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Rochelle Lea Gehrke

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The Dissertation Committee for Rochelle Lea Gehrke Certifies that this is the approved version of the following dissertation :

Dynamics Between the Academic Advisor and Student on Academic Probation Which Lead to Academic Success

Committee:

Marilyn C. Kameen, Supervisor

James P. Duncan

Norvell W. Northcutt

Michael W. Raney

James W. Vick

**Dynamics Between the Academic Advisor and Student on Probation
Which Lead to Academic Success**

by

Rochelle Lea Gehrke, B.S.; M.Ed.

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Dedication

This work is dedicated to my loving and supportive parents Wally and Sandi Gehrke and my POSSLQ Russ Davenport. Their encouragement, generosity, and patience helped me reach my goals and dreams. They have inspired and pushed me to be the best that I could be, to never give up on my aspiration, and to always work towards helping those that can often be overlooked. For that, I thank them with all of the love I have in my heart.

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Dynamics Between the Academic Advisor and Student on Academic Probation
Which Lead to Academic Success

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Rochelle Lea Gehrke, Ph.D.
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Supervisor: Marilyn C. Kameen

This qualitative study explores the relationship between an academic advisor and a student on academic probation. Although many scholars have repeatedly cited their findings that advising is important to the retention of students on probation, few have specifically examined how the relationship between the student and advisee plays out in the actual advising session. In addition, institutions of higher education typically require students on academic probation to meet with their advisor; however, the advisor does not have a set of guidelines to utilize to ensure academic success and retention of the student.

The purpose of this study is to explore the nature of how academic advisors impact the retention and academic success of students on academic probation. The style and dynamics of the advising session will be examined in relation to the response of the student. The principal questions of this study are: (1) Do advisors have an impact on the academic success of students on probation? (2) What is the nature of the relationship between the academic advisor and the student on probation? (3) How do the dynamics of the relationship relate to the success of the student on probation?

The researcher will interview students on academic probation and academic advisors who work with these probation students. All interviews will be audio-taped, transcribed verbatim, and analyzed according to Strauss and Corbin's (1998) grounded theory methodology. Constant comparative analysis will be used to identify patterns and categorize findings. The data will also be member-checked and peer reviewed for validity.

This study will make a significant contribution to the academic advising profession as well as scholarship in the field. By studying the relationship between the academic advisor and student on probation, a better understanding of the dynamics can be offered for advising practices and retention efforts.

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CHAPTER 1 – Introduction to the Study

OVERVIEW

As college students pursue their undergraduate degrees, they encounter many challenges and struggles. Not only are the undergraduate years a time of personal development and growth, they are also a time of academic advancement and learning. Almost every student will have occurrences of academic disappointment and struggle; however, the frequency and severity of this academic difficulty can determine the student's probable retention and graduation. Typically students with greater academic difficulties are placed on academic probation. Academic probation generally results when a student's cumulative grade point average (GPA) falls below a 2.0 on a 4.0 scale. Once a student is placed on academic probation, s/he increases the chance of not graduating and obtaining a bachelor's degree (Glennen, Farren, & Vowell, 1996a). How the student reacts and handles the probationary status is a major determinant in the student's future collegiate success (Kelley, 1996).

There are many resources available on a college campus to help a student succeed academically, especially once s/he is placed on academic probation. One of these resources is the academic advisor. Since students on academic probation are at a higher risk for attrition, they are often required to meet with their advisor. The academic advisor is a university employee who is available to help the student choose appropriate classes in order to complete the degree requirements, navigate the institution and its policies and procedures, locate necessary resources and assistance as needed, and help the student to have a successful overall collegiate experience. The advisor is also available to help a student explore his/her goals in relation to academic options. Although advisors are available for all students, many do not utilize their advisor's knowledge and experience until a time of crisis, like being placed on academic probation.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The academic advising process has been identified as the crucial link between students on probation and the institution, especially in the retention literature (Cook, 2001; Habley, 1981; Muskat, 1979). A student feels more integrated and connected with the institution when s/he has an institutional contact (Earl, 1987; Heisserer & Parette, 2002; Spanier, 2004). Tinto's (1975) foundational retention model confirms that academic integration is a primary factor in student retention. Advisors provide information and concern and typically become the institutional contact for the student on academic probation. Frequent and persistent interactions between the advisor and student on probation can produce motivation and accountability outcomes (Earl, 1988; Kelley, 1996; Ramirez & Evans, 1988). In addition, effective advisement produces students with personal goals that match their skills and interests.

Interestingly, although many scholars have repeatedly cited their findings that advising is important to retention for students on probation, few have specifically examined how the relationship between the student and advisor plays out in the actual advising session. In addition, there are no established guidelines or standards by which advisors and institutions of higher education (IHE) can ensure that they will obtain outcomes such as accountability, motivation, and goal achievement. IHE typically require students on academic probation to meet with their advisor, but the advisor does not generally have a set of guidelines to utilize in order to help ensure academic success and retention of the student.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study was to explore the nature of the relationship between academic advisors and students on probation, especially relating to retention and success of the students. The style and dynamics of the advising session were examined in relation to the response of the student. The researcher hoped to uncover guidelines or standards relating to how an advisor

should or should not assist a student on academic probation in achieving academic success. Academic success is defined as removal from academic probation, or depending on the severity of the low GPA, academic success may simply be the retention of the student with no academic dismissal or dropout.

Research Questions

The guiding questions of this study were: (1) Do advisors have an impact on the academic success of students on probation? (2) What is the nature of the relationship between the academic advisor and the student on probation? (3) How do the dynamics of the relationship relate to the success of the student on probation?

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Growing literature supports the positive effect that academic advisors can have on the success and retention of students on academic probation (Backhus, 1989; Glennen et al., 1996a; Habley, 1981; Janasiewicz, 1987; Kirk-Kuwaye & Nishida, 2001; Molina & Abelman, 2000; Ramirez & Evans, 1988). In addition, Crocket (1985) maintains that the academic advisement process is the cornerstone of student retention at IHE. Unfortunately, the literature is limited in its qualitative analyses. Effective advising has primarily been measured by retention percentages and graduation rates. The qualitative nature of the relationship between the advisor and student on probation has not been examined. In addition, there are no tested guidelines for advisors to call upon when working with students on probation. This study addresses that gap in the literature.

In addition, most studies are concerned with freshmen and the first year of college. Rarely is an emphasis placed on analyzing how to retain those on probation beyond the freshman year. Since most studies focus on the first-year experience, they also weigh multiple variables

including pre-college characteristics such as high school GPA, SAT scores, and parental education level. Those studies offer limited generalizability when it comes to non-freshmen. This study looks at multiple student scenarios and offers new findings which are more generalizable for undergraduate students at all levels.

The following foundational sections begin looking at students on academic probation, their situation personally and academically, and the academic advisor status in the schema. It defines the academic probation process and offers rationale for it. In addition, the following sections will illustrate and define academic probation students and how they obtained that status.

Academic Probationary Status

At most IHE, students are placed on academic probation when their cumulative GPA falls below a certain point, for example below a 2.0 on a 4.0 scale. On a 4.0 scale, a letter grade of a C is a 2.0 and considered average. Anything below the 2.0 is below average and may be considered failing. Kelley (1996) found that academic probation is usually necessitated following a pattern of poor performance which indicates that the student is having trouble in a wide variety of classes rather than a single course. Students on probation are notified of their academic standing and typically given conditions they must fulfill during this probationary time. The category of probation is a warning for students whose academic performance falls below institutional requirements of good standing (Higgins, 2003). When students are placed on academic probation, this is a warning that their academic progress is not satisfactory and that they should take steps to improve their academic performance in order to avoid dismissal from the university.

Reasons for Academic Probation

There are many reasons for placing students with a low GPA in a category called academic probation. Higher education's rationale for probation is: 1) It is used as a form of stimulus to encourage satisfactory student performance; 2) It is used to clearly inform a student of the gravity of performing substandard academic work; 3) It identifies individuals who are at risk for leaving the college to help them improve performance and stay in school (Kelley, 1996). When a student reaches the probationary level, s/he is in danger of not graduating, since typically IHE have a minimum GPA that is required for graduation. For a student's GPA to sink that low, it indicates the student is having troubles somewhere. Often it is assumed that these troubles are related to the student's grasp of the academic curriculum; however, personal and nonacademic issues may play a significant role too.

Institutional Procedure

The policies and procedures for probationary status at IHE may vary. The typical process involves notifying the student of his/her status via letter or email. This notification informs the student of the required procedures and potential repercussions. One typical requirement is for the student to immediately schedule an appointment with his/her academic advisor. The one-on-one meeting not only allows the student to learn what exactly academic probation entails, but the advisor can also ask the student about the specific causes leading to his/her probation. The advisor identifies on-campus resources such as professors, the student counseling service, and the academic learning/success center to help the student seek assistance towards academic improvement. Then the two cooperatively come up with a game plan for the student's overall success.

Risks of Probation

When a student is placed on academic probation, s/he is at risk in many ways. For example, students on financial aid and/or who play varsity sports are at risk of losing opportunities or eligibility when placed on academic probation as both financial aid and athletics usually have minimum GPA requirements. Similarly, students in special programs such as ROTC and provisional admissions programs may be at risk when their GPA begins to decline. Students on probation are generally performing academically below minimum standards; hence, these students are often forced to repeat classes which require additional expenses and time for that student and the institution. Students on probation are also at risk for not graduating because of the extra costs and time required in trying to raise the GPA to meet minimum requirements. One of the best teachers in life is experience; however, students on probation do not necessarily get the opportunity to learn from trial and error experiences because of the financial and time-related costs (Russell, 1981).

Students who do not pull their GPA out of the probationary parameters may ultimately be dismissed from the institution. Dismissal means a student cannot attend the institution for a specified time period. The exact timeframe and procedures are set by the individual institution and vary but, at a minimum, the student must not enroll in that particular institution for one semester. After the one semester, it depends on the IHE as to when and how the student may return.

Students on Academic Probation

There is not a single typical type of student on probation because decisions regarding academic probation and academic dismissal are based on the student's cumulative GPA. Since students on probation have no specific criteria except for their lagging academic performance, even those with strong academic backgrounds, high SATs, and strong study skills can be placed

on probation if their GPA falls below the boundary line. Characteristics such as race, culture, ethnicity, socioeconomic status (SES), parental education level, and high school performance are not necessarily predictors of a student falling into probationary status. One study, however, did find the incidence of unsatisfactory academic performance is greatest in highly technical majors (Ramirez & Evans, 1988). They also discovered probationary status most prevalent at the freshman and junior levels. Minority populations which are underrepresented in the university tend to be overrepresented in this category also. In addition, according to this study, non-native students are also overrepresented in the probation population (1988).

Reasons for Falling into Probation

A compilation of research identified the most frequently cited reasons for academic probation as a difficulty balancing class and work, insufficient financial aid, and inadequate student-faculty contact (Earl, 1988). Other issues contributing to students falling into probationary status are numerous. One institution spelled out the primary issues on their web site as: 1) The student is not prepared for college-level work. 2) S/he is ready for the classes but only for a minimal load of college-level classes at a time (3 or 4 max). 3) The student is ready for the classes but desperately needs time-management skills and better study skills. 4) S/he is majoring in a subject that is not enjoyed, possibly because their parents are "making" him/her enter that field. 5) The student may be dealing with serious family or other nonacademic issues that have taken him away from his studies (ex. caring for elderly or sick parents/grandparents, caring for younger siblings, or coping with a recent loss). 6) The student may be the only person holding the household or extended family together. 7) S/he is working 30 to 40 hours a week to pay for school. 8) S/he is struggling with emotional or psychological issues that interfere with academic performance and focus. 9) The student partied and goofed off too much. 10) S/he is simply lazy. 11) S/he is making common undergraduate errors in judgment (Siena College, 2003). The

student on probation may experience one or several of these issues. In addition, because of the nature and intensity of the collegiate instructional pace, when such interfering factors escalate and divert the student's attention to other priorities, s/he is seldom able to regain the lost time and work necessary to succeed (Ramirez & Evans, 1988). The struggle becomes a difficult climb for these students.

Talking with a student on probation may reveal an entire host of reasons as to why the student is struggling academically. As illustrated, there are many reasons regarding how and why a student may end up on academic probation; but it is necessary to understand that even bright students can fail (Garnett, 1990). Although some students have bright minds, they may be very bored with their academics. They may experience what Tinto (1987) calls "incongruence" or lack of fit with the institution. The institution may not be challenging and/or appealing to the particular student's needs and goals. Even students who are not exceptionally bright may fail a course because they are not interested in what is being taught. Exploring academic majors and career goals is important in helping these students on probation (Cruise, 2002).

Myth of Self-Reliance

Many students who find themselves on academic probation are not self-reliant and they do not self-select to seek out resources for assistance until it is too late. Many students show a disinclination to voluntarily seek assistance until academic recovery is impossible and academic probation is inevitable (Glennen, Farren, Vowell, & Black, 1989; Heerman & Maleki, 1994; Himmelstein, 1992). Even when students are viewed as self-directed because they have taken some initiative, the resources that are revealed and available still require the student to follow through independently. Advice, strategies, and tools that are offered also require the student's follow through (Kirk-Kuwaye & Nishida, 2001). The student's desire to take action is voluntary but requires initiative (Heerman & Maleki, 1994). Academic advising and institutional retention

efforts must acknowledge the myth of self-reliance and be proactive in seeking out the students who will not come forth on their own for help (Earl, 1988; Himmelstein, 1992). Students on academic probation have a hard time helping themselves in many ways, including seeking out assistance. Many student support services are designed based on the assumption that the student will self-identify their academic and developmental needs and then seek appropriate assistance (Holmes, 2002). These services are not necessarily helping the students whom they are seeking.

Mistaken Judgment by the Student

Another reason students often find themselves on academic probation is due to errors on their part. Common issues of mistaken judgments by students include: 1) enrolling in too many classes, especially while on or nearing academic probation; 2) not repeating courses in which a D or F grade was obtained; 3) attempting to drop a course after the deadline; 4) failing to resolve incomplete grades before the deadline; 5) taking advanced courses when not yet prepared; 6) taking courses based on the advice of a friend; 7) taking all early morning courses and; 8) meeting with academic or personal helpers too late (Russell, 1981). Lack of maturity, experience, and information are what hurts these students. Mistaken judgments typically involve a student who is not intentionally sabotaging his academic career; s/he is just uninformed and does not realize it. An academic advisor could inform and correct a student regarding similar issues, such as it is better to take fewer credit hours so the student is not spread so thin and can stay focused. Repeating a class in which the student scored poorly or failed involves institutional policies but is certainly something about which the student needs to inquire. Deadlines are important and can carry some severe repercussions when not followed. Incompletes turn into failing grades and drop classes do not, cannot go away. Preparation and knowledge are two keys to a student's academic success. When one or the other is diminished,

the student may struggle. All of these mistaken judgments could be rectified, if the student were to consult with his/her academic advisor.

Often students who wait too late to meet with their advisor find themselves in unfortunate situations such as academic probation. Advisors have knowledge based on working with multiple students and learning from the students' experiences. Advisors can relay the lessons learned by previous students to help other students not repeat similar problems. Advisors also are trained to have an understanding of the institutional policies and procedures. This information can help guide students through the university procedures and protocols, such as dropping or repeating a class. The advisors can utilize their knowledge of the institution to guide students towards their academic goals and pursuits; thus helping the students successfully reach their goal of degree attainment and graduation.

DEFINITION OF TERMS

For the purpose of this study, the subsequent terms are defined as follows:

Academic advising: The process, techniques, and strategies that provide assistance and information to students regarding their academic programs and career decisions.

Academic dismissal: A student is not allowed to return to the institution to attend classes for a specified time (for example, one long semester) after not meeting the minimal academic requirements set forth by the institution.

Academic probation: A student who does not earn at least a cumulative grade point average (GPA) of 2.0 on a 4.0 scale.

Academic success: For the purpose of this study, a student who has improved his/her GPA and will not face academic dismissal the following semester will define academic success.

At risk: The term at risk will be used with a verb (“are at risk…”).

Attrition: In this study, attrition refers to students who leave and discontinue their studies at an institution.

Dynamics: The characteristics, facets, and style that make it [academic advising relationship] unique.

Myth of Self-Reliance: A common misconception that asserts that all undergraduate students will have the foresight, know-how, and/or motivation to self-select and seek out assistance, especially before their need reaches a critical state.

Persistence: In this study, persistence refers to continuous enrollment at the institution with the goal of obtaining a degree.

Retention: For the purpose of this study, retention will refer to the student who stays/persists at the institution. S/he is not academically dismissed; s/he does not withdraw.

CONCLUSION

Obtaining an undergraduate degree may come with many multiple struggles and challenges. One of those challenges may be academic and lead to academic probation. Most IHE require students who are on academic probation to meet with an academic advisor for guidance and assistance in successfully continuing their undergraduate pursuit. Advisors provide knowledge and experience that can help a student navigate their educational career.

This study is looking at the link between students on probation and academic advisors. Of particular importance is uncovering whether advisors have an impact on the retention and academic success of students on probation. Tinto's (1975) foundational retention model highlights the importance of academic integration for students who persist at an institution. A university contact person such as an academic advisor can be essential to this academic integration and the student's retention.

A growing literature supports academic advisors as an effective system for attaining success and retention with students on academic probation (Abelman & Molina, 2001; Appleton, 1983; Austin, Cherney, Crowner, & Hill, 1997; Backhus, 1989; Cruise, 2002; Fuller, 1983; Habley, 1981; Kapraun Jr. & Coldren, 1982; Russell, 1981). However, a majority of the studies are quantitative and look primarily at students' first-year experiences. This study is qualitative in nature and explores the experiences of students at all years in their academic pursuit. Their common denominator is their academic probation status.

There are numerous reasons why a student may find him/herself on academic probation. In addition, the probation status can create consequences and risks that are barriers to attaining an undergraduate degree. In Chapter Two, the literature related to students on academic probation and academic advisors will be explored. In addition, academic advising styles, advising in relation to student retention, and theoretical retention models will be presented.

CHAPTER 2 – Related Literature

INTRODUCTION

A growing literature advocates the crucial role of academic advisors in developing and implementing unique strategies for student success and retention (Molina & Abelman, 2000). The positive impact of these advising interventions for students on probation has been well established (Garnett, 1990; Habley, 1981; Heerman & Maleki, 1994; Kelley, 1996; Molina & Abelman, 2000; Steinmiller & Steinmiller, 1991). Research on student retention and attrition suggests that contact with a significant person within an institution of higher education is a crucial factor in a student's decision to remain in college (Heisserer & Parette, 2002). Backhus's (1989) study found that a caring attitude by that faculty or staff person was the strongest positive correlate with persistence. The literature is primarily quantitative in nature and analyzes multiple variables when examining student retention success rates. Academic advising is customarily one of the variables under consideration. In most cases, the findings reveal that the advising process is vital to student success and campus retention.

The primary objective of a well-conceived and well-delivered advising service is to provide sound advice and guidance to students concerning academics and other student development outcomes. As a result, the outcome is often increased student retention for the institution (Backhus, 1989; Brookman, 1989; Habley, 1981). Forrest (1982) also points to the efficacy of academic advising for achieving general education objectives and increasing student persistence. Beal and Noel (1980) identified inadequate academic advising as the greatest barrier to student retention. Crocket (1978) argues that academic advising is an integral part of the higher education process which should ultimately help students maximize educational benefits.

The following section will highlight the role of academic advisors, especially when working with students on academic probation. It will also focus on how the advising style, particularly intrusive advising, plays a role in advising effectiveness. Retention, students on

probation, and advisors will be discussed collectively. Finally, appropriate retention models will be outlined.

ACADEMIC ADVISORS

Many students choose to go to college without a thorough exploration of how that experience will enable them to capitalize on their abilities toward the achievement of their personal life goals. Fortunately, academic advising plays a pivotal role in mediating the dissonances in this search for meaning in the educational environment of higher education (Habley, 1981). Quality academic advising provides the most significant mechanism through which students are able to clarify their educational goals and relate their goals to the collegiate experience. Because this relationship and opportunity exists, academic advisement is the critical link in student retention (Habley, 1981). Advisors express an active concern for the student's academic preparation and a willingness to assist him/her in exploring services and programs that can improve skills and motivate him/her to complete the degree.

Advisors also take an interest in students personally and approach them with an open and caring attitude (Upcraft & Kramer, 1995). The academic advising function consistently allows for interaction with each student throughout his/her academic career. In addition, properly delivered academic advising can be the most utilized student assistance, one-to-one service provided on any college campus (Habley, 1981). While the advisor offers assistance to the student in assessing and discussing the university academic program offerings in relation to the student's needs, s/he also helps the student explore his/her goals and abilities and how that matches the institution. In addition, the advisor aids the student in designing an academic program which capitalizes on the student's strengths and interests. Finally, the advisor must challenge the student to achieve at the highest level consistent with his/her abilities (1981).

Advisors are dedicated to guiding and helping students because they are responsible for bridging the collegiate reality gap that students may confront and for working with students as they seek to negotiate the confusing and sometimes frightening passages to complete their education and begin their careers (Yudof, 2003). Advisors can meet the needs of their students by encouraging a positive self-concept, by helping them get involved in the collegiate community, and by introducing them to student support services and other resources available (Spanier, 2004).

ADVISORS AND STUDENTS ON ACADEMIC PROBATION

When a student is put on academic probation, often the student is required to meet one-on-one with his/her academic advisor. Advisors are typically in the best position to assist students in making quality academic decisions. During the appointment the advisor has the opportunity to ask some key questions of the student, of which the primary one is, "Why did you do so poorly in your classes?" Most students will be very forthright when they answer the question; however, the advisor must then press further to discover if there might be specific factors negatively impacting the student's academic performance (Heisserer & Parette, 2002). The advisor can then uncover the real state of affairs and try to help him/her analyze the situation. For instance, some students may honestly not realize that working 30 hours a week can have a negative impact on their studies. Other students may not be aware that they can retake courses that they failed in order to replace the new grade or to average with the old grade towards their cumulative GPA. The advisor has the opportunity to ask the questions that spur exploration of the possibilities and potential problems. This sort of inquiry by the advisor is based on a more developmental or intrusive advising style. With increasing numbers of students who are at risk for academic failure, coupled with effective intervention approaches reported in

the literature, it is suggested that academic advisors should strive to be more intrusive in their interactions with student advisees (2002).

The research literature is increasingly affirming the crucial role of academic advisors in creating and employing unique strategies for student success, especially for students on academic probation (Garnett, 1990; Heerman & Maleki, 1994; Kelley, 1996; Molina & Abelman, 2000; Steinmiller & Steinmiller, 1991). As students on probation meet with their advisor, they begin to develop a greater understanding of their own academic needs and the requirements for the degree. The success plan that is corroborated involves working as a partnership to understand the causes of the current probation situation, to identify what needs to change, and to implement the plan (Frost, 1993; Higgins, 2003). Many academic advisors are trained to identify academic needs of their students and to identify adjustment and orientation problems early (Earl, 1988). At the same time, advisors are also imparting the knowledge and collective wisdom of previous students' experiences (Russell, 1981). The advisor must intercede and show the student his/her mistake in judgment and explain how a seemingly logical decision was not so logical (1981). Academic advising is intended to assist students in identifying the relationships between college courses and their own aspirations, to increase the opportunities for self-discovery, to clarify the purpose of higher education, to continually evaluate the educational process and its effect on each student, to utilize the resources of the college to implement plans that lead to academic success and life goals, and to strengthen the relationship between academic preparation and life after college (Muskat, 1979).

Quality academic advising plays a major part in the successful recruitment and retention of students (Heisserer & Parette, 2002). The single most important factor in advising is helping students to feel that they are cared for and valued by the institution (Heisserer & Parette, 2002). Advising's success towards retention stems from a very close interaction with the student and a certain aggressive persistence in establishing this interaction (Heerman & Maleki, 1994). Academic advising potentially can facilitate retention by stimulating a positive, personalized

relationship between student and advisor. Relationships evolve into interactions involving trust and honesty. A trusting student-advisor relationship is a vital step toward helping the student gain the confidence and the skills necessary to continue (Spanier, 2004). Although all academic and support services available on the campus are critical elements in a retention strategy, the academic advisement process has been called the cornerstone of students' retention (Crockett, 1985). Nevertheless, an institutional philosophy that highlights better student services throughout the entire campus will result in better retention overall (Beal, 1979).

ADVISING STYLES

The academic advising literature often discusses the competing advising methods or paradigms. The three most common approaches are prescriptive, developmental, and intrusive. Prescriptive advising believes that a student's performance follows a set prescribed curriculum. Developmental advising is generally a one-to-one (or small group) collaborative interaction between an advisor and a student. Whereas, intrusive advising draws value out of both prescriptive and developmental advising (Earl, 1988).

Prescriptive Method

The traditional advising scheme is known as the prescriptive method. It is a single-directional didactic activity where advisors limit their activities merely to providing information about courses, to explaining policies and procedures, and to ensuring that the student is enrolled in the appropriate courses (Broadbridge, 1996). Crookston (1972) identified prescriptive advising as the simple exchange of a student receiving answers to specific questions where the session is closely controlled by the advisor. It is an authority-based situation and provides little opportunity for the student to exercise any power. The result of this method is an advisor who is allowed to remain relatively uninvolved in the relationship (Broadbridge, 1996). In essence, this

approach is little more than an administrative function, concentrating on short-term rather than long-term goals with little active participation in actually developing the student and his/her career goals (1996).

Developmental Method

Crookston (1972) coined the term developmental advising in one of the first articles which focused strictly on academic advising. He explained it as an advisor who is concerned about a student, including his/her personal and occupational decisions. The advisor is interested in aiding the student's rational processes, environmental and interpersonal interactions, behavioral awareness, and problem-solving, decision-making, and evaluation skills. Crookston (1972) distinguishes the developmental advising process as a relationship based on a shared responsibility between the advisor and the student. The relationship is a negotiated agreement between student and advisor, a goal-related, two-way collaborative activity (Frost, 1993).

Using the developmental advising approach, the advising process is more about guiding and not necessarily directing students toward any particular personal goals and/or how to achieve them (Kadar, 2001). Developmental advising is a continuous and cumulative relationship with a purpose for both the advisor and the student as it moves beyond the maintenance and administrative function. Advisors must make special efforts to encourage students to become involved in college life and to discuss their academic progress. Developmental advising helps students to become aware of their own changing self as they are encouraged to make their own decisions and discover solutions (Broadbridge, 1996).

Intrusive Method

The intrusive advising philosophy, which takes developmental advising a step further, is the recommended advising approach when working with academic probation students. Blending prescriptive and developmental advising, intrusive advising is systematic and directive in offering assistance to students while supporting them in identifying developmental needs and accomplishing educational goals (Upcraft & Kramer, 1995). It is action-focused in involving and motivating students to seek help when they need it. Intrusive advising connotes a propensity to thrust oneself into the affairs of others or to be overly curious about another's concerns (Glennen, 1976). The intrusive approach utilizes qualities of prescriptive advising and developmental advising to help the student, specifically at crisis points such as academic probation (Earl, 1987), when student-advisor contact is inevitable (Huggett, 2004). The student is in direct contact with an advisor who deals candidly with the student's academic situation at a time when the student has maximum motivation to accept assistance (Earl, 1987). The advisor actively forges the connection with the student, which the advisor ultimately builds upon to develop an ongoing relationship (Huggett, 2004).

In intrusive advising, the advisor begins to establish a rapport with the student while covering academic requirements, grading procedures, probation guidelines, attendance regulations, and the curricular options available (Glennen, 1976; Glennen & Baxley, 1985). Emphasizing individual attention for the student, intrusive advising was based on the philosophy that the university should call students in for advising numerous times during the year instead of the typical once-a-semester meetings at registration, when the student's academic career could already be in serious trouble (Glennen & Baxley, 1985). Advising must be continuous and part of an ongoing program in order for it to demonstrate positive outcomes for the student (Letchworth & Bleidt, 1983).

Intrusive Advising and Students on Probation

The concept of intrusive advising was pioneered by Robert Glennen and his associates in the 1970's (1975). According to Glennen, in intrusive advising, the institution takes the initiative (Upcraft & Kramer, 1995). It begins at the first sign of academic difficulty, requires effective communication, is person-centered, considers short-term options as well as long-term needs, and requires empathy and openness (1995). In an academic setting such as a college, intrusive advising is essential (Glennen, 1976). Often the intrusive philosophy is utilized when a student is on probation or nearing academic risk. Advising interventions that are more intrusive generate student responsibility when it comes to problem solving and decision making. It assists the student in identifying resolvable causes of poor academic performance and it offers negotiated agreements for contracts for future actions (Molina & Abelman, 2000). Intrusive advising is described as having more of a personal rather than a professional approach, incorporating intervention strategies that allow the advisor to become an active part of the student's life, which in turn helps the student to stay motivated. Students are likely to keep up with their schoolwork when they know that their academic advisor will be contacting them about it (Cruise, 2002). It helps students identify and cope with academic problems that would otherwise interfere with the student's academic achievement (Glennen & Baxley, 1985). In addition, the intrusive advising philosophy is valuable because it assumes that some students will not take the initiative in resolving their academic concerns and struggles (Holmes, 2002). Those students need someone to help and guide them towards success.

Although intrusive advising is the recommended philosophy for working with academic probation and at-risk students, the establishment of a solid, warm, trusting, and supportive relationship with the advisee should be the foundation of the advising session regardless. Being directive and prescriptive does not mean that the advisor is uncaring, unsupportive, or cold (Mottarella, Fritzsche, & Cerabino, 2004). In addition, developmental advising does not mean the advisor is delinquent of assisting and motivating the students. Advisors must respond to the

student in the manner and style that allows the student to feel most comfortable and satisfied with the advising experience. Establishing a connection and relationship with the student is significant and should be utilized whether the advising appointment necessitates intrusive advising or not. For example, when a student has a basic question such as the sequencing of classes for a degree plan, it may be more appropriate for the advisor to be prescriptive in nature. The advisor correctly answers the student's question and the student is satisfied. The advisor then may check-in with the student to verify whether additional guidance and advising is needed at that time. If the student is content and feels the appointment was complete, no developmental or intrusive advising was needed.

RETENTION

The retention of college students at the freshman and sophomore levels has been a top priority in higher education since the 1980s when fiscal concerns shifted administrative philosophies from survival-of-the-fittest competitiveness toward the desire for student continuance (Earl, 1987; Molina & Abelman, 2000). Institutions nationwide have been increasingly proactive in mediating student performance to diminish academic risk and attrition. At a time when resources, financial and personnel, are in limited supply and traditionally reserved for academic programs, IHE have made academic advising a prerogative (Molina & Abelman, 2000). Quality academic advising programs play a large part in the successful recruitment and retention of students (Heisserer & Parette, 2002). Advisors are typically in the best positions to assist students in making quality academic decisions. In addition, research literature on student retention and attrition suggests that having a contact with a significant person within an IHE is a crucial factor in a student's decision to remain at that college (Heisserer & Parette, 2002; Spanier, 2004).

Advising and Retention

Academic advising defined from a retention perspective is the assistance in the mediation of dissonance between student expectations of college and the actualities of the educational environment (Habley, 1981). Dissonance occurs at two primary levels: 1) the student may have inaccurate or undefined expectations; 2) students may experience conflict regarding the purpose of higher education. Parental, sibling or peer pressure feeds information, as does vocational and economic considerations, that is not always accurate and/or consistent with the student's needs (1981). For academic advising to affect retention positively, it must be a student-centered, developmental or intrusive process rather than a prescriptive and administrative function undertaken for the promulgation of institutional policies and regulations (1981). The delivery of quality advising services can make a major contribution to the creation of a staying environment. Noel (1985) also believed that an extensive institutional effort such as academic advising provides the valuable and enriching educational experience that promotes student retention. The focus of the advising retention program should be on those resources which enable students to clarify their educational goals and relate those goals to academic offerings on the campus (Habley, 1981). It should also emphasize student learning and development (Noel, 1985). Crocket (1985) stated, "Academic advising, effectively delivered, can be a powerful influence on student development and learning and as such, can be a potent retention force on the campus" (p. 244). Facilitating an environment that promotes retention involves the entire campus community; however, effective academic advising can potentially guide students toward the goals and pursuits that connect the student with the university.

Cost-Effectiveness of Retention

High retention rates not only affect student graduation numbers but have far-reaching financial implications for the IHE and the community. At the institutional level, retention affects funding patterns which in turn affect facilities planning, academic curricula offerings, and many other facets of the institution. Increased retention equals increased student revenues that are generated (Glennen et al., 1989; Heisserer & Parette, 2002). Student attrition directly impacts institutions of higher education by the loss of tuition income and creates the additional cost of recruiting new students. Revenues lost by decreased retention include monies derived from reduced occupancy in the residence halls, meal plans purchased, expenditures in the book stores and snack bars and lessened ticket sales for campus activities (Glennen et al., 1989). Long-term, the attrition of a student is the loss of a potential alumni donor, the cost of bad public relations from a dissatisfied student, and possibly a decline in internal morale. In addition, the institution must incur recruitment costs to replace the lost student (Robbins, 2003).

Overall, retaining a student is more cost effective than recruiting new students (Astin, 1975). Investing resources to prevent students from dropping out is more cost effective than applying the same resources to more vigorous recruitment of new students (1975). A cost-benefit analyses of student recruitment strategies, which require substantial institutional expenditures (e.g., salaries of staff, travel funding, and marketing costs), may range between \$200-\$800 per student (Kramer, 1982). In contrast, retention efforts designed to manage student enrollment are estimated to be three to five times more cost-effective than recruitment efforts (Noel, Levitz, & Saluri, 1985; Rosenberg & Czepiel, 1983; Tinto, 1975). From a larger perspective, retention affects much more than the IHE. The loss of a student not only loses dollars for the university but also revenue for local businesses and those who cater to undergraduate students. In addition, individual students who attain their academic goals have an improved chance of professional success in our competitive society (Glennen et al., 1989). Students who do not have proper

training and education for the workforce are generally unprepared to meet the expected roles and responsibilities associated with particular professions (Heisserer & Parette, 2002). Graduating students are much less likely to default on their student loans than students who do not persist. Typically college graduates are more likely to find gainful employment which allows them to be better able to consistently pay back student loans. Clearly, undergraduate student persistence and degree attainment significantly impact the overall economic success for colleges, universities, and the general community (Heisserer & Parette, 2002). The investment in advising and retention efforts is necessary to affect dramatic results in higher education and society (Glennen et al., 1989).

An increased support for academic advising is a necessary focus of a retention effort (Earl, 1988). For most institutions, retention is a key objective of the advising effort (Tuttle, 2000). Academic advising facilitates retention by stimulating a positive, personalized relationship that contributes to a successful collegiate experience for a student persisting toward a realistic educational goal (Kapraun Jr. & Coldren, 1982). Research confirms that academic advising connects the student to the institution, and faculty-student contact has a significant effect on student motivation, involvement, and retention (Glennen, Farren, & Vowell, 1996b; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991; Tinto, 1993; Tuttle, 2000). Because retention improves the academic and financial foundations of institutions, most have expanded their advising centers in the last 20 years (Tinto, 1993). Effective academic advising can improve the fiscal stability of an institution “by increasing retention and graduation rates, thereby increasing appropriations based on an enrollment-driven formula” (Glennen et al., 1996, p. 38).

The beneficiaries of improved retention and graduation rates are the students and the taxpayers. Individual students who have attained their academic goals have improved their chance of success in our competitive society. The additional fiscal resources they generate enable institutions to improve and maintain programs and services. The increase in retention and graduation rates demonstrates the accountability of institutions to their constituents. The investment in advising and retention efforts brings dramatic results and helps to offset budget reductions (p. 41).

Regardless, advising should not be seen as a cure-all for retention issues. Retention is a multifaceted concern that is influenced by every facet of the university community and by every person who comes into contact with students, whether through instruction, support services, advising, or administrative policies and procedures. Greater retention is attained when improved services to students become the overall institutional priority (Beal, 1979).

Students on Probation and Retention

Students on academic probation are particularly a retention concern for institutions because they are at a greater risk for attrition. The two main consequences of probation that challenge a student's retention and ultimate graduation are related to time and money. Students on probation are at risk for losing financial assistance because of their low GPA. In addition, since the student on probation is academically below minimum standards, s/he will likely be forced to repeat classes, thus incurring additional time and expense. In effort to raise the student's GPA to the satisfactory point required for graduation, the student may need to enroll in additional courses. This also adds time and money to the student on probation's pursuit towards a degree.

Retention Models

Three specific models are outlined regarding student retention in higher education. Tinto's (1975) theoretical model of dropout behavior is a common basis of retention studies. Janasiewicz's (1987) model for student withdrawal and Habley's (1981) model that links academic advising to student retention add greater specificity to the retention issue and student decisions.

Tinto

Tinto (1975) conceptualizes dropping out of college as a process rather than an event in which the student utilizes the cost-benefit analysis theory in his/her decision making. He (1993) has found that a student's sense of belonging is directly related to his/her persistence, or his/her decisions made, to remain in school. The essential sense of belonging is increased or decreased through interactions with the academic and social environments of the university. Similar to Astin's (1977) theory, persistence is a function of institutional commitment resulting from an integrative interaction process between the individual and the institutional environment.

Tinto's (1986) model of student persistence [retention] focuses primarily on the importance of noncognitive reasons for leaving college. Given individual characteristics, prior experiences, and commitments, the model argues that it is the individual's integration into the academic and social systems of the college that most directly relates to his continuance in that college (1975). The degree of success of academic and/or social integration will alter goal and/or institutional commitments, which are manifested as persistence or lack of persistence at the institution. Tinto (1975) distinguishes between the academic and social domains of the institution which suggests that it is possible for a student to achieve integration in one area without doing so in the other. In addition, external factors not directly related to the model (family tragedies, financial emergencies) can alter components of the model. Furthermore, even the individual student's perceptions of the process may vary, thus adding a subjective element to the model, leading to unexpected outcomes (1975).

Academic performance is strongly related to satisfaction with college integration. Grades tend to be the most visible form of reward in the academic system, thus becoming both a reflection of the person's ability and of the institution's preferences for particular styles of academic behavior (Tinto, 1975). High levels of campus participation and beneficial and encouraging relationships with faculty and other campus role models increase the likelihood of student retention (Spanier, 2004). These components and their effects are cyclical. If a student

has insufficient interactions with others in the college and insufficient congruency with the prevailing values of the college, collectively those factors can contribute to the student dropping out (Tinto, 1975). Academic advisors offer a direct and personal area of interaction for the student. The advisor can help the student feel integrated into the campus community and recommend other ways and places for the student to interact and find a greater congruency with the greater college environment. The advising task strongly affects retention; however, intrusive advising is needed in order to seek out and identify all the students at risk for leaving (Upcraft & Kramer, 1995).

Janasiewicz

Janasiewicz (1987) also identified many rather specific reasons a student may withdraw from college. Listed in order of importance, as cited by students, they are as follows: 1) financial reasons, 2) offered a scholarship at another school, 3) needed time out from school, 4) illness, 5) bad advising, 6) needed at home, 7) undecided about a major, 8) parents moved, 9) campus too impersonal, 10) dissatisfaction with my academic performance, 11) entered the armed forces, 12) major not offered here, 13) accepted a job, 14) could not get desired courses, 15) got married, 16) transferring to a vocational or technical school instead, 17) attending a new school instead, and 18) random other contributing factors. Based on his study and the 18 student identified reasons for attrition, Janasiewicz (1987) also created three models of student leaving behavior.

The Discouraged Student Model (Janasiewicz, 1987) illustrates the dropout as a failure on the part of the institution. This failure could be related to the advising program or it could be more systemic as an institutional philosophy deficiency. Students who fit into this model generally fall into one of two extremes. Students in one group are doing poorly in their academic work and are unhappy about their performance. They are confused about career options and are likely to continue their education at a community college because the university is not the right

fit. Students in the other group typically have a positive attitude because they are having a successful experience at the institution. These students take more responsibility for their behavior but still choose to leave the institution. Regardless of the extreme, the Discouraged Student represents a definite challenge for the academic advisor.

Janasiewicz's Academic Model concerns students who leave the institution for specific academic or career reasons. Often these students are more academically gifted and talented. They are proactive and weigh the value of an education at one institution to that at another. These students often leave, not for academic reasons, but for curriculum reasons. They are not an appropriate fit with the institution.

Finally, the Financial Model addresses those students who leave the institution strictly for financial reasons. These students often must return home to get a job and attend their local community college. For these students, correlating factors such as a low GPA may taint their assessment of the economic value of remaining at the school (1987) especially if the student struggles with academic probation.

Habley

Habley (1981) also started with Tinto's work and created another retention model; however, his focus was more on developmental academic advising. The Advisement-Retention Model presents an explanation of the critical role academic advising plays in retention (1981). This model has three basic components: The Educational Environment, Reasons for Leaving, and Reasons for Staying. The Educational Environment component involves the sum total impact of the academic environment on the student. The factors of the academic environment include programs, classes, curricula, policies, procedures, and people. The Reasons for Leaving factors are those that have led to a student's decision to leave the institution, such as institutional mismatch, irrelevance, boredom, low concern for students, students feel efforts and abilities are

fairly rewarded in the classroom (low effort x ability to reward), health concerns, other personal problems, and financial needs. In contrast, the Reasons for Staying component involves the factors that enhance the student's desire to remain enrolled. Included among these reasons are institutional match, relevance, stimulation, high concern for student, and high effort x ability to reward ratio. Thus, the model serves as a continuum for five measurements.

Habley (1981) argues that the delivery of quality academic advising services can make a major contribution to retention. By offering students an individual discussion and assessment of the five factors and then providing information about academic program offerings and campus resources, the advisor serves as the most viable retention contributor on campus. Habley's (1981) model supports the contention that quality academic advising provides the most considerable means through which students are able to elucidate their educational goals and relate those goals to their collegiate experience. Since personal commitment to either an academic or occupational goal has been identified as a single most important determinant of college persistence (Muskat, 1979), advising clearly becomes the critical link in student retention.

SUMMARY

The literature clearly illustrates the importance of academic advisors in achieving academic success and retention for students on probation. Advisors connect the student to the institution and provide an opportunity for student integration. They also help students on probation realize their personal goals while also assessing their abilities and talents. Within the literature, accountability and motivation have been positive outcomes from the advising session; however, the nature of the advising interaction that produced such outcomes has not been examined or identified. The literature does not provide any inside look at the actual advising session nor does it examine the dynamics of the advisor-advisee relationship. The next chapter will discuss how that was investigated in this study.

CHAPTER 3 – Methodology

INTRODUCTION

Research in the field of academic advising has been limited overall. In addition, that which exists is predominantly quantitative in nature. Certainly, qualitative research has a place in the scholarly study of academic advising, especially in regards to working with students on probation. The multidimensional nature of the advising session and advisor-advisee relationship is a critical component which requires more in-depth qualitative analyses. McGillan (2000) affirms this thought, “We must study what advisors do. Observational and reflective studies of advising encounters may provide an understanding of effective practices and the meanings generated by both advisor and advisee” (p. 366). With this knowledge, the advising profession can identify areas of excellence and mediocrity.

PURPOSE

As previously illustrated, the object of this research study was to explain from the participant’s point of view; thus, the interpretivist/constructivist paradigm has been utilized. In answering the research questions of this study, the qualitative methodologies Interactive Qualitative Analysis (IQA) and Grounded Theory were employed. These formats were chosen based on the investigation and methodological limitations of other relevant research. According to Patton (1990), qualitative methodologies allow the researcher to study a specific issue in depth and detail. He also explains that qualitative methods are “particularly oriented toward exploration, discovery, and inductive logic” (p. 44). Hence, qualitative research and the interpretivist/constructivist paradigm fit well together.

Though there appears to be a substantially small amount of qualitative research in the academic advising field, there also appears to be other gaps. After reviewing the literature, this

study was also designed to attempt to uncover more information regarding what the academic advisor and the IHE should and should not do when working with students on academic probation. Since there is very limited research on the nature of what specifically works and what does not work in retaining and helping academic probation students achieve success, especially as it pertains to the academic advisor, there is a need for more specific guidance for advisors that is based on student feedback.

THE INTERPRETIVIST/CONSTRUCTIVIST PARADIGM

Constructivism is the study of the multiple realities that are constructed by people and the implications of those constructions for their lives and interactions with others (Patton, 2002). The thread throughout constructivist studies is the “emphasis on the socially constructed nature of reality as distinguishing the study of human beings from the study of other natural phenomena” (p. 99). Several researchers contend that qualitative methods are generally supported by the interpretivist/constructivist paradigm (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Glesne, 1999; Patton, 2002). Glesne (1999) states:

The ontological belief for interpretivists, therefore, is that social realities are constructed by the participants in those social settings. To understand the nature of constructed realities, qualitative researchers seek out the variety of perspectives; they do not try to reduce the multiple interpretations to a norm (p. 5).

In this qualitative study, the perspective of the participant was realized through a focus group and multiple interviews in order to examine the experiences of the student on probation when working with his/her academic advisor. This new knowledge was uncovered to provide a greater understanding and to contribute to the growing body of knowledge in this area.

PARTICIPANTS

Participants for the study were recruited from within a large research university. Three categories of participants were needed: 1) undergraduate students with previous academic probation experience but currently in good academic standing, 2) undergraduate students currently on academic probation, and 3) professional academic advisors who work with students on probation. All participation was voluntary, confidential, and at-will. The student participants were each given a gift certificate upon completion of their involvement; however, the advisors received no such compensation.

FERPA

Ideally, the researcher would have obtained and contacted a list of students who met the study's criteria regarding academic probation experience; however, since a student's academic probation status is based on his/her cumulative GPA, the researcher was not allowed to directly contact eligible student participants. GPA is part of a student's private education record and is protected by the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) (U.S. Department of Education, 2005). However, since this study is the researcher's dissertation and would benefit educational institutions, it was believed that the GPA identifying data would be accessible through the *research exception* provision.

The researcher contacted the university's Associate Vice President for Institutional Compliance and Legal Affairs to seek permission to gain the student names based on GPA criteria as a *research exception*. The Associate Vice President informed the researcher that the Family Policy Compliance Office (FPCO), the federal agency that is charged with enforcement of FERPA, addressed a similar situation in 2004. The question of whether a study that incidentally may benefit an institution can be considered a study done for or on behalf of an institution under the *research exception*, is addressed in a letter to Ms. Amy C. Foerster,

Assistant Counsel with the Pennsylvania Department of Education. FPCO's Director LeRoy Rooker stated:

Some educational agencies and institutions have asked whether FERPA would permit them to disclose information to outside researchers under the "study" provision of FERPA. See 20 U.S.C. § 1232g(b)(1)(F). Under FERPA, an educational agency or institution may generally disclose personally identifiable, non-directory information, without obtaining prior written consent, to organizations conducting studies for, or on behalf of, the agency or institution ... Implicit in the "study" exception is the notion that an educational agency or institution has authorized a study. The fact that an outside entity, on its own initiative, conducts a study which may benefit an educational agency or institution, does not transform the study into one done "for or on behalf of" the educational agency or institution (Rooker, 2004).

Since the *research exception* could not be applied to this dissertation project, a more complicated route was taken to obtain participants.

Student Participant Recruitment

To solicit students to participate, the researcher obtained a list from the university registrar of third- and fourth-year undergraduate students in the College of Liberal Arts, hoping that the students who met the study's GPA criteria would self-select and volunteer to participate. Once a participant agreed to volunteer, the researcher then obtained consent to verify that the student's GPA did fit some aspect of the study's criteria.

Preceding the spring semester, 1,525 psychology, government, and economics third- and fourth-year students were emailed by the researcher asking for participation of students who were currently on probation or who recently raised their GPA above the probation criteria. (See Appendix A) The solicitation email had been reviewed and approved by the university's Institutional Review Board (IRB). The majors of psychology, government, and economics were chosen because they were the three largest majors in the College of Liberal Arts, which is the largest college within the university. The researcher was seeking a large data pool so as to have

a greater chance of students agreeing to participate. Numerous recruitment emails were sent out but very little response was received.

Since students with academic probation experiences were not self-selecting to participate, the researcher had to contact IRB several times to get additional approvals to change the solicitation routine and pool. On two occasions, the researcher asked for access to additional student names and email addresses beyond just the initial three majors in the College of Liberal Arts. At the outset, specific majors had been requested for solicitation; but with the second request to IRB, the research asked for access to all third- and fourth-year students at the entire university. In addition, after one student on probation asked if he would get paid to participate, the researcher asked IRB for approval to offer an incentive for students to participate. Once IRB authorized a door prize incentive for the participants, that information was added to the subject line of every recruitment email.

The third- and fourth-year students in the College of Education, School of Business, and remaining College of Liberal Arts majors were also contacted several times. Despite the fact that approximately 7,590 students were on the solicitation list, there still were not enough responses. When an eligible student did agree to participate, the research asked for his/her postal mailing address and then a letter and the IRB consent packet were mailed. (See Appendices B and C)

The final contact with IRB was in the middle of February. A flier that the researcher had created was approved to be hung around campus in an effort to gain additional participants. (See Appendix D) Upon notification, fliers were posted in residence halls and academic buildings. Eventually, with the study already in motion, a satisfactory number of students volunteered to participate.

Focus Group

The first group of student participants made up the focus group. It was comprised of six non-freshman students who were, or had been, in the College of Liberal Arts. These students had all been removed from academic probation within the last school year. The gender composition of the group was primarily females, with only one male. The racial and ethnic mix was very diverse including African American, Asian American, Hispanic, and Caucasian students. This group of participants met as a focus group and produced the first data in the collection process.

<i>Alias</i>	<i>Gender</i>	<i>Race</i>	<i>Classification</i>	<i>GPA</i>
<i>Mocha</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>African American</i>	<i>Junior</i>	<i>2.2</i>
<i>Nancy</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>Asian American</i>	<i>Sophomore</i>	<i>2.7</i>
<i>Robert</i>	<i>Male</i>	<i>Caucasian</i>	<i>Junior</i>	<i>2.3</i>
<i>Strawberry</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>Caucasian</i>	<i>Junior</i>	<i>2.2</i>
<i>Texas</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>Hispanic</i>	<i>Junior</i>	<i>2.5</i>
<i>Star</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>Hispanic</i>	<i>Senior</i>	<i>2.0</i>

Table 1: Focus Group Participants

Student Interviews

The second sample of student participants was comprised of 16 students (see Table 2: Participant Students on Probation). Eleven of the students were currently on academic probation with the university; one student (†) was recently off of probation; two students (*) were on academic dismissal; and two students (†) were on special probation with distinctive programs through which they were admitted into the university. The original research pursuit of only interviewing students currently on academic probation with a cumulative GPA below 2.0 was altered due to the struggle to get enough participants.

Of the 16 participants, no one was classified [based on the number academic hours completed] as a freshman; however, three students were in their first year at the university. Two of these students had transferred in from another institution while one student was in her first year of college but had received several hours from dual-enrollment classes taken during high school. The gender and racial combination of these student participants were varied with three males (Caucasian, African American, and Hispanic) and 13 females (two Hispanic, nine Caucasian, and two African American).

<i>Alias</i>	<i>Gender</i>	<i>Race</i>	<i>Classification</i>	<i>1st GPA</i>
<i>Cecilia</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>White</i>	<i>Sophomore</i>	<i>1.7</i>
<i>Chompers</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>Hispanic</i>	<i>Senior</i>	<i>1.8</i>
<i>Dropout</i>	<i>Male</i>	<i>Hispanic</i>	<i>Senior</i>	<i>1.9</i>
<i>Jenny</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>Caucasian</i>	<i>Junior</i>	<i>2.4⁺</i>
<i>Jessica</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>Caucasian</i>	<i>Senior</i>	<i>1.8</i>
<i>Joy</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>African American</i>	<i>Sophomore</i>	<i>2.0[*]</i>
<i>Kathy</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>Caucasian</i>	<i>Sophomore</i>	<i>1.8</i>
<i>Leroy</i>	<i>Male</i>	<i>Caucasian</i>	<i>Sophomore</i>	<i>1.7</i>
<i>Lucy Love</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>Caucasian</i>	<i>Sophomore</i>	<i>0.9</i>
<i>Marlene</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>Hispanic</i>	<i>Junior</i>	<i>1.8</i>
<i>Michelle</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>Caucasian</i>	<i>Senior</i>	<i>3.0[*]</i>
<i>Nicole</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>Caucasian</i>	<i>Sophomore</i>	<i>1.4[*]</i>
<i>Roxie</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>Caucasian</i>	<i>Senior</i>	<i>1.7[*]</i>
<i>Spring</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>Caucasian</i>	<i>Senior</i>	<i>1.9</i>
<i>Stewwy</i>	<i>Male</i>	<i>African American</i>	<i>Sophomore</i>	<i>0.2</i>
<i>Summer</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>African American</i>	<i>Junior</i>	<i>1.8</i>

Table 2: Participant Students on Probation

Academic Advisor Interviews

The last set of participants was a sampling of academic advisors who worked with the participants on probation. Sixteen advisors were personally solicited to participate, and 12 agreed. (See Appendix E) These advisors came from the four main colleges which the students represented: Liberal Arts, Education, Communication, and Business. Their input was needed to gain the advisor's perspective and perception. The data also helped to triangulate the information given by the students on probation during the students' interviews.

DATA COLLECTION

The data were collected in three distinct ways: 1) a one-time focus group, 2) two personal and individual interviews with each student on probation, and 3) a one-time interview with each academic advisor.

Focus Group

The researcher met with the focus group of students who were previously on academic probation. These students had successfully obtained a 2.0 cumulative GPA or higher in order to be removed from academic probation. The purpose of the focus group was for the students to freely discuss their experiences while on academic probation and their encounters with academic advisors during that time. The focus group also provided a method for the researcher to familiarize herself with the student language, their basic thoughts about probation and academic advisors, and the students' experiences related to advising and probation. This information provided an initial basis for the researcher to become aware of any biases or assumptions that she personally had regarding probationary status and academic advising.

The data from the focus group provided the researcher with key categories to utilize and inquire about during the subsequent interviews with the students on probation. It was assumed

that the experiences of the focus group participants could be generalized and applied to other students who have experience with academic probation. The themes and/or categories that consistently emerged from the focus group discussion were utilized in formulating the interview questions for the subsequent step in data collection.

Interactive Qualitative Analysis (IQA)

The methodology guiding the focus group was Interactive Qualitative Analysis (IQA). IQA research design starts with a research question that is not yet clearly defined. The research flow assumes that ambiguity is a characteristic of the early thinking about the project. It then seeks to identify those who have something to say about the problem (Northcutt & McCoy, 2004). This discussion occurs within a focus group that is constructed based on the commonalities of the participants. For this study, the constituency was entirely made up of undergraduate students who had been on academic probation at the university. Through the focus group, the exploration of the academic probation and advising experiences began.

Focus Group Process

For this study, the focus group participants were given pizza and drinks when everyone arrived. Their candid conversations and casual introductions allowed the students to become comfortable with each other and to promote an informal, comfortable atmosphere. When the pizza was almost gone, the researcher asked the students to have a seat to do introductions and select alias names. Consent forms had already been collected, but the researcher addressed the issue of confidentiality and privacy. Then the students were asked to sit back and get comfortable for the guided imagery process. (See Appendix F)

Guided imagery involved the researcher asking the students to relax and put aside their thoughts from the day. The researcher then asked the students to silently recall their various

experiences and issues related to academic probation. As the researcher mentioned thoughts and ideas pertaining to probation and advising, the students reflected silently about their own related experiences. This procedure was a warm-up exercise to help students focus on the issue at hand, and their experiences with their academic advisor while on probation. The room was very quiet and progressively got more solemn. Once the researcher finished presenting thoughts for reflection, she then asked the students to openly discuss what they were thinking and feeling during the guided imagery.

It did not take long for the group to openly and passionately discuss what they had personally experienced while on probation. This candid discussion led to multiple personal stories regarding interactions with advisors and other experiences while on probation. Students debated about probation and dismissal policies, related to each others' experiences, and vocalized differences of opinions and experiences, especially regarding academic advisors. After awhile, the researcher asked the group to maintain their passion and candor but this time while recording the thoughts and reactions to the discussion on individual note cards. This silent "brainstorming" allowed the students some anonymity as it reduced the influence of peer pressure. While participants individually filled out the cards, IQA encourages participants to brainstorm with no censoring (Northcutt & McCoy, 2004).

When the writing started to wane, the 70+ cards that were produced by the students were taped to the wall. They were hung in no particular order but in a place so that everyone could read each card. After all of the cards were adhered to the wall, the researcher led the group in a clarification discussion regarding what was written on each card. The purpose was to come to a shared understanding of the meaning represented on the card. The author of the card did not have to come forward with his/her specific explanation as anyone could offer ideas regarding the card's meaning. This discussion led to the sharing of additional personal stories. When the last cards were discussed, the researcher asked the students if they had any additional comments that they wanted to offer for the sake of the study. This prompted more discussion, but basically the

group was retelling experiences that they had already shared; no new stories or insights were being disclosed. The students were thanked for their time and participation and each given a door prize as promised in the recruitment email.

With the focus group concluded, the researcher then took the pile of note cards and began clustering them into groups with similar meaning. This categorization of the note cards is called inductive coding (Northcutt & McCoy, 2004). Next, the researcher began to name the categories. To assure that the researcher was being aware and cautious of her own biases and assumptions, she had a colleague read the focus group transcript and then examine the clusters and category names. The colleague had a few questions about the clustering; hence, they discussed the discrepancies and arrived at an agreement.

Next, the researcher began reviewing the categories and combining similar clusters into new, larger groups. The name of these groups, or affinities, is more abstract and has a possible range of meanings (Northcutt & McCoy, 2004). These final affinities provided the foundation for the interview questions with students on probation.

Balance	Negative Feelings: Student
Family	Non-Academic Issues
Financial Issues	Options
Institutional Policies	Positive Actions: Advisor
Mental Health: Student	Positive Actions: Student
Negative Actions: Advisor	Stereotypes
Negative Actions: Student	

Table 3: Categories from Focus Group (listed in alpha order)

Interviews with Students

Utilizing the affinities that were grounded in the focus group data, the researcher interviewed the 16 student participants. Each student individually met with the researcher for an initial one-hour semi structured interview at the beginning of the semester. The hour-long semi structured interview was designed to ensure that all students were asked the same questions;

however, the flexibility of the process allowed the individual student experiences to be explored in sufficient depth (Pizzolato, 2003).

The initial interview was piloted on two students to assess the comprehensibility of the questions. These two students were invited to be pilot student participants not only because they were recently placed on academic probation but also because they were acquaintances of the researcher and would be comfortable answering the questions and asking for clarification. The pilot interviews were tape-recorded and transcribed verbatim just like the focus group. Piloting the interview protocol with these students significantly helped the researcher to revise several questions to enhance comprehensibility and to preview the types of responses the students on probation would likely give to the interview questions. It also allowed the researcher to adjust the length of the interview protocol (Appendix G). These pilot interviews provided an opportunity for the researcher to discuss with each student how she felt while being probed about her stories and experiences regarding academic probation. This process-analysis conversation helped the researcher to be more sensitive to the students' stories and emotions. In addition, the conversation helped the researcher realize the ways her perceived status as a graduate student and positioning as an academic advisor could affect the ways in which the participants chose to interact and respond.

The 16 participants were interviewed once at the beginning of the semester and a second time at the very end of the semester. The interviews focused on the student's experiences while on academic probation, especially when dealing with his/her academic advisor. The impact of those experiences with the advisor was explored, as well as the influence of other people and programs. The goal was to understand the dynamics of the advising session and how that influenced the student on probation's success. The interviews were centered on the students' comments and stories about the experiences and decisions they identified as impacting their academic probationary status. The students were asked about any decisions or discoveries that they made in the advising session or based on the exchange of the advising session. During each

interview, the researcher probed the student to discover if and how the academic advisor, specifically, affected the situation. The researcher also inquired about other influences and/or supports in the student's life. The interviewer questioned and continuously asked for clarification of the student's comments, so to clearly distinguish and understand who, an academic advisor or someone else, was impacting the student and how.

A second interview with the students occurred at the end of the semester. Because of scheduling and final exams, some of the students were interviewed before they knew what their final academic results would be while others had totally completed the semester and knew their new academic standing. For this interview, many of the same questions from interview one were asked but in different ways. The researcher sought to capture the dimensions and properties of the various questions and ideas identified from the first interviews. In addition, the second interview asked students specific questions related to their personal situation discussed during interview one. This was a way for the researcher to get clarification and also to see if the student had changed any of his/her perceptions and opinions. The researcher explored whether the students followed through with their initial ideas and game plans and why or why not. She also asked about the student's support group and key influences. These types of questions were attempting to determine if the academic advisor's impact on the student was more or less when compared to parents, teachers, pastors, and others. This final interview also quizzed students specifically on their relationship with their advisor over the last semester and what perceived dynamics were involved.

Interviews with Academic Advisors

In addition to asking students about their experiences with academic advisors while on probation, several advisors were also interviewed. The 12 advisors who agreed to participate were queried as to the nature of the relationship between an advisor and a student on probation

and how it may differ from students not on probation. Perceptions and interpretations about the advising session with students on probation were questioned in order to compare to those which the students offered. The advisors were also asked about the advising style that is typically utilized when working with the student on probation and the subsequent, perceived effect. These interviews triangulated some of the student's interview data and clarified areas of ambiguity.

ANALYSIS OF INTERVIEW DATA

The basic analysis of the data began as the researcher took notes during the student interviews. Although the interviews were tape-recorded and transcribed, the notes helped in realizing the emerging themes even before the transcribed data could be fully analyzed. As recurrent themes in the interviews and relationships of the themes to each other began to surface, the researcher included those topics in the subsequent interviews. To ensure reliability, all of the data were consistently collected in the same form. All interviews were audio-taped and completely transcribed verbatim just like the focus group.

Grounded Theory

All of the interview transcripts were coded based on Strauss and Corbin's process of grounded theory (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Patterns, themes, and codes were constructed through a constant comparative analysis of all of the interview transcripts (1998). Initially, a full understanding of each individual case was established before the unique experiences were compared, combined or aggregated thematically (Patton, 2002). The researcher was paying attention to reoccurring patterns and themes based on the experiences of the student on probation and his/her academic advisors. With each set of interviews, all of the transcripts were analyzed and compared. The constant comparative analyses yielded a large set of codes; these codes were then used in coding the other interview transcripts. Cross-case analysis identified patterns and

themes that cut across individual student experiences (Patton, 2002). New patterns, themes, and codes, however, were realized with every new set of interview transcripts; thus, past transcripts were reassessed based on the newly identified constructs. This process helped ensure that emergent categories and themes were *grounded* in specific cases and their contexts (2002).

Grounded theory does not start with a theory; but through systematic data collection and analysis, a theory may be derived. The researcher must constantly ask questions and look for comparisons to achieve success in collecting and analyzing data. Often saturation is pursued, where no new information emerges from the data (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Using grounded theory, the researcher hoped to uncover guidelines for academic advisors on successful and unsuccessful ways to help probation students obtain academic success.

Coding

Coding involved three levels: open, axial, and selective coding as suggested by Strauss and Corbin (1998). In open coding, the transcript data were broken into discrete parts and then viewed by similarities and differences from one another. This analysis identified several possible beginning categories, patterns, and themes and their respective properties and dimensions. Strauss and Corbin (1998) suggest that the purpose of “naming phenomena is to enable researchers to group similar events, happenings, and objects under a common heading or classification” (p. 103). This consisted of making notes within each transcription to label the relevant statement with an expressed meaning.

According to Strauss and Corbin (1998), axial codes are related to each other according to their subcategories. “Categories are concepts, derived from data, that stand for phenomena” (p. 114). Subcategories are categories broken down according to their “conditions, actions/interactions, and consequences” (p. 126). In this stage, the researcher looked for recurring regularities in the data, which often revealed patterns that could be sorted into

categories. Constantly, the researcher kept memos of thoughts and ideas as she spent so much time with the data. During axial coding, the categories began to be differentiated from one another based on dimensions and properties and sorted accordingly (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). To make sense of the coding and categories, the researcher created and constantly updated a matrix so as to group and organize the concepts. In doing so, the possible properties and dimensions that each category represented were more easily assessed and identified. As categories were identified and organized, they were also named. Unique phenomena that appeared were named by the researcher. Categories that seemed to match previously identified factors maintained the name given by the original researcher.

Finally, selective coding was used to integrate and refine the categories (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). The categories were tested to make certain that they were mutually exclusive and collectively exhaustive in applying the participants' statements and descriptions of the phenomena. This process entailed, "...selecting the core category, systemically relating it to other categories, validating those relationships, and filling in categories that need further refinement or development" (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 116). This was accomplished by doing another data review that focused on the fit of each datum's placement within the categories. Unused data were also assessed to make sure that that data could not be sorted into an existing category or used to represent a phenomenon of interest to the study.

Once all of the pertinent data were sorted into categories, their relationship to each other became of foremost importance. Basically, once an understanding of the phenomenon can be established and its major elements can be identified, it is useful to come to an understanding of how these categories function as a process. Strauss and Corbin (1998) identify process as the "sequences of evolving action/interaction, changes in which can be traced to changes in structural conditions" (p. 163). They explain that bringing process into the final analysis of any grounded theory study is an important component. Bringing an end to grounded theory, Strauss and Corbin (1990) add, "Validating one's theory against the data completes its grounding" (p.

133). One way this can be done is through laying out the theory in memos utilizing diagrams and/or participant narratives. These processes are described in Chapter Five.

TRUSTWORTHINESS

Trustworthiness, also called validity, is essential to the credibility of the study. To ensure trustworthiness and the rigor of this study, the researcher utilized several strategies. Member checking was the primary form of triangulation utilized. The findings in Chapter Four were shared with the student participants. They then had the opportunity to verify and ensure that their quotes and views were appropriately characterized, interpreted, and presented. The participant and researcher discussed any discrepancies and addressed various questions.

Trustworthiness was also established through the interviewing of participants. In the study, the students on probation were interviewed twice with the second interview verifying the information given at the first interview. All of the questions and discussion involved in the second interviews were based on the specific student's first interview information. In addition, academic advisors were interviewed after the first round of student interviews. The interviews with advisors were essential in educating the researcher about different philosophies and styles of advising. These interviews also helped the advisor identify personal biases and preconceived ideas regarding advising students on probation.

Finally, the researcher submitted the results in Chapter Five to an online listserv connected with the academic advisor's professional association, NACADA. This listserv was part of the NACADA Probation, Dismissal, Reinstatement Issues Interest Group. The members of the listserv were asked if they agreed with the results and why or why not. The discussion that ensued was informative and identified discrepancies were addressed.

LIMITATIONS

The researcher faced a few limitations while striving to collect the richest and most accurate data possible. The primary limitation was related to FERPA and identifying students who met the criteria for the study. As discussed earlier in Chapter Three, students on probation were not eager to self-select and agree to participate in the study. The student group had to continually be expanded and eligible criteria for participation had to be adjusted.

Another limitation of this study occurred while trying to learn about the academic advisor's impact on the student without the researcher influencing that connection through the questioning and probing. The researcher tried to maintain an unbiased, nonjudgmental demeanor while also utilizing questions grounded in the data from the focus group and previous interviews to examine all potential avenues. The researcher worked to provide a safe environment for the students to speak freely about all aspects of their experiences related to academic probation. Most of the student participants did not realize that the researcher was also an academic advisor until the end of the second interview when it was disclosed.

Two final limitations affecting the study were related to time and location. Obviously, a longitudinal study regarding students on academic probation and their ultimate academic success and retention would be ideal. However, for this study, time limitations restricted the exploration to one long academic semester. In addition, an analysis across multiple institutions would have also added to the richness and generalizability of the results. Nonetheless, the scope of this study was limited to the multiple colleges and schools within a very large and diverse, single university.

CHAPTER THREE SUMMARY

This chapter outlined the basic methodology and research techniques that were employed in this study. Interactive Qualitative Analysis (IQA) was utilized to establish the initial framework of the study based on the focus group data. Grounded theory was utilized and rooted in an interpretivist/constructivist paradigm to analyze the data from the individual student and advisor interviews. The findings produced insight into the student on academic probation to provide a better awareness for advisors and institutions of higher education when assisting these students in achieving academic success. These findings will be presented in Chapter Five. In Chapter Four, the emergent themes from the student interviews are defined by the researcher and described in detail through the student's voice.

CHAPTER 4 – RESULTS

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of the present study was to gain a better understanding of students on probation and their relationships with academic advisors. Chapter Four provides an overview and discussion of the research findings, which emerged from the examination of the individual student interviews. The guiding questions of this study were: (1) Do advisors have an impact on the academic success of students on probation? (2) What is the nature of the relationship between the academic advisor and the student on probation? (3) How do the dynamics of the relationship relate to the success of the student on probation?

This chapter includes insight into the participants' interviews followed by the results and analysis of the study. Because of the magnitude of data, Chapter Four is divided into sections based on the emergent themes. During open coding, 32 categories of meaning were derived from the data through the procedures described in Chapter Three. In axial coding, the categories were conceptually divided into larger categories, or themes, of meaning. Axial coding and the subsequent selective coding produced 11 themes, many with supporting categories and subcategories. Within each section, the individual themes are discussed in detail, utilizing interview excerpts to express the theme through the student's voice. At the end of each section, a summary is provided to help form the basis for the diagram discussed in Chapter Five.

PARTICIPANT OVERVIEW

Table 4 highlights some general details about the interview participants beyond what was outlined in Chapter Three. The indicated specifics are important details related to the student's experiences with academic probation. Table 4 also denotes the student's final academic success or non-success.

Alias	Credit By Exam	Description	1st GPA	2nd GPA	Probation
Cecilia	NA	Previous semesters on probation; emergency surgery and family death; self-supported	1.7	2.06	Off
Chompers	NA	Previous probation and one dismissal; mental health challenges; study skills struggle	1.8	1.96	Continue
Dropout	10 hrs -A, 6 hrs -B	Multiple semesters of probation and one dismissal; prolonged sick family member (& death)	1.9	2.13	Off
Jenny	3 hrs -CR	Previous probation; changed major; partied; study skills struggle	2.4 ⁺	2.48 ⁺	Off Spr 2005 ⁺
Jessica	3 hrs -B	Previous probation and one dismissal; worked many hours; mental health issues	1.8	2.08	Off
Joy	NA	Mental health issues; severe car accident; death of a friend	2.0 [*]	2.23 [*]	Lost her Scholarship [*]
Kathy	NA	Freshman adjustment; athletics involvement; major change	1.8	2.10	Off
Leroy	NA	Transfer student; failed attempt to drop a class; family emergency	1.7	2.28	Off
Lucy Love	NA	Transfer student; severe mental health issues	0.9	1.60	Continue
Marlene	16 hrs -A, 6 hrs -B	First-generation, international student; worked many hours	1.8	1.66	Dismissed
Michelle	3 hrs -B, 3 hrs -CR	Mental health issues; purpose of college questions	3.0 [*]	2.92 [*]	Monitored [*]
Nicole	3 hrs -CR	Study skills struggle; procrastination; overcommitted	1.4 [*]	NA [*]	Returning [*]
Roxie	NA	Does not like school; partied	1.7 [*]	NA [*]	Returning [*]
Spring	5 hrs - B	Previous probation and twice dismissed; parents separation; worked many hours; procrastination	1.9	2.27	Off
Stewwy	NA	Previous probation and one dismissal; worked many hours; partied; procrastination	0.2	0.85	Dismissed
Summer	NA	Study skills struggle; worked many hours; mental health issues	1.8	1.78	Dismissed

Table 4: Description of Interview Participants

Of the eleven students on academic probation, six raised their GPA to a 2.0 or above and are no longer on probation. Two of the students will stay on academic probation and will not be dismissed because they have shown appropriate academic improvement. In addition, three students will be dismissed from the university for a designated time period. The one student (†) who had already been removed from probation maintained her good academic standing. Both students (*) who had been dismissed for the semester were planning to return to the university for the upcoming long semester. Finally, the two students (*) who were on special probation through their specific programs will both continue on their probation because neither raised her GPA high enough. One of the girls lost her scholarship while the other girl will continue to be closely monitored.

In the table, the researcher also noted whether the student participant had accepted any test credits. During the time of this study, students at the university could receive credit for classes by taking appropriate placement tests. These credit hours would then be calculated into the student's GPA, essentially improving his/her academic standing. Upon closure of this study, the university changed the policy so that test credits could be claimed only as credit (CR) and not as a grade that would affect the student's GPA. Seven of the students in this study had accepted credit hours through testing prior to the university's policy change, and five of those students received a grade that raised their cumulative GPA.

Finally, the table briefly highlights each participant's history of academic and collegiate struggles. Unfortunately, students do not attend college in a vacuum; they must also contend with all aspects of life. Many of the student participants struggled with nonacademic issues such as mental health problems, excessive hours at work, and family problems and deaths. In addition, the participants struggled with lack of academic preparedness and lack of experience. Study skills, motivation, and procrastination were common trouble areas for the participants. Of course, all of these issues impact academic achievement and collegiate success, thus contributing to a student's overall academic standing and possible academic probation status. Although there

were similarities shared among participants, perspectives and experiences associated with academic probation and academic advisors were very diverse. These variations and differences added depth and richness to the results of this study.

CATEGORIZING THE DATA

During the analysis, significant themes emerged through the coding of the student interviews. Words, phrases, and paragraphs that seemed relevant to the study and the research questions were coded onto individual index cards which were then conceptually ordered to identify emerging themes, categories, and subcategories. Constant comparative analysis, as described in Chapter Three, then revealed relationships and patterns amongst these themes and categories. Table 5 outlines the main themes that emerged from the data. With most of the themes there are also categories and subcategories.

As a reference to the reader, a table of each particular theme and any corresponding categories or subcategories precedes each section. Following the table is a brief introduction to the theme, including information alluding to the categories and subcategories, when appropriate. Within each section, the theme, categories, and subcategories will be narrated through the student's voice by quotes from the interviews. In each quote, the researcher has italicized key information connecting the quote to the theme. In addition, information delineated between two brackets ([]) has been added by the researcher for clarification of the context. Information delineated between two arrows (< >) indicates that the information has been changed by the researcher to protect the student's privacy and maintain confidentiality. Finally, a brief conclusion is provided at the end of the each section, reiterating the theme.

Theme One: Academic Reality Theme Two: Advising Experiences Theme Three: Causes of Probation Theme Four: Connection to the University Theme Five: Probation Fallout Theme Six: Build an Advisor Theme Seven: Frequency and Consistency Theme Eight: Fix It vs. The Cycle Theme Nine: Support Sources: The Three R's Theme Ten: What is the Purpose? Theme Eleven: Hindsight

Table 5: Emergent Themes Listing

Theme One: Academic Reality

Theme One: Academic Reality Categories: Catch-Up Give-Up Surprise
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Table 6: Theme One

In the first interview at the beginning of the semester, students were asked about their experiences leading to academic probation and their overall awareness of their academic standing. Were they aware that academic probation was impending? Some students were specifically asked to talk about it; whereas, other students freely mentioned it as part of the processing of their collegial experiences. During the second interview, the majority of the students briefly touched on the topic; however, their comments were typically consistent with the first interview.

Catch-Up

Prior to academic probation, several students realized midway through the semester that their academic performance was not as good as they wanted. Because of their lack of experience in college or simply excessive optimism and self-confidence, these students believed they could catch-up in the end. They did not consider probation a possibility.

By the middle of the semester I realized, “Oh my goodness, *I’ve missed like a test in this class and a paper in this class,*” and I was kind of far behind and, uh, I *tried to catch-up.*

Summer p. 1-10

I thought it wasn't going to be a problem; but then like halfway through I realized it was kinda hard. But *I thought I could pull it out.* ...Ah, they [grades] kind of started off bad, but then I figured like, “Ok, okay. Then I’ll go to reviews and it will get better. I figured just, whatever. But then they just *kind of stayed the same.* But his grade [chemistry class] was where like if you made a good grade on the final that could be your final grade. So, *I figured I still had a chance...* the whole time.

Kathy p. 1-33

Give-Up

Other students were aware of their poor academic performance; but instead of trying to catch-up, they gave up. They considered it just too late to recover. Many of these students were dealing with severe nonacademic issues that were taking precedence over school.

And at the end of the semester, I just *started giving up.* And I was like, “Forget it; it is over for me.” I already knew I was going to be on probation.

Marlene p. 1-30

...at the beginning of semester, I knew I started getting lower. But I thought I can pick that back up. But then it came to a certain point where I didn't really care anymore. And there was *no way I could save myself.*

Lucy p. 2-67

No, I pretty well knew [would be on probation]. Well, I didn't really think about probation; but I knew I had made really bad grades. I didn't think I would fail 3 of the classes; I thought maybe I would fail one. I figured I might have squeezed by with a D maybe. ... but I had just kind of *given up on it*. I just *didn't feel like doing anything*.

Jessica p. 2-77

No, I knew where I was headed and I *didn't care*.

Dropout p. 2-81

... it was pretty much *already too late* and all I had was like a final or a couple of other grades; so I couldn't pull it up. I knew I was going to be on probation in the fall. ...halfway through the semester or something, the grades that I had already made were pulling me down so much that it was hard to come back up.

Nicole p. 2-46 / 4-170

I think it all started with feeling like it doesn't really matter, it's just college ... half way though last semester when it was *already too late to catch* my grades...

Michelle p. 4-103

Surprised

A couple of the students had no knowledge of the academic probation process at the university. They did not realize that they were at risk of being put on probation, a status which can lead to dismissal. The students actually expressed surprise when they learned that they were going to be on academic probation.

Yeah [surprised about probation notification], because I didn't get it. I didn't understand that it would do that to you. I thought, "Hey, I'm in college. I'll just do what I want and graduate eventually." *I really wasn't educated on the minimum GPA*. I didn't read that stuff.

Spring p. 1-26

But I never really put it in that...even that deep of a thought. It was like, "Well, I'll just drop that class. Oh, one F won't hurt, you know, as long as I get my degree in the end." And then...I don't know. And then when...once I got on academic probation, it was like, "*Bing!*"

Roxie2 p. 16-717

It was sort of surprise because *I didn't know the university had that kind of a system*.

Stewwy p. 19-2

Conclusion

The categories explain the different levels of awareness that the students had regarding their academic standing. Some students were in denial about their performance or simply sanguine about their standing. They thought they could bring up their GPA in their classes, despite their performance to that point. Other students were aware of their poor academic status, but they chose to quit. The students who figured it was too late to recover were struggling with nonacademic issues. Finally, a few students who were completely unaware of their severe academic decline did not realize the university would put them on academic probation. Since they were not aware that such a process existed, they did not fear the probation status. Regardless, at the end of the semester, all of the students became aware of how their GPA affected their new academic probation status. They also became acutely aware of the consequences of academic probation, including the potential for academic dismissal.

Theme Two: Advising Experiences

Theme Two: Advising Experiences
Categories: Favorable
Subcategories: Routine
Positive Energy
Above and Beyond
Categories: Unconstructive
Subcategories: Generic
Negative Energy
Lacking Knowledge

Table 7: Theme Two

Theme two encompasses the students' advising experiences prior to their academic probation positioning and afterwards. Each participant was asked to talk about his/her contact with any academic advisor, especially as related to his/her experiences with academic probation.

The students told of meetings which were either perceived as routine and helpful or generic and impersonal. They also told a number of stories filled with great energy, excitement, and passion, oftentimes even tears. The dynamics related to those incidents are revealed in very positive and negative ways. Students talked of very generous gestures from advisors, gestures that would likely be considered above and beyond any typical encounters. On the other hand, they also described appointments where the advisor misinformed the student and/or appeared to lack the necessary knowledge of the institution and its policies that was needed.

Favorable

Routine. Students spoke positively about advising meetings that were helpful and informative where the interaction appeared congenial and the purpose for the meeting was accomplished. In these sessions, the student's questions were answered; and although the encounter was simple, it was meaningful.

...I got to take a natural science something. I don't know if it's a natural science, but anyways, it was a meteorology course. I heard about it, and then he recommended it 'cause I didn't know what it was, what fell into that category. ... And then at the end of the semester, he knew what was going on [nonacademics], and *he helped* as far as just making sure that I had contact with my professors and whatnot. And then he sent me the email at the end, which is again, it's almost as good as grades. And it was kinda like just a letter saying that, you know - *a pat on the back* [you are off probation].

Dropout2 p. 10-410

Each time I walk out [*feel empowered*], I guess because I have a plan. You know? I know, okay, so for the next four months, these are my classes. Good. Got it.

Michelle2 p. 24-1096

...it was the time when I decided to drop it, and then kind of just thinking about what classes to take next semester, what teachers, and *what she liked, and kind of mapping out* what I'm gonna have to take for the next two years. ... I mean, *she asked* how I was doing in my classes and things like...

Jenny2 p. 3-108

I went to a meeting about transferring into the college and then they said to call so-and-so for a meeting to transfer in. So I *met with him* [academic advisor] to talk about how I can transfer in and how my classes are going and stuff like that, and why I want to transfer in.

Kathy p. 5-202

Sometimes these basic meetings incorporated a little bit more. For instance, in a couple of situations, the advisor offered an extra tip or referral.

Actually my advisor in my major, yesterday when I went to talk to him, he *gave me a little pointer*. He said that they have a quiz at the learning center that shows you and tells you how you learn. So I think I'm going to go and take that and I think that will be very helpful to me...

Summer p. 6-257

I already had that [course layout up to graduation] planned out. And I told him about that. He said that was a really good idea. And just *be open when classes are closed*. Move things around. To *never put too many* - like last semester I took four unbelievably hard classes, which made it even worse - and he said never to do that again. Take like maybe three hard classes, two easy ones, or two hard classes, three relatively easy ones... to make sure I don't get overloaded again.

Lucy p. 9-406

Positive Energy. Some of the student experiences involved more of a connection with the advisor. These students came away from the advising appointment not only with the satisfaction that their questions had been answered but also with the knowledge that they have a university contact person who cares about them and will be available for them. Their stories reveal a comfortable, informal connection that was personable, motivational, and respectful. Progressively these students were realizing that the advisor was more than just a resource for course scheduling.

She [advisor] actually *made me feel better*, like I can actually go to her. I don't know, for some reason, [before] I just had thought that I couldn't tell her how I felt or what was going on. ... It [the first appointment] turned out pretty good. I was pretty scared before I saw her. I don't know why. I felt like I was talking to my parent or something. And I was going to get yelled at.

Marlene p. 1-35 / 3-106

It was like, "How are you doing emotionally? Are you able to cope?" [after the car wreck and death of a best friend]. He was like "I hope you're doing better and

you can handle the workload this semester.” I was like, “I think I can do it,” and he was like “Okay, *I’ll keep on checking on you and make sure you’re doing what you need to be doing.*”

Joy p. 4-173

So I just walked down there [to the advising center] real quick, walked in. She was like, “Hey, Michelle!” *She remembered me*, which was awesome. And I was like, “Yeah, you know, this thing with the professor, that policy really helped, and he’s gonna let me retake it.” *She was really excited for me*. And she was writing on my file just to make note of what we had talked about, and she was doing something else—oh, double checking on the classes that I had registered for, so that I could get that little nod. During the course of sitting in her office for the five minutes, she started, she told me a story about how when I had called her ... that she already knew where to go, what policy to find, what book to look in. And it just *showed her expertise*, kind of. I didn’t even have to finish my sentence; I didn’t have to finish the story. And she *already knew what I was gonna need and where to find it*. ...it’s just clinch. She does things when it’s necessary. It’s good.

Michelle2 p. 12-511

Yeah, ‘cause he [advisor] said he went and looked through all my stuff and went and looked at my classes from back in my <previous university> when I left with a 3.5. And that’s why he thought, this was a completely weird fluke that I’d gone from a 3.5 to a 1.0. So he *had done some history work on me*.

Lucy2 p. 10-451

I was a little nervous because I remembered the advisor from before. I don’t remember her name but she was very formal and so I wasn’t real comfortable with her. And then I went in to speak to Advisor Eight and I was surprised that she’s so young, probably late 20s or early 30s. So I went in and just kind of told her “This is what I’ve been doing. I’ve been working for the past 5 years; I’ve been going to community colleges so I really want to come back. I don’t know if I want to finish my <current> degree or if I want to switch over to journalism or photojournalism. I’m not exactly decided but this is what I’ve got planned out for the next semester, so what do you think?” And she said, “This looks good. You’re definitely going to need this, and if you continue with <this degree> this is what you will need to get done.” A lot of it was stuff I already knew from doing the degree audit online, so we just kind of went through what I needed to get done and she checked off everything and told me you need to register and all that, and it was *real easy and real informal*. Not real “This is what you have to do!”

Jessica p. 8-331

He said, I was looking for the reaction on his face, but he said, “You’re doing well, but we just want to make sure if there’s anything, just make sure.” Because he said, “We know you can do well, but we want you to do your best.” That really kind of *motivated me* to go check it out.

Sewwy p. 9-11

For some students, they emphasized the importance of being able to relate to the advisor. These advisors were either currently graduate students or quick to recall their personal stories as a student while advising.

She really kind of *came down to my level* and really explained things step-by-step, suggested a fair amount of classes. Every time they print out your degree audit and what classes you need to take ... she would list out good classes for me to take. I just really *felt like she listened to me*. I think it was just that she felt more like she was a student, kind of *on my level*, than an adult standing over me saying, “What are you doing?!”

Spring p. 4-161

She’ll say, “I had a hard time with this when I was in school.” If I have a question about teachers and I’m saying, “I don’t understand what this teacher wants and how does she expect me to answer.” And she’ll say, “When I was teaching, this would happen so maybe you should just talk to her and that’ll clear it up for her, because students sometimes bring things up to me and maybe be better for the whole class.” So, she *brings things in from her own experience*.

Chompers p. 6-272

We talked about some football. He, played football here - walked on. And I was trying to walk on at the same time, so he was ...talking to me about that...

Leroy p. 6-48

Above and Beyond. There were a few specific advising experiences where the student really thought that his/her advisor had gone beyond the typical advising responsibilities. These stories certainly made an impression on the student and reassured him/her that there was a university person watching out for her/him.

The first advisor I talked to, he was very helpful. ... He made the effort to call me in the mornings; *he gave me a wakeup call for about a week*. He said he’d never done anything like that, but he was willing to give it a shot to help me get started on the right foot.

Stewwy p. 2-36

It made me feel nice, because it's such a big university you don't expect your advisor to come see you when you get in an accident. They were really nice. They *came to see me [in the hospital] and make sure to bring me stuff* and told me not to worry about my classes until I get back. They were really helpful making sure I talked to someone in the Dean of Students and everything.

Joy p. 3-134

He *gave me like a time management calendar* kind of thing and I tried to do that ... He was trying to give me like a study schedule where I would like study from this time to this time every week and stuff...

Nicole p. 6-241

One student who was dealing with severe mental health challenges was working so closely with her advisor that the Dean of the college gave the advisor authority to determine the student's progress relative to her capabilities and academic standing.

Because of financial aid, you're required to take a certain number of classes; even on probation, you're required to take a certain number of classes. Last semester I'd have been better off taking fewer than 12 hours; so this semester, after I was approved, *the Dean told my academic advisor that she could pretty much make up the rules of my probation*. So, I'm just taking 9 hours now.

Chompers p. 4-140

Unconstructive

Other advising experiences of the students on probation were not so agreeable and positive. Two students individually told me that the specific reason they volunteered to participate in the study was to tell about the horrible advisors with whom they have been subjected. These students told of such upsetting experiences that they hesitated to go back to anyone. The negative encounters ranged from very impersonal, hurried appointments to feelings of being discounted and sternly judged. Other experiences were not so much about the interaction between the student and advisor; they dealt more with advisors who gave erroneous information to the students.

Generic. Students who felt like a number during their advising session expressed their lack of connection with the advisor and the university. Typically the incident felt hurried and

impersonal, where the advisor was doing very little in the way of helping the student beyond the bare basics. Some students felt that they were discounted and treated coolly by virtue of their probationary status.

I was just a number to them [advisors], just some little girl who was having issues in her life and needed to get over it.

Spring p. 10-448

Where it's, even when you are in there [an advising appointment], I'm like, "Well, how much time do I have?" Because I know he's got a crazy amount of appointments; and I'm just another, I'm probably the fiftieth person he's seen this week. And so ... does he really have my interests in mind, or is he just, I'm gonna help you knock this out and...next person, next person. You know, where it's just really the job.

Leroy p. 16-3

I just felt like I was doing a survey [students on probation academic contract] because I was doing a survey. He [advisor] didn't reiterate or it wasn't the fact that, "The reason why you're here is because you're on academic probation." It was, "Okay, you're on academic probation, but so what, you'll live. Now this is what you need to do." And that was it.

Summer p. 12-526

Like everything that he pretty much helped me with, I could have looked it up and spent 10 minutes on the university website and found it. Like if I came in with a question, he would just start looking it up on the internet and then just like hand me a piece of information.

Nicole p. 8-334 / 11-489

I talked to the <college> people at the very beginning of fall semester. I mean you have to go in and sign the paperwork thing [grade contract] and they asked me that [why are you on probation] and I told them why. And, I mean, it's in their computer system. They could look and read about what happened the previous semester. And they *didn't once mention* the retroactive [drop] and I think that would have been something nice to say. And *they also didn't tell me* if I were to be ... get the letter of dismissal, that I can appeal that. Like all those things that are vital to know, I learned through the counseling center.

Cecilia p. 9-384

... he just *doesn't get the bigger picture*. He sits in his little office and fills out his little papers and that's the way the counseling session goes. He *never made eye contact*; he's looking at the desk the whole time. "How ya doing? Good, good, good, okay, okay." And that was the end of that. I could have handed him a piece of...in fact, I did one time, just to test him, a piece of paper with someone else's name on it. It went all the way into my record, got put into a drawer and

filed away before I ever said “Hey sir, that wasn’t my name on that paper; those aren’t my grades; those aren’t my classes; that’s not my teacher: ...it’s that bad. So the *sessions weren’t particularly helpful or poignant* at all.

Michelle p. 2-33

They really *said the same stuff*... It was kind of the same thing ... It kind of *feels the same way each time* [at each advising appointment]. I don’t know if I’m indifferent, but I always have the feeling that when I leave, my success depends upon me...

Stewwy p. 8-9

Nicole was in a semester-long Freshman Interest Group (FIG) led by her academic advisor.

Although the FIG met once a week, the advisor still could not seem to remember her.

I don’t know how many students he advises; I’m sure it’s a lot. But every time I come in, he would be kind of like, “And you’re Nicole, right?” and I’m like, “Yeah.” So he wouldn’t like – he *never really remembered my name or my situation*. He would always pull up my grades and pull up my information [on the computer]. I think if he had made a more like personal connection and actually could remember you and be like, “Oh, how are things going,” without having to pull it up online, then you would feel a little more comfortable with him also. But it wasn’t ever really like that.

Nicole p. 15-674

Negative Energy. Some of the student experiences revealed rudeness, minimal respect, and even more judgment. Students mentally relived these experiences as they conveyed them during the interview, including the associated pain and anger. Several students shed tears during the interview as they talked about these advising experiences. The stories strongly communicate condescension, disregard, and disdain.

You have to see them [advisor] again [when you are on probation]. And he said you need to take a natural science and then he suggested geology... And he said, “You should probably take one of these two,” and he gave me two courses. I ended up taking one; and I ended up dropping it because I wasn’t doing very well in there. And I went to talk to an advisor, *who I will never ever talk to again*. I talked to him about it. I said, “I really need to drop this class.” He was like, “Well, why did you take this class?” I said, “Because whoever I talked to last time recommended it to me.” He’s like, “What’s your major?” And I said, “It’s undecided.” And he said, “This is only for geology majors.” And I was like, “Well, that would explain why I’m having a tough time in here.” He was like, “I can’t believe you bothered to take this class.” And *got on me like my father, like*

yelling at me and telling me I was stupid, and I actually left in tears. I called my mother and they told me to sue the school. I was really, really upset with him.

Spring p. 3-104

I looked at him crazy, cried, argued, eventually I just tired ... I quickly realized that he wasn't, or I felt like, *he wasn't fully 100% about me.* So I just, after about the middle of it, I just let him talk. I was like, "Just sign my paper so I can go home." And that's what he did ... telling me what I couldn't do, what I shouldn't do. *He made it about him more than making it about me* and having a genuine concern and care for me – he had the attitude that he was doing me a favor, or I felt like he had an attitude that he was doing me a favor, like, "You're lucky that you got me, cause I signed your paper." And that was not positive. That was *very prideful*, I thought.

Summer p. 2-91 / 13-597

Maybe if I was a better student, then I would probably see him in a different light. But I guess because of the grades I have, I feel like he – *I don't know if he like kind of gave up on me and that's why he only gives 5 minutes to me* or whatever. But I don't really see him as supportive if he's only going to give me 10 minutes a semester. You have to go to him – I mean you get as much out of it as you put into it, but I really don't get anything out of the 5 minutes I'm there; so I don't really make an effort to keep going.

Nicole p. 14-595

Cecilia explained how she was raised by her grandmother for many years. During the semester that her GPA severely dropped, she had emergency surgery mid-semester. Shortly thereafter, her grandmother passed away. The death occurred after the last university deadline to drop a class for the semester.

She [grandmother] was in Houston. And then this part really just upsets me, because when I went to do the retroactive medical withdrawal and they denied it, I went back in and I just wanted to know why and everything. And they told me. I said, "Yes, but I wasn't planning on my grandmother passing away. I mean I made the decision before not to drop the semester but I didn't know that [grandma's death] was going to happen." The academic advisor I talked to said, "Well, the thing about it is, we look at deaths and everything, it's something serious; but *you're just at that age where grandparents die.*" I couldn't believe that she said that.

Cecilia p. 5-226

Lacking Knowledge. A final issue related to students' negative experiences with their academic advisors is misinformation. Receiving wrong information was not as frequent as the episodes of students receiving generic and minimal information; however, the students who were wrongly advised spoke with hesitance about revisiting their advisor.

And then, very unsatisfied with the third one [advising meeting] ...but then I think *he didn't understand the process* for that school [college] well enough or didn't understand the class schedule well enough where *he couldn't advise me what I need*. "What's my next step?" Um, and then I didn't feel I was getting very good advice and all that. Right now, I think I'm taking a class I've already taken before...

Leroy p. 12-26 / 5-18

One student who was consistently dissatisfied with her advisor believed one reason he was not knowledgeable was because he was out of touch.

I was *taking some of the wrong classes*. Like I didn't finish all my basics and I started taking like more <major-specific> classes that should have come later on after the basics. I took math two before I took math one. ...I think he's been at the university for a long time, and he knows a lot of stuff. But it's more like he knows how to find it on the internet or how to find a phone number. *He really doesn't know the advice to give any more...*

Nicole p. 1-13 / 15-640

Conclusion

The students had many different advising stories to tell with many different advisors. Some experiences were more satisfying and beneficial. The spectrum of the positive experiences included basic, routine advising appointments on one end and impressive, above and beyond at the other end. The dynamics along that spectrum included caring, motivating, informative, and accepting.

The other dimension of the students' advising experiences was much less helpful and potentially harmful. Generic appointments pushed students in and out quickly with no personal connection. These episodes could potentially describe a lazy advisor or an advisor who is over-loaded. Another component of the negative experiences involved advisors who did not know

enough about the department or university or who had inaccurate information. This bad advising costs students time and money and inhibits the development of a relationship. The dynamics of these negative advising sessions are impersonal and non-caring, uninformed and unaware, rude, judgmental, and condescending.

Theme Three: Causes of Probation

<p>Theme Three: Causes of Probation Categories: Nonacademics Subcategories: Mental Health Family Finances and Work Categories: Inexperience and Unpreparedness Subcategories: Transition Lacking Skills Partying</p>

Table 8: Theme Three

During the interviews, the students could not help but talk about the reasons and causes that contributed to their academic probation. As new, young adults, the students struggled with balancing life and school. Life as an undergraduate student was different than a high school student. Responsibilities related to family and finances changed, as did personal responses to those stresses. In addition, their lack of experience in college and their lack of preparedness with college procedures and curriculum were problematic. Study skills, procrastination, and taking advantage of resources were constant issues.

Nonacademics

All of the students wrestled with some sort of nonacademic issue; and many students struggled with multiple nonacademic problems. The primary nonacademic issues mentioned by the students were related to family problems, financial struggles and work demands, and mental health challenges. The students had difficulty balancing competing demands and handling additional responsibilities and obstacles.

Part of the reason I didn't want to withdraw [after emergency surgery and then grandma's death] is because I was living on campus, so I didn't know that when you do that, withdraw... do you have to leave campus? *I didn't have any place to live and I'm putting myself through college, and it's really hard.*

Cecilia p. 3-120

Mental Health. One of the most difficult and elusive nonacademic problems was the mental health challenges. Admitting and understanding that there was a problem was difficult. Then, finding the energy to seek help was even more taxing.

... it wasn't like last semester, which the bottom fell out, *the bottom had been falling out for awhile.* I had somewhat of a *breakdown* maybe not last fall but the fall before... I ended up taking a medical withdrawal from school then.

Summer p. 1-43

I came here and had a really, really rough semester. *And I became severely depressed and had to go on medication* for it and I'm good now, but that entire semester, killed me. I would basically *sleep just 18 hours a day.* And not go to class, and not feel like going to tests.

Lucy Love p. 1-8 / 2-66

Oh, I was sure I had *depression.* But it kind of...the depression kind of came from not doing. You know, it kind of, like, feeds on each other. You know, so I don't know if I was depressed first and then started doing bad or if I was depressed because I was doing bad or depressed 'cause I was kind of in a new city and kind of new and trying to find my place so...

Jenny p. 14-36

...when all the anxiety was first hitting me I didn't understand any of it and it seemed like why am I so not in control of my life and being able to get to school. Because everyday I'd think I'm going to go to school today and then I don't. ...When I get anxiety, I get really tired.

Chompers p. 10-414

Family Issues. The students also described family obligations and problems that they faced. Being called away from campus during final exams was one problem; however, struggling with continuous troubles semester after semester was a much larger burden to balance.

Oh, then ... one of my classes, I missed a final exam I wasn't able to make up, which caused a poor grade in the class. [*had to leave early for a family emergency*]

Leroy p. 10-40

My parents separated for the second time. It will be three years this June. So, I guess that was my sophomore year, right after I'd gone back to school for my third semester. My mom became extremely vulnerable; my dad kind of disappeared into the world. I have two younger brothers; one is three years younger than me, and one is eight years younger than me. I moved home my sophomore year, since I didn't do well and I was out of school anyway. So I was at home while all this was going on, and *I felt like I had to be the mother and the father* and the cook and the person who cleaned and the person who was going to school and everything. ... I became a mother, essentially, because she was emotionally messed up and gone. So I was kind of *by myself*.

Spring p. 12-508

I did well; then I did okay; and then I started having problems. *My mom was sick, she's still sick.* ... My father died when I was very, very young; so I'm kind of the only person she can turn to. One thing led to another and my *heart wasn't in it*.

Dropout p. 3-53

Finances. As mentioned in Chapter Two, going to college creates many costs. The most obvious financial costs for the student include tuition, fees, and room and board. Although students may work to help pay for college, they also may work to escape from college.

I was going to take all of my classes on Tuesday and Thursday and I worked Monday, Wednesday, Friday. I thought that would be a good schedule. It would

keep me busy. But I soon learned that it was a *horrible schedule*. ... Also on the weekends, *I also had another job*, so I would work then. And so I *didn't have time to do my [school] work*.

Marlene p. 1-16/28

Freshman semester I would like to blame it on partying, but I really didn't. I just worked at a law firm where we only worked 8:30-5:30, and my classes of course were 8:00 am, because I was a freshman, and that was horrible, because I thought college was going to be, you know, make your own schedule and go to whatever class you decide you want to go to. *I just really didn't want to go to class, so I worked a lot instead*. I probably went to about 50% of my classes, and I made a 1.5, which I was really impressed with, considering I didn't do anything.

Spring p. 1-18

For some students, the various nonacademic issues intertwined and blurred the lines of causation. Summer struggled with the demands of working and balancing her other responsibilities, including her schoolwork. She ultimately could not do it all anymore; hence, her mental health became an additional setback.

The whole time I've been at <the university>, *I have had two jobs* and worked and gone to school and its something I have to do because my family can't afford to... I just *got physically tired*. Once my body broke down, then my *mental [capacity] broke down*. It was emotional and I was in bed for like 2 weeks.

Summer p. 1-45

Inexperience / Unprepared

Transition. Adjusting and transitioning to the university were difficult for both students coming straight from high school and ones transferring from another institution of higher education. Even with forewarning, students still were surprised by their challenges in adjusting. Learning how to adjust to the expectations of college was difficult.

I don't ever remember having an issue with studying or anything like that in high school. *When I got to college, that wasn't necessarily a good thing because I realized my study habits were horrible*. And maybe it was part me that I didn't seek out help once I realized "Okay, I don't know how to study." I didn't really seek out help but I don't know. I've just always been hardheaded that I can handle anything.

Summer p. 6-244

In high school, it was so easy. I think I did my homework for one class in the class after it, and never opened the book outside of school.

Spring p. 1-26

I was having a lot of problems for a lot of different reasons. *I don't think I was very prepared for college* so when I got here it was pretty rough the whole beginning of college.

Chompers p. 1-4

I had some bad grades and then, um, miscommunication with a dropped class. Which right now I have an F I'm trying to appeal. ... *It was partially transition to a different school.*

Leroy 1-46/50

Lacking Skills. Inadequate study skills, inadequate time management skills, and the inability to prioritize and balance responsibilities also contributed to the students' academic challenges. With problem areas such as procrastination, the students knew what the problem was but just could not overcome it. With other troubling issues such as study skills, the student did not necessarily realize or fix the problem until too late.

...my high school was really, really easy. So it was kind of like *I wasn't really prepared* for the work that I was gonna have to put into this.

Jenny p. 16-18

Pretty much the most important thing I have to continue to figure out... A lot of it is about *procrastination*. It's not just, oh I don't feel like doing this, but I get such anxiety about doing things that even little things make it impossible to do big things. If I don't study then I don't want to go to school the next day because I'll be unprepared and what if the teacher calls on me, and things like that. Then that *leads to being unprepared for the test* and I stay up all night for the test and then that's not taking care of any other classes. So, I have to try to fix that however I can and do the schoolwork.

Chompers p. 4-187

I was involved in rowing. So, I never really done it before, and it took up lots of time. I was signed up for lots of classes, a lot of core classes at the same time. ... *practice took like four to five hours out of the day, out of the studying time.* So I wasn't able to get like as much studying as I probably could've/should've gotten done.

Kathy p. 1-9 / 1-20

I ended up *finding out the night before* that I had to take a Russian test.
Michelle p. 5-148

Like, *not knowing that, maybe, yes, I have to go to class everyday and just kind of learning the time management things*, I think, was the big deal. And I was just a little *overwhelmed* being here and having...being in such a wonderful city and having so many other things to do. So that's what initially got me onto probation.
Jenny p. 1-18

I will be like really involved with something and then I get spread too thin. And a lot of that like – a lot of my freshman year that was a big problem, 'cause I was in a student group with my church and everything. And then I was like in other small groups and then it all got kind of spread too thin. And I wasn't like studying enough or I didn't have my priorities straight; and so instead of going and studying for a test that I had in a couple of days I would go to a meeting ... I met a lot of people and I felt connected in that way, but it *got so exhausting* that I had to get out and then it ended up being the complete opposite, it had an adverse affect anyway. I was in a sorority, but I got in late.
Nicole p. 10-444

...every time I go into a course I'm like, I'm going to ace this course, like I can do this and blah blah blah. And then I do it for two or three weeks, and then I get *lazy*. And I'm like, I'm not going to read today. Then I go to the next one, and I'm like, "Man, I have to read double; but I don't really want to read today." I'll read a little bit, you know, and things get further and further behind.
Spring p. 10-422

The student's inexperience in college and insufficient skills to prioritize also affected his/her class attendance. Not comprehending the importance of daily class attendance was problematic for a student and his/her grades.

The semester that I went on probation ... that semester I was taking 15 hours and basically *just didn't go to class*. Like the geology class I took, I know the big reason I failed that was because *I never went to lab*. It was an 8:00 a.m. lab and I didn't even realize we had a lab final; so I never took the lab final. I took the regular final and they were announcing "Okay the results for the lab final will be up here," and I knew I was doomed on that one and that was the semester I made 2 Ds and 3 Fs.
Jessica p. 1-8

I wake up every day with the goal to go to class...Sometimes I don't find classes useful, sometimes I'm too busy, sometimes it's because I'm tired...whatever it is,

my biggest challenge is going to each of the classes I'm scheduled for...that's every day, every week my goal.

Michelle p. 16-466

I just feel like I was 'where's Waldo'. I'm out there, and nobody's going to notice if I'm not. *Nobody's going to notice if I'm not in class*; so who cares?

Spring p. 13-594

Partying. For a few students, their prioritization put school below partying. They participated in lots of activities and socializing, causing school work and class attendance to suffer. A typical routine of the partying students involved late nights out and then sleeping until time for work or the next party.

Even though I made really good grades, I really didn't, like I said, I didn't really like school. It was boring. So I was like, well, maybe I can get the best of both worlds, and I transferred out to Colorado to a ski town. And my grades there were F, F, D, F. Um, I might have gotten an A in English. I don't know. But *I skied*. There was a bus that picks you up right from the college and took you right to the mountain.

Roxie p. 1-43

I was just, basically, *partying too much and sleeping too much*.

Jenny p. 10-16

Conclusion

Students do not attend college in a vacuum; hence, they are not only learning to adjust and transition to a new way of life that lacks structure and parental supervision, but they must also learn to handle and balance all aspects of life. Working and managing finances interfered with schoolwork, as did family problems and mental health traumas. In addition, learning to navigate college was a chore. Most students found that they struggled with the transition to college and were completely ill-prepared for the academic demands involved. Temptations such as partying and working as an escape from school were not monitored by parents; hence, they evolved into routines and bad habits. Students on probation typically found themselves in that situation for a number of reasons. Usually students were not just dealing with

one contributor but multiple reasons leading to academic probation. Once on probation, how the students handled the situation determined their future academic success.

Theme Four: Connection to the University

<p>Theme Four: Connection to the University Categories: Wearing the School Colors Subcategories: Out of the Classroom Prestige Finish What I Started People Power Categories: Professors Subcategories: Need? Need! Categories: Hot – Cold Categories: Cut the Losses Subcategories: Lost in the Shuffle</p>
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Table 9: Theme Four

In considering the concept of retention, the participants were all asked about their connection to the university. The student answers were strongly influenced by the placement and context of this issue in the interview. If the student was describing some negative aspect of his/her undergraduate experience, such as a bad advising experience or the cause of his/her probation, the comments concerning the university were negative. If the student was talking about more upbeat and positive issues, then the connection to the university was typically positive. This tainting of the comments required the issue of connection to the university to be broached a couple of times throughout the first interview and confirmed in the second interview.

Wearing the School Colors

Out of the Classroom. Working on-campus, seeing the school advertised on people's shirts and hats all over town, school spirit bubbling with every athletic event, and living in a wonderful city were all huge contributors to connecting the student with the university.

...when I got back here this first semester, I went and *bought a <university> hoodie.* So I *have <the school colors> all scattered along the floor* in my apartment from all my <university> stuff now. And I have a little *university sticker on the back of my car.*

Lucy p. 7-312

Yeah, *I love the university.* I love the city and university. The university took me back in. Yeah. Plus we're like...we're the <athletic champs> and you know, I'm still a partier at heart. Go <Team>! *I'm proud to graduate from this school. And my parents are proud, too, and that makes me happy.*

Roxie2 p. 25-1139

I've lived in this city since <middle school>, so that's been about 10 years now. The very first time I ever did anything at the university was in 7th grade when I went to a basketball game and *heard the fight song and got chills,* and that was it. ... Then going to the football games in high school and just being in the athletic area, I think it's a beautiful campus; but I love the city. *I would not want to live anywhere else.*

Spring p. 8-350

I live close to campus. I see it everyday, seeing a lot of people everywhere with <university> shirts on or people that I know. ... *I work up here* for the drawing department. So I do modeling for them and stuff like that. It's just *nice to just kind of see it all over the city.*

Jenny p. 6-24

Prestige. Not only did the out of the classroom activities stir support, but the students also talked about the academic reputation and prestige of the institution. They were pleased that the university had so much to offer outside of the classroom. In addition, they believed that those opportunities gave their degree more regard.

I'm going to be really happy to get my degree because of how *prestigious...* I guess I feel the connection of <the university's> *reputation...* I've been here for

several years and it's *feels like home*, but I don't know... I want to be in the alumni association and stuff...

Spring2 p. 11-472

I think because it's [graduation] getting closer, and there's a lot of talk now, now that it's closer, about people *complimenting* the fact that you're graduating, not just graduating but from <the university> - that <the university> is *a reputable school* and all this stuff. I applied here...it was the only school I applied to, so I didn't have any idea that it was difficult to get in, that I was risking, whatever. I'd had absolutely no idea. And now I think I kinda get it. Also, *accomplishments* at <the university>... We had one of our professors just got a Pulitzer Prize. There's something to that, that I was in that guy's class and my knowledge was certified by him. You know?

Michelle2 p. 25-1127

I go here, and I'm spending my entire summer here and fall, spring. And then I'm hoping to go on *this Study Abroad thing, which is an amazing opportunity* ... So I'm hoping to do that. But there's no other school in the state that would allow you to do that. So I feel more connected to the university and glad that I'm going here. ...There's so many summer abroad and just abroad chances here for any class. You wouldn't even think that there would be a class like that where you could just go and swim in the Great Barrier Reef, and there is. And so I'm glad that I go to this university for stuff like that.

Lucy2 p.19-824

One student appreciated multiple connections to the university, through the unmistakable school spirit all over the place, through her academic major, and also through her friends and her professors. Jessica felt strongly connected to the university prior to her dismissal. Now, coming back as an older student, her strong connection remained but was evident through different avenues than before.

I've always felt connected to the university because I was *born wearing the school colors and singing the school song*. From a little bitty kid, I knew how to do cheers; so *I've always felt like this is my school*. But now that I'm here, I think I do feel...I don't know if I feel more connected now than I did before 'cause with the sorority, we were real active and did a lot of stuff on campus and went to the rally and all the little campus activities and that kind of thing. And now I don't get to go to as many of those. *I feel more connected to my <major department>* as opposed to just the university in general. 'Cause I've always felt like I'm a <Bobcat>. I've always been a <Bobcat>. But now I feel like I'm really kind of a part of my major department. I know the professors, a lot of the professors know who I am. I know who a lot of the students are, we have the same classes together.

I kinda know who's doing what, who's interested in what. I think that's more what I'm feeling is connection to my <major department>, not necessarily the university.

Jessica2 p. 16-707

Finish What I Started. For the most part, all of the students wanted to be at and stay at the university. They believed they deserved to be here and did not want to give up. It was very sentimental to hear the students that have already experienced dismissal to talk of wanting to finish what they have started.

Well, my thing is *I started something; I wanna finish it.* It's not so much that, I actually think UT is a very prestigious school; so, that's another reason that I wanna graduate from there, but it's mainly that I started there so I wanna finish it.

Marlene2 p. 14-639

...then when I decided I was going to the university [after dismissal and staying out for 5 years], because I was still wavering about going to <North University> or coming back here and I finally decided, "*You know, I started there and I'm going to go back there and finish it up.*" I don't want to be the only one in my family to not graduate from the university.

Jessica p. 6-275

And then the more I thought about it, the more *I realized that this is what I wanted.* This is what I wanted to do since I was three years old. I can't just give up. And then five years down the road be like, "Man, why didn't I just go back?"

Lucy p. 4-168

It really didn't hit me until I was looking back ... because I really feel now that *I deserve to be here.* I feel that I have the talent, the drive, and motivation to be here.

Stewwy p. 5-7

People Power. A main connection for most of the students in the study to the university was their relationships: friends, student organizations, and advisors. Even students who professed to not having much school spirit and were sort of indifferent to the university in general believed that the people were what tied them to the community.

...before I was on academic probation, I didn't see any relationships, any connections with the university besides my <special program> advisors. Since I've been on it [academic probation] and since I've talked to some people in the <special program>, since I talked to my <major-specific> advisor yesterday, I see that *there are things that they're [advisors] actually doing to help students who are on academic probation.*

Summer p. 8-341

Well, I guess you have to find what you like about the school and what makes you feel good here, I guess. I mean, athletics was my connection at first, but then I realized I didn't really need it. ... And then I just, *I don't know, get to know people here and, you know, in the dorms and your classes and just, I guess, find a way that way.*

Kathy2 p. 17-752

... a more person-to-person basis definitely helps me feel like I'm a little more connected to the university.

Jenny p. 6-39

I don't have school spirit or anything like that, but I definitely feel like *I've made some really amazing friends that I know that I'm gonna know the rest of my life.* And I met them because of the university. So, in that sense, I guess I feel connected just because of the people that I've met

Cecilia2 p. 14-610

I think *it's just the people* that I'm around that got me back, 'cause there are times I was like, <Scoffs> "I just can't do it here. This...this place just gets on my nerves. I just can't do it. I wanna get out of here." And they were like, "No, Joy, you can't leave us. If you leave, we won't have met you." And they're like...they would try and tell me that if ...it's us. You have to come back for us. And so 'cause of that, I'll come back. 'Cause I know I'll break their heart if I told them I'm not coming back.

Joy2 p. 5-195

Professors

Need? To Need!. The students on probation were mixed when describing their experiences with professors and understanding how and why professor contacts and connections were important. Several students spoke strongly about their connection with their professors; whereas, other students did not feel the need or desire to build such a connection.

It's amazing like how much going to office hours helped. You don't have to tell them [professors] like a whole lengthy story of why you're on academic

probation, but just showing them that you care speaks a lot to them. And its just letting them know that, “Hey, I’m on academic probation and I’m going to try and work my hardest in this class and I want to do my best; and I’m not asking for an A, but just like how I can get a better grade and what things you’re looking for.”

Cecilia p. 17-760

I went and saw one of my professors ahead of time. Talked to him about how I did really badly in the class like the semester before. And *he said any time I needed help I could come talk to him.*

Lucy p. 4-182

I’ve gotten to know quite a few of ‘em [professors]. ...some of my bigger classes where there’s over a hundred students, *I hadn’t gotten to know the professors real well.* I’ve gotten to know the TAs a little bit. But my smaller classes and in <my major> department, *I feel like I could go and talk to those professors at any time, and I have.* You know, I’ll stop by and say hi and talk about whatever’s going on. ... *I feel like I can just go and talk to somebody whenever I wanted to.*

Jessica2 p. 4-162

I talk to one or two [professors]. I’m just not that type of person. *I can’t go in an office and just like sit there* and – I don’t know what to say. ... It seems weird to me and so I’ve never been – I always see the TAs. But if I don’t feel comfortable I just won’t go.

Joy p. 6-236

Even the teachers that were willing to help, I didn’t even talk to them. Once I talked to them that one time [after the car accident], *they haven’t heard from me since.*

Summer p. 1-27

I e-mailed my teacher to ask like how to study for the test. *That’s basically it.*

Kathy p. 9-409

I’ve actually *never spoken to my professors.*

Marlene p. 5-218

Hot - Cold

Several of the students expressed their conflicted feelings of love and hate for the university. This was partially because of academic probation and academic struggles but was also related to the individual student’s overall connection to the institution, in general.

I have had a *love-hate relationship with the university* since I've been here, depending on how the wind blows.

Summer p. 8 – 340

I do [have a connection to the university], but it's kind of like *a hot and cold* thing. It's always changing and stuff.

Nicole p. 10-443

Spring is proud to be getting her degree from the prestigious university; however, she does not necessarily recommend that anyone else attend the institution. She is concerned about submitting someone else to the same trials that she has endured while at the university.

... but *I don't know that I would recommend* anybody coming to school here.

Spring p. 8-361

Lucy used to feel that the university was a terrible place that was against her; however, she had a change of opinion after seeking some help and trying to rectify her previous academic challenges.

It is no longer like the university is the big bad monster trying to kill us all with horrible, horrible grades. It is any other college.

Lucy p. 6-251

Cut the Losses

Lost in the Shuffle. More than half of the students, however, revealed their thoughts of leaving the university and transferring to another institution. They discussed the less desirable aspects of the university and their attraction to other institutions that did not have such qualities. Often the students expressed being overwhelmed and feeling like a number because of the large population of the student body. Others just wanted to attend a place where their GPA was not so low already.

So that's the part that I really don't like at all about the university and big institutions, is that *you can really get lost in the shuffle ...*

Summer2 p. 13-556

When you think *you're just a number*, which is easy to do especially here with 35,000 or more students, it's *easy to get lost*.

Michelle p. 2-56

Personally... *I feel like totally just a number*.

Spring p. 8-355

I kind of thought about it for a while. *I thought about maybe doing a smaller university*.

Jenny p. 6-6

Ah, maybe I should not go back [to the university]. I could go back to <North University>. And I hated it in that town. *So, it was that bad that I was thinking that I could go back to <North University> and be sort of happy. But at least be getting decent grades.*

Lucy p. 6-264

Roxie stated that if she could not graduate in the next semester, she would not return to the university. She was worried about missing out on life because not only would her boyfriend be starting graduate school far away soon but also her parents were moving.

No, not now [would not return to the university if graduation wasn't in December]. Not now. *There's too much going on in my life that's so exciting that I feel like I would miss out on moving, on when I need to move on. I can push it [moving on] back to December, but I feel like if I were to wait 'til next May, it would be...not only would everyone be gone but the boyfriend would've moved on, you know. My parents would've retired up to Seattle, and I'd still be here pursuing a degree when ... No. No.*

Roxie2 p. 17-742

While Nicole did decide to take a semester off from the university, she attended the local community college where she took some of her basic core classes. The semester away was a time for her to reprioritize and regroup. After her semester on dismissal, she was planning to return to the university and she wanted to be better prepared for her return.

It's a lot slower paced, a change of environment and everything; but it's given me a chance to get my priorities straight and like actually getting down to it and studying and stuff like that. It's not that bad, being like my basics, I guess you can get the basics from anywhere, but it's a lot slower paced so I have time to get organized, I guess.

Nicole p. 6-273

Conclusion

The students felt varying levels of connection and loyalty to the university. Most of the students felt honored to be a student at this institution and regarded their eventual bachelor's degree with high esteem. They also were connected by the components of higher education that occur outside of the classroom, such as athletics, school spirit, and support of the city. Students

who were not necessarily interested in athletics were still buying the school colors and clothing to show off their pride for the institution. Probably the biggest connector for all of the students was the people. Friends, classmates, coworkers, and staff personnel were all named.

Not all students cheered for the school colors. A couple of students talked about their inconsistent attitude towards the university. They described it as hot and cold. Many students considered transferring to other institutions for numerous reasons, but ultimately they decided to stay. Some of the students spoke of leaving the institution. Nicole was the only student in the study who was attending a different institution because of her one-semester dismissal from the university, but she had already reapplied in order to return when her one semester was over. Regardless of perceived connection to the university, the students explicitly talked about wanting to finish what they started. Although other institutions were appealing in some ways, they could not compete with the pride and reputation associated with this university.

Theme Five: Probation Fallout

<p>Theme Five: Probation Fallout Categories: Losses Subcategories: Personal Financial Categories: The Only One Categories: Social Mirror Categories: Wake-Up Call</p>

Table 10: Theme Five

Academic probation had consequences for all of the students. Most of the consequences were negative and impacted the students accordingly. Personal and financial loses were primary. Students often felt alone, as if they are the only one struggling with the academic probationary status. In addition, students believed that their academic status prompted a change in people's

perceptions and reactions to them. They also experienced greater levels of judgment and visibility related to their academic standing.

Losses

Personal. Individually, the students had a decline in their personal self-confidence as they struggled with the embarrassment, disappointment, and pressure prompted by their academic probation status. They also felt a loss of integrity and personal pride which provoked additional stress. The academic probation status contributed to the students feeling a personal low.

... really just discouraged by the man. And, uh, I just definitely have some issues of pride, so it [academic probation] really like *killed me*.

Cecilia p. 3-117

You report to a place with a certain amount of power and presence and you have it until you give it away, and *I felt like I gave it away. I hurt my image...*

Michelle p. 12-264

I was embarrassed ... it was more internalized. I was embarrassed for myself; I was embarrassed at myself because I know that I am not a student on academic probation, that is not what describes me.

Summer p. 8-335

[getting on probation was a] big disappointment where the first year I wanted to really kick butt here. So it's *disappointing* that I'm starting—'cause I know that first year plays such a big role, and then you're *always trying to catch up* after that. So *a lot of frustration* 'cause I feel like I really worked hard...

Leroy p. 3-18

I felt not good, *devastated*, like, uh, *pretty embarrassed*.

Jenny p. 2-32

I was *incredibly embarrassed*. I still am. That's why I didn't tell any of my friends. I was *incredibly sad*. I *felt like completely hopeless*, basically, and that there was *no way to recover* from that.

Lucy p. 10-436

It's almost more stress for me to be in school than it is for me being out because I know that 2.0 is sitting there. And I know I just need to make above a 2.0 every

semester. It's just like, how much work am I going to have to put into this, or how much am I not. Because it's like I said, *I feel like I'm in the bottom tier of <university> students.*

Spring p. 16-689

Financial. Academic probation also produced difficult financial issues for students to overcome. Typically, they did not want to have a job so that they could focus just on schoolwork; however, without a job, there was difficulty paying for tuition, fees, and room and board. Academic probation caused many roadblocks with financial aid and scholarships. A couple of the students lost their scholarships because of their low GPA while other students lost all ability to get federal or state financial aid.

I'm not really working [at a job] and I've saved up like a whole lot of money, and *worked really hard to save up that money, so I can get off of academic probation.* But from here on out, like after this semester, if I get off of academic probation, like I will be working; so I'm pretty sure I'm not going to graduate in four years.

Cecilia p. 11-496

I can't get financial aid now; so I have to go through a bank loan process and that's not very much fun.

Chompers p. 4-160

I think I'm not...I might not be able to get it [scholarship] back, 'cause my GPA, the way it dropped, even if I made....a good grade, it still won't be able to bring it high enough to make up for whatever I need. 'Cause to get at least half the scholarship back, you need a 2.5.

Joy2 p. 5-223

The Only One

An additional consequence of the probationary status related to feeling like the only one on campus with this negative label. Contrary to the focus group participants, the students who were interviewed all stated that they were aware that they were not the only ones on academic probation at the university. Despite knowing someone who was or had been on academic probation, the students still needed to be reminded and reassured from friends and professors. Friends or family members were often utilized as resources of knowledge regarding probation

and others who have been on probation. Professors and academic advisors provided the verification that academic probation is not uncommon and that it can be a temporary status.

She [ex-girlfriend] had been on academic probation before. So I knew that; so, I wanted to ask questions. Like, when I got the letter about academic probation, I feel like I didn't get any information. Well, what does that mean, now? And then, so she explained ...

Leroy p. 4-20

*A lot of my friends have been on academic probation that have already graduated. And so I kind of know through them, and they've put my mind at ease, because like I know I'm not an idiot and it just ...I don't know, just having the label [of academic probation student] over you, its hard to deal with and *it does feel like you're all alone* or that you're not good enough or not smart enough or whatever.*

Cecilia p. 12-528

I knew before I came to UT, *I knew a guy whose older brother was in a fraternity and had a little bit too much fun.* He was only here a year, year and a half, and then he was gone. And *my roommate was dismissed;* so, no, I kind of felt like I was just half the other people, just struggling my way through. I know everybody did do well in high school who goes to school here.

Spring p. 13-557

I knew that it happened, I just didn't know how often or how many people were on probation or any kind of percentage. I still don't know what percentage of students might be on probation at any given time. That's not something that they advertise, but why would they?

Jessica p. 12-546

... a lot of times, when I first got the academic probation, even though it was only for like five minutes, I was like, "Oh my gosh. That's it. I'm one of those horrible people that got put on academic probation. I'm doing that bad. I'm completely like nobody can help me at this point. Completely, like *nobody else is having trouble like this.*"

Lucy p. 15-667

Summer planned to utilize the knowledge and personal strength that she had gained from her experiences on academic probation to help someone else in the future make sure that s/he did not feel alone.

... the struggles that I've gone through are not so I feel like I'm alone, I'm the only person this is happening to. So, I don't feel like I can't do it. I feel like I'm

going to do it and *I'm going to be able to help somebody else who maybe feels like 'I'm the only person going through all these different things.'*
Summer p. 9-395

Social Mirror

The students alleged that other people's behavior seemed to be more judgmental and negative towards them now that they were on academic probation. They were hypersensitive to this perceived change and believed it occurred even with their academic advisors. To the students, academic probation was regarded as a label which made them highly visible, similar to the scarlet letter. Because of their sensitivity and visibility, many students chose not to tell people about their status, hoping to avoid the ridicule and criticism.

And the verbiage that I'm getting about that is *sink or swim*. You know, *pull yourself out of the hole or hang yourself just enough rope*—that kinda garbage.
Michelle2 p. 4-44

And I don't really like to tell her just because most of my family kinda, they have high expectations of me. So I just felt like, "*Oh My God, I am letting myself down, and my family.*" *So I didn't wanna tell anybody like what I was going through.*
Marlene p. 2-82

I didn't tell any of my friends because they think of me quite highly as a ... I'm the smart one of the group. To be on scholastic probation.... *So I didn't tell any of my friends. Only my mom and my dad know, and me, and then now you. Not ... my brothers don't know. Nobody else knows. They know I didn't do well, but they don't know anything about scholastic probation.*
Lucy p. 6-232

Don't tell anyone. Nobody [in her world knows].
Marlene p. 3-98

I was given the label...it kind of *changed the dynamic*.
Michelle p. 6-168

...people are ... looking at me to see how I do this semester to see whether I should be eligible to continue...
Stewwy p. 13-8

I knew I was like *being looked at really closely*.
Nicole p. 5-185

Wake-Up Call

Opinions about probation were widely varied among the students. Some were more accepting of their situation; however, this generally occurred with students who had been on probation for multiple semesters. They had more time to process.

I've been on probation every semester since the first one; and *it's just a way of life now*, like, okay I'm on probation. It's just a constant like struggle. Okay, this is the minimum GPA I have to meet. And that's kind of where I stick it.
Spring p. 6-239

A couple of students perceived academic probation as a stimulator to working harder. Probation became a motivator of sorts.

It was...it was kind of *like a discouraging motivator*...but still a motivator, nonetheless.
Jenny2 p. 8-357

It sucks. It's like a black cloud looming over your head all the time. But it's sort of *putting the pressure on you to do better in school*. The whole title is just sort of demeaning, I guess, but it does sort of *force you to do better* in school. With me, it was just seeing what my GPA was and wanting to get it a whole lot higher than that.
Lucy2 p. 19-837

Other students were not as accepting or embracing of the idea because they felt that probation was discouraging and disheartening.

It sucks. It sucks because you are in that, you know, *you are in the loser bracket*. *And you're continually...you're fighting uphill*. And you feel like you don't know what you're... you feel like you don't know really what you're doing. ... *It just sucks*.
Dropout2 p. 22-916

The majority of students, however, recognized academic probation as more of a wake-up call or a second chance. The students understood the repercussions of being on probation and they acknowledged that they must work harder and differently to succeed.

Well, I mean, I think it makes sense for somebody. ...it's nice that they give you a chance to try, 'cause it kinda shows that they understand. You know, some people have stuff to do, and it doesn't always go the best as you expect. *So they give you that chance to bring yourself back.*

Marlene2 p. 16-716

It's a wake-up call and if you look at it from the right angle, it can be probably one of the best things that happens to you. Because even though I have all this stuff that academic probation brings, I also have a wake-up call as far as this is why life is hard.

Summer2 p. 14-630

... getting on academic probation has definitely *put me in my place*, I guess. And because I was just like always very driven and I had to make good grades or I was like a failure at life. So getting on academic probation is like, "Hey, look, you will wake up tomorrow and the world is still turning, everything is still going on."

Cecilia p. 16-694

I mean, it just feels like ... I guess kind of like *a slap on the wrists*. Like, "Hey, you need to step it up." But it doesn't really make me feel sad or anything. You can't really dwell on it.

Kathy p. 8-343

I think that kind of *getting the wind knocked out of me* kind of made me *wake up* and go, "Whoa, I can't just coast through this; I have to actually do some work occasionally."

Jessica p. 13-581

...this is only a *heads up*, that if you're going to do something then you need to do it. It's more like you're here for yourself and this is your shot at being successful in life. <This university> is a great school with great resources and this is your shot to really make something of yourself, so heads up you need to do it.

Stewwy p. 15-26

Conclusion

Academic probation had multiple repercussions for the students. On a personal level, the students individually faced several losses. They lost some of their self-confidence and felt very embarrassed and discouraged. Their pride was wounded and they worried about their image. From a financial perspective, the students lost scholarships and other financial aid opportunities because of their low GPAs. Deciding whether or not to have a job was also a major consideration. The students believed that the behavior of other people changed with the student's new academic label. Because they felt very visible and judged, they often chose not to tell people about their academic status in order to prevent additional condescension.

The students all said they knew someone who was or had been on academic probation; thus affirming that they were not the only one. They found comfort in knowing others who also had the probation label; however, they still struggled with feeling somewhat different, possibly dumber, and singled out. A couple of the students put up a good front while describing how this particular university is excessively difficult, causing multiple people to do poorly and land on probation. Regardless, students individually fought with their loneliness and embarrassment related to being on academic probation.

The students' opinions of probation and its purpose varied, but ultimately the students believed probation to be an awakening. Not only had it notified the students that their grades were at risk, but it also provided some motivation. On several occasions, the opinion of probation was bittersweet. Students were appreciative of the warning and the opportunity to improve the situation before getting dismissed. On the other hand, the probation label and the embarrassment and stress that came with the label were not so appreciated and potentially counterproductive.

Theme Six: Build an Advisor

<p>Theme Six: Build an Advisor Categories: Human to Human Categories: Age Debate</p>

Table 11: Theme Six

During the interviews, the students were constantly prompted and encouraged to talk about their academic advisors. Besides talking about specific advising experiences, their commentary included descriptions of personality traits, advising styles, and arbitrary individual preferences. Although it would be difficult to build the perfect advisor because students differ, their situations differ, and their needs differ, there were some qualities that were consistently valued and desired or vice versa. Being comfortable with the advisor was the core component of the impending relationship.

Human to Human

Advisors who treated their students on probation as human-beings with respect and no judgment inspired a comfortable atmosphere. Advisors who were also genuine, engaging, and caring stimulated an even more secure and contented connection. In addition, an informal, laid-back atmosphere was preferred for these undergraduates on academic probation. They did not want to feel as though they were being preached at or treated like children or a number. Most students appreciated an advisor who could relate to them and view them as a student versus a label.

...important in that *the advisor seems human*, instead of just like a staff member of the university. So they've got to be *able to relate*, that's number one. ... just looking for someone they can relate to.

Stewwy2 p. 12-544

The one [advisor] I like *isn't condescending*. She doesn't treat me like a number and she *doesn't treat me like*, "Yeah, you're just another student on academic probation." She's *down-to-earth and realistic and compassionate and treating me like a person*.

Cecilia p. 14-611

I feel *she's very understanding* of things. ... She's *very friendly*...like we're just friends talking about what's going on in the last couple of weeks. *I respect her* as someone who...the sort of relationship where she's the advisor and I'm the student, but I don't feel like I'm the subject.... She's very *understanding, not judgmental*...

Chompers p. 9-371

When she asked me, "Ok, what happened?" And then when I started pouring myself to her, then I just *felt more at ease*, that *she was listening* to me and *she actually cared*. ... *She was just like a normal person*. ... I mean, she listened to me and showed a little bit *concern* over my grades and stuff...

Marlene2 p. 17-776

I do feel motivated afterwards 'cause *she is very calm* about things. You know, it's like I can really...I feel like *I'm a lot more collected* after I see her. She gives me good information ... no beating around the bush

Jenny2 p. 3-143

They've always been pretty *laid back*. I'm a laid back person so I tend to go toward people that are laid back. But they've always been just laid back. ... He *laughed a lot*. He was very – he *didn't make a big deal* out of why we were there. I felt like it was just a regular – like at some point I almost forgot that I was doing a survey because I was on academic probation. It wasn't a big deal; *it wasn't a judgment*.

Summer p. 12-528

He's really *nice*. He's real *laid-back*. He feels like he's *on my level*. I feel like I can *go talk to him at any time*. ... He just kind of hangs out; he's *real casual*, things aren't real formal. I can go there whenever I want. I could probably go in there and hang out if I wanted to, but I haven't done that. ... I mean I feel like if I had a problem I could go in there and talk to him at any point. I'm not intimidated by him at all. I feel like he's on my level. I could talk to him about my parents if I wanted to. I feel comfortable enough to just go in there and hang out and have a soda or whatever. I feel like he is a fellow student or something.

Spring2 p. 8-351

He seems *pretty cool* and he's *also taking classes on campus*; and so he gets it when I talk about how hard classes are and stuff. *He understands*. I'm just comfortable with him.

Joy p. 7-297

First one [appointment] before coming into the summer, I was really excited about him. He's a *really nice guy* and *very helpful* in answering questions and all that. ... Their offices are comfortable and they just seem...they're nice enough ... you call them by their first name. ... *there's not the overpower and intimidation*.

Leroy p. 17-19

And she's been *really, really, really, really great*, yeah.... And I really liked her and...a lot because *she cared*. ... She cares. She really does. She cares. And I tell my friends, "You should just go to Advisor Seven." She's willing to *listen*. And I can't even tell you... she's given me *really great advice* on personal matters; but she's been someone that's been an anonymous, like, third party that was just there so *I can hear myself talk it out* instead of sitting there talking to my cat...even though neither of them may not really say anything. <Laughs> She sits there, and she listens. And you never feel like you gotta go or you need to stop.

Roxie p. 26-1152

He's [advisor] *the reason that I'm here*. The big reason. ... I was planning to come back a year later than I did. He made me come back sooner. I talked to him. He knew my situation, what had happened, the course of events. And we mapped out a strategy to get me back into good standing. ... So he gave me the tools and knowledge in order to get back on course. ... he was very influential.

Dropout p. 5-200

So she maintained, you know, the usual, *unbelievably resourceful status* that she had in my head. ... Open, useful, I don't know, ... a resource. Yeah, I guess the...all the positives.

Michelle2 p. 23-1041

Students also described negative advising qualities and styles that were not desired in an advisor.

With Advisor Twelve, I *felt like I was a little kid being disciplined*. ... at least acted like he cared about what was going on in my life, or not generalizing with everybody else, saying, "Oh well, life happens." He could have smiled and nodded instead of *making sarcastic, rude remarks*. I think they were completely uncalled for, and I think it almost suggests that he's uneducated in the social atmosphere to say something to somebody like that.

Spring p. 4-137/142

Age Debate

There was no clear consensus regarding age and gender preferences of advisors with the students, even though it was discussed and debated repeatedly. The students disagreed with each other and they sometimes even disagreed with themselves.

I tend to probably *take advice from an older person* better than I would somebody who's closer to my age; not that I don't think that it's valid, but just that not only do you have the same experience that I do, but you have the *wisdom* to go along with it.

Summer p. 17-788

I think she's a good age because she's *young enough to remember* being a student real well and then she's been *doing what she does long enough to get good at it*. She's got some experience there.

Chomper p. 7-309

It doesn't really matter. He was *really young*. He was like in his twenties, I think. So it was kind of comfortable, he was still younger and kind of *understood the college thing* I guess.

Kathy p. 6 -246

She acts, *she has a youngness about her even though she's old*. ... She has that student-student and student-mentor relationship to where ... you can come talk to me about other things too... which helps feel...I think it brings the comfort level up a lot.

Jenny2 p. 15-650

It would probably be with someone, *someone a little bit younger*. Like I think he's been at <the university> for a long time and he knows a lot of stuff, but it's more like he knows how to find it on the internet or how to find a phone number. He really *doesn't know the advice to give any more*...

Nicole p. 16-640

Marlene did not have a strong opinion on the age of her advisor; however, she did have a preference for the ethnicity/culture of her advisor. She had a very difficult time getting up the courage to meet with her advisor face-to-face. During the first interview, Marlene reflected that someone with a similar background or Hispanic culture might have made her more open and comfortable seeing an advisor.

I would feel probably I could relate to them [if the advisor was *the same ethnicity and/or culture*]. You know just because the hardship that most Mexicans, I guess have, especially being an international student.

Marlene p. 8 -346

Conclusion

The ideal advisor would vary by student and situation; however, the general qualities that students on probation preferred were relatively consistent. Students positively described advisors as compassionate, understanding, and not condescending. The students wanted to be treated with respect and kindness, like an undergraduate and not a labeled subject. Advisors who were empathetic, accepting, and not patronizing were specifically preferred by students on probation. Students talked about connecting with advisors through comfortable conditions that were conducive to disclosure and acceptance. Although the age of the advisor was frequently deliberated, both young and old were both well supported.

Theme Seven: Frequency and Consistency

<p>Theme Seven: Frequency and Consistency Categories: How Often Subcategories: Once a Month Plus Registration Time Not Even Once a Year Categories: Different or Same</p>

Table 12: Theme Seven

The more the students talked about academic advisors, the more they revealed about their actual contact to advisors. In order to have a relationship with an advisor, there must be the initial contact. The number of communications between a student and advisor varied, with some having a greater frequency than others. Along with variations in frequency, students also experienced variations in who was the advisor. For several of the students, their advising person

changed from one meeting to another. The regularity of appointments was largely the responsibility of the student; however, having some consistency as far as with whom s/he meets was not always something the student could control.

How Often

Once a Month Plus. Some students recognized a need to meet more often with the academic advisor. They believed that an increased frequency of contacts could only contribute to better help and greater benefits for the student.

I think in the fall semester, I was seeing her...at some point, *it was every week and at other times it was every other week.* So far this spring I saw her a whole bunch at the very beginning because I was worried about appealing my dismissal and what classes I was going to take because my loan didn't come through; so my classes got dropped. So I saw her a lot then but it's been every other week. I just saw her last Friday. ... I know I'll be seeing her *every two weeks*; I want to have successes to share with her.

Chompers p. 5-217 / 9-377

Maybe about *once a month or so...* I'd see her in the hallway; and we'd talk or we'd talk in a meeting. She'd ask me, "So how are you doing? Ten hours of B's, right?" And I said, "Yeah, ten hours of B's." So probably about once a month or so that we talked about it.

Jessica2 p. 12-523

Registration Time. Other students used their advisor infrequently throughout the year, primarily for help with university registration and related procedures. Often this meant advising once a semester near the registration period.

I saw him *before the summer and then before the fall.* ... Next week I'm going to set up an *appointment for advising.* I'm trying to decide whether I'm gonna do summer classes or not, so I was waiting to decide that and then go...

Leroy p. 5-41 / 7-39

I've gone a couple of different times. I went in *between fall and spring* in the break somewhere in there. And I went *this past summer* because I was taking courses at the community college in the fall and I wanted to make sure I was

going to be able to get back into the university and that everything was counting for what I needed to count for.

Spring2 p. 5-222

Not Even Once A Year. The rest of the students had minimal contact with their academic advisor over the semesters. In a couple of cases, the student's interview for this study seemed to prompt him/her to make another appointment with his/her advisor.

I didn't talk to anybody this whole time. Over five semesters, besides the advisor who you sit down and say blah, blah, blah, blah...and you're one of 15,000 students in the college.

Dropout p. 3-118

...whenever I first transferred here [2 years ago] I did [sit down face-to-face with an advisor], but since then, no.

Lucy Love p. 1-27

I think *my freshman year* I went [to see an advisor] just for some classes that I had. I had to ask her something. But that was *the only time* I went.

Marlene p. 3-125

No [haven't seen advisor since last interview], I have been meaning to meet with an advisor for the past couple of weeks. I think I might go over there today because it's so close.

Stewwy2 p. 4-180

We talked...last time we talked was when I came in and I was—I *haven't talked to her [advisor] since I talked to you.*

Roxie2 p. 7-280

Summer had not been back to her academic advisor in the college because she had endured a bad advising experience during a difficult time in her life.

So, last semester I didn't talk to an advisor because I still had that animosity or I was still offended or something.

Summer p. 3-95

Different or Same

When students went to see their advisor, some students saw the same person for most of their advising appointments. Other students did not have such consistency and met with a different person every time. Students who preferred having greater stability by seeing the same advisor realized the consistency enables more efficient and comfortable sessions.

It's been *the same person [advisor]*. I went to another person one time during registration just because there was so much traffic... Most of the time I see Advisor One, who is my advisor in <my major>.

Summer p. 10-415

I had academic advising before I set up my schedule every semester. *He's always the one I advise with*; so if I ever had what I thought was a class-related academic issue, he would easily be the first person I would go to.

Michelle p. 7-207

I would like to have had the same advisor all the time. ... I wasn't declared; I was in the college advising center, and you *pretty much never see the same advisor twice*. So it's hard for them to get to know you. ... I actually made an effort to meet with the same lady twice and she didn't remember me, but she sees so many students its crazy. ... When I declared my major, the new advisor told me it would always be her that I got to see, and then I thought she would just get to know me better if I see her more.

Chompers p. 1-7

There's a college advisor that I do like, but I rarely get to speak to her because of the way my last name falls. It seems like *I talk to a different person every time* and I'm telling my story over and over again.

Cecilia p. 4-174

I think if you are *meeting with the same person over and over again*. I know they have so many students to talk to that it's kind of hard to organize that, but it helps.

Stewwy p. 8-19

...it's a little bit *easier for me to talk to people sometimes if they know me*; they kinda know where I'm coming from and stuff, you know?

Jenny p. 8-19

Spring chose to wait for the advisor whom she had seen before as opposed to getting the first available advisor.

So I thought that was how it was supposed to be. *I thought I was supposed to go back and see that person every time.* And I was happy with them... So that's what I wanted to do. I would call to request that, or ask the person when I walked-in, "Can I see so-and-so because that's who I saw before." And I just assumed that everyone wanted to see Advisor Two [because] I waited the last semester I was undecided to see Advisor Two. I was like, "I'm not going to see anybody else in here; he's the only one I want to see. I'll wait this time."

Spring p. 2-86

Conclusion

Students met with advisors at different frequencies and consistencies. A few students met with their advisor once a month or more; whereas, others thought a meeting right before registration was sufficient. Several of the students rarely had any meetings with their academic advisor. The reasoning for the infrequent meetings was not always clear although a few students really did not understand the reason to utilize an advisor. In some cases, the student seemed to be encouraged through involvement with this research study to see an advisor. One particular student spoke of previous negative experiences that had discouraged her from seeking out an advisor again. Nevertheless, the students all seemed to prefer consistency in the advisor with whom they met. Working with the same advisor prevented having to retell a personal, potentially painful story to a new person each time. In addition, having the same advisor prompted a more continuous and comfortable interaction, allowing trust and a relationship to grow.

Theme Eight: Fix It vs. The Cycle

Theme Eight: Fix It vs. The Cycle
Categories: Improvement
Subcategories: In the Works
Subcategories: Got it Going
Categories: Motivation
Categories: The Cycle

Table 13: Theme Eight

Getting off academic probation was a major priority for all of the students. They talked about what improvements they were initiating, the new game plan that they had already implemented, and the issues that they were still working to correct. They also discussed what motivated them to keep going. Since academic probation could be very discouraging, it was crucial to keep the motivation strong. When discouragement began to beat out motivations, the students found themselves getting caught in the cycle of bad habits.

Improvement

...so then when the whole academic probation came I was just like, "Okay, it's *either put up or shut up* now. Let me just figure out what I need to do and look forward now because I can't do anything about last semester."

Summer p. 8-325

Got it Going. To bring their GPA up and work to get off academic probation, the students identified areas in which they needed to work. When the new semester started and the academic probation label loomed, their new plan of action was executed. The students began attending classes all of the time, studying more frequently and more effectively, and focusing on time management and prioritization issues. They realized what they needed to do and then did it.

I *go to class*. I have learned that this ... because bad behaviors take a while to purge out of your system. ... I go to class, *study on the weekends*. I don't think I have ever utilized my weekends since I've been in college.

Summer p. 10- 446/460

I think I'm getting better at it [time management]. I will say that was definitely a problem last semester. I mean it could just be because I'm *working less*, but I think I've kind of *got it figured out and putting priorities on what needs to be done*. ...I've been to all of my *professors' office hours and studied*. I can't even tell you how *many hours [I've studied] for exams*, and still like managed.

Cecilia p. 16-705

I don't really need a lot of money so I can support myself and still make it [without a job]. *Be broke but still make it*. I usually read before the week starts. So I'm always *reading ahead of time and taking notes*. I *attend class* every time, I mean unless I have something to do, it is okay. Like I don't feel that bad because I know I've read. But I make sure that I know somebody there or have somebody's e-mail address. So I can ask them, "Oh hey, I didn't go to class. Can you pass me the notes?" That is pretty much what I've been doing.

Marlene p. 14-609

I started reading. I bought my books ahead of time and I just started reading. And like suddenly, because I'm *on the antidepressants, suddenly I can concentrate*. ... So I just *started reading, getting ahead*, started doing homework when it wasn't even assigned. I went and *saw one of my professors ahead of time*. Talked to him about how I did really badly in the class the semester before. And he said any time I needed help I could come talk to him. So I was like on the ball with that whole thing, got way ahead of myself. I'm still ahead in every single one of my classes. ... I've felt so much better about my classes. I *go to classes every single time*. I feel really secure. I finished test and I'm never like, "Wow, that test really killed me." But more like, "Oh, wow. I did really well on that." So I am a whole lot more confident this semester.

Lucy p. 4-179/5-181/6-251

I guess the biggest thing was in my studying, *studying before, three days or so before the test* instead of waiting 'til the day before. That's what I changed the most is my studying and getting 'em done early. Oh, and I *took an effective reading class*...

Kathy2 9-405

The biggest thing is that I'm *making myself go to class* and making *me sit right down at the very front*, because that way I know the professor knows I'm not there if I don't show up. ... I make sure I'm there every time, because I want them [professors] to connect with who I am. I've *spoken to all my professors* and they know my name and I think that's the biggest thing, is because before the

professors didn't know who I was and I didn't make any effort to make sure they knew who I was, so I really was just another number.

Jessica 14-630

My old friends, I don't hang out with as much because I'm *trying not to party as much* this semester. Uh, *doing my work*. When I was first here, I didn't do anything. So, actually doing something and that pretty much made a statement [that I am capable], I think. If you compare my progress from this year with last year, it's like I'm actually in school this year compared to last year.

Stewwy 2 3-128 / Stewwy p. 6-25 / 7-12

I actually at the beginning of this semester *wrote out a little game*, it's called the Summer Game Plan for Success at the university. And I actually, one night, just went online and *looked at all the avenues that I could seek help from at the university* - going to talk to my <college> advisors more often, going to <program> advisors, going to talk to my <major-specific> advisors more often, going to the university writing center, going to the learning center.

Summer p. 6-252

In the Works. Some of the students did not have their new game plan in full swing and they acknowledged areas in which they still needed to improve. Although the areas to be improved were similar to the previous category, the variation was by implementation timing.

I wake up every day with the goal to go to class. ... Sometimes I don't find classes useful; sometimes I'm too busy; sometimes it's because I'm tired... Whatever it is, *my biggest challenge is going to each of the classes*.

Michelle p. 16-466

...just every semester just *learning better time management, learning that I can go talk to my professor* if I have a question, rather than sitting on it and getting myself worked up about it and pushing it off and then trying to look it up and just stuff like that. ... stepping up and *getting my shit together*. Just *spending more time studying and making sure I'm doing my assignments* that day because even...I let it go a day, then it gets built up and then I get overwhelmed then maybe I'll push it off another day. So just really getting and even, maybe, *doing my whole calendar a little bit better*.

Jenny p. 1-33 /13-15

So just *being more mature* and making the decisions like *fixing my priorities* and *being more organized*.

Nicole p. 16-686

... definitely *make a point every day to do something*. That's one thing about learning that has helped me. Even if it's reading two pages out of the 20 pages you've got to read.

Summer p. 20 – 899

Pretty much the most important thing I have to continue to figure out... A lot of it is about *procrastination*. It's not just, "Oh, I don't feel like doing this;" but I get such anxiety about doing things that even little things make it impossible to do big things. If I don't study, then I don't want to go to school the next day because I'll be unprepared and what if the teacher calls on me, and things like that. Then that leads to being unprepared for the test and I stay up all night for the test and then that's not taking care of any other classes. So, I have to try to fix that however I can and do the schoolwork.

Chompers p. 4 1-87

You know at the beginning of the semester it was kind of standing on new legs because I hadn't been serious about school in a while; so that I had to *figure it out*, and just *getting into a routine*, that was important. And you know everything was pretty much new to me so I had to get used to it.

Stewwy2 13-559

Motivation

Staying motivated was a constant battle for the students on probation. Individually they tried to identify things that would keep up their enthusiasm. Achieving good grades, maintaining a positive attitude, and looking to graduation were all components of maintaining motivation.

It just kinda *made me want to try harder* because you know, obviously on probation you have to do better. So I just changed everything I was doing, like studying and everything. ... Studying more, like the more time I have, the time that I was rowing, I study during that. And then do, focus on classes, I guess, instead of other things.

Kathy p. 3-92

Last semester wasn't perfect but it was a lot better. Getting through that and *knowing that I can get through a semester was good for my confidence* for this semester. And this semester is going really well.

Chompers p. 4-140

Well, just *seeing myself actually succeed at the university is pretty motivating*, knowing that I can actually do it, proving to myself and the school that I can do it.

Stewwy2 p. 3-115

It's gotten a lot higher [motivation]. The possibility of getting A's in all my classes, which I knew in a few of my classes was out of reach, but I was still striving. Well, maybe if I did, like, amazingly well on the final, I'll get an A in the class. So *I've been really motivated to do that*. And I'm still, like, *super motivated to do my organic chemistry really well...*

Lucy2 p. 5-196

I started hitting A's for the first time and really understanding, like, "Wow, this is great!" You know, this is great. And it really is *what carried me through the end*.

Dropout2 p. 4-180

... sometimes I think I *do a little bit better when I have a little bit more pressure on me* 'cause I just know I have to make that deadline. So, I'm definitely getting things done, I guess, more so than I was.

Cecilia2 p. 4-150

Graduate on the same scheduled timeframe, not having to dip down again.

Michelle p. 16-476

The Cycle

When students could not keep up their motivation, they found themselves falling back into bad grades and poor habits. Cecilia described this as being the cycle of probation.

It's like a cycle, cause you're on academic probation and you're trying to get off; but you're really discouraged because you're on it. So then it's hard to keep yourself motivated when you're in this cycle.

Cecilia p. 17-769

All of the students in the study talked of this battle, a fight between discouragement and motivation. The label of academic probation loomed over their heads and inevitably affected their self-confidence and inspiration. Most often, they knew what they needed to do to succeed academically; however, they struggled to keep the enthusiasm and confidence at an appropriate level for their success.

... it was a bumpy semester to begin with and then ... it was *easy to slack off*. ... When you bust your ass all semester and then something stupid happens at the end, and here you are, worrying about if you're on it [probation] again. You know, and, like, because of the identity, you're always worried about it, you're always thinking about it. Yeah, absolutely. *It's definitely a cycle*. It's like the criminal justice system. It's the same situation. *Once you're in it, it's really, really hard to get out*. Yeah.

Michelle p. 3-78 / Michelle2 p. 21-921

You know, it was like *running uphill in sand and just getting... sinking... sinking deeper and deeper and deeper*.

Dropout2 p. 13-592

... *falling back into that groove of not caring and not going to classes* and stuff ... the first of the semester, it was just kind of free and easy, not really doing much and not really worrying about it. And then it took kind of pretty much the second half of the semester that I really started feeling overwhelmed and just feeling uncomfortable being overwhelmed.

Jenny p. 14-27 / 16-38

It helped in the beginning [advisor doing a wakeup call] but *then the same problems got in the way*.

Stewwy p. 2-43

... it came down to being halfway through the semester and the *grades that I had already made were pulling me down so much that it was hard to come back up*. So I figured out what I needed to do pretty much and it was just too late when I did find out. ...It's so hard to pull up your grades and everything else.

Nicole p. 4-170/17-775

'Cause, I mean, *once you're in probation, it's pretty hard to get out of it*. It's not that easy. ...I just felt frustrated; so, I think it pretty much clouded what I really wanted to do and asking for help and all this stuff. I was *just fed up with everything*. I was just like, "Aahh! I'm tired of school; I'm tired of working; and I'm tired of just doing all of this."

Marlene2 8-355 /9-400

I'm going to go to school and do these things. And when I *saw myself back in that same cycle*, I was like, "Oh." So I think part of me *gave up a little bit* toward the middle of the semester,

Summer p. 8-323

I'm telling my parents, "Yeah, I'm going to work really hard on a 3.0 or a 3.5 this semester. And then I take my first set of tests, and they're always kind of lower than I wanted them to be. And I'm kind of like, "Alright, well this is what I absolutely have to do to stay in school; *so this is where I'm going to try and stick it.*" That's how my whole entire college experience has been; so I don't know any other way.

Spring 6-243

Lucy was trying to use the academic probation status as motivation to do better and get off probation. Although she felt conflict, she held hope that she would get off probation and continue to improve.

... it's hard to get off [of probation]; *so you're pretty discouraged. But I'm still really motivated because I'm trying so hard to get off of it.* I'm working harder than any of my friends are right now who have decent GPAs; because I'm trying so desperate to get mine up to where they're at. So, it's discouraging, but I'm using that discouragement as a way to get out of that whole idea of ... 'cause the sooner I get away from scholastic probation, the sooner the hope continues. And it gets better and better.

Lucy2 p. 15-665

Conclusion

Students on academic probation do not want to continue on probation. They typically understood what they needed to do to improve their GPA and attempted a game plan to rectify the situation. While some students immediately implemented new strategies towards their academic success, others took a bit longer to activate a new approach. Nevertheless, the students sought to identify motivational aids to help them keep their confidence and enthusiasm going. Sometimes, motivation occurred when the student made a good grade, successfully completed an assignment, or looked forward to graduation. Keeping the motivation alive was what was important and difficult. Students who lost the motivation found themselves back in the cycle.

Being on academic probation often reduced a student's self-confidence and produced a struggle between motivation and discouragement. All of the students spoke of the cycle and the challenge not to go down that path. For some students, especially those who had been on

academic probation for multiple semesters, the cycle was harder to fight. Raising their GPA was considered an uphill battle.

Theme Nine: Support Sources – The 3 R’s

<p>Theme Nine: Support Sources – The 3 R’s Categories: Relatives Categories: Roommates Categories: Resources Subcategories: On Campus Subcategories: Off Campus</p>

Table 14: Theme Nine

The types of support that students needed varied from academic to personal. Students sought out help from various sources; however, family members and friends were the two main resources. A few students also reported using other resources on and off campus. On campus, programs such as the academic learning center and counseling and mental health center were helpful. Off campus, students sought out support from their psychologist or pastor. The main reason students would utilize one source over another typically related to their comfort level, which is why family and friends were consulted most often.

Relatives

The majority of the students admitted to utilizing their family members as their major source of information and support. Parents especially were consulted for a number of reasons ranging from personal and emotional support to academic guidance and motivation. Students consulted their parents first, even if they were not necessarily the most qualified or helpful

source. Sometimes students talked to their parents only to be referred to another more appropriate source, such as a doctor or academic advisor.

I talk to them quite a bit. I probably *talk to my mom just about every day and my sisters probably every day or every other day*. Like, one'll call me one day and the other one the next day and stuff like that.

Chompers2 p. 7-9

Well, *talking to my mother throughout the semester really gave me a boost*. She said "You're doing really well this semester and this is your one good shot to get things right," and it really helped me to put things back in perspective once again. And I feel good about that.

Stewwy2 p. 3-113

I do. I *get that a lot [affirmation about ideas] with my relationship with my parents*. ... So I think I really get more of that from them. And then they will even tell me, "Well, go talk to your advisor and see what they say." So kinda getting affirmation on various levels.

Jenny2 p. 17-742

My parents give a lot of support. So it's good having that 'cause I don't have like tons of friends here...

Kathy2 p. 8-359

My mom knows about the bumpy stuff, the relationship issues and house and stress. And I told her about the shift in my attitude about college, how it's [college] stupid. I used to talk so horrible about college, but she doesn't know about the academic probation part. My mom has never known much about my grades even in high school, that's never been a part of what we talk about.

Michelle p. 13-395

I have a mom ... she's like our cultural – Hispanic, Mexican... [which] is very different. So even before a came to college, *she didn't want me to go to college*. She didn't want me to leave her or whatever. So that was pretty hard. ... So I *didn't wanna tell anybody* like what I was going through [receiving low grades]. ... *Even though she can't help me at school, she still helps me emotionally*.

Marlene p. 2-82 / 16-713

Roommates

Students also used their friends for advice, information, and support. Because of the trust and comfort that comes with these friendships, the students continuously believed in and relied on their friends. Students reported that their friends typically related to and understood their situations better than older, more removed people.

... sometimes its just *easier to talk to people that are more like closer to your age range and that have been through all of this already*. And it definitely helped that a lot of my friends, like a lot of them have graduated and some of them have been on academic probation, but just like getting advice from them and knowing what they did or what they wished they had done differently, that definitely helps. ... *My friends really are a good support system because they kind of keep me grounded*, I guess.

Cecilia p. 16-707 / 18-810

I feel like I have a really ... my two roommates who I live with, I lived with one of 'em for two years and another for three years. I think *between my friends and my family, I have a pretty good support group*. And ...it's a little bit easier for me to *talk to people sometimes if they know me*. They kinda know where I'm coming from and stuff.

Jenny p. 9-12

Well, it was *mainly just my friend <Suzy> and my boyfriend* 'cause nobody else knew [about probation and academic struggles]. Well, my boyfriend, he's like, "Hey, have you done your work?" He kind of checks on me. So I like that. He is always asking me, "Have you done your work?" Or "You have to go to class everyday." Or stuff like that.

Marlene2 p. 9-387 / Marlene p. 14-463

I think that's *good to have my friends force me*. It kinda sucks. But at the same time, it makes me do it. I'm not going to be like, it's not like they're my parents. So it's someone I'm actually going to listen to, I guess. I listen to my parents, but still... its like, they are your parents. They don't understand.

Lucy p. 16-698

A group of email friends [is my support group]. I'm on this email list and a lot of the people I've known for about six years now... but they're kind of my sounding board. ... *My other support group is the Parrotheads*. I'm a big Jimmy Buffet fan and so I've got my group of Parrotheads back in <another city and here>. So that's kind of who I'm depending on. So it's a little different.

Jessica p. 16-715

I talked to *a friend of mine who was almost going to be dismissed*. He lived in the dorm with me, a good friend of mine, and he had been talking to an advisor and he was telling me a lot of the stuff that she was telling him. It was really stupid of me, because I took a lot of what he said to be true, and didn't find out for myself.

Stewwy p. 4-18

Joy had especially relied on her friends, most of whom were friends since high school. Because they had a very close relationship, she really struggled without them at the university after the accident. She was the only one to return to the university that following semester.

My friends [are my support], which they're not here [this semester], so it's really hard. Like if I'm feeling way down with family problems, the friend that died, we were real close. Any advice, he seemed to do the best. Homework, he knew mostly how to help me with stuff. Most of the classes, we were taking the same classes; so if I needed help, he would help me. So this time [semester] it's like there's no one there. I'm doing most of the work myself. I mean if I need help I will try. I will go to TA office hours and try to get help there. But I don't really have anyone. I'm pushing myself to do most of the work.

Joy p. 7-281

Resources

On Campus. The university provides multiple resources and people on campus to help students with academic, personal, and financial issues. About half of the students talked about utilizing the university resources and really benefiting from them. The other students either talked of their intentions to visit a resource or their belief that they did not need such services.

Having the *group therapy* that I go to, it's definitely helped a lot, just knowing that you're not alone with all this stress and other personal stuff that goes on. That's helped. I'm definitely like a big advocate now of like the *counseling center*, cause it really has helped a lot.

Cecilia p. 13- 551 / 7-285

I went to *financial aid*. I was in *counseling at the mental health center* here at the university. And it was like I had a really good experience with those two.

Summer p. 13-580

I have a *sorority advisor*, she is an alumn and she was an advisor for my department in the sorority. And I would talk to her about what I was doing and what was going on. And she knew about my grades and she told me how her college experience had gone and kind of tried to encourage me.

Jessica p. 2-61

In the fall, I went [to the *learning center*] and *another undergrad* actually sat down with me and read through a bunch of stuff, probably like 45 minutes of her just reading stuff and ... “This is how I study. This is how you should study. For a math course, this is the best way to study for this. For something that’s coming a lot from a lecture, I would do this.” She sat down with me and helped me probably more than anybody else had at the university.

Nicole p. 12-544

No, I actually thought about going [to the learning center], but I've never actually gone.

Marlene p. 12-526

I don’t know why I have this thing about the learning center, maybe it’s the name, *The University Learning Center, it’s kind of like special ed for college students.* I don’t know. [he never went to the learning center]

Stewwy2 p. 8-313

I know when I first got on probation they told me about *the writing center and stuff and the learning center*; and I think I would have been more inclined to go if somebody showed up and showed it to me or walked me through them or made me feel comfortable or familiar with them. And it would have been better as a freshman ...but *now as a senior walking through somewhere that I don’t know at all is kind of intimidating.* I don’t want to walk through there and looking like I don’t know where I’m going or what I’m doing.

Spring2 p. 14-614

I *almost went to the counseling center* for the thing with my aunt, but that was more of a... There was some question about whether or not I was gonna have to prove some stress or something like that. *So I almost did but ended up not doing it.*

Michelle2 p. 3-12

I *didn’t really need to [go to the learning center or writing center],* but I studied in groups, like, with people in my class.

Kathy2 p. 2-79

Off Campus. Finally, a few of the students also received support and assistance from off campus. Primarily, the students talked of their religion and the people associated with their church. This is a comfortable resource in which students not only have a familiarity but an established relationship.

It [time management and prioritizing] was definitely talked about a lot of times; and *they [the pastor and his wife] supported me as much as they could.* They have even supported me with finances so I wouldn't have to worry about some things with that.

Summer2 p. 41-72

... *going to see the Sisters*, that's not any anxiety to me, which is part of the reason that I like going with them. It's part of the reason our Bishop gave me that calling 'cause I told him that. ... I go see them partly also because I *always feel better when I see them*; and then that helps me with schoolwork and just getting little things done that'll help me go to school the next day.

Chompers2 p. 5-15

I just kind of have *put it in God's hands*, and it's just like what's meant to be is meant to be. And worrying about it isn't going to, I mean, worrying about it to an extent, not just like not caring about it all, but just being over...so overwhelmed and stressed about it only makes it worse, and so I just have to *trust that God's gonna do what's best for me.*

Cecilia2 p. 5-224

Conclusion

All of the students found people and programs that helped to support them in their undergraduate pursuit, especially while on academic probation. Family and friends were the greatest source of encouragement and assistance because the relationship was already comfortable and established. When additional support was needed, the students looked to resources on and off campus. They not only utilized university-provided programs and staff, but they also went off campus to their churches and religion. Some students had intentions of seeking help but never followed through with that. Other students did not believe they needed any specific help and would keep doing what they were doing.

Theme Ten: What is the Purpose?

Theme Ten: What is the Purpose?

Categories: Navigate University Procedures

Subcategories: Class and Registration Tips

Subcategories: Specific Situations

Categories: Success Track

Subcategories: Troubles

Subcategories: Talk it Out

Subcategories: Go-To Contact

Categories: Really Needed?

Table 15: Theme Ten

The purpose of the academic advisor was talked about continually in the interviews. Students who frequently visited their advisor had a much more developed idea of the advisor's function when compared to those who rarely met with an advisor. How the students viewed the advisor affected their need to utilize one. Most students recognized that advisors were primarily a resource for class selection and registration information.

Navigate University Procedures

Helping select courses, knowing prerequisites of specific courses, understanding degree plans and the registration system, and having information on the style of specific professors and courses was the basic utilization of academic advisors by students on probation. In addition, a few of the students consulted their advisor regarding more specific university procedures, such as withdrawing and changing a major. The advisor was the student's reference point for the university catalogue and policies, navigating the university in general.

Class and Registration Tips. The goal of being an undergraduate student is to complete a degree and graduate. In order to achieve this goal, students had to take the specific courses that met the requirements of their degree plan. Assistance with selecting classes and navigating the nuances of classes were the most frequently referenced uses of an advisor for the students.

They were in *a little box called 'advisor before registration.'* ...Our conversations are, "Here's my classes; here's my game plan."

Michelle p. 11-321 /9-261

And so usually about a week after add/drops, I would be like, "Oh, *these are the classes I'm taking,*" and go in and tell him.

Nicole p. 13-567

... *usually the only times that I have gone in are for registering for classes.* And then I've gone in there, in the whole advising thing, to go and ask about maybe trading classes or something. Maybe this class might work better with...for me or something like that.

Jenny p. 5-25 /14-3

I thought it [*the purpose of the advisor*] was to help inform students of classes, options, resources, that sort of thing, which I normally see and get from them sometimes.

Cecilia p. 10-448

I've seen him *to talk about the classes* I'm going to take in my degree plan, but that's pretty much it. I'm actually going to see him in a few minutes just to make sure all my classes are going to count and I'm going to graduate in December.

Spring2 p. 4-149

Specific Situations. Once in a while, a student needed an advisor for help with something more specific than registration and selecting courses. Students exploring different majors or having troubles and needing to withdraw sought out their advisor to learn about the process. The advisor was seen as a greater resource.

... going to talk to him about the *medical withdrawal*...

Summer p. 2-69

I saw him more probably my spring semester of my freshman year, just because that's when I was wanting to *study abroad* and thinking about *communications [as a major change]* and stuff like that.

Nicole p. 7-289

I've only talked to her maybe 2 or 3 times about similar things – how to *double major in sociology*, what the requirements may be, and specifics about profs, that kind of thing.

Michelle p. 9-271

Success Track

Getting to graduation required a degree plan, a game plan, and the success that was required to get there. In general terms, the students described their advisor's purpose as helping them navigate the path towards graduation by keeping them on track and guiding them towards their goals.

I think the advisor's purpose is to *help you get where you wanna go*.

Roxie p. 25-1122

To help you *set your goals* for school, for that particular semester and the future, and *to be a guide for you* for that semester and the rest of your academic career. To *help you have a successful experience*, and answer any questions you need to have...

Leroy p. 17-27

...help you choose your classes, to help you meet a particular goal in mind like what you want to be when you get out of college. They can *help you stay on that path* or they can help you pick classes that would help you figure out what you want to do. Now, I know they can be a good support for you.

Chompers p. 8-25

The purpose of an academic advisor is to *ensure the success of the student*. ...the academic advisor can kind of push in certain places and kind of help out. ... They have good resources it looks like to *help keep students on track* and keep track of what's going on.

Stewwy p. 10-512

Troubles. As students on probation, they watched their academic progression very carefully to avoid dismissal. Several students predicted that if they felt problems arising, they would see their advisor for help. The advisor was viewed as the one who could help the student work through the trouble so as to get back on track.

If I started feeling like I was doing badly in school again, I actually would go see him and talk to him and sit down. And try to work something out. And if not him, I'd probably talk to my therapist.

Lucy p. 9-388

I would definitely go to my advisor again if I would see that I was in trouble with one of my classes. Because obviously, that means something and she can obviously do something about it.

Marlene p. 10-423

Talk it Out. The females found it important to use their advisor as a sounding board, someone who could affirm or disagree with their game plan and ideas.

To go *talk to them* and look at my academic progress, look at how many – I think I know from last year how many credit hours I need, but just to make sure that we're all on the same page; and then also to just kind of let them know that, "Hey, I'm trying and I need your help, and so I want to come talk to you. I feel like *I need to talk to you* about what's going on."

Summer p. 11-505

It's funny, you can kind of know something, like I know the choices of the two options; but just *being kind of retold and having it down on paper and looking and weighing out the odds*, for me that really helps. Just kind of hearing it back, I guess.

Cecilia p. 15-682

I just really feel that if you don't tell them things, then they're not gonna know. Like you kind of feel like you have been thinking about these things, and you go in and kinda *want it to be told to you. I need to tell them as much or as little as I need to* because whatever I give them, this is their job. They will know, probably, the right answer for me.

Jenny2 p. 15-665

I do better when I vocalize things. I understand myself better when I vocalize things. I kind of get what's going in my head a little bit. *I want to talk it out* instead of keep it all mental.

Spring p. 10-437

Go-To Contact. The students appreciated seeing their advisor as the key contact person who could help them navigate the university and develop a personal success path. The advisor

was viewed as someone who could answer questions and maybe even predict what information the student should be requesting.

Just to kind of keep students on the right track and help them if they have questions. This is such a big university that it's *nice to have one person that I know that I can go to to ask questions of and get information from* and not have to wade through all the phone systems and internet trying to find stuff on the website and which building do I need to go to for this and who do I need to ask for this. It's kind of like that *one central point of contact* for anything to do with the university in general. I can go "Hey, do you know anything about this," and if she doesn't, she can direct me to who might. *It's easier to have that personal contact instead of looking at this huge administration.*

Jessica p. 11-480

And just *having somebody there to call on when you really need it*, because it has been such a long road back. And I call him every semester; before the semester, we discuss different options. In fact, he is kind of tired of me now, in a good way. I bug the hell out of him. But yeah, I want him to give me the information, want I need to do, and he's the one that has it, and he's has access to it, especially in a case like mine.

Dropout p. 5-221

...he's sort of *the hinge point* for the department for students.

Michelle p. 7-214

So *he's the person that I go to* if I have a question, even when it's just something little like, "Can I do this with scholastic probation?" Stuff like that. I mean, just someone that I can go and ask questions to that will give me a pretty prompt answer rather than having to search through the endless and endless pages online or just not know at all. ... And so, he's told me a whole lot of stuff I had no idea about and wouldn't have known otherwise.

Lucy2 p. 14-633 / 9-368

Conclusion

Throughout the interviews, the students discussed what they believed to be the purpose of academic advisors. The main function described was navigating university policies and procedures. Getting help with course selection and degree requirements prior to the next registration period was a primary reason for meeting with an academic advisor. A few students

also met with an advisor to process more specific tasks such as a major change or university withdrawal. The advisor is the student resource for such duties.

The students also spoke in more general terms about advisors as being the ones to keep students on track. When students needed guidance or help with troubles, the advisor was the selected source of assistance. Advisors were also a sounding board for students to talk out their thoughts and decisions. This allowed the student to begin making decisions on her/his own but with the safety of the advisor's support. Finally, students believed the advisor was their main university contact person for questions. A student's advisor was the one key person to answer questions or to show students where to find answers.

Theme Eleven: Hindsight

<p>Theme Eleven: Hindsight Categories: Lessons Learned Categories: My Responsibility</p>

Table 16: Theme Eleven

While contemplating the semesters leading to academic probation and the time on probation, the students often reflected on what they wished they had done differently. These wishes and regrets were uttered in wonderment. Could they have prevented the academic decline and probation? Will the identified changes be what are needed to eliminate the probationary status? As students talked about the lessons they had learned, they also admitted to being responsible for the academic situation. They were culpable for their academic situation, but they acknowledged that individually they must be the ones to remedy the situation. No one is going to do it for them.

Lessons Learned

The students' dialogues included lots of thoughts of regret. Looking back, the students verbally contemplated the ways that they could have done things differently; they lamented that they wished they could do it over. For the most part, all of the students identified ways that they wished they had adjusted their study skills and habits. A few of the students wished they had utilized resources better. All in all, the students spoke of the lessons they had learned and reflected on how to do things differently in the future.

I think if I would have known a lot of stuff that I know right now, like I can probably make a list of things I would have liked to know the first month of being at the university and like how that would have changed a lot of the, I guess, my grades and stuff, not even just as far as where to go and help and stuff, but also like the study habits and just like the library.

Nicole p. 14-607

I don't think I have [used my advisor to the fullest]. I think there's more I could have done, more questions, appointments, I could try to make...

Leroy p. 17-34

... maybe had I gone to the learning center or something like that, I would have been able to understand college more. In high school, I was at the top of my class, but I don't ever remember doing homework.

Summer p. 6-236

So I think I learned my lesson of not trying to stack that many classes in a row on one day 'cause it... I get burned out after the first couple. I'll be like, "Oh, I don't wanna go sit through another class."

Jessica2 p. 2-66

... cause to me it just depends on what class I take that will make my grades better. I believe I got better knowing what teachers to take and what classes to take and that will help. ... I realized I'm not a morning person and the semester made me realize that. Being here earlier in the morning just doesn't work.

Joy p. 11-497

I think that would have helped me out so much, just to visualize the stuff I that needed to do, like on the dry erase maker board, or to be by myself with books and be stuck there.

Spring p. 15-652

Looking back on it, I would have chosen a different option like the community college or another university where I could choose my program of choice, or enrolled into a college of my choice...

Dropout p. 1-46

My Responsibility

Another topic that students frequently mentioned while reflecting on their undergraduate experience related to the accountability aspect of their academic probation. All of the students admitted to being the one to blame for the probationary status, although some students struggled with full admission. The students also acknowledged that it was their responsibility to rectify the situation. Fault and responsibility were placed with the student.

I mean I'm not going to try to blame somebody else... I guess just being more responsible with things and knowing that I just need to do it.

Nicole p. 14-607 /16-700

I think it was mostly my fault, I mean you could probably argue that it was all my fault. I am willing to take the responsibility for that, because he [advisor] did try to help me, I just didn't help myself.

Stewwy p. 10-25

But when I realized ... this is completely me, and that was when I was like, "Oh yeah, it is not the university's fault. They didn't do anything wrong. This is *completely my fault.*"

Lucy p. 6 -266

I feel like it's all my fault. I feel like I can change it if I want to, it's just a matter of wanting to. They're all decisions that I made myself and I'm responsible for all of them and I understand that and that's fine. ...I make certain decisions and I pay the consequences.

Spring2 p. 13-587

I think it is mainly on my part. *I don't like to blame other people for my actions.* So I think it's mainly on my part.

Marlene p. 12-539

It's mostly my job to make that grade, so if I make that maybe I need to work harder to make it better this semester.

Joy p. 6-239

I felt like you know this is a big school and you really have to kind of *stand on your own* and so in that case I went into myself and I was like “I have to rely on myself because there’s not many people here who are going to reach out to me, so I do it.” Then when I realized I was doing a pretty bang-up job, I started to seek help, and luckily I’ve been able to find help.

Summer p. 17-751

Well, I just feel like this is a *big transition period in your life* to where you’re really out in the real world now. You’re not...parents aren’t there to wake you up. They aren’t there. They’re there for you, but it really is up...*it’s a hundred percent up to you*; ‘cause, I mean, the tools are there to ... I mean, they give you the books. They give you the lectures, if you go. So it really is <*Sighs*> up to you to do that, to go to class. And if you need the help to seek it out because the professors and the...everyone else is working here to help. So I kind of realized that at first but didn’t think that maybe...*I maybe thought that I didn’t need it*. But realized that it is a hard university, and that if you are struggling, then don’t get myself all worked up and have to drop my classes and all that. I could probably have started earlier and found a way to kinda work it out.

Jenny2 p. 7-296

Conclusion

In hindsight, the students identified things that they wished they had changed. Not only did they spend a lot of time reflecting on their previous semesters and academic experiences, but they also reflected on the lessons that they had learned since being put on academic probation. As the students reflected on things they wished would have happened, they also took responsibility for the situation. Some students struggled with this ownership but ultimately realized that they were accountable. The students took the blame for their probationary status and accepted responsibility for correcting the situation.

Chapter Four Summary

A total of 11 themes emerged from the student interviews conducted during this research study. Chapter Four identified the 11 themes and then individually defined and described the theme and any corresponding categories and subcategories. The themes highlighted the experiences of students on probation and how those experiences connected to academic advisors.

In Chapter Five, the researcher will discuss the research questions in relation to the data and emergent themes. Then the constructed model will be described and it will highlight more about the experiences of students on probation and the impact of academic advisors. The findings of this study are significant in that they provide valuable information to advisors and university administration regarding students on probation. It is also helpful for students on probation to understand the commonalities of their struggles with other students on probation. Chapter Five will not only describe the findings of the study, it will also discuss the implications of the study, provide recommendations for academic advisors and university administrators, and identify areas for future related research.

CHAPTER 5 – FINDINGS

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this chapter is to provide an overall summary of the study, discuss the findings in relation to the research questions, and present a theoretical model derived from the data. This chapter also includes a discussion of practical applications and provides recommendations for future research studies.

PURPOSE OF THIS STUDY

The goal of this qualitative study was to explore the experiences of students on academic probation, especially in relation to their academic advising. Specifically, the researcher examined the academic advisor's potential impact on the success and retention of students on probation. This was accomplished through two sets of individual interviews with students who had been on academic probation. The students were asked to talk about their experiences while on probation; in particular, they were asked about their academic advising encounters. After constant comparisons and analysis of the data (described in Chapter Three), a model was constructed that illustrates how the emergent themes interact, thus reflecting the cause and effect of multiple factors on students on probation and their academic advising.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The questions guiding the study were: (1) Do advisors have an impact on the academic success of students on probation? (2) What is the nature of the relationship between the academic advisor and the student on probation? (3) How do the dynamics of the relationship relate to the success of the student on probation?

Discussion of the Research Questions

The participants in this study described their experiences with academic probation and academic advisors. Their responses serve to address the research questions. The following sections are an overview of research findings as they address the research questions. For each question, the issue will be addressed based on the information from the participating students' experiences. Then the researcher will help the reader to gain a greater understanding by offering specific students' stories and circumstances.

Question 1

Do advisors have an impact on the academic success of students on probation? Advisors can have an impact, positive and negative, on the academic success and retention of students on probation; however, there are many variables that affect the impact and the degree of that impact. In addition, there is no guarantee that an advisor will have any effect on a student on probation's academic success at all. Beal and Noel (1980) identified inadequate advising as a specific factor that negatively impacts student retention. Some of the key variables that can affect the impact include: all advising experiences of the student, the relationship between the student and advisor, the frequency of visits and communications between the advisor and student, the student's understanding of the advisor's purpose, the cause of the student's probation, the strength of the support from other people for the student (i.e. family and friends), the lessons that the student has learned, and student's willingness to ask for help.

Positive Impact - Dropout. Dropout is an example of a student who experienced a positive impact on his academic success because of his advisor. Advisor Stan was influential in Dropout returning to the university. Advisor Stan was also influential in helping Dropout negotiate the university policies and procedures to his academic advantage by helping him submit an appeal to return to school early from his dismissal. In addition, Advisor Stan

recommended Dropout take a language placement test in order to try and increase his GPA. As a bilingual student, Dropout was able to acquire ten hours of A's and six hours of B's from his placement test score. When those grades were calculated into his GPA, Dropout's cumulative GPA was even closer to a 2.0.

While considering Dropout's other responsibilities, Advisor Stan also worked closely with Dropout to make sure he was taking the appropriate classes for his major as these other responsibilities were some of the causes for his low academic standing. As a father and the primary care-taker for a sick relative, Dropout was balancing family, school, and a job. During the semester of this research study, Dropout had to leave the semester early because his relative had passed away. Advisor Stan helped to notify Dropout's professors and to make arrangements for times to makeup the final exams.

Dropout's academic successes were a result of his own hard work and his close, trusting relationship with his academic advisor. Crookston (1972) defined the developmental advising approach as a relationship between the advisor and student which fosters and generates student responsibility and action. When an advisor becomes a more active part of the student's life, the student is more motivated, thus, more likely to succeed. Advisors help students identify and cope not only with academic problems but also with issues that would otherwise interfere with the student's academic achievement (Cruise, 2002; Glennen & Baxley, 1985). Dropout was comfortable talking with his advisor not only about his academic situation but also about his nonacademic issues that were affecting his schoolwork and class attendance. In addition, Advisor Stan felt comfortable with Dropout and believed that academic success and graduation were possible. That disposition was acknowledged by Dropout and reciprocated with an improved GPA. After a very long journey, Dropout is on track to graduate in two semesters.

Positive Impact - Chompers. Chompers is another student who had a close relationship with her advisor, a relationship that led to a positive impact on her academic success. Chompers suffers from severe mental health issues related to anxiety. Her mental thought-process can

literally debilitate her, thus severely hurting her class attendance and performance and ultimately her GPA. Ramirez and Evans (1988) believe that nonacademic issues related to mental health problems are the most significant factors that affect a student's performance.

Chompers' advisor, Betty, has worked with Chompers for many semesters and she increasingly understands the struggles and challenges that Chompers must fight. Chompers told accounts of Advisor Betty contacting professors, financial aid, and even the college's Dean to help Chompers continue at the university. Chompers feels a certain accountability to Advisor Betty, thus receiving a burst of motivation with each appointment. This is an example of intrusive advising which involves an adjustment of the student's ability to self-refer and assume responsibility for her academic performance (Earl, 1987). Chompers willingly meets with Advisor Betty almost every other week, even for just a fast check-in. Chompers still has a few semesters left before she can graduate; but with every semester, her GPA nudges up a tiny bit closer to 2.0 and no more probation.

The positive impact of an advisor on a student's academic success occurs when there are more frequent contacts between the student and the advisor and when a comfortable relationship is established. The advisor knows and understands the student's situation and has experience seeing how the student approaches and processes things. Developmental advising is this shared responsibility between the student and advisor (Earl, 1987).

Negative Impact - Leroy. Leroy had none of those things. He had met one advisor whom he liked but was only able to visit twice. Arranging an appointment was not easy; the advising office was not close to the central part of campus and the advising appointment book was typically filled several weeks in advance. In addition, simply communicating with the advisors outside of a scheduled appointment was difficult. Leroy could not exchange email communications with an advisor because the advisors preferred to work only by appointment. Leroy's academic success was negatively impacted by his advisors primarily because of their lack of availability and misinformation. Kelley (1996) found that frequent and persistent

interactions between the advisor and student on probation can produce the positive outcomes needed for the students academic success. Leroy did not experience frequent interactions or positive outcomes.

During Leroy's first semester at the university, he submitted paperwork to drop a class. He assumed that he had done everything correctly; hence, he did not think about the class again until he saw the F on his grade report at the end of the semester. He tried to talk with the administrative staff about the paperwork but they said they did not have it. Leroy asked an advisor for help but the advisor said there was nothing he could do; the administrative staff handles drop paperwork. No one would accept Leroy's story that he had turned in the proper paperwork and that it must be lost. He pleaded for help and continued to follow-up on the search for the missing paperwork. Nonetheless, the F stayed on his transcript and contributed to his academic probation status.

Leroy's next contact with the advising office was for course selection advising prior to registration. He met with a different advisor this time because of scheduling difficulties with the first advisor whom he liked. This different advisor seemed new to the job and had to look up a lot of the information during the appointment. There was no discussion about Leroy's probation status or the drop problems. Leroy got a list of classes that he needed and then went on to register. Crookston (1972) defines this advising style as prescriptive advising where the advisor is more directive and authoritarian and spends little time asking questions about the student or establishing any relationship or personal connection. The research literature supports developmental and intrusive advising styles for working with students on probation but typically prescriptive is not the preferred or most appropriate style (Abelman & Molina, 2001; Austin et al., 1997; Earl, 1988; Higgins, 2003; Russell, 1981).

During the subsequent semester, Leroy began to question the necessity of a particular class he was taking. Although he believed he already had the credit for that class requirement and was taking an unnecessary class, he could not drop the class because he needed to maintain

his full-time student status. Therefore, he stuck it out. Leroy did not go back to an advisor until he needed to look at his course selection again. Advisors had negatively impacted his academic success with an F on his transcript for a class that should have been dropped and an extra three-hour class that did not help him towards graduation. This experience with advisors has impacted his perceived need to use them. Their cost versus benefit for Leroy has not been advantageous. Leroy is a retention risk for the university as illustrated in Janasiewicz's (1987) Discouraged Student Model. His departure from the institution would be a failure on the part of the institution and its advising program.

Question 2

What is the nature of the relationship between the academic advisor and the student on probation? When interviewed, many of the advisors said that their relationship with students on academic probation did not differ from their relationship with students in good academic standing. The advisors believed that they did not treat or need to treat the students atypical. The opinion of students on probation, however, differed.

Personally and individually, students on probation typically feel very embarrassed and lonely because of their probationary status. Depending on multiple variables including their other sources of support and the cause of their probation, these students may come into an advising session with a different self-perception and disposition than students in good academic standing. The student may bring to the advising session a feeling of self-disappointment, the sense of feeling judged, or a fear of an impending reprimand. This attitude of the student on probation affects the nature of the relationship between the advisor and the student, at least in the student's eyes.

The nature of a positive relationship between an advisor and student on probation is very comfortable, trusting, nonjudgmental, and informal. A trusting student-advisor relationship is a

vital component towards helping the student gain confidence and skills necessary to persist (Spanier, 2004). The students on probation want not only to be heard and maybe even understood but also certainly not judged. They want to know that they have a university person who is on their side to guide them through the probation period towards graduation. Along this path, the student on probation does not want the advisor to be condescending and constantly referencing the tutoring center. Advisors who have taken an interest in students personally and approach them openly are better received by students (Upcraft & Kramer, 1995). The nature of the advising relationship is tainted with the low self-esteem of the students on probation; hence, the advisor needs to help the student not only with realism and individuality but also with motivation and hope. Heisserer and Parette (2002) found the single most important factor in academic advising is helping a student feel that s/he is cared for by the university; thus, the student feels valued overall.

The nature of a negative relationship between an academic advisor and student on probation is typically two things: (1) judgmental and (2) impersonal. The students told passionate stories of advising appointments where the advisor seemed full of contempt. The nature of the relationship between Cecilia and her advisor was so painful that she no longer uses an advisor at all and she really had nothing to say about advisors during her second interview. Her last advising experience was with an advisor who was condescending and assumed that her probationary status was due to partying. He neglected to learn about her depression, an emergency surgery, and a dying relative, events that all affected her academic performance.

Summer also had a negative experience that discouraged her from further utilizing an advisor. Her relationship with the advisor was only out of necessity. To her, this advisor was more concerned about his own retention numbers than her well-being. Because of the rude, patronizing relationship she had experienced with her advisor, she only went to see him when it was essential for her registration and progression towards her degree. Backhus (1989) found that a caring attitude by a faculty or staff person was the strongest positive correlate with retention.

Summer and Cecilia did not experience a caring attitude; thus the nature of their advising relationships did not work towards their academic success and arguably hurt their retention.

The perceived nature of the relationship between an advisor and a student on probation may differ. Students on probation are very sensitive to the attitude and behavior of others. Because they are struggling with a personal feeling of embarrassment and low self-esteem, they are hypersensitive to being judged. The nature of a positive relationship is trusting, comfortable, and informal. Although this sounds similar to that of any student, the student on probation goes into the relationship with a deficit. Because s/he is extra sensitive to negative energy, the nature of the relationship changes and is more complicated when working with such dynamics. Rocci (2005) added that students with academic risk not only need to feel important to the advising process but they also need to be in a non-threatening environment.

Question 3

How do the dynamics of the relationship relate to the success of the student on probation? As the researcher could have anticipated, the more positive dynamics in the advising relationship prompted a stronger connection between the student on probation and the academic advisor. This also encouraged a higher academic achievement for the student. Those dynamics not only include a respectful, caring, informal atmosphere where the student felt comfortable, but it also involved the overall exchange between the student and advisor. Research on student retention suggests that a caring attitude is the single most important factor in the advising session. When a student feels cared for, s/he also begins to feel valued (Backhus, 1989; Heisserer & Parette, 2002; Rocci, 2005). Students on probation did not want to feel like the “subject” or the lowly undergraduate student who needed help. They wanted more of a partnership with the advisor during the advising session. They wanted a mentor and a friend in their advisor, not a mother-type or adult who could not relate to them. The students wanted both

an interactive and an objective conversation when the advisor was informing. Crookston (1972) identified this preference as developmental advising, a relationship based on a shared responsibility between the student and the academic advisor. This relationship is a negotiated collaboration that is a goal-related, two-way partnership (Frost, 1993).

Nicole. The dynamics to which students did not respond well included harsh, critical treatment and impersonal, hurried meetings. Nicole believed that her advisor treated her differently because of her poor academic standing. She thought that she might have had a better relationship and stronger connection with her advisor if her GPA had not been so low. She did not feel their relationship was motivating or empowering but more hasty and impersonal. He was not invested in a student-advisor partnership. Rocci (2005) explained that students in academic jeopardy needed to feel important to the advising session; they wanted to know that somebody cared.

Lucy. Lucy experienced the opposite from what occurred with Nicole and her advisor. Lucy was surprised that her advisor had done some exploration into her academic history and discovered how differently her low GPA compared to previous semesters. He was not only very involved in the advisor-student relationship, but he was also a great listener, very supportive, encouraging, and energizing. After each meeting, when Lucy left her advisor, she had an increased level of confidence and motivation. Earl (1988) described this motivational advising as an effective form of deliberate intervention for students at academic risk. Lucy came away from her advising appointments more motivated and armed with the knowledge and options that would help her most. In addition, she felt no hesitation to go visit her advisor again when needed. As illustrated with Lucy, advisors who express an active concern for their student's academic preparation and a willingness to assist him/her in improving their academic performance also motivate the student to stay at the institution to complete their degree (Habley, 1981). Lucy now wears the university colors and has a bumper sticker proudly displayed on her car.

Summary

Advisors can impact the academic success and retention of students on academic probation. Habley (1981) found that the delivery of effective advising services can make a major contribution to the creation of a staying environment. There is, however, no guarantee that an impact will occur; and if one occurs, it is not guaranteed to be positive. Kathy was not impacted by her advisors and she had no real relationship with an advisor; however, she was able to pull her GPA up past a 2.0 after only one semester. She met with an advisor once a semester to verify that her course selection was appropriate, but she did not discuss her time management issues or her major change decision. Her academic success was impacted by the support of her family and her own hard work. In her interviews, she stated that she understood how the advisor could be a greater resource but she does not feel the need to utilize the advisor like that.

Chompers, on the other hand, attributes a lot of her academic success and retention to her advisor. They meet every other week and have a student-mentor / friend-friend relationship. It is not formal and does not feel like a business meeting. Chompers and her advisor have an interactive dialogue that involves respect, compassion, and a personal touch. Chompers credits her advisor with being the main reason she is still at the university and getting closer to graduation. Broadbridge (1996) described developmental advising as a continuous and cumulative relationship with a purpose for both the advisor and the students. The success of developmental and intrusive advising stems from a very close interaction between the student and advisor and a certain aggressive persistence in maintaining this interaction as they work towards the goal of student graduation (Heerman & Maleki, 1994).

When the student's academic success is improved, the nature of the relationship between an advisor and student on probation is typically a positive interaction. None of the students responded well to tough-love or criticism. They desired a positive interactive partnership where more than just the student was invested in the outcome. Negative relationships discouraged the

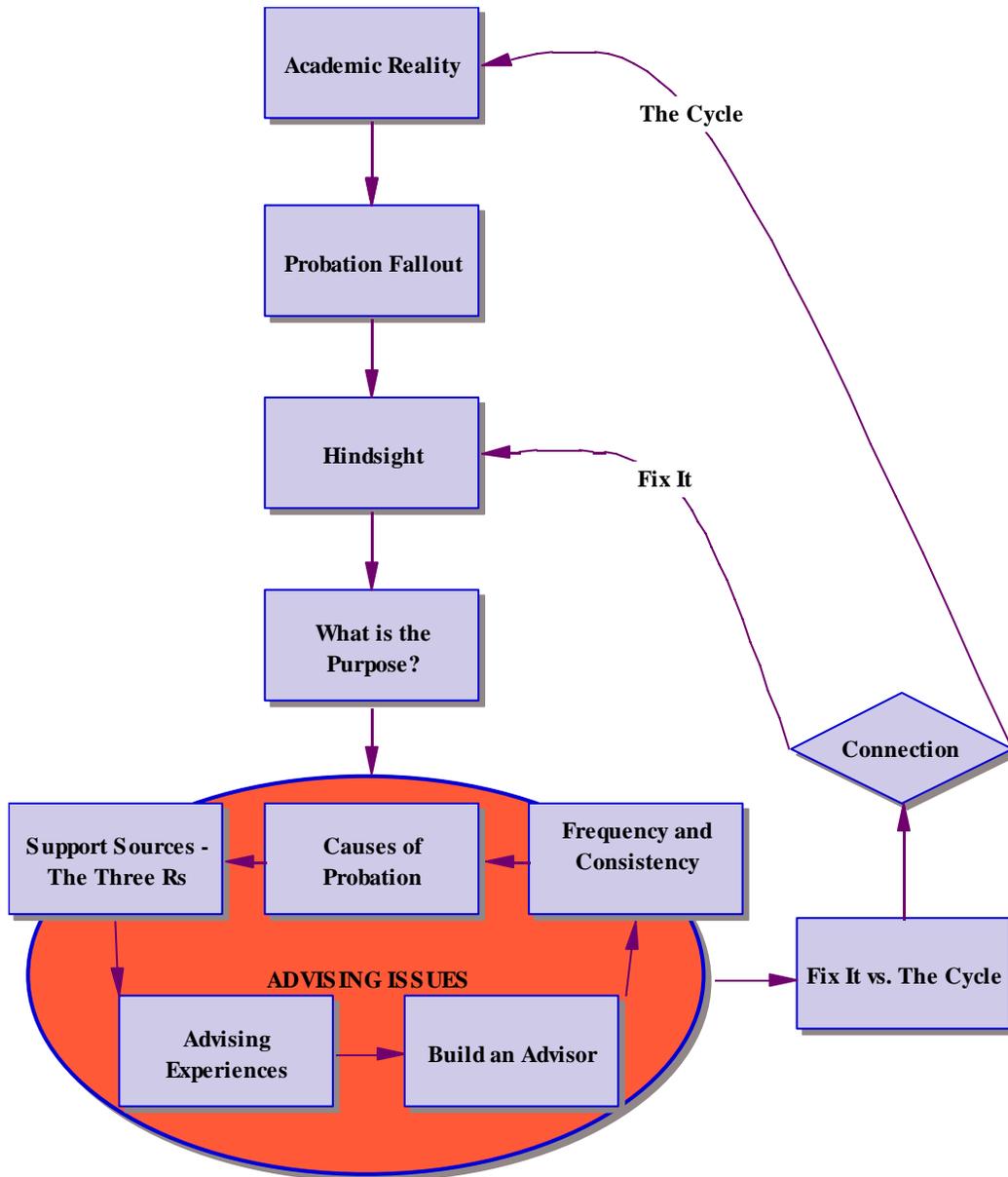
student from utilizing the advisor, thus relying more on friends, family, and professors for information.

The dynamics involved in a successful connection between the advisor and student on probation were actions that spoke to the investment. Advisors who were helpful, compassionate, supportive, and motivating during the advising session were better received by the students on probation. Molina and Abelman (2000) found that when content is held constant, the manner in which the information is relayed significantly impacts the academic performance and retention rates of students at academic risk. Advisors who were preachy and condescending were not perceived as encouraging to the students; instead, these advisors drove a rift in the relationship.

In the next section, the Probation and Advising Interactions Model (Diagram 1) will provide a depiction of how students are influenced by multiple variables that ultimately impact the advising process.

“THE BOX”

Figure 1: Probation and Advising Interactions Model



DISCUSSION OF THE DIAGRAM

This research study used grounded theory for data collection and analysis. Sixteen students with the experience of being on academic probation were interviewed twice throughout the course of one semester during this study. The two separate interviews were each approximately an hour in length. All but two students participated in both interview sessions. From the interviews and analysis, eleven themes emerged: (1) Academic Reality; (2) Advising Experiences; (3) Causes of Probation; (4) Connection to the University; (5) Probation Fallout; (6) Build an Advisor; (7) Frequency and Consistency; (8) Fix it vs. The Cycle; (9) Support Sources: The Three R's; (10) What is the Purpose?; (11) Hindsight. Diagram 1 illustrates the relational processes that connect the themes and explains how the interactions between an academic advisor and student on probation are impacted.

In order to describe the diagram and demonstrate how students on probation flow through the system, the researcher will narrate Stewwy and Lucy's paths. One story illustrates a successful trip through the system and the other student's story was not quite so successful. Each section will open with the researcher providing an overview of that student's academic career. Following the brief overview, the researcher will go through each theme in the diagram and describe how the student was impacted. The descriptions will contain the words and feelings that were conveyed by the student.

Stewwy

Stewwy ended up on academic probation after just one semester at the university. He had partied a lot and worked a job to keep up with school bills and partying expenses. School was not a priority and ultimately fell by the wayside. His second semester at the university he was on academic probation. He continued to work and party but tried hard in the beginning also to keep

up with his school work. Again, since school was not his top priority, his performance declined. This second semester of a low GPA resulted in Stewwy getting dismissed.

At the time of this study, Stewwy was just returning to the university after his one semester on dismissal. If his performance this semester did not show substantial improvement, he would then be dismissed from the university again, but this time for three consecutive years.

Academic Reality. The semester that led to Stewwy's academic probation started off badly. Initially, he was optimistic that his grades would still be okay; however, he eventually cared less and less about academics. He knew that his probation status was inevitable.

The next semester, his first semester on academic probation, Stewwy was confident about his academic performance and his ability to increase his GPA. He was sure he would be academically successful. Ramirez and Evans (1988) found that students at risk of academic probation often lack a more holistic understanding of themselves and of their predicament. For Stewwy, when the confidence wore off and reality set in, he realized that he was not succeeding and it was too late to recover. He ended up getting dismissed for one semester.

At the beginning of this study, Stewwy was just returning to the university from his semester on dismissal. Throughout the semester, Stewwy believed that he was doing the best that he had ever done since becoming an undergraduate. During our last interview, Stewwy was confident that he had stayed on top of what he needed to do all semester and that he would get a semester-end grade report that reflected his new commitment to school.

Probation Fallout. While on academic probation, Stewwy really felt that the academic reality of his extremely low GPA and his academic probation label were a wake-up. He said he was actually appreciative of the heads-up and anxious to prove his ability. Stewwy did not feel judged by others nor did he ever talk about being embarrassed or discouraged by the probationary status. He did not even struggle with feeling like the only one on probation because there were several other students on probation in his dorm.

Stewwy did experience some negative fallout because of his low GPA. In order to have a chance at receiving his financial aid, he had to go through a specific appeal process with no guarantee that he would be granted monies. In addition, Stewwy was not eligible to declare a major at the university while on academic probation. He was very anxious to declare his major and begin taking classes beyond just the basics; however, now he would have to wait until he was in good academic standing again.

Hindsight. Upon receiving the official notification regarding academic probation, Stewwy began to reflect on the lessons he had learned and the responsibilities he had neglected. He realized that there is a lot to be done on the student's part regarding academic success; hence, he took full responsibility for his declining academic standing. He constantly spoke of how he was the only one who could ultimately affect his success, and he admitted that he was working on a lot of growing up. Stewwy also confessed that since he felt responsible for his own success, he was not always open to seeking help from others. He admitted that his self-reliance worked against him because he does not seek assistance fast or frequently enough. This lack of requesting help certainly influenced his perceived purpose of academic advisors and resulting utilization. Similarly, Hoyt and Lundell (2001) found that students who are at risk of academic decline fail to seek out available services and assistance until it is too late.

What is the Purpose? Stewwy's difficulty receiving financial aid forced him to see his academic advisor, who helped him complete the appeal form. Although he had previously considered the advisor as useful in selecting courses, he now learned that their purpose could extend much further. As students meet with their advisors, they begin to develop a greater understanding of their own academic needs and how the advisor can help them achieve academic success (Garnett, 1990).

Stewwy's first real appointment with an academic advisor occurred while he was already on academic probation, for the first time. He had a bar on his record so he could not register and he needed to complete a contract regarding his probation status. During this meeting, Stewwy

realized that the advisor could be more beneficial to him beyond just picking out his classes each semester, especially now that he was on academic probation and at risk of dismissal. Stewwy always understood that ultimately his academic success was his own responsibility but he now believed that the advisor could be someone who could help to ensure that success, to help and push him as needed. Sound academic advising and planning has been identified as a cornerstone of collegiate programming aimed at student development and retention (Muskat, 1979). Advising assists students in identifying the relationships between classes and their personal aspirations. In addition, it strengthens the student's desire to achieve their academic and professional goals (1979).

Causes of Probation. Certainly, not having a better, fuller understanding of the purpose of an academic advisor contributed to Stewwy's academic decline. He did not seek out the advisor for improvement strategies when his grades were declining; thus, he ended up on a semester of academic probation. While on probation, Stewwy met with his advisor once and learned that advisors can be beneficial to students; however, he continued with his old ways which landed him with a semester of dismissal. This is consistent with what Kirk-Kuwaye and Nishida (2001) found. A certain proportion of students will continually refuse the help offered and then end up with poor academic outcomes, including probation and dismissal (2001).

Other contributors to Stewwy's academic decline were partying too much, missing classes, and working too many hours at his job. Stewwy spoke of his delight in getting out and meeting new people, and hanging out with his friends. This partying, however, forced him to get a job so that he could continue to afford the expenses associated with partying while also taking care of his school-related bills. Stewwy's job initially was just part-time, 10-15 hours a week; but when he saw his grades get lower and lower, he decided that he enjoyed working more than doing school work. He would work and then go out and play. After a late night out, he would inevitably sleep through his classes, get up in time to go to work, and then go out to play again.

Support Sources – The Three Rs. The causes of Stewwy’s probation forced him to seek out sources of support. Spanier (2004) confirmed that finding a support system is critical to college survival. Although Stewwy did not utilize any on-campus resources, he did keep in touch with his mom. Stewwy actually called his mom quite frequently. In addition, she checked in with him on many occasions. Although Stewwy constantly spoke of being his own support system, his mom was the one person with whom he was always in contact. Since his mom had not attended college, she did not understand Stewwy’s GPA or the academic system; however, she could tell when things were not going well for Stewwy. On a couple of occasions, she suggested that he come home to fix things. Because he believed that he was his own support system, Stewwy declined the help and chose to persevere at the university.

Advising Experiences. After Stewwy returned from his semester on dismissal, he finally realized that he needed additional support beyond just his mom, and he acted upon that realization. Although mom offered emotional support, she did not know how to navigate college and was unable to help Stewwy establish the control and structure that he needed. During the previous semesters, Stewwy’s advising experiences were minimally influencing and any potential impact from an advisor did not last long.

Because Stewwy’s first real meeting with an advisor was during his first semester on academic probation, he was reeling from the wake-up call caused by his academic probation status. This positive advising experience started off very routine with the advisor giving Stewwy the contract, explaining the process and repercussions of probation, and offering referrals to resources. However, the advisor also volunteered to give Stewwy a wake-up call every morning to help him get to class. Stewwy was thrilled that this advisor would go above and beyond to help him. Unfortunately, the wake-up calls were effective for only about a week. Then Stewwy returned to his old pattern of staying out late and sleeping through his classes. Kelley (1996) found that how the student handles the probationary status is a major determinant in the student’s future collegiate success. So far, this has proved true for Stewwy as well.

The bulk of Stewwy's advising experiences occurred when he returned from his semester on dismissal, the semester of this study. Although he had realized the potential in utilizing an academic advisor for help, he was just now truly acting upon that realization. Stewwy described these experiences as very pleasant and helpful but rather routine. The advisors all recommended that he visit the learning center on campus. Since he did not have a job upon his return to the university, they strongly advised him not to get one. Stewwy stated that even though the advisors all seemed the same, which he attributed to their excellent training, he believed they motivated him at each meeting. He also felt a sense of accountability to the advisors. He appreciated having a "Big Brother" who was looking out for his academic success at the university.

Build an Advisor. Based on Stewwy's advising experiences, he believed he needed something additional from the advisors. On numerous occasions he said that he believed the advisors were doing a good job; however, he would have appreciated a more aggressive approach. Although the motivation the advisors sparked was crucial for Stewwy, he also wanted an advisor to check-in on him more often. He even suggested that university people, advisors and professors especially, pursue students who are struggling and help them to succeed and not give up. Intrusive advising has been defined as an aggressive, deliberate intervention that enhances student motivation and accountability (Earl, 1987; Heerman & Maleki, 1994). Stewwy's preferences alluded to an intrusive advisor. When asked about undergraduate students being adults and objecting to advisors holding their hands, Stewwy replied that, "if you were actually being an adult about it, then you probably wouldn't be in that situation." Hence, Stewwy justified the necessity for intrusive advising with students on academic probation.

Frequency and Consistency. Clearly, Stewwy's advising preference is directly related to frequency and consistency, since he would like to have more appointments with an advisor. He also stated that he was anxious to declare his major so that he would have the same advisor consistently. As an undeclared student, Stewwy was advised in the college's advising center, not

a major-specific office. He believed he would have had a better relationship with his advisor if he met with the same person every time. The research literature also confirms Stewwy's desire that in order for advising to be effective and contribute to positive outcomes for the student, it must be continuous and part of an ongoing program for the student (Glennen & Baxley, 1985; Letchworth & Bleidt, 1983).

Prior to dismissal, Stewwy had not really realized the importance of seeking help to understand university procedures. He met once with an advisor prior to his first registration to discuss course selection. Ramirez and Evans (1988) found that only a small amount of students on probation in their study had ever spoken with an academic advisor. For Stewwy, the following semester when he was on probation, he was forced to meet with an advisor to complete the contract and to get his registration bar removed. Although he began to understand a greater purpose of the academic advisor, it was not until he was dismissed for a semester and returning on his second semester of academic probation that he realized the benefit of advisors. During that first semester back, Stewwy tried to meet with his advisor once a month; however, he believed that the follow-through and his ultimate academic success were in his own hands.

Fix It vs. The Cycle. Stewwy's first time through the Advising Issues Loop had minimal impact on his academic success and ultimate retention. He ended up sucked into The Cycle and academically dismissed. His causes of probation outweighed any help or support that he could receive from his mom or an advisor. In addition, Stewwy did not understand the severity of his academic situation and repercussions, nor did he understand the need to utilize the help.

Stewwy's second time through the loop, when he returned from dismissal, he was motivated to improve his GPA so that he would be eligible to declare a major and stop taking boring core courses. He said that he was attending most of his classes and doing most of his schoolwork. Partying had fallen by the wayside and school was more of a priority. He wanted a job but could not find one, which turned out to be a blessing for his studying and time

management. Stewwy had more structure and routine in his schoolwork and planning, and he was also implementing a new game plan to improve his academic standing.

When we met for his last interview, Stewwy was curious but not concerned about how his GPA was going to turn out that semester. He had several final exams left to take but he believed that he had been a university student for the first time ever that semester; hence, he expected a successful outcome. Although he attributed all credit for this possible success to himself, he also admitted that bad habits die hard.

Connection to the University. Unfortunately, Stewwy's academic success correlated to his lack of a connection with the institution. The only connection that Stewwy felt to the university was in his belief that he deserved to be here. He loved the school and was ready to become a full-fledged student, i.e. someone with a declared major and not on probation. He did not feel a connection to his advisors and without a declared major, he said he did not feel that he had a fit into the university yet. Tinto (1975) identified academic performance as being strongly related to satisfaction with college integration. Stewwy's poor academic standing and his lack of a declared major were barriers for his connection and integration into the university community.

Outcome: Unfortunately, when the semester was completed and the grades were calculated, Stewwy did not increase his GPA high enough to continue at the university. He finished the semester with a 2.0 but did not raise his cumulative GPA high enough to stay at the institution. He submitted an appeal to the college advising office regarding his impending three-year dismissal but it was denied. Unfortunately for Stewwy, he is now at a greater risk for not obtaining his degree. Once a student is placed on academic probation, s/he increases the chances of not ever graduating and obtaining a bachelor's degree (Glennen et al., 1996a).

Stewwy understood the benefits of working with an academic advisor; however, he did not act upon that realization until after he had already been dismissed for a semester. In addition, Stewwy did not have a major declared so he did not have one single advisor with whom he could consistently meet and establish a relationship. Regardless, Stewwy had a hard time following

through with the advice and recommendations that were offered by the advisors. He was referred to the university's learning center at least three times but never went. Similar to the Myth of Self-Reliance discussed in Chapter One, Stewwy did not take on the responsibility and follow through with the advisor's recommendations (Kirk-Kuwaye & Nishida, 2001). He knew what to do but just did not do so. This contributed to Stewwy's unsatisfactory grades and second academic dismissal.

Lucy

Lucy was a premed transfer student from another large state university. She had done extremely well academically at her previous institution but she was hit by severe depression while at The University at Southwest. Between semesters, she started taking medication and seeing a therapist. During this study, Lucy was trying to redefine herself and turn things back around.

Academic Reality. At the beginning of her first semester at the university, Lucy thought she could catch-up and improve her grades; however, as the semester proceeded, she did not care anymore. She knew that probation was impending; hence, she just gave up on her classes and grades.

Probation Fallout. When Lucy found out officially that she was on academic probation, she said she had an emotional breakdown. Since she had been a 3.5 student at her previous university, she could not believe her new situation. She was extremely embarrassed and exceedingly sad. She described how she felt as completely hopeless and frightened, as though there were no way to recover.

Although she felt extremely low, she had learned at summer orientation that transfer students frequently experience a severe drop in their GPA during their first semester at the university. Consequently, she knew that she was not the only one struggling with her low

academic standing. Despite the consolatory feeling of company, she appreciated hearing about the many students who also endure probation. In addition, she appreciated the confirmation that academic probation is not the end of the world.

Hindsight. As Lucy continued to struggle with her probation label and embarrassment, she realized that it was completely her fault. She wished she had withdrawn and gotten help during the semester that caused probation. But overall, Lucy was not very reflective; she was more interested in moving forward and not looking back.

What is the Purpose? One reason Lucy did not get help was that she did not know to whom to go. She knew academic advisors were available to help plan her course schedule, but she was unaware of their ability to assist with her other struggles. Prior to her probation status, Lucy did not have any meetings with her advisor. She had exchanged emails with her advisor when she first started the semester to verify her course schedule was correct, but she never met face-to-face with anyone.

When Lucy did begin to communicate with her academic advisor, she realized that he was the one person she could go to with questions without having to pour through the pages and pages of the university website. Quality academic advising can provide the most significant mechanism through which students are able to clarify their educational goals while navigating institutional policies and improving academic skills (Habley, 1981). During her semester on probation, Lucy utilized her advisor to give her tips and strategies towards academic success. He advised her to take fewer hours and focus on bringing up her GPA. He also gave her tips on how not to overload herself with all extremely rigorous and time-intensive classes but to balance the level of rigor with each semester. Ultimately, Lucy's advisor helped her get back on track.

Cause of Probation. Lucy's primary cause of academic probation stemmed from her severe episode of depression. Previously she had struggled with depression; but during the semester that caused her probation, Lucy slept more than she was awake. During the interview, she jokingly stated that she really did not ever need to sleep again; she had so much sleep stored

up. Because of her excessive sleeping, she not only missed an appointment with an advisor, but she also missed the drop deadline and the withdrawal deadline.

Prior to her probation, Lucy would occasionally go to class; however, she could not concentrate. She would stare around the room with her mind a million miles away. Her notes from the classes that she attended were just as insufficient as the notes she never wrote during classes she missed. While taking exams, Lucy's mind would wander off, only to be brought back to the moment by the end-of-class bell ringing. Ramirez and Evans (1988) explained that because of the nature and intensity of the instructional pace, when interfering factors, such as depression, escalate and divert attention, students are seldom able to regain the lost time and work.

Support Sources – The Three Rs. Lucy's mom had always been a major supporter in Lucy's life. Before Lucy realized how beneficial an academic advisor could be, her mom was the one to whom she constantly turned. However, when Lucy was initially struggling with her depression at the university, she said she contacted the university health services. Unfortunately, she also says that no one called her back; thus, she never got treated. It was not until Lucy went home to her mom at the semester break that she went to a therapist for treatment and medication.

Lucy also experienced a complete change in support by her friends during her semester on probation. The group with whom she had partied at the very beginning of the semester basically abandoned her after a roommate experience that resulted in her moving across town. She did not offer any specifics, except that she moved herself to a new home and shortly thereafter found herself in the tears of depression. Those original friends did not know what to do and basically disappeared. During the rest of the semester, Lucy relied on her mom and a few classmates as her support. Her semester on probation when she was attending classes and getting back on track, Lucy found additional friends through her classes and study groups.

Advising Experiences. At Lucy's previous institution, she had been advised for class selection; but she believed that the advisors hated their jobs and hated students disturbing them

even more. As a result, she brought that negative expectation into her advising experiences at this university. Prior to her probation, she had only exchanged very generic emails with her advisor about course selection. When she learned of her probation status, she still continued to email her advisor but with additional questions about probation, not just course selection.

All of the email exchanges with her advisor were pleasant and informative. She had nothing but good things to say about her advisor and his helpfulness via email. However, when she finally decided to meet with her advisor face-to-face, she realized that email required eighty notes, whereas, a face-to-face meeting would cover all of the information, and then some, at once. Lucy now appreciated her advisor even more. He proved to be not only helpful and informative but he also provided very positive energy and additional motivation for Lucy. Her advisor utilized intrusive advising to establish a rapport with her while covering academic requirements, probation guidelines, and the curricular options available (Glennen, 1976; Glennen & Baxley, 1985). He then helped with her motivation to succeed (Earl, 1988).

Build an Advisor. At the university, Lucy realized that advisors are not all the same and that it was possible to have a positive experience. Her preference for an advisor was built from that new understanding. Especially when compared to the advisors at her previous university, Lucy appreciated her advisor's kindness and willingness to be more than just an advisor; she believed that he was a mentor to her. At her previous university, Lucy did not struggle with her academic standing; hence, she did not have the same preferences that she has now for her advisor. Previously, she just needed assurance that her course selection was appropriate. Now she needed a lot more guidance and support. Because of her academic probation status, Lucy needed greater encouragement, hope, and motivation. She said that academic advisors should focus their efforts on students on probation because those students really, really need personal guidance and knowledge of their options.

Frequency and Consistency. Prior to her probation status, Lucy had been in contact with her advisors at her previous institution only a couple of times for help with registration. During

her first semester at this university, she had met with a college advisor initially to get her classes set-up. Then, she exchanged a couple of emails with her major advisor.

When Lucy was put on probation, she emailed her major advisor multiple times. After the advisor would respond to one question, that would trigger another question for Lucy to email. Finally, Lucy made the trip to her advisor's office to meet face-to-face. She reported that face-to-face was much better. As students on probation meet with their academic advisor, they begin to develop a greater understanding of their own academic needs. The success plan that is corroborated between the advisor and student involves working as a partnership (Frost, 1993; Higgins, 2003). For Lucy, when meeting face-to-face with her advisor, she would ask one question and her advisor would answer it and give additional related information. Instantly, she could then ask any questions that were sparked by the previous answer. Lucy was soon visiting her advisor for every question she had, which was every couple of weeks to once a month. One instance prior to registration, she had been exchanging emails with her advisor but then beat him to his own office hours one morning with additional questions.

She felt very comfortable with her advisor and appreciated that she had just the one advisor continuously. She did not have to re-explain her embarrassing situation multiple times. In addition, they both got to know each other better with every meeting. She did state that she thinks it should be required for students on probation to meet with their advisor at least once a month. She really felt she benefited from that kind of frequency. Such frequent and persistent interactions between the advisor and student on probation can produce motivation and accountability outcomes as it did for Lucy (Glennen, 1976; Ramirez & Evans, 1988).

Fix It vs. The Cycle. Although Lucy entered the Advising Issues Loop with a previous negative advising experience from her other institution, she came out with a new positive experience that ultimately benefited her academic success. Because of the support from her mom and the frequent help from her advisor, Lucy was able to greatly improve her academic performance. Based on her advisor's advice, she decided to only take 12 hours during her first

semester on probation. Then, she started reading to get ahead immediately. Lucy also went to all of her classes; she made school her top priority. She was motivated by the chance of getting an A, a motivation that affected her self-confidence. When asked about the possible cycle that students fall into while on probation, Lucy said she could understand the concept; however, she personally was fighting the discouragement of probation with the motivation of getting off.

Connection to the University. Lucy's success in turning her academic performance around correlated with her connection to the university. When she began her semester on probation and her new academic game plan to turn things around, she also decided to embrace the university. Tinto (1993) found that a student's sense of belonging is directly related to his/her decision to remain at the university. She had thought before that the university was a huge entity out to get her; but when she realized that her low GPA was her own fault, her opinion changed.

When talking about her connection to the university, Lucy explicitly described the university sweatshirt that she bought and how her home is splattered with the school colors. Not typically someone to have school spirit and go to athletics games, Lucy also found herself adopting a new attitude and a new appreciation of college sports and team spirit.

Above all, Lucy wanted to graduate from this university because she was excited about the prestige that would come with her degree. While working on her undergraduate degree, she was going to take advantage of all that the institution offered, including a summer study abroad program. As she embraced the university, she anxiously chatted about wanting to meet new people at the university. The diversity of the university population appealed to Lucy as she believed it to be the only place in the state to have such variety. She wanted to embrace all matters of what the institution had to offer

Outcome: Lucy started her academic probation with a 0.9 cumulative GPA because her grades from her previous institution had no influence on her current GPA. During the course of this study, Lucy made a semester GPA of 2.5 which resulted in a cumulative GPA of 1.6.

Although Lucy did not raise her cumulative GPA up to a 2.0, she was allowed to continue at the university on academic probation. A 0.9 is a deep hole from which to climb out, but Lucy had shown significant academic improvement to justify her continuation. She was working more closely with her advisor and meeting all of her professors. She had proven to be a student with strong potential of graduating; thus the university seemed to be embracing her as well.

Summary of the Diagram

The diagram works for students who are academically successful and those who are not, as was presented through Lucy's and Stewwy's journeys. In general, the diagram illustrates the big picture of what affects and influences the student on probation, especially as they enter into advising. The loops suggest that academic advising is intertwined with, and affected by many, many factors. The various factors can be in continual motion with all the themes affecting the student's academic advising interaction or the motion may pass through some themes unaffected; thus, only certain themes could be impacting the advisor-student connection. The frequency of the motion and what themes are involved depends on the student and the situation at the time.

The themes outside of the Advising Issues Loop are related more specifically to the student's reality and perception; whereas, the themes in the Advising Issues Loop involve the interaction of the student with other people. Regardless, the interaction between students on probation and academic advisors is not a simple connection and is not consistent. There are multiple issues that are interacting and influencing the situation constantly.

The Box

Advisors were in a little box called "advisor before registration."
Michelle 11-321

The diagram is titled "The Box" and is referencing several students' metaphors regarding their academic advising. During Michelle's interview, she believed advisors only fulfilled the

box or the purpose of class advising before registration. Other students perceived the advising appointment as a task on a to-do list. After they met with their advisor, they could check off that box since they had completed the task. Students who had advisors with cubicles for offices described the advising environment as a box that did not provide any privacy. The students on probation could hear other advisors with students. As a result, they assumed they were being overheard as well. Two females who had very negative experiences with an advisor felt that they were confined in a box and could not get out during that appointment. They expressed great relief when the meeting was over so that they were able to leave the physical confinement of the advising box. However the metaphor is defined, it reveals information about the student on probation and his/her academic advising experiences and expectations.

PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

This study suggests many interesting implications for academic advisors and their working with students on academic probation. The framing of the study in the context of the student's perception stems from the need to identify gaps in the student's understanding of how to attain academic success. This rationale serves as a way to identify opportunities for academic advisors and IHE to work more effectively with students on probation or at risk of academic probation. In addition, the study provides a big picture awareness of what the student on probation experiences while struggling with a poor academic standing. The multiple factors that affect the student are brought into the advising sessions, thus impacting the connection between the student on probation and the academic advisor. Institutions and advisors that are aware of the multiple factors that influence students on probation may provide a more effective and impacting advising experience. Such a change in the advising experience should also affect the levels of student success and retention overall, since students are being served on a more personal and informed basis.

The advising experience is the place on the Probation and Advising Interactions Model where academic advisors have the most significant impact on students on probation. The advising experience impacts the student in a positive or negative way; and that experience shapes the student's opinion and perceived use of advisors for the future, thus potentially affecting the student's academic success. Advisors need to remember that their advising session with a student has been influenced by that student's past advising experiences. The advisor working with the student on probation must provide a positive, effective advising experience for the student, which promotes a trusting partnership that leads to more frequent contacts and a positive impact on the student's academic success. The frequency of contact between an advisor and his/her advisee is important to building a strong and comfortable relationship. Of course, to establish this relationship, the student needs to be able to meet frequently with the same advisor and not be subjected to an advisor lottery.

To create this positive, trusting partnership, academic advisors also need to utilize a more intrusive advising style which engages the student on probation better. Intrusive advising does not mean hostile or overly aggressive; it is an engaging and personal partnership that produces motivation and accountability. The newly motivated student on probation feels a sense of accountability to the academic advisor who provides encouragement and assistance. Students on probation struggle with balance, structure, and prioritization. Having a stronger relationship with an academic advisor would allow the student to have a university contact who would help him/her negotiate those issues. A student feels more integrated and connected to the institution when s/he has an institutional contact (Earl, 1987; Heisserer & Parette, 2002; Spanier, 2004). In addition, as students build a connection with their advisor, they understand a greater benefit to utilizing the advisor as an institutional resource. Advisors are not only useful for planning and scheduling classes, but they are also beneficial to a student's overall academic success. Students on probation often need intrusive advising to help them realize the benefit of working with an advisor.

Since academic probation is embarrassing and potentially lonely for students, academic advisors need to remember that when working with this population. Although time management, procrastination, and study skills are basic problems that affect all students, they especially impact students on probation. Advisors need to be aware that these issues are often compounded with multiple other concerns; thus, the student is managing much more than just academic challenges and bad grades. In addition, all students on probation are not struggling with their poor academic status because of too much partying and sleeping. Stereotyping and judgment do not help the student's perception of himself/herself nor his/her academic standing and ultimate retention. The advisor needs to take the time to learn about the student and his/her causes of probation. Then the advisor can be a more personal resource and a greater benefit to the student and the institution.

In order for the academic advisor to be more aware and capable when working with students on probation, institutions need to provide an encouraging, supportive, and progressive environment for advising. Institutions need to implement appropriate training and professional development opportunities for advisors regarding working with students on probation. In addition, institutions need to be aware that this unique population of students can require more attention and specific assistance than students who are not in academic jeopardy. Advisors that work with students on probation need to be allowed additional time to work with these students and the advisors need to be trained as to the most effective utilization of that time with the student. In addition, advisors working with students on probation need a smaller caseload of students so they can offer the additional time and availability that students on probation require. Institutions need to invest in the retention of their students by providing advisors with the tools, time, and knowledge that is required when working with students on probation.

Finally, institutions need to measure the effectiveness of their advisor training programs and their academic advisors. There must be continuous evaluation of the instruction and material offered for academic advisors working with unique populations such as students on probation.

Furthermore, the advisors that participate in the programs and/or who work with special populations must also be evaluated. The specific measurements of the assessment will vary based on the institution's mission; however, all IHE should be concerned with the overall academic success and achievement of the students. The evaluation should not be strictly numbers, for example, the number or percentage of students retained. The qualitative aspects must be considered for a true and efficient assessment of the institution's and the advisor's effectiveness when working with students on probation. Evaluation is key to the success and effectiveness of any advising program.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Based on the limitations of this research, there is a need for additional research. This study was limited in time and location; thus, a longitudinal investigation involving several institutions would assure greater generalizability. In addition, a researcher who was not also an academic advisor might produce somewhat different responses from the participants.

Regardless, there are many student populations in which academic advisors work; thus, the research to improve the relationship of those students with their advisors should expand to provide more efficient and effective strategies and mechanisms for success. One should never assume that a single student is like another. The big picture scenario should always be considered.

There is limited research regarding academic advisors and students on probation, in general. To reduce that gap, suggested research questions for future studies include the following:

- How do academic advisors perceive their relationships with students on academic probation? What dynamics are involved?
- How does the perception of the student-advisor relationship and interactions differ between students on probation and academic advisors?
- What are effective, efficient, and purposeful intervention strategies to utilize when working with students on academic probation in regards to their academic success and retention? And at what points in the diagram are the intervention strategies most effective?
- How do professional training sessions for academic advisors contribute to their understanding of special populations and their unique needs?

Each of these questions could qualify as a research question for a future study. The exploration of academic advisors and students on probation is limited and needs expansion. Until the research is increased, students will not always be appropriately served and retention and academic success will likely suffer. Research looking specifically at the advisor and the advisor's effectiveness needs to be amplified to offer more specifics on what provides the most effective advising experience for students on academic probation.

PERSONAL REFLECTIONS

As the researcher of this study and also an academic advisor, this study had a significant impact on me personally and professionally. As an advisor, I know that working with students on probation can be tiresome and frustrating. As someone who wants to help everyone, I sometimes feel relatively useless and unheard when working with students on probation. Now I

believe I am better armed and aware to help this population. I better understand the importance of the big picture and individuality and uniqueness of every student.

During my interviews and focus group, I also realized how bad advisors and bad advising experiences impact students and their future use and trust of advising. In general, I now better understand that students on probation often carry with them a lot of baggage. What they have to balance and manage would be difficult for a grown adult; however, these students are only 19 to 24 years old and forced to deal with so much. It is unfair for life to lay so much on them; but then, as my dad says, “life is not fair”. When I work with these students, I will now try to provide a more personal and attentive interaction. I also hope to be more intrusive, especially in regards to follow-up. Unfortunately, time can limit the amount of intrusion.

While listening to the stories that these students offered, I found it difficult not to put on my advising hat and help. Since I am very empathic, I completely felt the pain and frustration of these students. After the first student cried (and many students shed tears) during an interview, I felt as though I had asked too much or pushed too far; however, she said that the interview was cathartic. She felt as though it was her time in a safe space to tell her story ... and for that story to matter. The students had all felt discounted as part of their academic probation label. The interviews allowed them a time to really talk about their experiences with no fear of judgment or repercussions. Not only was I happy to provide that for the students, but I was also honored that they felt that safe with me.

What I think was probably the hardest thing for me to deal with during this research was hearing the stories of bad advisors. Chapter Four reveals some of the pain and torment that these students experienced during their academic advising, and I think that is unbelievable. Previously, I had heard of professors who caused students to cry; but I had never heard of an advisor being so harsh as to provoke student tears. That made me very angry. I want to do something about these bad advisors; however, there is really nothing that I can specifically do except present my findings and results to others. I plan to create a professional development

presentation for the institution in which the students attended and I will also strive to present this at numerous professional conferences. Hopefully, bad advisors can then be identified and future advisors can be aware of what constitutes bad advising.

CONCLUSION

This study explored the experiences of students on academic probation and their interactions with their academic advisors. Through the student's voice, the experiences were analyzed and conceptualized into eleven themes. These themes were then illustrated as the Probation and Advising Interactions Model. This model described how the themes impact the student on probation and his/her academic advising. It offers a big picture view of the various issues that affect and influence the student on probation, especially regarding how it relates to academic advising. The diagram accounts for students who improve their academic performance and it illustrates those who do not improve and end up in The Cycle.

The research literature on advising and student retention agrees that advisors can impact the academic success and retention of students on probation (Cook, 2001; Habley, 1981; Muskat, 1979). Tinto's (1975) foundational retention model explains part of the reason why advisors impact the student's retention. An academic advisor serves as the significant contact person within the university who helps the student feel more connected with the institution. This sense of belonging is directly related to the student's persistence and decision to remain in school (Earl, 1987; Habley, 1981; Heisserer & Parette, 2002; Spanier, 2004; Tinto, 1993). When picking the preferred academic advisor, students favored an advisor who utilized a more developmental style of advising. The shared collaboration between the student and advisor made the advising relationship more a partnership where both parties were invested (Crookston, 1972; Earl, 1988; Frost, 1993). Several of the students also said that they needed an intrusive advisor

to help them raise their academic standing. The students wanted someone who was more deliberate with an intervention and motivating with student follow-through (Earl, 1988).

Finally, Molina and Abelman (2000) found that the manner in which information is relayed significantly impacts the academic performance and retention of students at academic risk. The single most important factor in advising is to help the students feel that they are cared for by the institution, thus instilling a sense of being valued (Backhus, 1989; Heisserer & Parette, 2002). This was true for the students on academic probation. They struggled with embarrassment, discouragement, and loneliness. An academic advisor can help provide the confidence and self-esteem that is needed for these students to overcome their academic decline. The advisor can also show compassion and understanding when working with the student on academic probation, not judgment or condescension.

APPENDICES

- A. Solicitation Email for Student Participants
- B. Letter to Focus Group Participants
- C. Letter to Participant Students on Probation
- D. Solicitation Flier
- E. Solicitation Email for Academic Advisors
- F. Focus Group Procedure Outline
- G. First Interview Content Outline

APPENDIX A: SOLICITATION EMAIL FOR STUDENT PARTICIPANTS

Dear Liberal Arts Student,

You are being invited to participate in a study for a graduate student investigating the possible connection between academic advisors and academic probation students. The intent of this study is to identify ways students can increasingly benefit from working with their academic advisors, especially while on academic probation.

The quick survey below is step one. Deciding if you are willing to participate is step two. Then, step three will occur after you submit this survey. You may be asked to participate in either: 1) two separate, individual one-hour interviews or 2) one two-hour focus group with 15 other students.

Academic difficulties are not an uncommon occurrence while in college. Provisions to help students during this time are vital to the student's and the institution's success.

Please be assured that this survey and future information and correspondence will be kept confidential. No student will be penalized nor will his/her university standing be affected by participating or not participating. All participation is voluntary.

STEP ONE

Please circle

Have you ever been on academic probation? YES / NO

ANSWER ONLY IF THE RESPONSE IS YES

Are you on academic probation now (Spring 2006)? YES / NO

Were you on academic probation last semester (Fall 2005)? YES / NO

During which semester were you no longer on probation (check only one)?

Still on probation Fall 2005 Starting Spring 2006

STEP TWO

If you are willing to participate in interviews or focus groups, please provide the following information:

Name _____

Email address _____ EID: _____

Postal mailing address _____

City/state/zip _____

You will receive further correspondence, including a consent form, from me in the mail in the next few weeks. If you have any further questions, please contact Shelly at shellygehrke@yahoo.com.

Thank You for participating!

Shelly Gehrke, MEd
PhD Candidate
Higher Education Administration
The University of Southwest
Home Phone: 707-2308

APPENDIX B: LETTER TO FOCUS GROUP PARTICIPANTS

Dear College of Liberal Arts Student:

First of all, Congratulations are in order. Your academic performance has earned you your way off of academic probation! Congratulations on your academic performance and hard work!

Second, because of your academic accomplishment, I am writing to request your participation in a one-time focus group. What is a focus group? It is a group discussion about your opinion, experience, and perspective of academic probation. I am a doctoral candidate in the Department of Educational Administration and my dissertation topic is related to the academic probation student and his/her experience. I am very interested in your specific experiences – good or bad – while on academic probation.

The primary goal of this research is to better understand how the university community, and especially academic advisors, can better aid students on academic probation. The confidential information you provide in the focus group will be a large portion of my dissertation. And it may also help UT better configure its services.

Your input and communication during the focus group will be confidential. Right from the beginning, you will be asked to identify an alias name. Whether or not you choose to participate does not affect your standing at The University of Southwest in any way.

The focus group will meet on campus one-time in the next couple of weeks. The meeting will be audio-taped for the researcher. It will last approximately 2-2.5 hours and pizza and drinks will be provided. There will be approximately 15 students participating in this meeting.

Please review the enclosed consent form. If you have any questions, you may contact me (shellygehrke@yahoo.com / 707-2308). If you decide to participate, please fill out and return the enclosed forms in the stamped envelope.

Please respond no later than Monday, January 23, 2006.

Thank you in advance for taking the time to consider participating in the focus group and discussing your experiences and opinions while on academic probation.

Take care,
Shelly Gehrke

Doctoral Candidate
Higher Education Administration
The University of Southwest
Ph: 707-2308

APPENDIX C: LETTER TO PARTICIPANT STUDENTS ON PROBATION

Dear College of Liberal Arts Student:

You are invited to participate in a study about the academic probation student's experience. My name is Shelly Gehrke and I am a doctoral candidate in the Department of Educational Administration. You were selected as a possible participant in this study because of your academic standing. If you choose to participate, you will be one of approximately 35 students to participant in this study.

The primary goal of the study is to better understand how the university community, and especially academic advisors, can better aid academic probation students. The confidential information you provide in the interviews will be a large portion of my dissertation. Your perspective and experience is important not only as part of my research but also to better inform UT about students' experiences while on academic probation.

Any information obtained in connection with this study that can be identified with you will remain confidential and will not be known by anyone except me, the researcher. Right from the beginning, you will be asked to identify an alias name; so that you cannot be identified. If you decide to not participate, your standing at The University of Southwest will not be affected in any way.

Participation in the study will involve two interviews lasting approximately one hour each. The first interview will occur within the next couple of weeks and the second interview will occur closer to the end of the semester. The interviews will be held on campus and at your convenience. Both interviews will be audio-recorded for the researcher.

If you decide to participate, you are free to discontinue your participation at any time. Please review the enclosed consent form. If you have any questions, you may contact me (shellygehrke@yahoo.com / 707-2308). I will be happy to answer any questions you may have.

Thank you for considering participation in this study. If you decide to participate, please fill out and return the enclosed forms in the stamped envelope. Please respond no later than Friday, February 3, 2006.

Cordially,
Shelly Gehrke

Doctoral Candidate
Higher Education Administration
The University of Southwest
Ph: 707-2308

**Are you *currently* on
academic probation?**

**Have you *ever* been on
academic probation
while at the university?**

**If the answer is “YES”, then please contact
Shelly Gehrke: shelly.gehrke@mail...
phone: 707-2308**

You are invited to participate in a study for a graduate student investigating the possible connection between academic advisors and academic probation students. Participation only involves 2 hours of your time either through a focus group or interview.

IRB Approved: 2005-08-0029

Shelly Gehrke
Shelly.gehrke@mail...

Shelly Gehrke
shelly.gehrke@mail...

APPENDIX E: SOLICITATION EMAIL FOR ACADEMIC ADVISORS

February 23, 2006

Dear Academic Advisor,

Earlier this semester, I emailed you asking for help in recruiting students on academic probation for my dissertation research. Now, I am emailing you to ask for your participation in my research.

My study is investigating the possible connection between academic advisors and students on academic probation. The intent of this study is to identify ways students can increasingly benefit from working with their academic advisors, especially while on academic probation.

As you are an academic advisor that works with students on probation, I would like to setup an interview with you to gain the advisor's perspective. The interview will last approximately one-hour and all information and correspondence will be kept strictly confidential. From the beginning, as a participant, you will pick an alias name to use. I hope to conduct the interview the week of February 27 – March 3, 2006. There will also likely be a follow-up interview at the end of the semester.

Please email me and let me know if you are interested and/or available to participate in my study. The interview can occur in my office or yours; however, I will be recording the session for my files and need someplace relatively quiet.

Thank You for your time and consideration!

Shelly Gehrke
PhD Candidate

...

IRB Approved: 2005-08-0029
(Consent form to be signed before participation)

APPENDIX F: FOCUS GROUP PROCEDURE OUTLINE

- I) Guided Imagery / Silent Nominal
- II) Open Group Discussion
- III) Silent Reflection
- IV) Dump Thoughts on Cards – silent group brainstorm
- V) Tape Cards on the Wall
- VI) Group Clarification on the Meaning of Each Card
- VII) Group Discussion
- VIII) Researcher: Arrange Cards into Categories
- X) Researcher: Name Categories

APPENDIX G: FIRST INTERVIEW CONTENT OUTLINE

Tell me about your experience getting to probation

Causes, problems, lessons

Advisor interactions

People supporters

Place blame / fault

Tell me about coming back to school but this time on probation

Probation label

Feelings, thoughts

Contacts, supports

Who and how many know you are on academic probation?

Who have you told? Who have you specifically not told? And why?

Tell me about this first month of being on probation at UT

Thoughts, feelings, interactions, connections, experiences

New experiences – different study habits, visit new resources, etc

Tell me about how/when your academic advisor comes into play.

Have your parents ever contacted the advisor?

Tell me about your advisor.

Their name, where they are located, anything kind of personal about them that you know?

How many times you have seen/contacted them – before, now. How many times have they contacted you? The process for appointments – you contact the advisor or the advisor contacts you?

Why did you go to see them? What are the results? Are you satisfied? Positive? Negative? Are your purposes met?

Do you consider the experience good or bad? Why? What does that mean (bad, good) to you?

Questions answered? Do you feel like you always got your questions answered and with good information? Tell me about an example.

Have you received advice? Did you follow it? Why or why not? What were your thoughts?

Privacy: How much do you think an advisor should ask/pry in effort to help you?

Tell me about more of the nature of your interactions with your advisor. Do you feel comfortable with your academic advisor? What do you consider as being “comfortable”? Is it in and out?

Gender: Does it matter?

Power / knowledge differential? Intimidating?

What do you believe is the advisor's purpose? Why do you believe advisors are here?
Do you have expectations of the advisor?

Is that someone you see as supportive? Or just as a resource for knowledge? Or someone to just help with class scheduling?

Would you go see your advisor about a bad day?

Timeframe / falling behind conversation?

Thinking about your experiences and especially the fact that you are now on probation ...
If you could create your own ideal advisor or advising situation, what would that mean to you?
What would that be? Personality characteristics and/or approach? Why would you choose those? Why would you not choose others? What would you specifically not want?

Tell me how your current advisor and advising experiences... and how does that measure up to that ideal situation.

Tell me about his/her specific ideal characteristics and/or approach, and the not ideal.
How does that impact you? Tell me what you would do if you could tweak your academic advisor, to make that interaction /relationship beneficial [ideal] to you while you're on probation.
What part of that is your part ... what you will put forth?

Have you ever thought about you having responsibilities to have successful advising?
Like a joint effort where you both create goals and expectations and talk about them?

Do you think there is anything that could have been different with advising and that relationship that could have prevented you from getting on probation?

What is the nature of that relationship? What is the nature of that interaction? Was it positive? was it negative? Were you satisfied with it? Were you unhappy? Did it have any impact or benefit for you? What are some of your goals going forward, looking at your relationship with your academic advisor and your academic probation.

Tell me about personal game plan going forward

What is going to make you successful? (How do you define successful?)

Did your academic advisor help you put that together?

Does your academic advisor play into that gameplan?

How did you come up with it?

Did anyone help you?

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Vita

Rochelle Lea Gehrke was born in Waterloo, Iowa on August 4, 1971 to Wallace G. Gehrke and Sandri L. (Friedley) Gehrke. She was raised in small-town Iowa until 4th grade when she was uprooted to The Colony, Texas. Shelly has one younger brother, Craig.

Shelly attended Stephen F. Austin State University in Nacogdoches, Texas and in 1993, earned a Bachelor of Science in Environmental Science and a Bachelor of Applied Arts and Science in Public Relations. Shortly after graduation, she accepted the Project Coordinator position for Continuing Education at Texas Woman's University. She served there for two years before accepting the Director of Admissions position at Lon Morris College in 1997.

In 1999, Shelly moved to Austin, Texas where she served as the Director of Education for the Texas Association of Homes and Services for the Aging/Educational Institute on Aging (TAHSA/EIA) for three years. Concurrently, she attended the University of Texas (UT) and completed a M.Ed. in College and University Student Personnel Administration in 2002. Shortly thereafter, Shelly was accepted into the UT Ph.D. program in Educational Administration, where she specialized in Higher Education. During her doctoral work, Shelly served as a teaching assistant in the School of Business for three semesters. She also served as an academic advisor in the College of Natural Sciences her last three years at UT. She resides in Austin, TX with Russ and their pets, Jackson, Ajax, Corkey, and Zin.

Permanent Address: 3404 Lakeside Drive, Austin, TX 78723

This dissertation was typed by the author.