale. A strong leadership model is crucial to being able to achieve these goals and objectives. Administrators must know the college or university powers want to give their employees the ability to strive in the workplace without any negative or deceptive practices from management.
Qualitative Research Approach

This was a good approach for this study because the qualitative research approach provides the necessary components to analyze and examine the recruiting and enrollment best practices to improve the program. The program has to be refined and evaluated properly to improve the recruiting opportunities to garner new students.

Relevance to the Discipline

The phenomenon was relevant to the discipline based on the need to recruit students in that it will advance the profession of early childhood education. The current field of workers does not generally seek to advance their educational goals. A recruiting model that can show the students the relevance of advancing their educational goals provides better career opportunities in the future.

Deficiencies in the Evidence

The area that needed to be addressed was the increasing of the enrollment of students in the early childhood program at the University. Deficiencies exist in this area due to the targeted population not being accessed by proper marketing and the fact that many child care providers do not choose to advance their education because of an inability to pay for classes.

Audience

The audiences that benefit from increasing enrollment in the program are the daycare workers and childcare providers. Additionally, the children whom these individuals teach benefit as well because the skill level of the workers improves with their educational advances in the field.
Definitions of Terms

For the purpose of this proposed research project, the following terms are defined:

**The Associate of Arts degree program with emphasis in Early Childhood Education (AA/ECE).** The AA/ECE is an online professional training program. Its central goal is to prepare competent early childhood educators. The AA degree program is designed to meet the following goals:

1. Offer entry-level college training for students in early childhood education.
2. Provide opportunities for students to build knowledge and skills required to work with children, families, and communities.
3. Provide effective professional development content linking theory and practice.
4. Facilitate distance learning college-level experiences for individuals working in the field.
5. Provide accessible professional development opportunities and support for students moving up the early childhood education career ladder.

**Associate of Arts advising/recruitment team.** An associate of arts advising/recruitment team is an advising team within the Office of Enrollment Services prepared to advise, counsel, and inform prospective students from inquiry to making an application to the program. Primarily, this group was formed by the Provost’s Council to increase enrollment at the school division.

**Bachelor of Arts degree (BA).** A bachelor’s degree is a degree that is awarded after 4 years of education at a 4-year college or university.
Chapter 2: Review of Related Literature

Rationale

The workplace is constantly evolving and developing innovative practices in the field of early childhood education. There are substantial disparities in the personnel and the student population who chose to enter this field of study. Due to the 1998 Head Start Act, 50% of Head Start teachers were required to attain the minimum of an associate’s degree by 2003. Indeed, it is possible that the Head Start Act is responsible for an increased number of students who have, in fact, signed up for class in these various 2-year programs. The program seems to be very accessible to students taking early childhood classes; however, implementing improved educational standards might demonstrate as being arduous for pupils, faculty, as well as community colleges and 4-year colleges. The 1998 Head Start Act and the possibility of more qualified teachers through voluntary universal pre-kindergarten in Florida presents to faculty and staff a strong desire to create alternative forms of education, such as distance education programs and computer-based educational opportunities (Birken, 2004).

A certain level of commitment and dedication at the University is essential for meeting the needs of an ever-changing population. The potential student population must be targeted for a specialized instructional delivery of this degree initiative. The leadership at the school recognized this in formulating the program in the beginning—that there would be a need to form partnerships with organizations currently providing training and development for the degree program (i.e., the AA/ECE program).

Florida is a state with an immeasurably different populace of characters. This proposes the element of diversity in multicultural settings and requires that institutions of
higher education create bilingual opportunities for the families and children who reside in Florida. Early childhood educators are equally as diverse as the families and children whom they teach. There are a vast number of racial backgrounds and ethnic demographics within this teaching realm. The persons in the latest research did not suggest that cultural diversity of faculty was a major responsibility; however, different research that focused on diversity constantly recommended that racial and ethnic contacts are essential to proficient development of young learners (Early & Winton, 2001).

The Institute for Higher Education (IHE) representatives purported the subjects of staff development (recruitment and retention) and compensation as factors hindering Florida IHE early childhood faculty. In the critical role of an individual being both an early childhood provider and a professional who trains childhood teachers, IHE early childhood faculty definitely comprehend the ultimate forces at work of the early childhood structure and can suggest respected awareness to policy and stakeholders (Early & Winton, 2001).

“A successful distance learning program must provide two key retention elements—quality student and faculty support services” (Recruitment Retention in Higher Education, 2002, p.4). A student will indeed achieve edification in obtaining a master’s degree which characterizes a practitioner style learner, who exhibits an ability to direct their education experience into suitable teaching practices and valuable learning capabilities. If lectures are deemed not to be effective in an online setting, it is up to the instructors to look for more interactive and activity involved courses that will enhance the students’ learning endeavor (Recruitment Retention in Higher Education, 2002, p. 5).

One of the main problems in recruiting at the graduate level is that there is no
delineated strategic action for each program. Additionally, there is no anticipated budget or gathering of data collected from the attended workshops and conferences. Basically, the degree programs send faculty members and recruiters to these seminars and conferences throughout the United States, which, on some occasions, will have booths or exhibit areas. Typically, these employees are going to the conferences to be presenters or to participate in the various activities. It is difficult for them to make time to recruit for these programs and, in some instances; they lack the skill or the knowledge to successfully recruit for their respective degree programs. Herein lays a major discrepancy in promoting and being able to increase the enrollment goals of a program. Ideally, university-based programs are improved based upon the success of individuals who have obtained degrees. This, in turn, leads to successful programs. It is important that the designed programs meet licensure requirements while consisting of multifaceted planning at the post-baccalaureate level and that university recruiters are aware of the knowledge a student has already obtained and the type of relevant skills he or she has attained in the profession (National Central Regional Educational Laboratory [NCREL], 1999, p. 10).

This type of university model is similar to that at the school of education. There can be successful recruiting efforts if the following procedures are enacted: (a) develop a strategic plan for recruiting with a reasonable budget; (b) conduct research on past conferences recruiting results; (c) explore new venues for recruitment (e.g., job fairs, chamber of commerce activities, workshops and conferences with recruiting modules, open houses, and relationships with school districts for recruitment purposes). According to Morrison (2004), students have to be viewed based on how business takes care of its paying customer with a business-like mentality. The University should not restrict
entrepreneurial ideals. It is important to note that peer marketing is a dynamic and fascinating tool that can be used to increase enrollment. Students will share valuable learning practices with their colleagues, ultimately recruiting prospective students and generating a strong desire to want to join this program of study.

Additionally, new technologies are another marketing approach used today. Emerging technologies, specifically the Internet in all its components, signifies another effective way to avoid the barriers of a bricks-and-mortar campus setting. With the Internet, recruiters will have various communication avenues, from online banner publicity to uniquely made college-oriented websites, to create and maintain a virtual on-campus manifestation. Rather than try to persuade students to go to off-campus storefronts, it is essential that this operative technique of finding out about the college program or service goes directly into their dorm rooms, libraries, study halls and cafeterias (Morrison, 2004).

A final aspect of improving recruitment is through the alumni databases. An awareness program to reach out to alumni has been developed in terms of reenergizing and reconnecting these educators, professionals, and community leaders back to the University. As noted by Albrighton and Thomas (2001), educating alumni is a process to be developed by universities. It can be an effective way to recruit from students who have had positive experiences with a college. The alumni are an extended family within a university community, and it is an open market of recruiters who do not have to be on staff. It is imperative that alumni are fully aware of the numerous university activities, both academically and socially, so that they will naturally serve as ambassadors of University out of a sense of pride and will sometimes feel inclined to lend financial
support to assist the current student body.

There are many challenges and future objectives required to design a recruiting and marketing strategy for the school. As supported by Albrighton and Thomas (2001), essentially, strong leadership that creates a clear action plan should transcend at all levels of the organization. This will ensure overall successful programs. While making valiant strides toward achieving, a high level of commitment must permeate the organization from a call center representative to an executive dean. Through such an encompassing dynamic approach, students’ needs will be smoothly met to provide a rewarding educational experience. The following issues will arise in exploring the future of the organization’s recruiting and marketing: (a) How can we avoid diminishing the quality of students while increasing their numbers through recruitment? (b) Can there be a universal recruitment plan instituted with a clear vision and mission for all graduate programs? (c) What are the major costs and concerns associated with the expansion of distance education in higher learning institutions?

One aspect of addressing these issues, according to Albrighton and Thomas (2001), is through building a strong alumni base. Alumni have a strong understanding of what the students need in order to be successful upon achieving their educational goals because they have lived the theory and practice after graduation. There is a mutual concern that alumni share with the university and the student body. Basically, they want to know that the degree which they earned continually presents a high standard and will continue to attract the sharpest and brightest minds in the field.

As evidenced from these brief conversations, Rothwell, Hohne, and King (2000) wrote,
Individuals can communicate the overall gist of the transformation from a trained-oriented to a performance-oriented approach in just a few short sentences. This process opens the door to schedule time to share the model and approach that are used to improve human performance. (p. 214)

One of the most important elements in conveying a clear vision is communication. It is like wanting to achieve or obtain something with a strong sense of purpose and commitment. Ironically, it can be difficult to achieve while creating an effective model with such high expectations.

The practical value of implementing this intervention is important because it provides the essential resources and logistics for improving human performance. Staff performance is critical to a seamless operating degree program.

It is critical that the roles of the individuals assigned to this project have a clear line of communication with the administration and support staff in order to foster the growth of these initiatives. Once it is recognized that the employees have an open-door policy and develop a comfort level about how to proceed with a project, this greatly improves the possibility of success. A lack of these clear lines of communication can lead to poor work performance and misguided direction as to what are the expectations from the administration.

The political, economic, and social dynamics are a paradigm shift, which cannot be measured or acquired by one individual, but consequently requires a complete buy-in and commitment in order to achieve the goal. This continuous training intervention will be an ongoing reorganization, redefinition, and restructuring of the program.

Overall, the vision and mission of this program is impressive due, in part, because of its ability to connect with nontraditional students who do not immediately possess the academic underpinning or foundation of a traditional post high school graduate and who
may have a mindset of advancing educationally.

One of the key philosophies being instituted from the University’s perspective at the school of education is the continuous design process of this organization to remain “ahead of the curve” in distance education while meeting the needs of students in a personalized and customer-friendly format. It is important that the staff, faculty, and students have a non-threatening and conducive learning environment at the organization ensuring the expansion and growth at this relatively young University. According to Galbraith (2002), to encompass the technique unremitting and fashionable, a system for altering project strategies is essential. But the precise frame of mind of supervisors is also necessary. School leaders must learn to ponder or to bring together as a verb, a dynamic verb.

This program can be assessed by the leadership of this institution, having a mindset to strive for recruiting and retaining students, albeit continually reshaping and rethinking the current tactics toward improving the quality of education students will receive. The argument of profit institutions compared with nonprofit institutions is relevant to today’s recruitment and retention efforts. The permeating opinions at profit-seeking institutions are that they are meeting students’ needs better than nonprofit institutions. Ruch (2002) stated that

Administrators at non-profit colleges and universities need to answer to many more stakeholders, making it harder for them to focus on students exclusively. Lack of clarity about who is the customer continues to be a fundamental challenge for many colleges and universities. (p. 3)

The AA/ECE program is recruiting from past registrants, prospective students as well as new leads from the Office of Fulfillment. It is the responsibility of individuals associated with the human resources development to provide a means so that employees
can learn how to react to a changing workplace. The key to the AA/ECE program is that employees understand that retaining and attracting these students depends largely on their being able to receive credit for their work or training experience. Due to the fact that these individuals work in modest-paying positions such as childcare, the cost of the program will be an enrollment issue. Progress can be achieved in three areas—student recruitment, solid retention efforts, and the current cost of the program (Groccia & Miller, 2005). It is vital that the staff does not have goals in recruiting that cannot be achieved within the program guidelines. The University has to provide adequate staff training in order to ensure goals are met without a loss of financial benefit and with a reduced amount of classroom activity. Getting over these hindrances is indeed a challenge, but developing staff training is a basic element for improving educational brilliance and staff efficiency.

In order to achieve a successful distance learning program, there are essentially two critical retention components, which are quality student and faculty support services (Recruitment& Retention in Higher Education, 2002).

Creating an innovative strategy in viewing higher education is an excellent method of advancing the developments in the value of programs being presented (Cornesky et al., 1990). It is vital toward solving these issues by creating a new viewpoint of the whole association. Employees and faculty members should be capable of resolving the difficulties which they may come across when the programs are applied. Espousing the fresh value idea comprises removing recurring; circumventing incessant errors that stipulate whether something is incorrect with a practice or those employees will be assigned work tasks that are outside their expertise level (Cornesky et al., 1990).
The designing and development of recruiting incentives and strategies needs to be clearly aligned with the mission and the vision of the University and the college to be successful in the 21st century of recruiting students to the school of education’s graduate programs profit. The researcher believes that the University, as well as the school of education, has been able to achieve success in this regard due in large part to the current leadership recognizing a need to create a market-development strategy in the recruitment of prospective students. “Distance learning technologies emphasize a strong educational propensity that is attainable to educators in the country” (The Journal of Marketing for Higher Education, 1997, p. 52). Precisely, this is what is happening at the University in the delivering of education in a non-traditional format convenient for some students.

**Theoretical Framework**

The theoretical framework of this study is based on best recruiting practices used by universities to increase enrollment. The aim of this paper is to explain conceptually how a prospective student can begin the program, effectively enroll, and have success in the program. It is the intent to provide a suitable recruitment process in which prospective students will choose this program to further their academic goals.

The theoretical framework of this study is based on two primary research-based models: Drucker’s business strategy and Ohmae’s 3C Model for business success (Ohmae, 2012). The 3C’s Model looks strategically at three factors necessary for business success: the customer, the competitors, and the corporation. Ohmae states that these three factors must be aligned and balanced for organizational success. As it relates to this study, the customer would be considered the potential candidates for program enrollment; the competitors would be other mechanisms, institutions, or ways in which childcare
givers can become certified or licensed; the corporation is the university target site.

Ohmae depicts the factors, which are required if an organization is to attain a competitive advantage, in a triangle with each factor at one of the three corners of the triangle.

Showing how to attain a competitive advantage is the purpose of this study.

Ohmae (2012) suggests that there are certain needs that arise from the customer end—needs of the potential students that affect their choices of academic programs and that are directly related to marketing of this product. These particular factors can actually be barriers to the potential success of enrollment, as they include core benefit or service and expected product. Based on these determined needs, schools of education offer a product—the teaching and learning experience for prospective candidates. Additionally, “to cater to their expectations and also to differentiate from competitors who tend to morph their products, corporations offer augmented products. Also, both the corporation and the competitors eventually tap the existence of potential products” (Ohmae, 2012, p. 2).

Drucker posits that *The Theory of the Business* (cited in Daly, 2009) focuses upon an organization’s mission, purpose, and goals based upon idea feasibility, proof of concept, and development of a business plan. These elements are reviewed and applied to business strategy in order to determine potential for growth prospects. The intent of this study is to recruit and enroll new students into a program that costs. Therefore, it is essential that if the University is to be successful in the recruitment process, it needs to know its program/product and re-invent a new theory—“as a set of assumptions about the future—a powerful new tool in the new/small business planning and advisory contexts” (Daly, 2009, p. 4). Drucker’s research states that “every practice rests on theory—even if
the practitioners themselves are unaware of it”—this method is a great way of getting the serious growth-minded entrepreneur to really think about what s/he is doing—and really think about what s/he is thinking!” (Daly, 2009, p. 4).

There are two assumptions that were made regarding enrolling new students in the program. The conceptual framework was summarized and analyzed for the best possible procedures from the data that have been collected. It was the intent of the researcher to conduct an extensive review of all the relevant recruiting methods and literature.

**Recruiting Challenges for the AA/ECE Program**

One of the challenges of recruiting in the 21st century is to strategize and know where and when to implement a program that will reach the prospective student in a non-traditional manner. The researcher was under the presumption that the school of education is excelling in this particular arena because of its sincere and conscious efforts to be a graduate school delivering quality education from a practitioner perspective, as well as being committed to servicing the communities in which the students work and live. This philosophy is an indirect means of recruiting and depicts a positive message to the general public. It also creates residual prospective contacts for the school of education.

The practical value of training the advisors is important because it provides the essential resources and logistics for improving human performance. Using a hands-on approach is more effective than a theoretical one. One of the key elements of the marketing strategy of the AA/ECE program involves establishing reasonable and obtainable goals for this program.

It is critical that the roles of the individuals assigned to this task have a clear line
of communication with the administration and support staff in order to foster the growth of this program. As noted in Gordon and Habley (2000),

Top-level leadership is important to operationalize the institutional mission and make a commitment to advising as a component of student success. Operationalizing a mission statement that includes an emphasis on advising means having organizational processes and structures in place that reward and recognize effective advising and that provide opportunities for advisors across campus to engage in dialogue about their advising roles. (p. 346)

The key to this recruitment plan is that employees understand that retaining and attracting these students depends largely on their knowledge of the program and their ability to convey this to the prospective students. It is a plan that the employees buy into because they would have input as to how it was designed and where and when it will be implemented. It is difficult to develop a plan without employee input because the employees will not understand the goals and objectives if they do not play a role into how it was designed. This is a system that will require administrators to show trust in their employees and model the appropriate leadership that will empower employees to market the program effectively. Employees have to be able to solve the problems that they may encounter when the programs are implemented.

It was the researcher’s task to analyze the practicalities of the mistakes of the new philosophy in order to ensure that the goals and objectives can be achieved. Examples were taken from actual employee experiences to illustrate the importance of understanding the degree programs within the organization. According to DiBella (2001), best practices of any workplace, especially in the postindustrial era, cultivate an ability that is imparted through other workers, thus augmenting team knowledge and thoughtfulness. Most occupations in the contemporary age involve some material handling or knowledge allocation. In both of these cases, how employees practice
knowledgeable material and novel expertise is characteristic of the whole education method that accompanies the task itself. It is vital that the AA/ECE advising and recruitment team defines any learning or knowledge deficiencies that may be specifically relevant to problems relating to the degree program. The administration has to be certain to train and develop faculty and staff properly so that the employees’ focus remains on task for the overall success of the program. The objective is to continually keep the advisors and recruitment teams abreast of the current trends and developing policies and procedures in the field of early childhood education.

The synthesis of having each of these components operating simultaneously is critical to creating a learning culture in which everyone can define their overall role in the process of completing their responsibilities. This is going to be accomplished through partnerships, existing students, technological advances, and academically sound programs meeting the needs of diverse audiences of student populations.

The communication lines between the Associate Arts office and the AA/ECE enrollment services representatives are critical for overall growth, and clear definition of program changes are necessary to avoid ineffective communication. In fact, there will be a human capital communication strategy employed to be able to reach out to prospective students in the AA/ECE program. This human capital campaign revolve around recruiting workshops, in-service training at daycare centers, and conducting seminars in the community to better educate them about the program. Furthermore, developing strong community ties is a way to enhance the branding of the program.

According to DiBella (2001), there are numerous organizations, tactics, and events that assist aiding groups and administrations to acquire knowledge. However,
effective action entails a readiness to perform, a commitment to scholarship, as well as the accessibility of possessions that can be beneficial to developing education investments (p. 85).

The communication has been improving after several meetings, which have been productive in forging toward the right direction. In order for an AA/ECE program to achieve successful enrollment increases, DiBella’s (2001) concepts for promoting learning, combined with a true commitment from employees, will ensure that conceptual changes have the potential of accomplishing change.

The AA/ECE program currently has a working list of approximately 29 pending applications and six fully admitted students. To establish and cultivate a relationship with these students, it is critical that this type of stewardship and formation of the team has a strong structure and vision of what needs to be performed.

**Relationship to the AA Program**

Leadership and the administration should examine the role of effective guidance at the school as it pertains to this program. The development of the doctoral advisors to improve customer service and increase enrollment in the AA/ECE degree program serves as the catalyst for this project.

This case study was designed to find out about the necessary recommendations needed for changing the performance of employees at the school as it pertains to this degree program. Based on the literature review and the prevailing theories on training and development improvements, the delivery method in this intervention will be transmitted through the online formats. These teams will act as conduits from their respective departments, and they will be introduced to the overall concepts of the AA/ECE program.
Background information on the development of the programs and the mission statement, goals, and objectives will be included. Additionally, an overall explanation of the design implementation and the projected plans in terms of growth potential for this program will be introduced.

The ability to recruit and enroll new students is the objective to meet the needs of each department. For example, the training for the academic advisors in the transfer of academic credits will focus on which credits will be accepted for the degree program. Part of their training will concentrate on the need for the advisors to completely understand how and which credits will apply to the various programs.

This training of the advisors is imperative to the overall program’s implementation and functionality. The formation of an AA/ECE advising and recruitment team is contingent upon the fact that the school of education should increase overall student enrollment. This program needs to attract a student who has the ability to transfer into a program with a substantial amount of the work already completed from either his or her current position or previous training. It is imperative that the departments have a working knowledge of how these degree programs will benefit from the prospective student.

Early care and education teacher preparation is much greater than K-12 because it serves both traditional and a nontraditional student clientele (Dukakis & Bellm, 2006).

The training and development for the marketing department will center on the best practices for attracting the professional and non-traditional students. This relates to the publications that are beneficial to the publications that are beneficial to advertising and what type of language and graphic arts would be appropriate. Throughout the training sessions employees will be encouraged to ask questions and provide feedback based on inquirie Colleges and universities sometimes offer courses that respond in a timely way to the needs of teachers in their surrounding communities. These institutions of higher education may enhance their
partnerships with teachers and community members to assess curriculum for how well it ‘accept[s] the children, their culture, their language, and their ways of knowing into the classroom. Early childhood educators might approach faculty at a local university or seek out a distance learning institution to suggest a course or workshop focusing on critical literacy, education and politics, or another area that will address current needs. (Meyer, 2007 p. 29)

It was a task for the researcher to analyze the practicalities of the mistakes of the new philosophy in order to ensure that the program can be achieved. Examples were taken from actual employee experiences to illustrate the importance of understanding the new initiatives within the organization.

It is essential for the leaders within the organization to improve staffing and development. Ambiguous trends and prospects should not be accepted (Cornesky et al., 1990). To accomplish an excellent presentation, communicating a strong and unswerving set of opportunities to individuals is essential. For the internal staff, it is important to institute a pure route in order to lessen mistakes, and the requirement for detailed guidelines will improve program objectives. On the other hand, unclear directions will exasperate personnel, and they eventually will not agree to the responsibilities and objectives (p. 33).

It is critical that this intervention addresses defining these specific problems as they relate to degree programs. The administration has to be certain to train and develop faculty and staff properly to avoid the frustrations of the employees so that their focus remains on task for the overall success of the programs.

The synthesis of having each one of these components simultaneously in sync is critical to creating an intervention in which everyone can define his or her overall role in completing the project. For example, the marketing plan for the AA/ECE program is a developing process attempting to achieve an overall goal of national notoriety. The entire
program has been created ranging all the way from developing marketing brochures to creating databases for existing AA/ECE teachers and candidates. Second, there has to be an established relationship with the early childhood organizations in terms of efforts toward having website links and possibilities of becoming an early childhood resource University, whereas teachers in the field can receive in-service training and support.

Cornesky et al. (1990) indicated that wanting a strong and precise direction supported with likelihood of success; the program is conceivable and should do well. Accommodating modification involves an ongoing commitment to dismiss archaic procedures and programs as well to advance different types (p.34).

With regard to the AA/ECE program, the objective is to create an initiative where the employees buy into the new concept. Additionally, employees should be able to understand the organization’s mission and vision for this program. Evolving an incentive program for employees who implement the mission and vision of the program should be something that enables the administrators to continue to foster growth and development.

Organizational transformations do not occur through announcements or formal programs. They occur through a genuine change in the organizational culture and belief in the programs through embedding new definitions in organizational processes and routines.

If the AA/ECE program is to endure and grow in efficiency, the marketing plan should clarify the existing marketing condition so that a college or a university can predict where it might be at the conclusion of a scheduled term; a measurement of the probable outcomes; a documentation of the resources required to conduct a well-positioned event; and an explanation of the activities that are to take place so that
execution of accountabilities can be allocated and observing established is in order to assess the accomplishment of anything that has been issued (Gibbs & Knapp, 2002, p. 5). Ideally, the students need to learn to become self-disciplined and motivated to be successful in this program.

The communication component of this program is critical for its overall growth, and a clear definition of roles is necessary in order to avoid ineffective communication. According to Cornesky et al. (1990), an institution of higher education has the ultimate obligation to attempt to provide service to the community at large to be able to meet its needs and community with it effectively and holistically. If an educational institution wishes to achieve the maximum potential of education goals, it is important to recognize its possibilities without taking advantage of all peripheral foundations of support (p. 37). In fact, this will be the human performance intervention that the AA/ECE program needs to be able to accomplish in order to make a valiant effort toward reaching the key stakeholders. It is important to know what the expectations of the key stakeholders are and how to meet the standards of the program.

The communication has been improving over several meetings, which have been productive in forging toward the right direction. Allowing the employees to suggest creative means of recruiting and developing a timeline to achieve the recruiting goals that the administration wants to establish is an important step to continue to improve the employee relationships with program administrators. A strong commitment from the administration shows the employees that the University has a mutual respect and interest in what they are able to accomplish with the program.

These ideas, combined with a true commitment from employees and faculty, will
potentially increase changes and attract the possibilities of accomplishing change. The present strategy to determine what type of learning pattern these students might have will be assessed through an electronic mail campaign. To establish and cultivate a relationship with these students, it is critical that this type of stewardship and formation of the coalition is established to build a strong foundation. Rosenbaum et al. (2006) stated

Our aim instead to compare private and public colleges that are highly similar in terms of the accredited occupational programs they offer, the students they enroll, and the geographic region and labor market they serve. At the same time, we seek to contrast how these colleagues use different procedures, to understand how these procedures operate, how students respond to them, and how students’ experiences and outcomes differ in comparable colleges using different procedures. (p.12)

The AA/ECE program needs a minimum push to become a transitional model for the current students toward matriculating in the field of education. The future recruitment for an AA/ECE program depends on employees reaching the optimum level in training and development as it pertains to transfer of credit for the current and prospective students.

What can become a reality of the AA/ECE program is to determine how it has impacted the enrollment of students in the undergraduate program at the University. In essence, it needs to remain a program with a continual pathway of enhancing and mastering the teaching craft to new attainable levels. According to Rosenbaum et al. (2006)” if a college advocates an uninterrupted track and a vibrant comprehension of the college’s mission and vision, students will be able to contact their preferred programs without any deterrents at all (4-year college or occupational institution), and students can matriculate successfully through the college experience” (p. 16).

It is important for students to establish a feasible timeline to be successful in
After graduating from school, the student needs to have a logical path into the career path and to be knowledge, in large part, because of the college experience. There is a strong propensity for students to attend community college in this program based on affordability and access to the school. This type of evidence bodes well for recruiting efforts in this particular program.

**Trends and Developments for the AA Program**

The current trends in the field of early childhood are persuading educators to obtain a college degree and expertise in the field. Head Start wants to issue mandates requiring classroom teachers to obtain an associate’s degree. Legislation is being drafted to require that Head Start teachers have bachelor’s degrees.

Certainly, there is a necessity for growing the standards of education for early child care workers; however, completing that goal is an arduous task. Basically, the concept of increasing qualifications is an intense discussion because it may not be feasible for these individuals. It has to be decided if administrators are going to support these advancements and pay early educators more so that they can afford the rising cost of college. The management has to make sure that these increased educational standards parallel current teacher compensation and that the proposition of going to college is not an unattainable goal for educators. Additionally, there needs to be some active surveys as to whether or not educators are interested in obtaining higher degrees. The motivation has to be in place so that the legislation of getting college-bound early childhood educators is not an ambitious or lofty proposal. It shows the desire by colleges and universities to adjust and transform their curriculum so that it is relevant to students’ needs and so that they can relate it to the field of study. Also, it is important that the curriculum is not
going to become outdated in the near future. Based on federal directives to intensify the labor force of cultivated early childhood educators in the classrooms, the University community must address and have the ability to create systems that will allow for diligent recruitment and to work closely with curriculum designers that attract prospective students to these programs. It may be a decent practice to offer community seminars to gauge the interest of students who will take these programs in the future (Bellm & Whitebook, 2003).

**Early Childhood Standards**

There have been recent demands by early childhood leaders and stakeholders to achieve higher qualifications for ECE teachers because the overwhelming belief is that the children will receive a better education. The goal is to link these qualifications with the proper resources in order to help staff in gaining access to higher education and ultimately completing their degree programs. This should result in higher wages and salaries upon these educational goals and achievements being obtained.

The trend is moving away from individuals with college degrees from a traditional college but at least having some college training, that is, at least greater than a high school diploma but less than a typical college degree from university. (Herzenberg, Price, & Bradley, 2005, p. 35)

There is a prevailing argument that higher qualifications will drive present daycare educators out of the workforce. There is also skepticism as to whether or not increasing standards in education can facilitate the subsequent demands of adding new teacher requirements. Furthermore, there are leaders and policymakers who question if this is an appropriate means of spending ECE funding received from the benefit of taxpayers. This is of particular concern because of so many children who need child care services and the ability to provide the necessary number of workers in the field. This ongoing debate to
determine what is the best way to meet young children’s needs and, at the same time, be certain to maintain a diverse ECE workforce with positive growth potential is critical to the future of transforming young children into a viable, stable profession.

The results from the recent studies have continued to fuel the debate in the ECE field about whether the effects of a BA degree are so minor or unpredictable that requiring it for working in the ECE field does not even seem relevant. It is difficult to measure the benefit to the classroom if a teacher has a BA degree or not. A quality teacher typically will thrive and excel in the environment.

It is rather odd that the available research has not made any significant progress toward resolving this issue, thus creating a critical void in how well the present-day intellects can update the important policy concerns and crucial decisions that exist today. The field has utilized a vast amount of time trying to determine the unfounded evidence, formulating views as a definitive answer on the topic of college-educated teachers being more capable and better educators than the teachers who have less formal training and education. Based upon the lack of evidence, policymakers have a difficult time arguing the professional wisdom of experienced teachers versus the teachers with a considerable amount of education who have yet to acquire the valuable teaching experiences in order to make them better suited for the classroom.

A realistic and method tactic to nurturing staff recommendations should dictate advanced ideals as well as comprise included stages and exploration and assessment that expands our comprehension of the extended-period remunerations of changed tactics to instructor’s edification and specialized progress. (Herzenberg et al., 2005, p. 35)

Several of the experts in the field have suggested that there is a need for conducting critical assessments of the quality of degree granting in early childhood
higher education programs. Obtaining knowledge about the quality of higher education degree programs may, in part, lead to meaningful insight about the program’s worthiness and what effects, if any, this has upon child outcomes in early care and education. Targeting higher education program quality is a vital step toward improving early childhood professional development. Additionally, recruiting efforts should be constructed upon the information received after individuals have successfully completed these programs so that future students can have a foundation to base upon entering college and before embarking on this endeavor all together.

Prospective students who choose to pursue a career in early childhood education must have a strong desire and willingness to work with young children. Developing strong communication is necessary because early childhood educators have to be able to communicate with their students and their parents. Most colleges and universities offer degree programs with a vast number of majors and concentrations. Some of the degrees that are offered are an associate of arts in early childhood, elementary education, early childhood education, preschool education, kindergarten education, and special education.

On a national basis, the majority of ECE teacher preparation takes place at the community college level, with limited programs at 4-year institutions. The amount of diversity within the ECE student population is large in comparison with the background of the faculty members.

Given that the presence of non-White faculty may lead to better preparation of culturally competent teachers and a more diverse pool of early childhood teachers, programs need to make recruitment of non-White faculty a priority. Early childhood teacher programs indicated that attracting and retaining ethnically and linguistically diverse faculty was a large challenge. (Maxwell, Lim, & Early, 2006, p. xx)

It is amazing that nearly a third of faculty members working with early childhood
education teacher preparation programs have very little experience working with children before kindergarten. Furthermore, many of them have no experience at all working with children. It is critical for these higher education institutions to hire enough faculty in order to have low faculty-to-student ratios; however, this is not the case because many of these universities do not hire full-time faculty. There is a need to improve these circumstances and to address what effects this may have upon the teacher education programs. It will create a hindrance in the structure and the ability to adequately train and educate the workforce in this field. Without more colleges and universities supporting these types of programs, there will not be any measureable gains and advancement of teachers pursuing a career in this field in the future. Most of the African American and Latino teachers with less than 4-year degrees serve children of low-income families and, often, live in the same communities. It can be a natural fit for them to remain in the field because it is a benefit for their environment. Additionally, they can receive mentoring and ongoing supervision from other members of the community who know the demographics very well.

To envision a bright and promising future for young children, highlighting the importance of nurturing, structured, age-appropriate early education as a solid foundation for lifelong learning, requires linking what is expected in terms of teacher competencies and education qualifications with the quality of the surroundings where teachers live and work to seek out new learning experiences. For nearly a century or more, there have been negative stigmas attributed to the low-wage earning potential of early childhood employment and what can be done to stem the tide, thus creating a large amount of turnover in the field and recruitment and retention problems seen as systemic and
indefinite aspects of the field.

Higher educational credentials and more specialized progress to advance presentation have been fundamentally unchanged from consideration to the labor situation or the compensation of educators; concerns too frequently have been assessed as unimportant pertaining to the needs of the students in the early childhood programs. (Whitebook & Ryan, 2011, p. 35)

Chapter Summary

Most of the research has been centered on how to educate the children and recognize the proper skills and education that are needed for teachers to establish a rewarding high-quality early childhood education. Most of the focus for the ECE programs has been on training and college-level coursework in order to enhance the workforce. This is a sound practice. Nevertheless, a limited amount of research has been conducted in the academic content or usefulness of an education in this field. Consequently, there has been some effective research on course offerings and what interests teachers have who are continuing their education at the college level. Some research has indicated that insignificant consideration about early childhood teacher curriculum specifically meeting the students’ needs based upon demographics has not been addressed. If the colleges were willing to enhance the curriculum in order to meet specific prospective students’ needs, there may be a renewed interest and a possible desire to enroll in classes. This clearly would require more hands-on work from faculty to survey, interview, and listen to the students in their respective communities. Obtaining this type of education would be invaluable to these students, and they would see the direct impact that it would have on the population that they serve.

The precedent-setting characteristic of this degree in education is due, in part, to the fact that the degrees were designed for individuals who already possess half of the
course work in order to complete these programs. These types of initiatives need to have a clear vision and mission in order to thrive in the 21st century of advanced degree programs. If the proper resources of leadership as well as subordinates develop a sense of synchronization these programs can develop and become implemented at the school of education. The leadership structure that exists within the organization clearly exhibits the ability to transcend these new programs into a reality. However, it will take a strong sense of cooperation, commitment, and communication for all the participants to elevate the school of education as an exemplary “ahead of the curve” model for others to follow.

**Research Questions**

In order to summarize the information at the school division, there is a need to assist in the overall improvement of the design and delivery format of this degree initiative. The following research questions will be examined:

1. What changes, additions, or omissions should be made to the structure for a recruiting program for the AA/ECE?
2. What would be the attributes and content of a universal recruitment plan?
3. How effective does the AA/ECE program meet area(s) of certification and state and Head Start standards?
4. What can be done to promote higher numbers of quality-level students in the recruitment process?
Chapter 3: Methodology

Introduction

An instrumental case study strategy was used in this proposed study of the AA/ECE program. A qualitative method of data collection is used for this study (transcription, review, and analysis of interview questionnaire results). Qualitative research comprises a number of methods of inquiry that support the understanding and significance of a social phenomenon. Qualitative research is predicated upon the assumption that reality is constructed by individuals interacting with their social environment (Merriam, 1998).

Research Design

“A case study is a detailed examination of a limited structure (e.g., activity, occasion, procedure, or participants) based on very encompassing data gathering” (Creswell, 2007). The case study approach is used to increase an in-depth understanding of the case under review rather than to simplify findings beyond the scope of the case. “However, the instrumental case study approach is appropriate when the case itself is examined as means of providing insight into a specific issue or to redraw a generalization” (Stake, 2000, p. 445).

This study lent itself to an instrumental case study because the item of interest was the perspective of prospective students’ college decisions rather than the case itself. A second reason that the instrumental case study approach was operative for this study was because it ameliorates the limitations of the study. A limitation of the study was that the sample was made up of 10 employees in a daycare center. The case study approach corrected for this limitation of only one daycare center being used, students’ decisions
about college are relevant, and their decision to increase their understanding in the field of education within the sample is closely related.

A Recruitment Guideline (see Appendix A) was used to determine the overall structure, format, and perceptions of the recruiting guidelines for the program. A determination needed to be made as to whether or not the new information about the degree programs will be viewed as insightful and useful for the employees participating in the sessions. This will be conducted through various methods.

The written assessments of staff and faculty regarding the program do exist as a resource should any problems occur.

If ambiguities remain in the assessment of the individual research, it is even less clear how to assess graduate research and educational quality at the program level. Probably the defining characteristic of a high quality graduate research program will derive from its value-added dimensions. Rather than simply measuring faculty productivity, this type of framework will necessarily require more attention to assessing key elements of departmental/programmatic culture and curricula, especially those that foster the types of student learning necessary for future career success. (Groccia & Miller, 2005, p.101)

**Population**

The population for this study was drawn mainly from teachers and teacher aides at an urban daycare center in the south Florida area. These teachers are deemed prospective to the university program based upon their strong desire to advance their education goals and to seek a college-level education in the form of an AA or BA degree. The participants were 10 African American female employees at this daycare center ranging in age from 18 to 35. They have all been employed with the center for over a year and fully intend to remain in the profession. The director of the program has informed the researcher of his or her intention to remain in the field of early childhood education.
Many prospective students learn about the program via their communities, advertising, or from attending conferences. It will be essential for each program to design databases for tracking names, addresses, contact numbers, and emails. This information can be obtained through the marketing department and should be accessible to the administration for purposes of tracking student enrollment. This information needed to be obtained and reviewed according to quarterly student terms at the school division. The participants were recruited based on their interest in obtaining and furthering their education at the university level.

**Informed Consent**

Completing the interview questionnaire poses minimal risk and no gain or benefit to the participant, as introduced to the potential participant in person, and as part of the actual interview questionnaire. The benefits of the research were explained as enhancing and improving the enrollment in the early childhood degree program at the University.

Participation for the survey questionnaire was solicited by directly visiting the daycare center and distributing it to the focus group in person. Subsequently, the researcher distributed the required informed consent forms. The confidentiality of both the identity of the participants and participant responses was described, along with the required researcher contact information. The participants were notified of the anonymity of their responses and the availability of the study results. The required information sent to the participants was written in a clear, specific, and simple manner so that the participants clearly comprehended what they were consenting to when agreeing to take the survey (Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative [CITI], 2000).
Participating in the focus group also posed minimal risk for the interview subjects. Once the group meeting was convened, the interviewer explained the informed consent process and provided a copy of the informed consent (see Appendix D). The subjects were asked to sign and date a signature form, their signatures representing consent to participate in the interview. Both the interviewer and the informed consent information reflected that the conversations held in the focus group would be recorded. However, no names were used in any of the research or in any portion of the transcripts of the interviews. The informed consent signature pages will be kept locked in a confidential location for the required amount of time before being destroyed.

**Instrument**

The first type of instrument used was a survey entitled a Survey for AA/ECE Program (see Appendix A). The survey was used to collect data that should be able to determine what level of interest a prospective student may have in beginning the program. The survey comprised 10 “Yes” or “No” type questions. The questions were basic in order to determine the best interests of the students. The 15-minute interview was administered by the researcher in the daycare center.

The answers collected from each interview were totaled by the researcher using a 100-point scale with 10 points assessed to each question. The idea was to obtain completed interviews that were not complicated and easy to complete, therefore developing a genuine rapport with these prospects of the program.

Student feedback and comments were tracked in a database and evaluated upon the completion of each semester right up until matriculation. This was a crucial intervention toward ensuring that the educational experience at the University was
rewarding for the students. The intervention should benefit the school of education because positive feedback should result in higher enrollment figures for the future. This undertaking was viewed by the administration as an independent element in the continuous enrollment increases within the division. According to Albrighton and Thomas (2001),

One-to one interviews are useful when there is a need to explore detailed experience of one individual, such as the process used by a major industrial company to allocate research funds to universities. Very often, though, the ‘added value’ of qualitative work lies in the interaction among respondent. (p. 25)

This survey should be distributed when addressing a group of prospective students to determine the overall awareness of these new degree initiatives and the student population to be served. Data collection and data analysis at such time will be acquired from continual training and development to enhance any new training modules using the previously trained employees as facilitators.

**Focus Group**

A second data collection procedure involved the use of a focus group. A focus group of three early childhood educators from a south Florida university daycare location were conducted to arrange for more comprehensive data for the study. The focus group consisted of a group interview with numerous subjects who were cognizant of the research subject and who were gathered for the purpose of contributing to the study (Gall Gall, & Borg, 2007). These educators were invited to participate in the focus group via direct contact through the researcher and the daycare director. The survey questions determined what the students’ experiences are like while teaching in the field of early childhood education. What did they expect to learn from being in the program? What knowledge did they feel that they would gain from enrolling in the program? What did
they think about the design and curriculum of the program? A convenient location and time for the focus group was identified. The meeting took place at the daycare center on the University site.

When the focus group was convened, the researcher acted as the interviewer. The interviewer explained the purpose of the focus group and what goals might be achieved when it is completed. The daycare employees were first asked to read and to sign an informed consent. After consent was received, the interviewer began recording the group conversation. The interviewer posed general statements and questions regarding the prospective student interview process and obtained the subjects’ educational experiences teasing out innovative ways to recruit prospective students to the program. For example, what were their feelings about the length of the program? Was there anything that they would like to comment on that was not covered in the interviewer’s questions?

Additionally, the interviewer inquired as to what the members of the focus group suggested could be done to enhance early childhood learning experiences and getting individuals interested in pursuing a career in early childhood.

**Data Collection and Analysis**

The survey for the AA/ECE program was used to determine the organization’s training and development needs. The survey for the AA/ECE program was designed in a scaled response and yes or no format. Due to the fact that the targeted population ranges from professional to nontraditional employees, the questions focused on cultural variations of employees as well as professional working knowledge to assess students’ needs.

Finally, the results of the survey should help with soliciting individuals who
exhibit a willingness to participate and learn more about this program. In essence, this survey should assist the administration in a positive manner with involving the employees to buy into the program, because ultimately this buy-in will result in an overall increase in human performance. Moreover, this concept is important because it relates to the growth of enrollment at the school in creating unique and diverse programs to meet the educational requests of prospective students.

The results of the survey were presented to prospective students at the daycare centers well as to the focus group of early childhood educators. All the information was strictly confidential. The completion time of this instrument was approximately 15 minutes. The scoring of the instrument was done on the basis of completing it entirely in order to receive the maximum score of 100. In essence, 10 points was counted for each response by the applicant. It was designed this way so that the survey would not be intimidating or threatening to the interested parties who agreed to participate in this study.

This process also had written components. The overview briefly described the background of the AA/ECE program including objectives, eligibility requirements, financial aid requirements, and information to assist prospective students.

To obtain the answers to Research Question 1, the researcher interviewed the prospective students and collected data from their responses. These responses were collected and analyzed to determine what level of interest these students may have had in the program. To obtain the answers to Research Question 2, the researcher used the literature review. To obtain the answers to Research Question 3, a series of questions were given to the focus group for its immediate and relevant feedback. To obtain the
answers to Research Question 4, the researcher used the interviews of the prospective students, the literature review, and the focus group.

Assumptions

Three assumptions were proposed for this research: (a) that the literature review examine leadership, training and development, communication skills, and the implementation of this degree initiative; (b) that the information disseminated with the staff will be significant and useful; and (c) that the team discussion format and use of effective leadership skills may positively impact the delivery of this program recruiting model.

Limitations

The survey questionnaire was written in a simple, straightforward manner, and the participants responded using a yes or no format. One limitation the researcher foresaw was that because he does not work at the daycare center in which the research was being conducted, the pursuit of research information may have been difficult to capture. Fortunately, obtaining information and working with daycare staff was an easy process. The researcher also hoped to receive enough responses from both sample populations, and a relatively equal amount of responses from both groups, so that research findings would be considered valid.

Validity and Reliability

Since this questionnaire was developed specifically for this research study, this researcher did not conduct validity and reliability tests. The researcher understands that reliability and validity are conceptualized as trustworthiness, rigor, and quality in a qualitative model. As noted by Chenail (2010),
Authors can also reflect back upon their earlier review of the literature and compare and contrast their results with the pertinent theories and relevant results from these previous studies. This portion construct of the discussion can conclude with the authors’ comments on the overall level of confidence they have in the trustworthiness or internal validity of the results counterbalanced with any limitations identified. Authors can then move and share any suggested implications for stakeholders, such as future studies for researchers to consider. (p. 8)

“Qualitative research uses a naturalistic approach that seeks to understand phenomena in context-specific settings, such as real world setting where the researcher does not attempt to manipulate the phenomenon of interest” (Patton, 2002, p. 39). This is the case in this study, which should produce results arrived at from a real world setting where the phenomenon of interest unfolds naturally. According to Golafshani (2003), “the credibility of a qualitative research study depends on the ability and effort of the researcher” (p. 600).
Chapter 4: Results

The purpose of this dissertation was to understand, explain, and make recommendations that could potentially increase enrollment for an Associate of Arts Program in Early Childhood Education (AA/ECE) at a private university. The current enrollment conditions are well below the expected enrollment goals. At the present time, there are only 17 students enrolled in the program for the winter term. The goal for enrollment is to have approximately 75 students per term. The recommendations from the program office are to effect dramatic enrollment change in the program. The University is concerned based upon the low enrollment in the program, which has impacted the school of education’s overall recruitment efforts. The recruitment efforts have consisted of the following: registration initiatives designed to focus on prospective students interested in the program, such as, recruiting calls from staff and offering direct assistance with registration; the development of a new database specially targeting prospective students; and a marketing and advertising campaign using traditional and social media to find new applicants in the field of education. For example, among the initiatives planned were student-centered webinars and developing a virtual network of daycare owners and operators who are committed to improving the educational experiences and opportunities of their daycare workers.

This survey was distributed to the group of prospective students to determine the overall awareness of these new degree initiatives and the student population to be served. Data collection and data analysis was acquired from continual training and development to enhance any new training modules used previously trained employees as facilitators.

The following four research questions were critical to this dissertation. The
research questions were based upon the low enrollment data compiled from the school of education’s budget department. The University has set forth recruitment goals and objectives in order to support increased enrollment as well as to provide a thorough, quality education to prospective students.

1. What changes, additions, or omissions should be made to the structure for a recruiting program for the AA/ECE?

2. What would be the attributes and content of a universal recruitment plan?

3. How effective does the AA/ECE program meet area(s) of certification and state and Head Start standards?

4. What can be done to promote higher numbers of quality-level students in the recruitment process?

The end result was based upon the focus group data that attempted to unearth answers to and explanations as to declining enrollment. Those findings could then be translated into a comprehensive and salient list of recommendations that the program administrators might use to turn around the extant enrollment conditions in the AA/ECE program.

**Research Question 1.** What changes, additions, or omissions should be made to the structure for a recruiting program for the AA/ECE?

Survey questions were used to glean responses from the daycare workers to determine their interest and desire to begin a program in early childhood education. A notable change that needs to occur in the recruiting area of the program is a concerted effort to reach more daycare centers in the urban areas where the program is not recognized. For example, when the survey question was posed about familiarity of the
program, only two daycare workers responded that they knew about the program. An additional recommended change is for the administration to utilize the staff at the University’s Office of Information and Technology because they created a database of prospective students who have expressed interest in the school of education. This type of structured recruiting system was created to improve enrollment at the school of education. Review of the data on prospective students was done by generating weekly reports which are disseminated to a team of administrative assistants who serve as recruiters for the various programs at the school of education. The recruiters target prospective students via email blasts and calling campaigns targeting prospective students who have completed all or some of the admissions process, but have not registered for classes. Prior to this system being used for recruiting, the school relied heavily on student word-of-mouth. Another recruiting tool has been to increase the television ads and billboards on major interstates and highways.

**Research Question 2.** What would be the attributes and content of a universal recruitment plan?

The survey questions that were designed to address the ideal of a universal recruitment plan were the survey questions that addressed the need for the prospective students to continue their education. For example, 70% of the students surveyed want to continue their education in the field of education. There is a strong propensity for students to attend college in this program based on affordability and access to the school. This type of evidence bodes well for recruiting efforts in this particular area. Another important aspect of a universal recruitment plan suggested from the survey was that all of the daycare workers said they would participate in training and development programs to
learn more about the AA/ECE degree program.

This is an ideal way to persuade educators to obtain a college degree and further expand their expertise in the field. Head Start wants to issue mandates requiring classroom teachers to obtain an associate’s degree. Legislation is being drafted to require Head Start teachers to have bachelor’s degree.

Research Question 3. How effective does the AA/ECE program meet area(s) of certification and state and Head Start standards?

The survey question that specifically addressed the area of certification was addressed to the participants as follows: Are you familiar with the AA/ECE standards teachers must have in pursuing certification? Of the 10 daycare workers surveyed no one answered “yes” to being familiar with the AA/ECE program standards teachers would have to have in pursuing certification. The AA/ECE program would assist students in meeting the area of certification on the state level. Additionally, the program would assist students in reaching the Head Start standard of obtaining a bachelor’s degree.

There is a prevailing argument that higher qualifications will drive present daycare educators out of the workforce. There is also skepticism as to whether or not increasing standards in education can facilitate the subsequent demands of adding new teacher requirements. Furthermore, there are leaders and policymakers who question whether or not this is an appropriate means of spending ECE funding received from taxpayers. This is of particular concern because so many children need child care services, yet there is a shortage of qualified daycare workers in the field. This is an ongoing debate: determining the best way to meet young children’s needs and, at the same time, be certain to maintain a diverse ECE workforce with positive growth.
potential.

**Research Question 4.** What can be done to promote higher numbers of quality-level students in the recruitment process?

Of the students surveyed about their interest in college, the following question was posed to the daycare workers: Are you interested in pursuing your education with this University? Of the 10 daycare workers surveyed, 7 answered “yes” to being interested in pursuing their education with the University. With 70% of the surveyed participants wanting to pursue their education at the University, this is a strong indicator in favor of recruitment. This is a high number of students who want to enter the program; however, the quality of the students has to be determined once they are active in the program. Another strong indicator of promoting higher numbers of students in the program was the result of the survey question that asked the students if they desired to continue their education on a college level? Of the 10 daycare workers surveyed, 7 answered “yes” to wanting to continue their education on a college level. Pursuing a college degree program appealed to 70% of those surveyed. Based on this high percentage of students, a pre-admissions interview could be conducted to assess the student’s quality level. One advantage to these prospective students would be that they are already active in the field of early childhood education and have a good understanding about the field.

**Survey Results**

The initial qualitative section addressed the results from the survey used in the daycare center to determine what level of interest the 10 participants had in the AA/ECE program (Appendix A).
The daycare workers for this proposed study were made up of teachers and teacher aides at an urban daycare center in the south Florida area. These teachers were deemed prospective students for the University program based upon their strong desire to advance their education goals and to seek a college-level education in the form of an AA or BA degree. The participants were 10 African American female employees at this daycare center ranging in age from 18 to 35. They have all been employed in the center for over a year and fully intend to remain in the profession. The director of the program informed the researcher of the participants’ intentions to remain in the field of early childhood education.

A total of 10 surveys were collected, resulting in a 100% (10 of 10) combined response rate. The surveys were analyzed in December 2013. The high rate of return was due to the director of the daycare center’s ability to gather the participants together for the researcher to conduct this study.

Survey Question 1. Are you familiar with the AA/ECE degree program?

Of the 10 daycare workers surveyed, 2 answered “yes” to being familiar with the AA/ECE program at the University. None of the remaining 8 participants (80%) were familiar with the program.

Survey Question 2. Are you aware that the students enrolling in this program generally work in their respective fields?

Of the 10 daycare workers surveyed, 2 answered “yes” to being aware that students enrolling in this program typically work in the field of early childhood education. None of the remaining 8 participants (80%) were aware of this dynamic.

Survey Question 3. Are you aware of the socioeconomic and cultural differences
in the AA/ECE program student population?

Of the 10 daycare workers surveyed, 1 answered “yes” to being aware of the socioeconomic and cultural differences in the AA/ECE programs student body. None of the remaining 9 participants (90%) were aware of this phenomenon.

**Survey Question 4.** Are you familiar with the AA/ECE standards teachers have to have to pursue certification?

Of the 10 daycare workers surveyed no one answered “yes” to being familiar with the AA/ECE program standards teachers would have to have to pursue certification.

**Survey Question 5.** Are you aware that each of these new degree programs is designed in a fast track educational format?

Of the 10 daycare workers surveyed, only 1 was aware of the fast track design of this program. None of the remaining 9 participants (90%) were aware of the University’s fast track matriculation dynamic in this program.

**Survey Question 6.** Would you participate in training and development programs to learn more about the AA/ECE degree program?

Of the 10 daycare workers surveyed, all (100%) answered “yes” to having a willingness to participate in training and development programs to learn more about the AA/ECE degree program.

**Survey Question 7.** Do you want to continue your education on a college level?

Of the 10 daycare workers surveyed, 7 (70%) answered “yes” to wanting to continue their education on a college level. None of the remaining 3 participants (30%) intended to continue their education.

**Survey Question 8.** Have you earned any college credits?
Of the 10 daycare workers surveyed, 4 answered “yes” to having earned college credits. Since 40% of the surveyed participants have earned college credits, this could prove to be an important factor in recruiting for the program. The school of education does accept transferred college credits from an accredited institution. If anyone of the four surveyed participants were to begin this program, an academic advisor would review their college transcripts to determine what credits could be transferred into the program.

**Survey Question 9.** Do you enjoy working in the field of early childhood education?

Of the 10 daycare workers surveyed, all (100%) answered “yes” to enjoying working in the field of early childhood education.

Survey Question 10: Are you interested in pursuing your education with this University?

Of the 10 daycare workers surveyed, 7 (70%) answered “yes” to being interested in pursuing their education with the University. Since 70% of the surveyed participants want to pursue their education at the University, this is an ideal opportunity to recruit these individuals into the program and increase enrollment. (See Appendix E.)

**Chapter Summary**

This chapter described data results applicable to the research questions presented throughout this chapter. The survey questions were restated and were followed by statistical analyses engaged to display the results for each research question and to provide the overall findings of the survey conducted at the daycare center. The graph in Figure 1 indicates the response percentages to each of the survey questions.
Figure 1. Daycare workers’ response percentages to survey questions.
Chapter 5: Discussion

Overview

The problem this dissertation addressed was a need for understanding and then, response to enrollment goals in the AA/ECE program. Information about the program was not reaching the targeted population, and they are not responding and enrolling as expected. This lack of awareness has caused a lower than ideal enrollment in the program. According to the Office of Institutional Effectiveness, there have not been any increases in cluster sites for this program. The cluster sites are in various locations throughout the state of Florida to allow for outreach in the program. It is beneficial to offer the program to students throughout the state. There was only one site in the state of Florida (2012). This site is located on the main campus of a university in south Florida. Private 2-year colleges are more expensive, with net tuition (that is, published tuition minus financial aid) exceeding that of public 2-year colleges by more than $4,000 in the 1995–1996 academic year in national comparisons (Bailey, Badway, & Gumport, 2002). Based upon the fact that all of the daycare workers in the studied sample enjoy working in the field of education, this presents an excellent opportunity to introduce the degree program at the University.

According to Rosenbaum et al. (2006), surprisingly, private colleges do not draw students from more advantaged backgrounds. In part, this is because they aggressively use state and federal funding for students. Analyses of national data (NELS) find that public and private 2-year colleges enroll students who are not significantly different in test scores or grades, SES background, or in a wide range of other attributes (Stephan & Rosenbaum, 2006).
This study lent itself to an instrumental case study because the item of interest is the perspective of prospective students’ college decisions rather than the case itself. A second reason that the instrumental case study approach was operative for this study is because it ameliorates the limitations of the study. A limitation of the study was that the sample was made up of 10 employees in a daycare center. The case study approach corrects for this limitation of only one daycare center being that was used, students’ decisions about college were relevant, and their decision to increase their understanding in the field of education within the sample was closely related.

The population for this study was drawn mainly from teachers and teacher aides at an urban daycare center in the south Florida area. These teachers were deemed prospective to the university program based upon their strong desire to advance their education goals and to seek a college-level education in the form of an AA or BA degree. The participants were 10 African American female employees at this daycare center ranging in age from 18 to 35. They have all been employed with the center for over a year and fully intend to remain in the profession. The director of the program informed the researcher of their intentions to remain in the field of early childhood education.

Many prospective students learn about the program via their communities, advertising, or from attending conferences. It will be essential for each program to design databases for tracking names, addresses, contact numbers, and emails. This information can be obtained through the marketing department and should be accessible to the administration for purposes of tracking student enrollment. Pacal (2007) recommended that “colleges and higher institutions try to cooperatively develop a degree program encompassing the ECE child development courses into a bachelor’s degree” (p. 229).
This information will need to be obtained and reviewed according to quarterly student terms at the school division. The participants will be recruited based on their interest in obtaining and furthering their education at the University level. Based upon the lack of familiarity with the AA/ECE program at the University, it is critical that a viable presence in the community be established in order to increase awareness about this program. This presents an excellent opportunity for the University to recruit these daycare workers into the AA/ECE program.

Most of the research has been centered on how to educate the children and recognize the proper skills and education that are needed for teachers to establish a rewarding high-quality early childhood education. Most of the focus for the ECE programs has been on training and college-level coursework in order to enhance the workforce. This is a sound practice. Nevertheless, a limited amount of research has been conducted in the academic content or usefulness of an education in this field.

Consequently, there has been some effective research on course offerings and what interests teachers have who are continuing their education at the college level. Some research has indicated that insignificant consideration about early childhood teacher curriculum specifically meeting the students’ needs based upon demographics has not been addressed. If the colleges were willing to enhance the curriculum in order to meet specific prospective students’ needs, there may be a renewed interest and a possible desire to enroll in classes. This clearly would require more hands-on work from faculty to survey, interview, and listen to the students in their respective communities. Obtaining this type of education would be invaluable to these students, and they would see the direct impact that it would have on the population that they serve.
The decision to conduct this study was based on the following research questions:

1. What changes, additions, or omissions should be made to the structure for a recruiting program for the AA/ECE degree program?
2. What would be the attributes and content of a universal recruitment plan?
3. How effective does the AA/ECE program meet area(s) of certification and state and Head Start standards?
4. What can be done to promote higher numbers of quality-level students in the recruitment process?

**Research Question 1.** What changes, additions, or omissions should be made to the structure for a recruiting program for the AA/ECE degree program?

This case study was designed to discover recommendations needed for changing the recruiting performance of employees at the school as it pertains to this degree program. Based on the literature review and the prevailing theories on training and development improvements, the delivery method in this recruitment initiative was transmitted through the online formats. The school of education student services teams acted as conduits from the department, and they were introduced to the overall concepts of the AA/ECE program. Background information on the development of the programs and the mission statement, goals, and objectives were included. Additionally, an overall explanation of the design implementation and the projected plans in terms of growth potential for this program was introduced.

**Research Question 2.** What would be the attributes and content of a universal recruitment plan?

All students want to have a reasonable timetable to attend a college program.
Upon completing school it is only logical for students to begin to pursue their educational goals and enhance their future in the field of early childhood education. All members of the early childhood profession need access to college programs that will present a curriculum suited to their educational needs. There is a strong propensity for students to attend college in this program based on affordability and access to the school. These types of objectives fare well for recruiting efforts in this particular program. Based upon results from the survey question that elicited participants’ opinions about continuing their education, it is critical that the school of education follow up with these daycare workers, seizing the opportunity to provide the training and development in which they expressed interest. Ultimately, providing this type of training workshop or seminar could lead to these individuals becoming students.

The latest movements in the field of early childhood education are strongly encouraging novice educators to obtain a college degree and gain expertise in the field. According to Lee and Hayden (2009),”focusing on developing early childhood programs is a heavy priority” (p. 33). The majority of early childhood education students come from a first-time-in-college generation. As noted by Nitecki (2012) many “nontraditional students that make up the vast population of early childhood educators, are indeed pursing the 2-year college associate of arts degrees as an effort to eventually proceed in order to obtain a 4-year degree” (p. 129).

**Research Question 3.** How effective does the AA/ECE program meet area(s) of certification and state and Head Start standards?

There is an ongoing debate that higher qualifications will persuade present daycare educators to leave the workforce. There is also growing skepticism as to whether
or not increasing standards in early childhood education can facilitate the subsequent demands of adding new teacher requirements. Furthermore, the powers that be and policymakers question whether or not this is an appropriate means of spending ECE funding received from taxpayers. As noted by Ignash and Slotnick (2007), ”one of the hardest tasks is including articulation agreements in teacher education programs that must adhere to state and national standards” (p. 60). This is of particular concern because so many children need child care services, and there needs to be the requisite number of certified workers in the field. This ongoing debate to determine what is the best way to meet young children’s needs and, at the same time, be certain to maintain a diverse ECE workforce with positive growth potential is critical to the future of transforming child care work into a viable, stable profession. Head Start wants to issue mandates requiring classroom teachers to obtain an associate’s degree. Legislation is being drafted to require that Head Start teachers receive a bachelor’s degree.

**Research Question 4.** What can be done to promote higher numbers of quality-level students in the recruitment process?

Most of the research has been centered on how to educate the children and recognize the proper skills and education that are needed for teachers to establish a rewarding high-quality early childhood education. Most of the focus for the ECE programs has been on training and college-level coursework in order to enhance the workforce. This is a sound practice. The ability to recruit and enroll new students was the critical goal and objective to meet the needs of the department as well as the University. For example, the training for the academic advisors in the transfer of academic credits was focused on which credits could be accepted for the degree program.
This training of the advisors was critical to the overall program’s implementation and functionality. The formation of an AA/ECE advising and recruitment team was contingent upon the fact that the school of education must increase overall student enrollment. This program needs to attract a student who has the ability to transfer into a program with a substantial amount of the work already completed from either his or her current position or previous training. Merging field-based experience into the first 2 years of an associate of arts program is critical because it underscores a student’s real passion and ability to be able to work in the classroom (Ignash & Slotnick, 2007, p. 62) It was important that the school of education staff had a working knowledge of how this degree program can and should be beneficial for the prospective student.

A limited amount of research has been conducted on the academic content or usefulness of an education in this field. Consequently, there has been some effective research on course offerings and what interests’ teachers have who are continuing their education at the college level. Some research has indicated that insignificant consideration about early childhood teacher curriculum specifically meeting the students’ needs based upon demographics has not been addressed. If the colleges were willing to enhance the curriculum in order to meet specific prospective students’ needs, there may be a renewed interest and a possible desire to enroll in classes. According to Ignash and Slotnick (2009), early childhood programs must include field experience hours for students in teacher education programs in order to determine if this is the proper career choice. Further, developing special associate’s degree programs for future teachers has to be a priority of state implementation (p. 63). This clearly would require more hands-on work from faculty to survey, interview, and listen to the students in their respective
communities. Obtaining this type of education would be invaluable to these students, and they would see the direct impact it would have on the population that they serve.

**Discussion of Findings**

The collection of surveys the researcher gathered from the daycare centers yielded positive feedback about the workers’ desires to begin a college program. The results from the surveys proved to be reliable, and the researcher can share this information with the program director in the hopes of recruiting new students for the AA/ECE program.

There is not that much current dialogue and information about what motivates early childhood daycare workers to pursue degrees in higher education. Halle and Forry (2006) have determined that there is a partnership between working professionals desire to go to college and the characteristics that account for their success in the classroom. This study focused on the recruitment of daycare workers to return to college and what might be the most effective and feasible means for these prospective students to obtain a college degree in this program. The results of the survey show that 70% of the participants want to pursue a college degree. These findings represent an ideal recruiting opportunity for the University to increase the enrollment in the AA/ECE program. This is a critical factor based on the fact that the program has been in existence since 2000 and still does not have significant name recognition in the community where it could best serve. Nontraditional adult learners have an internal desire to take courses in early childhood education as compared to students of a traditional age, 18 to 25, who view higher education as a means to completing career goals (Bye, Pushkar, & Conway 2007, p. 100).

Another important finding from the survey was that 100% of the surveyed
participants want to participate in a training and development program in early childhood education. These findings would suggest that more in-service training and workshops could be conducted at the University level. This would provide an indirect recruiting opportunity while training and educating these employees in the field of early childhood education. Based upon these results it is critical that the University conduct follow up sessions with these daycare workers and increase the chances to provide the training and development in which they interested. For example, Child Development Associate (CDA) certificates are being offered at the University, and the training and workshops opportunities could be extended to the daycare workers. Also, 40% of the daycare workers indicated that they had earned college credits. This could be a solid recruiting tool and could prove to be an important factor toward acquiring new students. With a little less than half of the daycare workers having completed some college, this is a good opportunity to encourage those individuals to reenter school. As noted by Ignash and Slotnick (2007), developing and sustaining clear pathways for future educators who started higher education at community colleges in the likelihood of transferring to a 4-college does not get pushed to the wayside. In other words, the leadership from K-12 to colleges and universities needs to be accessed often and adjusted accordingly to the national and state level teacher education standards. Based upon the fact that this program is offered online to meet the needs of working professionals; it is crucial that the prospective students become aware of the ability obtain their education through this program in a reasonable and expedited time.
Implications

Developing a solid recruiting plan for the AA/ECE program will help to increase the enrollment and provide the University with a viable option in this particular discipline. An implication is that the University should have some kind of recruitment strategy considering the teacher shortages that will exist in the future. According to Hussar and Bailey (2006) “The U.S. Department of Education has determined through research that the demand for teachers in the nation’s public school will increase to about four million by the year 2015”. There is a plethora of new teachers that will need training and educational advancements in higher education.

The implementation of a recruitment plan to target this population of daycare workers in order to increase enrollment in the AA/ECE program is a significant goal in continuing to advance the school of education’s overall recruitment efforts. The University can capitalize on these prospective students and enhance their reputation in the field of early childhood education as a leader in providing the necessary educational opportunities to the professionals in this field.

It certainly can be implied that in establishing a solid recruitment effort that targets the early childhood daycare workers, there are principles that should be recognized once a strategy is in place. Another implication is that the directors of daycare centers have strong influence in encouraging and promoting their staff to obtain college degrees. These directors must realize that once the daycare workers obtain an AA/ECE degree, they will want additional pay as well as greater career opportunities. The implication is that the University and the early childhood daycare professionals will serve as advocates and facilitators in assisting prospective students in achieving academic
goals. As well as facilitating these individuals with seeking and out new and exciting career opportunities in the field of early childhood education.

For the recruiting efforts to be successful there has to be support from the administration at the University. The researcher has the inclination to believe that the leadership at the school of education is committed to increasing enrollment in the AA/ECE program. Additionally, the faculty and staff have been able to receive the necessary training and information about the program so that the goals and objectives are clear. (Buysse & Wesley 2006) there is a strong need for faculty enhancements around the teacher education programs in general. It is important that the leadership in the school of education guide and assist staff to maintain a high level of enthusiasm and a strong work ethic ensuring that the AA/ECE program increases in size as well as maintaining its high level of quality education.

Limitations of the Study

The critical limitation in this research study was the development of the questionnaire that was given to the prospective students in a simple straightforward format. The prospective students in the study represent a group of African American females. The daycare centers in which the research participants work is located in an inner city in south Florida. This determined that the study was limited to a certain ethnic group and gender. However, it is noted that the researcher did not ask for a specific ethnic background in the questionnaire; the researcher was aware that this particular population is dominated by females and has a high propensity of minorities in the workforce. Also, the small sample size of two daycare centers was a major limitation as well. It is difficult to recruit daycare employees and conduct a survey due to the cost of the program and the
that they have limited time to discuss college aspirations during the course of the workday.

Another limitation was lack of diversity in gender and the level of education that the participants have achieved. The gender issue and lack of educational level persist in being ongoing issues in the field of early childhood education. There has to be a state and national level to push for more men to enter the field. The prospective students/daycare workers in this study were women; there were no male employees working in either of the daycare centers where the study was conducted.

Finally, a limitation concern in conducting my study was the amount of time and privacy that could be spent with each individual daycare worker because they were in the work setting and could not be pulled away from their general daycare work responsibilities easily. However, there still was eagerness by these prospective students to learn more about the degree program.

Recommendations for Further Research

It is my passion and desire to see that the recruiting measures to increase enrollment in associate of arts program are implemented at the University. I have personally been able to establish a relationship at these two respective daycare centers and have been able to recruit prospective students into the program. There has been a vast of amount of research conducted in the area of early childhood education to motivate early childhood educators to purse higher education and obtain a degree. The potential to increase the student population does exist in this particular field. For example, the National Association of Childcare Resource and Referral Association (NACCRAA, 2011) indicates that 20% of daycare center-based early child care workers and educators
and 43% of the teacher assistants had received only a high school diploma or even less. Furthermore, this research concluded that 47% of the early child care teachers and 45% of the teacher assistants has received some college training, but had not obtained a degree and only 33% of the teachers and 12% of the paraprofessionals had received any kind of college education. To enhance and contribute to further implications and strides in the area of recruitment and advance of college degree programs for early childhood educators, specific recommendations from this case study include the following suggestions:

1. Proceed with further research in a similar case study manner to prove or disprove the findings based upon this study.

2. Proceed to investigate detailed studies to determine the significance of the lack of early childhood programs that exist for teachers who wish to continue their education.

3. Conduct research to determine if legislative initiatives exist and if they have been able to accomplish the goals and standards to increase the amount of prospective students who might want to obtain degrees in higher education.

4. Determine if the state and national ideals in early childhood education are implementing the best practices to development of early care programs.

5. Delve into the associations between the history, culture, organizational structures, and mission and vision of early childhood associate of arts of programs.

6. Conduct a follow up study with the two daycare centers used in this study.

7. Establish interviews with the daycare workers and directors to determine if they still have an interest in the AA/ECE degree program. Determine if the current faculty can conduct workshops with these prospective students to engage in indirect recruiting.
measures which in fact could increase enrollment in the program.

8. Determine what measures and initiatives can be done to recruit more men into the field of early childhood education. A large percentage of early child care workers and educators are females and most of them are over the age of 25, signifying them as “adult learners” or nontraditional students” (National Association of Childcare Resource and Referral Agency, 2011)

9. Commence research into a wider investigative study to determine what the context, manner in which to proceed, and develop leadership seminars to decide what the necessary steps are to developing more cohesive and curriculum detailed programs in early childhood educations at the college level. According to LeMoine (2010),” early child care workforce data are obtained and developed by establishing a partnership with several agencies and higher education programs”.

10. Begin to establish a regional approach to determine the quality of early child care programs and the leadership that exists in the field of early child care education at the multi-state level.

11. Research whether or not the leadership models that exist in early child care education are theoretical or practically feasible to determine if the University can increase enrollment in the AA/ECE program.

12. Conduct a study to decide whether or not the early child care program curriculum is affordable and accessible to the early child care workers in the field of education. Furthermore, does the program provide the incentive to obtain a degree as a career advancing goal which is recognized at the state certification level?
Conclusion

This study explored the possibility of recruiting for the AA/ECE program at two daycare centers in the south Florida area. The determination of this investigation strongly indicated that the need and desire to establish a grass roots recruiting measure to market the program could be effective. The overall aspect the University has to consider to increase enrollment in the program is to determine a feasible way to entice students to want to enroll in the program. Based upon the current research that exists there is a need to develop a specialized associate of arts programs. As noted by Donald (2002) “who explained that categorized education is a field that can be linked to a vast amount of opportunities and range for educators” (p. 198) This is something that the University has already accomplished and should be an attractive tool in recruiting new student into the program. However, it is important to note that the University has to establish a discounted tuition based in large part because the program has to be and remain affordable for prospective students. According to Carney-Crompton and Tan (2002), “certain aspects of emotional backing, recognition, reinforcement, approval, and institutional support which includes financial support, were believed to be critical factors in the early child care workers’ decision to return to school or not”.

The research detailed in the study determined that the University and state have to establish leadership workshops and symposiums to ascertain how to recruit more teachers in the field of early childhood education. This study revealed that there is a need to establish community ties and market the program directly to daycare centers to promote the program. The researcher found that building strong relationships with the community was a benefit to increasing the awareness of the program and being able to access what
prospective students are expecting in order to return to school, essentially starting the program. When colleges and universities work cooperatively to develop a degree program that reflects the early childhood education curriculum the student participation rate should increase because it meets the state and national mandates that are required to remain a relevant player in the field of early childhood education.

Overall the AA/ECE at the University is structurally very sound and organized in terms of the curriculum and faculty. However, the recruiting strategies employed to increase enrollment have not been successful at this particular time. The researcher recommends creating a forum where local daycare operators are invited to the school of education to garner feedback as to the most viable approach the University can take to increase interest in the AA/ECE program. Firstly, this would establish a relationship with the local community and help the University to increase the awareness about the degree offering. Ultimately, the grassroots approach to increasing interest in this program is evident from the current research study; and it can be effective through the dedicated efforts of everyone who has a vested interest in making sure that this program is successful for the University and the students who enroll in the program.
References


National Association of Childcare Resource Referral Agency March 2011


Recruitment & Retention in Higher Education. (2002). *Two experts share two keys to online retention*. Volume 16 No. 5, 4.


Appendix A

Survey for AA/ECE Program
Survey for AA/ECE Program

1. Are you familiar with the AA/ECE degree program? Yes/No

2. Are you aware that the students enrolling in this program generally work in their respective fields? Yes/No

3. Are you aware of the socioeconomic and cultural differences in the AA/ECE program student population? Yes/No

4. Are you familiar with the AA/ECE standards teachers have in pursuing certification? Yes/No

5. Are you aware that each of these new degree programs is designed in a fast track educational format? Yes/ No

6. Would you participate in training and development programs to learn more about the AA/ECE degree program? Yes/No

7. Do you want to continue your education on a college level? Yes/No

8. Have you earned any college credits? Yes/No

9. Do you enjoy working in the field of early childhood education? Yes/No

10. Are you interested in pursuing your education with this university? Yes/No
Appendix B

AA/ECE Eligibility Requirements
**Associate of Arts Degree in Early Childhood Education**

The Associate of Arts degree in Early Childhood Education is a professional teacher preparation program aimed at preparing competent early childhood teachers. The degree has been designed by Nova Southeastern University to provide students with learning experiences through which they develop the knowledge and skills required for working with children, families, and communities while meeting the mandate of the Head Start Act.

**Who is eligible for the program?**

Early childhood educators who are currently working in the childcare profession.

**How does online instruction work?**

All courses will be delivered via the Internet (World Wide Web, email, chats, etc.). Online courses allow teachers to receive/submit coursework, interact with participants, and contact professors via the computer, at times and places where convenient.

**Admission requirements:**

1. Completed and signed application form for admission.
2. $50 nonrefundable fee,
3. Copy of high school transcript as proof of GED completion.

**Financial assistance:** Nova Southeastern University’s Office of Student Financial Assistance administers comprehensive federal, state, institutional, and private financial aid programs. Critical teacher shortage, forgivable loan programs, and reimbursement programs may also be available in some states.

**Contact information:** Laura Fuchs (954)262-8500
Appendix C

Recruitment Guidelines
Recruitment Guidelines

Listed below are the necessary steps to conduct a recruitment trip.

Prior to the trip

1. Registration forms for each of the conferences, workshops, or seminars should be completed and submitted to a supervisor for approval.
2. Complete itinerary of schedule should be forwarded to a supervisor via electronic mail or in writing 10 days prior to the trip.
3. Airline reservations should be made no less than 7 days prior to the trip. Contact the University’s travel office to arrange flight details and itinerary.
4. When making hotel reservations, check for lowest possible rates. Make reservations as early as possible to secure reasonable rates.
5. Reserve a rental car, if needed.

Preparing for the trip

1. Contact the marketing representatives to determine what materials to disseminate that will be germane to the particular conference, workshop, or seminar being attended.
2. Specify and prepare the number of brochures, pens, note pads, and other marketing items needed for the trip.
3. Prepare the follow-up cards with the metered stamps.
4. Reserve a laptop computer 10 days prior to departing for the trip.
5. Meet with program director(s) for debriefing purposes of specifics and/or new information to be conveyed on the trip.
During the trip

1. Acquire contacts on completed FGSEHS information sheet.

2. Upon the duration of the event, the recruiter should make notes regarding the event outcomes in a database of new existing students.

3. Place all receipts in the trip envelope (hotel, airline tickets, meals, taxi receipts, etc.)

Returning from the trip

1. If follow-up postcards have not been sent, prepare and send.

2. Distribute list of potential students to the appropriate program director(s).

3. Follow up with prospective students.

4. Using your notes from the day of the fair, update the recruitment database layout titled “Individual Trip Results.” Include in the trip comments of quality candidates, event organization, is it recommended that we continue following up with prospective leads and any other pertinent information. This layout will need to be continually updated to compile perspective leads and outcomes of potential students.

Recruiting Materials

1. Applications

2. Brochures

3. Business cards

4. Cellular phone

5. FGSEHS Contact Information Sheet

6. Employment information
7. Laptop computer
8. Maps
9. Marketing incentive items
10. Pens, pencils
11. Table cloth
Appendix D

Prospective Student Interview–Informed Consent
Prospective Student Interview – Informed Consent

*Dear colleague,*
Your participation in the survey for the AA/ECE Program and The Focus Group is part of a study I am conducting to complete my doctoral research through Nova Southeastern University.

**What is the study about?**
Working adults in a day center and educators are being interviewed regarding their interests and assessments of the Associate of Arts Degree Program. Your responses are particularly important due to your experiences in the early childhood education field.

**How long will the survey take?**
The survey and the focus group will take about 15 minutes to complete.

**By agreeing to participate…**
Your participation in this study is voluntary. The thoughts and views expressed in the group interview will be used to make specific recommendations for the university offering this program for new students. You have the right to refuse participation, withdraw from the group at any time, or opt not to respond to the survey questions, without penalty.

**Benefits and Risks…**
Please understand that while there may not be a direct benefit to you for participation in this study, you are providing valuable information and have the opportunity to provide input on the support of new students to this university. The risks associated with this study are minimal. If you have concerns regarding the risks/benefits of participating in this study, please contact the investigators and/or the university’s human research oversight board (the Institutional Review Board or IRB) at the numbers listed below.

**Cost and compensation…**
Please also understand that there is no cost and no compensation for your participation in this study. Again, your participation is completely voluntary.

**Written communication…**
The survey will be achieved from the written results in the survey. These written survey results will be made available to the researcher, the dissertation committee, the university review board. Once the survey results have been compiled, it will be placed on an external drive and erased from the hard drive of the computer. The external hard drive will be kept in a locked file cabinet. University policy states that all information should be kept for a minimum of 36 months after the conclusion of the study. After this time period, the external hard drive will be destroyed.

**Confidentiality…**
Your written consent is necessary for participation in this survey. However, no names will be reported in any summary or direct quotes made from this survey. No identifying
information (name, date of birth, work location) is necessary during the survey. Please refer to the previous information regarding confidentiality of written i.e. survey results.

The signature page containing your signature will remain confidential and in possession of the researcher. The signature pages will be stored in a locked file cabinet. University policy states that all information should be kept for a minimum of 36 months after the conclusion of the study. After this time period, the pages will be destroyed.

A summary of the results will be made available at the conclusion of the study should you desire to read them. Thank you in advance for your time, support, and cooperation.

Sincerely yours,

Alcee L. Hastings, II
Principal Investigator
7951 NW 7th Court.
Plantation, FL 33324
954-370-3196

Institutional Review Board
Nova Southeastern University
Office of Grants and Contracts
(954) 262-5369/Toll Free: 866-499-0790
IRB@nsu.nova.edu
Prospective Student Interview – Informed Consent
Signature Page

I, _______________________________ (please print first and last name) have read the

Prospective Student Interview – Informed Consent. I understand the information
contained in the document. Any question(s) I have about any of the information have
been answered to my satisfaction.

My signature below represents my understanding of the informed consent procedures
listed in “Prospective Student – Informed Consent”, and my agreement to participate
in this focus group.

______________________________
(signature)

______________________________
(printed first and last name)

______________________________
(contact information – email address or phone number)