

PERSPECTIVES OF FORMER AND RECENT PARTICIPANTS  
OF THE EARLY IDENTIFICATION PROGRAM (EIP)

by

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A Research Paper

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the  
Requirements for the Masters of Science Degree  
With a Major in

Guidance and Counseling

Approved: 2 Semester Credits

  
(Research Advisor)

The Graduate School  
University of Wisconsin-Stout  
December, 2005

The Graduate School  
University of Wisconsin-Stout  
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Title: *Perspectives of Former and Recent Participants of the Early Identification  
Program (EIP)*

Graduate Degree/Major: MS Guidance and Counseling

Research Advisor: Carolyn Barnhart, Ph.D.

Month/Year: December, 2005

Number of Pages: 52

Style Manual Used: American Psychological Association, 5<sup>th</sup> edition

#### ABSTRACT

As the Midwest changes and grows, the educational programs offered should also be reviewed. Within the past 20 years, the Midwest has seen a tremendous growth in the number of ethnic minorities. Minority students bring knowledge and cultural diversity to the area. These students also face many challenges, including limited knowledge of academic programs and limited financial resources. In order to meet these diverse needs of today's students, programs like the Early Identification Program (EIP) need to be monitored and adapted to remain effective.

The Early Identification Program is an educational program available for disadvantaged students in grades 6-12. The purpose of EIP is to provide students with knowledge and skills to help increase their rates of graduation and entrance to post secondary institutions.

This study surveyed past and current EIP students from the upper Midwest on their perspectives of the program. It presents valuable insights that may provide program coordinators and/or others with information that can help improve the existing EIP, shape the future of the program, and/or defend the program from state and federal budget cuts that may threaten to eliminate the program. The findings of this research supported the study of early intervention programs in assisting and encouraging disadvantaged students to continue their formal education.

## Acknowledgements

There are many people I wish to acknowledge for their guidance and support in completing my research paper. I would like to give a big thanks to my sister-in-law, Dr. Julie Luetschwager for her assistance as I wrote this research paper. Her willingness to share her time and professional knowledge and skills when needed made all the difference.

I would also like to thank my advisor, Dr. Carolyn Barnhart, for her time and encouragement as I undertook this difficult challenge. Her excellence in teaching has been an inspiration to me throughout my years at Stout.

My family also deserves a big thanks for their love and patience. I would particularly like to thank my husband, Scott, for his understanding and support as I took another step in pursuing my dream of becoming a school counselor.

A special thanks to Jane Wiley and Sharon Hunter for their guidance in my research and education. Their mentorship has been wonderful influence in my life.

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## Chapter I: Introduction

For a growing number of disadvantaged students, school is anything but rewarding and fulfilling. In countless ways the diverse needs of these at-risk students are not met at school, which often leads to more and more students dropping out of high school. For many, this may be the continuation or beginning of many life struggles as they strive to become contributing members of society. For these students and many others, something else is needed, something that goes above and beyond traditional academics to meet their diverse educational needs.

According to McWhirter, McWhirter, McWhirter, and McWhirter (1993), students at a high risk for dropping out of school include students from low-socioeconomic groups and/or racial/ethnic minorities. According to Horowitz and O'Brien (as cited in McWhirter et al., 1993), poor students are three times more likely to drop out of school than students who are economically advantaged. Students from these at-risk groups often come from families that lack educational backgrounds, experiences, resources, and expectations. Furthermore Horowitz believes that many of these students are not motivated to succeed with their academics, may feel as if they do not belong at school, are unlikely to be involved in extra curricular activities and often have truancy and other behavior problems.

Disadvantaged students may see dropping out as a solution to their immediate problems; however, this solution masks bigger and more serious challenges. McWhirter et al., (1993) found that the economic consequences of dropping out of school include high unemployment rates and low wages. In the late 1980's, statistics for Wisconsin, cited in "Dropout's Perspective," revealed one-third of dropouts earned less than

minimum wage (as cited in McWhirter et al., 1993). Dropouts also face many social and emotional consequences. Their lack of academic success is often intensified further when they do not graduate with their peers. Often their self-esteem and confidence are lowered even more. This cycle of disparity often continues into the future as these behaviors are frequently passed on to their own children (McWhirter et al., 1993).

According to the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education (2004), “the nation’s high schools are graduating a far more complex and varied group of students” (p. 1). They believe that this continuing trend “should be a wake-up call, urging us to look closely at what we’re doing well and where we need to do much better in terms of retaining and graduating our young people” (p. 1).

This “wake-up call” includes implementing early intervention programs. Fenske (1997) believes:

The growth of early intervention programs reflects America’s commitment to high levels of educational attainment for all citizens. This commitment is embodied in the national ideal of equal educational opportunity without regard to social or economic status. Early intervention programs offer new hope to youth who are disproportionately “at-risk” of inadequate educational attainment by providing financial assistance and encouragement to them, their families, and their communities. (p. 1)

He also believed that interventions implemented early in a disadvantaged student’s school career helps incorporate a natural transition from elementary to secondary to higher education.

A program in Wisconsin that has a long trend of providing disadvantaged youth with skills and knowledge to graduate from high school and pursue higher education is the Early Identification Program (EIP). EIP was developed in response to an increasing number of minority and low-income students not going on to college. N. Anderson (personal communication, June 1, 2005) stated “Many disadvantaged students had no family history of higher education. Some families had no history of formal education at all. These families had to connect with mentoring experiences to gain exposure to career possibilities for their children.” EIP is an early intervention program targeting low-income and first-generation students (S. Hunter, personal communication, March 12, 2004). It educates students about post-secondary educational opportunities. It also allows them to network with others, including peers, mentors, tutors, college and/or technical schools and businesses. (B. Meyer, personal communication, April 13, 2005).

It is the intent of this study to identify to what degree students who took part in EIP were satisfied with the services that were offered to them. The study will look at the EIP offerings and what program opportunities were most helpful to students. It is believed that these students will share their valuable insights regarding the benefits of EIP in future goals, which may help secure the future of EIP from possible program cuts and help guide the program to make improvements that will continue to benefit disadvantaged students.

According to The Institute for Higher Education Policy (1998), the need to secure the future of programs such as EIP has increased because “Growing public scrutiny of higher education, combined with limited or reduced government spending, has focused increasing attention on the benefits of higher education, both from an individual and a

societal standpoint” (p. 5). If there is not a complete understanding of the full range of benefits of higher education, “selective disinvestment in higher education becomes increasingly possible. That is, if policy makers and the public do not have the total picture regarding why investment in education matters, other public policy priorities may end up getting more support than funding for higher education” (p. 11). For example, in the early 1990’s state support for higher education was reduced due to rising state costs of prisons and health care.

According to the State of Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction (2004), graduation rates in the state of Wisconsin rose from 89.73% in 1998-1999 to 91.83% in 2002-2003, and dropout rates fell from 2.35% in 1998-1999 to 1.98% in 2002-2003. Positive results like this send a message that schools are on the right track in educating Wisconsin’s youth. These results also support the need to continue with early intervention programs such as EIP as it continues to contribute to the educational success by growing and changing to better meet the needs of disadvantaged students in grades 6-12.

### *Statement of the Problem*

The purpose of this research is to examine the perceptions of former and recent students in the Early Identification Program (EIP) to determine if the program was/is beneficial and successfully met/meets their academic needs. These academic needs include skills needed to complete secondary education and access to resources to continue formal education if desired. Surveys will be distributed to select students from Wisconsin who took part in EIP between 1982-2005.

### *Research Questions*

There are four research questions that this study sought to answer. They are:

1. Do students feel that EIP met their academic needs?
2. What aspects of EIP best met/meet student needs?
3. What aspects of EIP need to be improved?
4. What can EIP do in the future to serve students better?

### *Definition of Terms*

There are six terms that need to be defined for clarity of understanding. These are:

*Disadvantaged Students.* Low-income students (family income is at 150 % of the poverty level or below) or first generation students (neither parent graduated from a four-year college) (S. Hunter, personal communication, March 12, 2004).

*Dropout.* A pupil who leaves school before his or her program of study is complete, before graduation, without transferring to another school.

*Early Identification Program (EIP).* A statewide program of Wisconsin Educational Opportunity Programs (WEOP), that provides academic, personal, and career counseling to several hundred students who are enrolled each year from participating middle and high schools in grades 6-12 (Wisconsin DPI, undated).

*Federal TRIO Programs.* Programs established by the United States federal government beginning in 1965 to ensure equal educational opportunity.

*Former EIP Students.* Students who participated in EIP between 1982-1996.

*Low-Income.* Family income is at 150% of the poverty level or below, or first generation students, neither parent graduated from a four-year college.

*Recent EIP Students.* Students who participated in EIP between 2000-2005.

*Wisconsin Educational Opportunity Programs (WEOP)*. “A bureau within the Division for Reading and Student Achievement in the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction whose purpose is to help educationally and economically disadvantaged students continue their education beyond high school” (Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, 2002, p. 2).

*Assumptions and Limitations*

The following assumptions/limitations were made related to this research study:

1. Students who took part in EIP will express some level of benefit from the services they received.
2. EIP offers disadvantaged students valuable opportunities in school that they may otherwise not have.
3. Participants will freely share their insights about their experiences with EIP.
4. A limitation to this study is that it focuses on a small sample size based on the inclusion of the alumni from one program site.

## Chapter II: Review of Literature

The literature review will consist of the following sections: disadvantaged students; problems and social consequences of disadvantaged students; meeting the needs of disadvantaged students; and the importance of early intervention programs.

### *The Disadvantaged Student*

*Who is disadvantaged?* The terms “disadvantaged” or “at-risk ” are often interchangeable words that can mean different things to different people. How they are defined depends upon the context they are viewed in and the perspective of the viewer. As McWhirter et al. (1993) pointed out, many professionals in mental health fields such as psychologists, social workers, and counselors use the terms to define individuals with emotional and adjustment problems. Educators often use these terms to define students who are at high risk of dropping out of school or whose low levels of achievement place them at risk of failing in school or after they graduate from school. In the medical field the term “at-risk” is used when referring to people with health problems. Economists and business professionals use the term “at-risk” when referring to individuals who lack necessary literacy and/or numeric skills needed to obtain or maintain successful employment.

Although both terms can be similar in nature, for the purpose of this study, the term “disadvantaged student” will be used. Regardless of how the terms are defined, there are certain factors that place students at a “disadvantage.” These factors include personal and familial characteristics, such as low socioeconomic status, membership in a minority group, single parent households, and parents with low levels of educational attainment. We cannot ignore the reality that all of these factors are often interrelated

(Donmoyer & Kos, 1993). Fernandez and Shue (cited in Donmoyer & Kos, 1993) stated that “In our society, minorities are more likely to be poor; women who are heads of households often earn less money than male heads of households; minority families are more likely to be headed by a single parent, usually female; and the poor are more likely to leave school early” (p. 9).

### *Problems and Social Consequences of Disadvantaged Students*

*First-Generation Status.* The Institute for Higher Education Policy (1997) found that many disadvantaged students include “first-generation students---those whose parent’s highest level of education attainment is a high school diploma or less---face many barriers to college access, including limited knowledge of postsecondary admissions and financial aid processes, lack of support from family and friends, and poor academic preparation for college” (p. 1). They are also more likely to delay continued education, which often hinders the likelihood of degree completion.

*The High School Dropout.* Students who are disadvantaged often face similar life challenges. One of the most serious challenges is their increased likelihood of dropping out of high school. Disadvantaged students face a number of circumstances that place them at high risk of dropping out. For example, disadvantaged students frequently do not become involved in traditional school activities, as they often lack personal connections with their school. Some may have truancy or disciplinary problems, which lead to academic failure and/or credit deficiencies. Disadvantaged students may also have problematic relationships with peers. They tend to choose friends who are experiencing similar life circumstances, which often encourages their negative behaviors. Challenges with family issues, pregnancies, drug and/or alcohol addictions often develop and pull

disadvantaged students further and further away from schools as they experience failure and decreased self-esteem (Donnelly, 1987). Disadvantaged students who are members of a minority group and/or are learning English as a second language (ESL) are also more likely to drop out of high school. Sometimes disadvantaged students drop out of high school because they are forced or choose to work to help lessen family financial difficulties (McWhirter et al., 1993).

*The Poverty Cycle.* Disadvantaged students from low socioeconomic homes who drop out of high school and/or do not pursue higher education are likely to continue their families' cycle of poverty. This often means continued participation in welfare systems. The Institute for Higher Education Policy (1997) noted, "Welfare recipients are predominately female, single, and minority. Ninety percent are single mothers. Of these, 37% are White, 36% are Black, and 20% are Hispanic. Almost half of the recipients, 42%, do not have a high school diploma" (p.1). Data indicates that the number of welfare recipients pursuing postsecondary education in some states has decreased. This may be due to welfare reforms that limit the time a person can receive benefits, therefore driving them to work, while limiting their participation in vocational education.

Dann-Messier (2001) pointed out as the economy continues to expand and grow, so will the number of skilled workers needed to fill jobs. However, many low-income family members are limited in their job searches or are unable to gain employment due to their lack of education and training. The days of high-wage, blue-collar jobs have now been replaced with high-wage, high-skill jobs. Therefore, efforts and opportunities for disadvantaged students to obtain higher education should be expanded so students can be

prepared with necessary skills and knowledge to help break their families' cycle of poverty.

Low-income individuals who attend college and graduate often become economically self-sufficient as their income levels increase. Kane and Rouse (cited in Dann-Messier, 2001) stated as a person's educational attainment increases; their wages tend to increase. In a study conducted on the impact of higher education on welfare recipients, Gittell (cited in Dann-Messier, 2001) stated after attending college, a little over 10% of recipients still received welfare, almost 90% who graduated from college remained employed since graduation, and over 40% of former welfare recipients who worked earned \$20,000-\$30,000 per year.

According to Boldt (cited in Dann-Messier, 2001), after successful completion of higher education, former welfare recipients indicated they had "more marketable skills, increased earning capacity, and higher aspirations for themselves and their families" (Dann-Messier, 2001, p. 6).

Furthermore, a study by the Institute for Higher Education Policy (2005) revealed that Wisconsin adults benefit from post-secondary education. Results indicated that Wisconsin residents 25 years and older who attained some college education earned almost twice the amount of adults who did not graduate from high school, were more than twice as likely to be employed, and were three times less likely to receive public assistance. The study also revealed that these adults were more likely to report their health as good or excellent, were twice as likely to volunteer in a community, and were more likely to vote in elections.

*Social Consequences.* As McWhirter et al. (1993) stated, “Dropping out of school has a significant impact on the life of the individual. And the costs go far beyond individual consequences. The practice of dropping out of high school has serious economic and social repercussions for the larger society as well” (p. 103). One economic and social repercussion noted as a result of dropping out of school is juvenile delinquency. Winbush (cited in McWhirter et al., 1993) stated the majority of drop-outs are from ethnic minorities and that these groups often see an increase in criminal behavior among their children and teenagers, as these youngsters react with frustration and anger to the “continued economic and educational marginalization” (p. 165).

McWhirter et al. (1993) found that low socioeconomic status alone is not directly related to the occurrence of delinquent behavior with disadvantaged students; however, there are factors that influence the type of delinquency they experience. These factors include a student’s ethnicity, the neighborhood they live in, and their parents’ occupation, education and income. McWhirter et al. (1993) found that:

“The children of minority families who live in poor communities and have unskilled jobs or are unemployed are at the greatest risk for violent forms of delinquent behavior. This risk is partly attributable to the difficulty of raising children in a poor environment and to the parents’ lack of education, resources, and problem-solving skills.” (p. 167)

#### *Meeting the Needs of Disadvantaged Students*

*Early Intervention Programs and Practices.* As previously discussed, disadvantaged students often face a vast array of social, emotional, educational, and economical challenges. The earlier one can intervene on these problems, the less likely

they are to develop or increase. Effective strategies that have shown repeated success can be found in many early intervention programs. Martin (1999) stated:

Beginning as early as kindergarten and progressing through high school, encouragement for students to enter college and receive a baccalaureate degree gives “at-risk” students the much needed support and extra attention they need. Many “at-risk” students need this help to successfully apply, attend, and graduate from college. Using early intervention strategies: (1) eliminates the boundaries between schools and colleges, (2) discourages student drop-out, and (3) gives students hope to pursue entrance into college. (p. 1)

According to Martin (1999), there are four types of early intervention programs: private; federal, state and local government collaborations; school college collaborations; and college-university supported programs. Martin (1999) found that since the 1960’s early intervention programs in the United States have developed. A private program in 1964 called “A Better Chance” was created to improve the enrollment of minority high school students in academically challenging public and private schools. Then, in 1981, Eugene Lang created the I Have a Dream Foundation (IHAD), whose purpose was to provide mentors, guidance counseling, academic support, and financial assistance to students so they could graduate and then work or pursue higher education. The National Early Intervention Scholarship and Partnership Program (NEISP) was developed under the 1992 authorization of the Higher Education Act. The NEISP provided states with federal financial incentives to develop and/or maintain a program that supported scholarship programs that encouraged low-income students to pursue higher education and early interventions that included personal and/or financial aid counseling, mentoring,

academic assistance, and support to students at the preschool, elementary, middle, and secondary levels who were at risk of dropping out. Along with program components, states were required to match funds. NEISP operated until 1998, when it was replaced with GEAR UP in the Higher Education Amendments of 1998. Although GEAR UP is similar to NEISP; it specifically targets low-income, middle school students and emphasizes early awareness (The U.S. Department of Education, n.d.).

School-college collaborations and college/university-supported programs aim to close the gap between K-12 and higher education by expanding partnerships to include K-16 grade levels. These programs provide support for a variety of disadvantaged students at many age levels. They not only help disadvantaged students prepare for and enter college, but support them while in college (Martin, 1999).

The National TRIO Clearinghouse (2001) stated that in 1965, with the Higher Education Act, Congress began creating programs to help Americans overcome social barriers to education. These programs targeted low-income and first-generation students. The programs were originally called Special Programs for Students from Disadvantaged Backgrounds. The number of programs has grown to include seven, which are now called Federal TRIO Programs. The seven programs that make up TRIO are: Upward Bound (UB); Talent Search (TS); Student Support Services (SSS); Veterans Upward Bound (VUB); Educational Opportunity Centers (EOC); Ronald E. McNair Post-Baccalaureate Achievement Program; and Upward Bound Math/Science (UBM/S).

Another program that aims to close the gap across grade levels and institutions is the Early Intervention Program (EIP). EIP began in the state of Wisconsin in 1983. It started in five areas of the state, including Wausau, Eau Claire, Ashland, Milwaukee, and

Racine. It has now expanded to Green Bay and Madison (S. Hunter, personal communication, March 12, 2004). Similar to the programs included in the Federal TRIO Programs, it helps disadvantaged students prepare for and remain in college.

### *The Importance of Early Intervention Programs*

Financial aid alone is not enough to ensure equal opportunities to postsecondary education for all students. Many non-financial variables influence a student's decision to enroll in college, such as their academic preparedness, life goals, and access to college and financial aid information. In order to promote equal access to educational opportunities, states "must target educationally and economically disadvantaged students early in the educational pathway" as the goal of early intervention programs is "to intervene on behalf of this historically underserved population" (Cunningham, Redmond & Merisotis, 2003, p.1).

Several educational leaders in Wisconsin believe programs such as the Early Identification Program have made a difference in the educational development of students. B. Meyer (2005), a former deputy superintendent of a Wisconsin school district stated:

"I believe that EIP has instilled a growing confidence in kids. They seem to be more confident of their own identity. They see many possibilities for their future, especially post-high school education. EIP celebrates kids. The people involved in it really believe in kids. They treat him or her as individuals, and look at each kid as a unique person. EIP has also helped Southeast Asian females continue their post-high school education. More and more Southeast Asian females are delaying marriage and having children, so they can pursue their education first" (personal

communication, April 13, 2005). L. Lawson (2005), a school counselor, has similar views in how EIP contributes to the success of disadvantaged students as she believes “this program lifts them by encouraging them to engage in activities that they otherwise would not have the opportunity to engage in and it empowers them to be academically and socially ready for college/higher education” (personal communication, October, 12, 2005).

In conclusion, a review of the literature was completed and findings presented on disadvantaged students, problems and social consequences of disadvantaged students, how the needs of disadvantaged students are met, and the significance of early intervention programs to assisting disadvantaged students to continue and advance their education.

## Chapter III: Method

### *Introduction*

This chapter describes the subjects in this study and how they were selected. This chapter also discusses the instruments designed, procedures for data collection, and how the data was analyzed. Identified limitations to the study will also be discussed.

### *Description of Subjects*

The subjects who participated in this study were 22 former Early Identification Program (EIP) students and 44 recent EIP students from Wisconsin. Research on former students was conducted at a 2004 EIP banquet. The research on the recent students was conducted at a high school and through the mail. The participants consisted of both male and female students.

Informed consent was obtained from all participants. Parental consent was also obtained for students under the age of eighteen.

### *Instrumentation*

Participant surveys were designed specifically for this study (Appendix A and B). The questions were formulated to examine the perceptions of past and recent Early Identification Program students of an EIP in Wisconsin. Questions were designed related to the degree to which the program successfully met their academic needs. Topics focused on if students did or plan to graduate from high school, how much EIP influenced students to pursue higher education, what EIP components were helpful, what components should be improved, and specific suggestions to help improve EIP. The survey has face validity and appears to measure what was intended; however, it lacks reliability because it has not been tested over time or in different locations.

### *Data Collection*

Former students that attended an EIP banquet in a mid-western city were invited to participate in this study. Also, recent students in grades nine, ten, eleven, and twelve from three mid-western high schools were also invited to participate in this study. Two surveys were created to help organize responses from approximately two decades (see Appendix A and B). Each survey consisted of nine to eleven questions. All participants received a cover letter, consent form, and survey either in person or through the United States mail. The cover letter was provided to inform students and parents that each student's participation was voluntary and would be kept confidential (see Appendix F). In addition, a brief explanation of the study was discussed with students in person at an EIP banquet or in a high school conference room. Each participant signed an informed consent (see Appendix C). Also for students under the age of eighteen, parental consent was obtained. All consent forms were returned to the researcher before participation in the study was permitted.

### *Data Analysis*

Descriptive statistics were used to analyze the data obtained. Results were reported as they related to the four research questions.

### *Limitations*

Some methodological limitations were evident. Because this research included former participants who enrolled in EIP over 20 years ago it may have been difficult for them to remember clearly what components of EIP were helpful and which ones needed improvement due to the passing of time. Other students may have had very limited participation in the EIP which also could hinder their insights into the program. Also,

former students were only able to receive EIP services from grades 9-12, while recent students were able to receive services from grades 6-12. The potentially small sample size and the participants being from one EIP site in Wisconsin may also limit the generalizability of the findings. In addition, former participants were not asked questions pertaining to why they did not go on to post-secondary education, and if they did go on to post-secondary education, how much EIP influenced their decision. Finally, no measures of validity or reliability were run on the surveys as they were designed specifically for this thesis.

## Chapter IV: Analysis of Results

### *Introduction*

This chapter presents an analysis of results that were gathered through a survey of past and recent Early Identification Program (EIP) students' perceptions of EIP. The purpose of this research was to examine the perceptions of former students in the Early Identification Program (EIP) to determine if the program successfully met/meets their academic needs. Results were gathered by way of the Early Identification Program (EIP) Participant Survey (see Appendix A and B).

### *Demographic Information*

The participants of this study included 33.3% (n=22) former students and 66.7% (n=44) recent students. Former student participants were identified at an EIP banquet. A portion of the recent student participants were identified through the local EIP office and by obtaining lists of students in the EIP. Students from two local high schools were then mailed a letter explaining the purpose of the research, a survey, a consent form, and a self-addressed stamped envelope to return the survey and consent form to the researcher. Students at a third local high school came to an EIP meeting room located in the high school. The purpose of the research was explained, and informative letters and consent forms were distributed. Students 18 years and older were asked to complete their surveys that day. Minor students were asked to obtain permission from their parents and return the next week to complete the survey. Discussion of the demographic data of the former and recent student participants are addressed separately.

*Former EIP Students.* The former student participants included 59.1% (n=13) males and 40.9% (n=9) females (see Table 1). The distribution by ethnicity of the former student participants included 90.9% (n=20) Asian Americans and 9.1% (n=2) Caucasians. Slightly more than 36% (n=8) of the former EIP participants were involved with EIP for only one year, and 45.5% (n=10) were involved for four years. The other 18.2% (n=4) were involved for two or three years. Fully 100% (n=22) of the former participants graduated from high school and 90.9% (n=20) went on to college, technical school, or another form of higher education.

*Recent EIP Students.* The recent student participants included 31.8% (n=14) males and 68.2% (n=30) females (see Table 2). The distribution by ethnicity of the recent student participants included 90.9% (n=40) Asian Americans and 4.5% (n=2) Caucasians. Unlike the former student participants, the majority of the recent student participants (75%) were involved with the program for three years or less, with the greatest number of participants (31.8%) involved with EIP for three years. In contrast with the former student participants who were involved with EIP for four years maximum, recent student participants were involved with EIP for as much as six years. The underlying cause for the increased length of time of involvement with EIP of some of the recent student participants was due to the fact that recent students had the opportunity to become involved with the EIP as early as sixth grade, whereas the former students could only begin in ninth grade.

Of the recent student participants, 93% (n=41) intend to graduate from high school. Similarly, 97.7% (n=43) of the recent student participants plan on attending college, technical school, or another form of higher education after graduation. While not

all recent student participants intend on graduating from high school, as the former student participants did, a greater percentage of recent students plan on furthering their education.

Table 1

*Demographic Information of Former EIP Students*

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Male	13	59.1%
Female	9	40.9%
Ethnic Background		
Asian American	20	90.9%
Caucasian	2	9.1%
Years in EIP		
One	8	36.4%
Two	1	4.5%
Three	3	13.6%
Four	10	45.5%
Graduated From High School		
Yes	22	100%
Pursued Post-Secondary Education		
Yes	20	90.9%
No	2	9.1%

Table 2

*Demographic Information of Recent EIP Students*

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Male	14	31.8%
Female	30	68.2%
Ethnic Background		
Asian American	40	90.9%
Caucasian	2	4.5%
Unknown	2	4.5%
Years in EIP		
One	9	20.5%
Two	10	22.7%
Three	14	31.8%
Four	4	9.1%
Five	5	11.4%
Six	2	4.5%
Intend to Graduate From High School		
Yes	41	93.2%
No	3	6.8%
Pursue Post-Secondary Education		
Yes	43	97.7%
No	1	2.3%

### *Research Question One*

The first research question this study sought to answer was: Do students feel that the EIP met their academic needs?

As noted in Table 3, half of the EIP components were helpful for a significant portion of the former and recent EIP students. For example, at least 75% of the former and recent students surveyed found educational field trips/conferences to be helpful. A similar amount of students found college tours to be helpful. Comparably, almost 75% found career exploration to be helpful. Exactly half of the former and recent students surveyed found the summer pre-college program to be helpful, while approximately half of the former and recent students surveyed found academic/career counseling to be helpful. Less than 50% of the former and recent students indicated that social/cultural events, scholarship search, and mentoring were helpful. Finally, twice as many former students (63.6% as compared to 34.1% of recent students) found college enrollment and financial aid assistance to be more helpful.

### *Research Question Two*

The second research question this study sought to answer was: What aspects of EIP best met/meet student needs?

The data (see Table 3) indicates that for both the former and recent student participants the aspects that best met their needs were educational field trips/conferences (86.4% and 75% respectively), college tours (77.3% and 75%), and career exploration (72.7% and 65.9%). Overall, there were five main areas where a majority (approximately

Table 3

*Helpful Components of EIP*

Components	Former Students		Recent Students	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
<b>Educational Field</b>				
Trips/Conferences	19	86.4%	33	75%
College Tours	17	77.3%	33	75%
Career Exploration	16	72.7%	29	65.9%
College Enrollment & Financial Aid Assistance	14	63.6 %	15	34.1 %
Summer Pre- College Program	11	50%	22	50%
Academic/Career Counseling	9	40.9%	24	54.5%
Social/Cultural Events	6	27.3%	17	38.6%
Scholarship Search	8	36.4%	12	27.3%
Mentoring	8	36.4%	11	25%
Other	1	4.5%	4	9.1%

50% or more) of past and present EIP students stated that: educational field

trips/conferences, college tours, career exploration, summer pre-college program, and

academic/career counseling were helpful. A significant discrepancy was found in the area of college enrollment and financial aid assistance. In this area, 63.6% of former students found it was helpful, whereas only 34.1% of recent students found it as helpful.

Activities that appeared to be least helpful, meaning less than 50% of the students surveyed stated as it as helpful were: social/cultural events, scholarship search, and mentoring. Only 7.5% of the participants indicated a helpful activity in the “other” category. These included a summer internship, meeting new/other EIP members, meeting needs and wants of students, and knowing EIP was there for help and support.

### *Research Question Three*

The third question this research study sought to answer was: What aspects of EIP need to be improved?

Both former and recent student participants indicated that all areas needed some improvement; however, no activity was identified as needing improvement by more than 40% of the participants (see Table 4).

When reviewing the data of the former and recent student participants separately there was no activity where both groups clearly agreed that improvement was needed. For example, it was noted that scholarship search was the activity most frequently indicated as needing improvement by former student participants (31.8%) while recent student participants (32.6%) indicated that career exploration was in the greatest need of improvement.

There was a positive downward trend in the percentage of respondents indicating that improvement was needed for the following activities: scholarship search,

social/cultural events, college enrollment and financial aid assistance, college tours, and mentoring. However, there was a negative upward trend in the percentage of respondents

Table 4

*EIP Components Needing Improvement*

Components	Former Students		Recent Students	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Scholarship Search	7	31.8%	10	23.3%
Educational Field				
Trips/Conferences	5	22.7%	11	25.6%
Career Exploration	4	18.2%	14	32.6%
Social/Cultural	4	18.2%	7	16.3%
Events				
College Enrollment				
& Financial Aid	4	18.2%	7	16.3%
Assistance				
Summer Pre-	3	13.6%	10	23.3%
College Program				
College Tours	4	18.2%	6	14%
Mentoring	4	18.2%	6	14%
Academic/Career	3	13.6%	12	27.9%
Counseling				
Other	1	4.5%	0	0%

indicating that improvement was needed for the following activities: educational field trips/conferences, career exploration, summer pre-college program, and academic/career counseling. The most significant negative upward trend in percentage was for the career exploration and academic/career counseling activities.

#### *Research Question Four*

The fourth question addressed in this research study was: What can the EIP do in the future to serve students better?

Former EIP participants provided the following suggestions for improvements: getting parents involved; hiring Asian staff to serve as good role models; more training on how to fill out scholarship/financial aid forms; increasing staff and funds to adequately provide resources; experiences and programs in the present and future for the large number of students enrolled and the ones on the waiting list; working with colleges and universities to offer specific scholarships for EIP students; keeping students involved; providing more information on careers; and keeping the EIP student numbers within reason so that it can continue to meet student needs through close relationships between EIP staff and students.

Recent EIP students listed several areas that needed improvement beginning with social/cultural events. A suggestion was made to offer more activities for older high school students rather than middle school students to help keep older students involved. This included having more out of town activities with other EIP students. It was also recommended that events be scheduled during the school day to offer EIP students a break from schoolwork. Another area that needed improvement was educational field trips. It was emphasized in this area that more educational trips be offered, including out

of state trips and specific career field trips to help learn about specific careers and to aid in career decisions. Suggestions for improvement were also made in the area of career exploration. It was suggested to expand programs and activities to include a wider variety of career options to help students make career decisions. Summer pre-college was also another area needing improvement. It was suggested that it be expanded beyond one week. Recommendations for improving mentoring included encouraging others, including young students, to join EIP. In the area of college tours, expansion of the tours to include new places and room for more student participation were recommended. Finally, areas for improvement that were specified as “other” included communication and tutoring. It was recommended that EIP staff communicate with students more often to know how they are doing. It was also recommended that more newsletters be sent out to EIP students. Another suggestion was to have EIP staff communicate with students by mail and not just in person. For example, letters or lists could be sent to students so they could check off which pre-college they would like to attend in order to fill out necessary forms. More meetings at high schools were also recommended. Lastly, it was suggested that EIP incorporate new ideas, however, ideas were not specifically stated.

#### *Other Results for Recent Students*

Due to the fact that the recent student participants had not graduated from high school and therefore were at the point of making decisions about continuing their education careers, additional questions were posed to this group. Recent student participants were invited to respond to the following question, “If you answered no to going on to college, technical school, or another form of higher education, why won’t you go on?” As noted in Table 2, only one participant indicated no intention to further

their formal education and responded with “joined the military”. Similarly, recent students were asked, “If you answered yes to going on to college, technical school, or another form of higher education, how much did EIP influence your decision?” Student responses to the question were as follows: 38.6% (n=17) reported a lot, 40.9% (n=18) reported quite a bit, 11.4% (n=5) reported somewhat, 6.8% (n=3) reported not very much, and 2.3% (n=1) did not report. Therefore, over 75% of the recent participants indicate that EIP had “quite a bit” or “a lot” of influence on their decision to continue their formal education.

### *Summary*

A majority of former and recent EIP students found approximately half of the EIP components to be helpful. These included educational field trips/conferences, college tours, career exploration, summer pre-college program, and academic/career counseling. However, twice as many former students compared to recent students found college enrollment and financial aid assistance to be helpful.

Former and recent participants did not agree on what components of EIP needed to be improved. For example, former participants indicated scholarship search most frequently as a component that needed improvement, whereas recent participants most frequently indicated that career exploration needed improvement. Both participant groups did offer suggestions for improving EIP, such as getting parents involved, increasing staff and funds, providing more information on careers and offering more meetings.

Finally, almost all of the former and recent students indicated that they did or planned on pursuing post-secondary education. Specific to the recent EIP students, a

great majority indicated that EIP influenced their decisions to pursue post-secondary education.

## Chapter V: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

### *Introduction*

This chapter focuses on a discussion of the research findings and conclusions that were drawn from the findings. In addition, recommendations for the current EIP and the future of EIP will be presented.

### *Discussion*

The Early Identification Program (EIP) was developed in the early 1980's as an intervention to assist an increasing number of minority and low-income students that were not going on to college. Its purpose is to provide these students with knowledge and skills to help increase their rates of graduation from high school and pursuance of post-secondary education. The purpose of this research was to examine the perceptions of former and recent EIP participants to determine if the program successfully met their academic needs, such as skills needed to complete secondary education, and access to resources to continue formal education.

Much literature supports the benefit of early intervention programs in getting students to complete high school and continue formal education. For example Donnelly (1987) found that disadvantaged students are more likely to drop out of high school as they often lack personal connections with their school and/or have truancy or disciplinary problems. Similarly, McWhirter et al. (1993) found that disadvantaged students may drop out of high school because they are forced to, or choose to work to help lessen family financial difficulties. Additionally, N. Anderson (personal communication, June 1, 2005) found that many disadvantaged minority students who immigrated to Wisconsin had no family history of higher education or formal education.

The findings of this study support the literature. This study found that 100% (n=22) of former students who took part in EIP graduated from high school, while 93.2% (n= 41) of recent students intend to graduate from high school. The remaining 5.8% of recent students either did not respond or indicated they were joining the military.

Another area of significance is research on disadvantaged student's low rate of entrance into post-secondary institutions and the success of early intervention programs in terms of influencing and preparing disadvantaged students to pursue and finish post-secondary education. The Institute for Higher Education Policy (1997) found that many disadvantaged students face barriers to post-secondary education, including "limited knowledge of post-secondary admissions and financial aid processes, lack of support from family and friends, and poor academic preparation for college"(p.1). According to Martin (1999), early intervention programs should be started early and progress through high school, as they encourage students to pursue college and get their higher education degree. He believes that at-risk students need extra support and attention to help them be successful. Cunningham, Redmond, and Merisotis (2003), also believe that disadvantaged students should be targeted early in their educational journey with early intervention program support, as they historically have been an underserved population. N. Anderson (personal communication, June 1, 2005) believes that many at-risk minority students in Wisconsin would not have been educationally successful and experienced higher education if it had not been for early intervention programs such as EIP. This study supports the findings of Martin, Anderson, and Cunningham, Redmond, and Merisotis as evidenced by 90.9% (n=20) of former EIP students having pursued post-secondary education after high school and 97.7% (n=43) of recent EIP students planning

on pursuing post-secondary education after high school. Additionally, all areas of EIP were found to be helpful by disadvantaged students, with educational field trips/conferences, college tours, and career exploration being helpful for the majority of disadvantaged students.

### *Conclusions*

Early intervention programs like the Early Identification Program (EIP) in Wisconsin are very beneficial to at-risk or disadvantaged students. They help at-risk students graduate from high school by offering support, encouragement, and opportunities to further their education after high school. They also help students to prepare for and to select post-secondary education through academic/career counseling, summer pre-college program, educational field trips/conferences, career exploration, scholarship search, college enrollment and financial aid assistance, college tours, social/cultural events, and mentoring.

It is interesting to note that twice as many former students (63.6% as compared to 34.1% of recent students) found college enrollment and financial aid assistance to be more helpful. This finding may be due to the fact that recent students may still be working through this process.

The importance of early prevention programs for disadvantaged youth is widely supported in literature. According to Dann-Messier (2001), efforts and opportunities for disadvantaged students to obtain higher education should be expanded in order for students to be prepared with necessary skills and knowledge to help break their families' cycle of poverty in order to prepare them with "more marketable skills, increased earning capacity, and higher aspirations for themselves and their families" (p. 6). This study

provides data on the analysis of EIP in Wisconsin. As this study shows, most students had/have their educational needs met in EIP, as most graduated or intend to graduate from high school and pursued/intend to pursue post-secondary education. The findings also demonstrated that all components of EIP were/are helpful, with some more helpful than others. Also, suggestions for improving the present and future of EIP were offered by students. For example, recent EIP students suggested that communication between EIP staff and EIP students be increased. Ideas included more personal contacts, utilizing newsletters and the United States mail more often, and having more meetings at high schools.

### *Recommendations*

An idea to help improve communication between EIP staff and students is for EIP to develop a web page to be included with participating high schools' websites. This page could state basic information about EIP on what it is and how to join, and update students on EIP activities and services, including descriptions, times and dates, and contact information. This would not only improve communication between EIP staff and members, but it may also attract new EIP members from participating high schools, which may help diversify the student population of EIP. B. Meyer (2005), a former deputy superintendent of a Wisconsin school district suggested that more males and non-Southeast Asian students should be encouraged to join EIP (personal communication, April 13, 2005). EIP alumni could also join the website and update their addresses as needed.

Another idea for improving communication includes training some EIP students to be EIP leaders in their school district. These "leaders" could serve as mentors and role

models. The leadership training and experiences that these students would encounter would help sharpen their leadership skills as they assisted new or existing EIP students with questions or concerns they may have. Due to budget cuts and reduced staffing, student leaders may be more available to EIP students, and may be better at “connecting” with students as they can identify more closely with student needs and concerns.

Former students suggested increasing parental involvement. Suggestions for improving parental involvement include making home visits. Many parents may be intimidated by attending meetings at schools. By talking with parents in their home environment parents may be more comfortable and willing to learn about EIP so they can help and support their child. Home visits should include an interpreter, as many parents of disadvantaged students may not be fluent in English.

Recommendations for further research include: (1) replication of this study with a larger sample to enhance generalizability of the findings, (2) investigate the grade in which a student begins receiving EIP services to determine if starting EIP in a specific grade impacts their success, (3) follow-up study of the recent (current) EIP students in two and four years to determine the impact of EIP on continued formal education, and (4) continue to hold EIP alumni banquets every 5-10 years to follow-up with students.

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**Appendix A**  
**1984-1994 Early Identification Program (EIP)**  
**Participant Survey**

## Appendix A

**1984-1994 Early Identification Program (EIP)  
Participant Survey**

**Please circle one response for each item 1-6:**

1. Gender:                    **Male**                    **Female**

2. Ethnic Background:        **Asian American**

**African American**

**Caucasian**

**Hispanic**

**Native American**

**Other (please specify): \_\_\_\_\_**

3. Grade you were in the EIP program:        **freshman**

**sophomore**

**junior**

**senior**

4. Year(s) you were in the EIP program:

**1984-1985**

**1985-1986**

**1986-1987**

**1987-1988**

**1988-1989**

**1989-1990**

**1990-1991**

**1991-1992**

**1992-1993**

**1993-1994**

**1994-1995**

5. Did you graduate from high school?

**Yes**

**No**

6. After high school, did you go on to college, technical school, or another form of higher education?

**Yes**

**No**

7. How was the EIP program helpful to you? Check all that apply and put a star \* by the 3 that were *most* helpful to you.

- academic/career counseling**     **career exploration**     **college tours**
- social & cultural events**     **scholarship search**     **mentoring**
- summer pre-college program**     **college enrollment & financial aid assistance**
- educational field trips/conferences**
- other (please specify)* \_\_\_\_\_

8. What services offered through the EIP Program did you feel could have been improved? Check all that apply.

- academic/career counseling**     **career exploration**     **college tours**
- social & cultural events**     **scholarship search**     **mentoring**
- summer pre-college program**     **college enrollment & financial aid assistance**
- educational field trips/conferences**
- other (please specify)* \_\_\_\_\_

Please explain how you think this program could have been improved and/or offer other ideas or suggestions you may have to help improve the current EIP program.

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Thank you!

Reanee Luetschwager  
Graduate Student, K-12 School Counseling  
University of Wisconsin-Stout

**Appendix B**  
**Early Identification Program (EIP)**  
**Participant Survey**

## Appendix B

**Early Identification Program (EIP)  
Participant Survey**

*Please circle one response for each:*

Gender:                    **Male**                    **Female**

Ethnic Background:   **Asian American**      **African American**      **Native American**

**Hispanic**      **Caucasian**                    **Other (please specify):** \_\_\_\_\_

Year(s) you were or are in the EIP program: \_\_\_\_\_

Will you graduate from high school?      **Yes**                    **No**

After high school, do you plan to go on to college, technical school or another form of higher education?

**Yes**                    **No**

If you answered **no** to going on to college, technical school, or another form of higher education, why won't you go on? (Circle your answer/s).

**financial reasons**      **family reasons**                    **not interested**                    **joined the military**

**not accepted to college**      **will take some time off**      **other** \_\_\_\_\_

If you answered **yes** to going on to college, technical school or another form of higher education, how much did EIP influence your decision? (circle your answer).

**A lot**                    **Quite a Bit**                    **Somewhat**                    **Not Very Much**                    **Not At All**



Appendix C  
Consent Form (Former Participants)

## Appendix C

**Consent Form**

- You must be 18 years or older to participate in this study and be a past participant (1982-2003) of the Wausau Early Identification Program (EIP).
- Your decision whether or not to participate will NOT affect current or future relations with the Wausau EIP program.
- You are invited to participate in this research study because your perspective is valued.
- This study is designed to discover what past participants of the Wausau EIP found most helpful about the program and/or what suggestions they may have to better help improve the program
- You will be asked to complete a survey. This will require approximately 5-10 minutes of your time.
- All records will be coded to assure your anonymity and the confidentiality of the information.
- All records and codes will only be available to the researcher and the transcriber. All records will be kept in a locked cabinet; and will be destroyed at the end of the research project.
- You are free to decline any question.
- There will not be any pain or discomfort with this study.
- After this study has been completed, you may be provided with a copy of the study, if you request one.
- **NOTE: Questions or concerns about the research study should be addressed to Reanee Luetschwager, the researcher, phone (715) 359-1681 or the research advisor, Dr. Carolyn Barnhart, phone (715) 232-2545. Questions about the rights of research subjects can be addressed to Sue Foxwell, Human Protections Administrator, UW-Stout Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects in Research, 11 Harvey Hall, Menomonie, WI 54751, phone (715) 232-1126.**

Sincerely,

Reanee Luetschwager  
University of Wisconsin-Stout  
Menomonie, WI 54751

\*\*\*\*\*

**Statement of consent:** I have read the above information. I consent to participate in this study.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Appendix D**

**Consent Form (Recent Participants)**

Appendix D

**Consent Form**

- You must be 18 years old, or if under 18, have parental permission to participate in this study.
- You must be a current or past participant of the Wausau Early Identification Program (EIP).
- Your decision whether or not to participate will NOT affect current or future relations with the Wausau EIP program.
- You are invited to participate in this research study because your perspective is valued.
- This study is designed to discover what past participants of the Wausau EIP found most helpful about the program and/or what suggestions they may have to better help improve the program
- You will be asked to complete a survey. This will require approximately 5-10 minutes of your time.
- All records will be coded to assure your anonymity and the confidentiality of the information.
- All records and codes will only be available to the researcher and the transcriber. All records will be kept in a locked cabinet; and will be destroyed at the end of the research project.
- You are free to decline any question.
- There will not be any pain or discomfort with this study.
- After this study has been completed, you may be provided with a copy of the study, if you request one.
- **NOTE: Questions or concerns about the research study should be addressed to Reanee Luetschwager, the researcher, phone (715) 359-1681 or the research advisor, Dr. Carolyn Barnhart, phone (715) 232-2545. Questions about the rights of research subjects can be addressed to Sue Foxwell, Human Protections Administrator, UW-Stout Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects in Research, 11 Harvey Hall, Menomonie, WI 54751, phone (715) 232-1126.**

Sincerely,

Reanee Luetschwager  
University of Wisconsin-Stout  
Menomonie, WI 54751

\*\*\*\*\*

**Statement of consent:** I have read the above information. I consent to participate in this study or give my child permission to participate in this study.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
Parent Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Appendix E

Cover Letter (Former Participants)

## Appendix E

Dear Past EIP Participant,

My name is Reanee Luetschwager. I am a graduate student at the University of Wisconsin-Stout in the School Counseling Program. One of the requirements I need to fulfill before I graduate is to write a thesis paper. I have chosen to write my paper on the Early Identification Program (EIP) in Wausau.

As a past participant of the EIP program, **I am very interested in your opinion of the EIP program.** Whether you participated in the program for a few years, one year, or part of a year, your perspective of the program is valued.

If you agree to participate in this study, you will need to fill out a confidential survey form. Your name and the name of the school you attended will not be used in any publications.

**Your participation in this study is completely voluntary.** If you decide to participate in this study your perspective may help to improve and shape the future of the Wausau EIP program. However, you may withdraw from the study at any time. You will be given the opportunity to receive a copy of the summary findings.

**Thank you for taking time to consider participating in this study. Your opinion is valued and respected.**

Sincerely,

Reanee Luetschwager  
Graduate Student  
University of Wisconsin Stout

Appendix F  
Cover Letter (Recent Participants)

Appendix F

June 3, 2005

Dear EIP Participant,

My name is **Reanee Luetschwager**. I am a graduate student at the University of Wisconsin Stout in the School Counseling Program. One of the requirements that I need to fulfill before I graduate is to write a thesis paper. I have chosen to write my paper on the Early Identification Program (EIP) in Wausau. **Being a past participant of the program myself, I am very interested in your opinion of the program.** Sharon Hunter and the staff at the EIP office are also interested in hearing your opinion of the program.

If you agree to participate in this study, you will need to fill out a confidential survey form. If you are under 18 years old, your parents will also have to sign the consent form. Your name and the name of the school you attended will not be used in any publications.

**Your participation in this study is completely voluntary.** If you decide to participate in this study your perspective may help to improve and shape the future of the Wausau EIP program. However, you may withdraw from the study at any time. You will be given the opportunity to receive a copy of the summary findings. **Thank you for taking time to consider participating in this study. Your opinion is valued and respected.**

Sincerely,

Reanee Luetschwager  
Graduate Student  
University of Wisconsin Stout

**\*Please send both forms back to me in the enclosed envelope by Friday, June 24<sup>th</sup>. Thank you!**