

A Comparison of Adjustment Factors Between
Undeclared and Declared First-Year
Students at UW-Eau Claire

by

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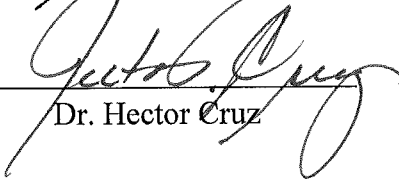
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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to research the differences between declared and undeclared freshmen in regards to their adjustment to college at the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire. Data for this study was collected through two surveys. The first online survey was offered the first week (September 2008) of classes. The second online survey was offered the tenth week of classes (November 2008). One hundred and six students completed both surveys.

The objectives of this study were to:

1. Determine the first-year undeclared students' perceptions on adjustment to UW-Eau Claire.
2. Determine the first-year declared students' perceptions on adjustment to UW-Eau Claire.

3. Identify the difference in first-year undeclared students and declared students on adjustments to UW-Eau Claire.

4. Identify differences in the perception of adjustment based on selected contributors to adjustment such as student involvement, faculty interaction, peer relationships, and classroom participation.

The data analysis indicated statistical significance at the .05 level. Although only one difference was found between undeclared and declared students, many statistical differences were found for each group between the week one and week 10 survey.

Recommendations were made in regards to the programming offered at the university and in regards to improvements that could be made if the study was to be repeated.

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I made many friends throughout the program. I met Korawan Muangmode (Yin) and Kristi Lund the first night of Organization Development in the Fall of 2006. At that moment I was thinking I wasn't really going to go back to school but then Yin sent me this email and I couldn't turn back.

Hi Jacqueline

Thank you for e-malling. Nice to meet you too. I will do my best for our best group. I hope that you won't mind if I have to ask for your suggestions sometimes. It's hard for me to adjust my ear to listening English many hours. I will be a bit slow but I'll work harder so I won't make any trouble..ok ^_^ I like you a lot because you always smile and that's really made me feel more comfortable.

Looking forward to hear from you soon.

*Take care,
Yin*

I also became friends with another classmate Rorey Pritchard during our Spring 2008, Psychology of Development course. We continued to meet monthly to encourage each other through this process of finishing our field studies.

When I told my dear friend, Jodi Thesing-Ritter, about going back to school she jumped right on board and joined me. I enjoyed taking classes with her as we both worked toward our goal of earning a doctorate degree. Whenever I felt overwhelmed I would think of Jodi and all she accomplishes on a daily basis.

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I lastly want to acknowledge my children. Carly and Cole were four and one when I went back to school. Today they are seven and four. Although going back to school meant I spent more time away from them, I actually did this for them in hopes I will have more career options that will give me more time with them in the future.

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Chapter I: Introduction

Background Information

The University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire (UW-Eau Claire) is one of 11 public comprehensive universities in the University of Wisconsin System. The University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire was founded in 1916 as Eau Claire State Normal School. In 1971 it became a part of the University of Wisconsin System. The University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire is located in Eau Claire, Wisconsin, a city of 64,000 people. The University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire currently enrolls 10,096 undergraduate students and 497 graduate students (University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire, n. d.).

The university mission according to the UW-Eau Claire website is:

The University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire is a comprehensive university whose purpose is to foster the intellectual, personal, social, and cultural development of its students. The University provides an academic environment designed to encourage faculty-student interaction and promote excellence in teaching and learning, scholarly activity, and public service. Its residential setting fosters personal and social development through a rich array of co-curricular activities. The University's focus is a liberal arts based education across the curriculum in all programs. The University places a special emphasis on experiential learning activities, such as international studies, faculty-student research collaboration, internships, and community service. UW-Eau Claire is the University of Wisconsin System's Center of Excellence for Faculty and Undergraduate Student Research Collaboration. (University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire Academic Affairs, n. d., p. 1)

In addition to the University of Wisconsin System mission and the core mission of the University Cluster Institutions, the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire has the following select mission:

- to provide undergraduate education in a broad range of programs, based on a strong general education component emphasizing the liberal arts and sciences, offering degrees in the arts and sciences, allied health fields, business, education, nursing, and other areas that grow clearly from university strengths and meet identifiable regional and state needs;
- to provide graduate education, at the master's and specialist levels, in select programs that grow clearly from undergraduate strengths and meet identifiable regional and state needs;
- to support and encourage scholarly activities, including research and creative endeavors, that enhance its programs at the associate and baccalaureate level, its selected graduate programs, and its special mission; and
- to support the cultural, educational, and economic development of the immediate region in a variety of ways, including its outreach and community service programs.

(University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire Academic Affairs, n. d.).

The University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire offers about 80 undergraduate degree programs and 14 graduate degree programs. The University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire labels students who have not yet declared a major as 'undeclared.' Universities and researchers may also refer to 'undeclared' students as 'undecided,' 'pre-major,' 'exploratory,' 'open major,' 'general studies major,' 'undetermined,' and 'special major' (Lewallen, 1995).

Undeclared students have long been a part of UW-Eau Claire. Undeclared students at the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire are advised by the *Advising and New Student Initiatives Office* located in 226 Schofield Hall. The office is organizationally a part of the College of Arts and Sciences. While the name and structure has changed, an office devoted to serving undeclared students has existed since the 1970's.

In recent years UW-Eau Claire has had between 25 and 30% of its incoming freshmen classified as undeclared students. At its peak in the mid 1990's UW-Eau Claire had 1350 undeclared students per year. Today that number has declined to an average of 1100 during fall semester. Currently at UW-Eau Claire undeclared students are not required, at any point before graduation, to declare a major (D. Gough, personal communication, June 12, 2008).

Although not true at UW-Eau Claire, research shows the number of students coming to college without knowing what they would like to study is growing by the year at many institutions. At one point many colleges and universities did not allow undeclared students. Now it is one of the fastest growing populations of incoming students (Donnelly & Borland, 2002). Most students feel some indecisiveness in regards to their vocation and/or career plans at some point in their college career (Gordon, 1995). In fact one of the major theorists of student development, Arthur Chickering (Chickering & Reisser, 1993) posits that deciding about a major or life purpose is a key developmental task for college students. Specifically, Arthur Chickering's vector called *Developing Purpose* has to do with deciding who you want to become, discovering your career interests and strengths, and questioning what is your life going to be about.

One of the first researchers to write about vocational choice in college, Emanuel Berger (1967), encourages universities to view all incoming students as undecided and to view college

and beyond as a time of career exploration and development. He also recognizes the immense pressure undeclared students are experiencing internally, from their parents and from society.

Researchers vary greatly in terms of the actual national percentage of undeclared students. Titley and Titley (1980) stated that 75 % of college freshmen demonstrated "...some form of undecidedness, tentativeness, or uncertainty about choice of major" (p. 294). However, they do agree that choosing a major and selecting a career are considerable sources of anxiety for college students today (Gordon, 1995; Gordon & Habley, 2000).

A lot of attention has been given to students entering without a major even though most feel that this indecision is a natural phase in student development. Research done comparing undeclared students to declared students has mostly discovered that these two groups are more alike than different (Lewallen, 1995). However there are some who believe that having a major or not having a major is a significant factor in adjustment to college and therefore in student retention. Many believe student satisfaction and perception of adjustment to college is a major predictor of student retention. In fact, Noel and Levitz (1995) describe it as a primary predictor of student persistence.

There are many factors when it comes to adjustment to college and its impact on retention. Researchers know that faculty/student interactions, involvement on campus, making connections with other students, parental support, peer support, personality, and major or lack-of-major are a few of the impacts on a student's adjustment to college (Astin, 1975; Lingren & Keim, 2005; Wintre & Sugar, 2000).

Tinto's (1993) well known research on student retention and attrition indicates that students make their decision about departure from an institution based on many factors they bring with them (family background, high school preparedness, abilities and skills). These

factors help them form goals and expectations. These goals and expectations interact with the experiences they have at college both academically and socially to determine if the student is able to socially and academically integrate into the institution. If that integration doesn't occur, Tinto believes they will leave the institution and contribute to the school's attrition rate.

There are mixed opinions and findings about whether being 'undecided' means a student is less likely to graduate. What is known is that a lack of major or career direction is a major reason students cite for leaving college (Noel, 1985; Berger, 1967). Lewallen (1993) disagrees and points out that lack of major is not synonymous with a lack of commitment to one's educational goals. He feels it is quite a leap and not factually proven to infer that students without a major are any less committed to their educational and college completion.

It is likely that attention given to student retention, and possibly undeclared students, on college campuses will increase. For example, the State of Wisconsin is experiencing a decrease in high school graduates and therefore a declining pool of traditional-aged freshmen for Wisconsin's colleges and universities. In fact, the peak of high school graduates was 2008 with 71,000 high school graduates. After 2008 there is a projected steady decline until the year 2013, hitting a low of just under 63,000 high school graduates. This trend levels off until 2015 and then slowly increases (University of Wisconsin System Administration, n. d.).

Retention is a topic of importance on any college campus and is something faculty and staff constantly strive to improve. Trying to figure out which students will struggle with their adjustment to college has been a challenge for student affairs professionals, administrators, and faculty as they attempt to constantly improve their campus' retention rate.

Statement of the Problem

The retention rate of undeclared students at UW-Eau Claire lags behind the retention rate of declared students most years. Losing students from their first to second year is problematic for the student and the institution. For the freshman class of 2006-2007, the first to second year retention rate at UW-Eau Claire was 80.7%. For undeclared students the retention rate was 77.9%. For undeclared students who started at UW-Eau Claire in the Fall of 2006, they were 2.8% less likely to be retained at UW-Eau Claire (University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire, 2008).

Purpose of the Study

One of the major factors in student retention is adjustment to college. If students do not have a pleasant start to college and they don't experience institutional fit, they will likely contribute to the university's attrition rate (Howard, Morey & Briancesco, 2003). Therefore it is possible that the reason for the higher attrition rate for undeclared students at UW-Eau Claire is that they do not adjust to college as well as declared students.

Adjustment to college will be measured for first-year students at UW-Eau Claire. Declared and undeclared students will be compared and recommendations will be made, if necessary, to better aid undeclared students in their adjustment to college in hopes it will increase retention for undeclared students.

The University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire is not currently collecting data on students' transition to college and how that might be impacting the retention of students, either declared or undeclared.

Research Objectives

The following research objectives will guide this study:

1. Determine the first-year undeclared students' perceptions on adjustment to UW-Eau Claire.
2. Determine the first-year declared students' perceptions on adjustment to UW-Eau Claire.
3. Identify the difference in first-year undeclared students and declared students on adjustments to UW-Eau Claire.
4. Identify differences in the perception of adjustment based on selected contributors to adjustment such as student involvement, faculty interaction, peer relationships, and classroom participation.

Importance of Topic

This research is significant for the following reasons:

1. The University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire's 80.7 % retention rate is strong compared to the national first to second year average of 70.2 % in public four-year institutions offering bachelors and masters degrees with traditional admissions selectivity (ACT Institutional Date File, 2007). However, the three point retention difference between undeclared students and declared students becomes even more critical when it is paired with what is happening in the State of Wisconsin in terms of the decreasing numbers of graduating high school seniors. The recruitment of these decreasing numbers of students will become more competitive and the desire to retain these students will be even more imperative (University of Wisconsin System Administration, n. d.). In this time of decreasing resources in higher education many believe that retaining students is more cost-effective than recruiting new students (Tinto, 1987).
2. The University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire needs to measure the adjustment to college of its undeclared student population. Since there are so many factors to adjustment, this

research should help the university know which areas the undeclared students are lacking so they can create programs, policies, resources and/or services to better target these issues.

3. The national demographics of the college and university student body are changing. Soon one in three students will be nonwhite. Students will be more diverse in every sense of the word (race, age, gender, sexual orientation, etc.) (Gardner & Hansen, 2003). They also will be taking longer to graduate, commute more from home, and be older. Because of these factors, there will likely be more stress on knowing one's major which will likely cause increased pressure on undeclared students.

Limitations of Study

This research has the following limitations:

1. Many variables affect a student's adjustment to college. The research includes everything from parental style to attachment theory classification; from personality type to involvement in college. It would be impossible to measure all possible variables when it comes to a student's adjustment to college.
2. There are many different ways to measure adjustment to college. Some people may assume that if a student is retained from year one to year two, the student has successfully adjusted to college. A researcher developed instrument to measure adjustment will be used to measure adjustment.
3. This is the first major research project performed by this novice researcher. Because of this there may be greater limitations to the study found in Chapter Five.

4. Because this study is not longitudinal it will not be known if improved adjustment to college in undeclared students will lead to increased retention. It will therefore not be random.
5. The students will be selected for this study based on which First Year Experience instructors allow this research to happen during their class time.
6. This study is limited because the data collected will be restricted to student-reported perception.

Definition of Terms

Attrition. A gradual, natural reduction in membership or personnel, as through retirement, resignation, or death (American Heritage Dictionary, 2000). For this project it means losing students who were once enrolled from the university.

First-Year Experience Class. These are small sections of regular university courses (English composition, Math, Biology, Sociology, History, etc., etc.) that are open only to freshmen. Each class has a student mentor as well as an experienced faculty member eager to help students in their transition to college (University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire, n. d.).

Retention. A benchmark measurement on college campuses to measure attrition between first and second year of college (Tinto, 1993).

Methodology

Eighty-five percent (85%) of first year students take First Year Experience courses. These courses consist of 20 students per class. The researcher will seek permission to enter 15 sections of First Year Experience courses. This will create a sample size of 300 first-year students out of a freshmen class of about 2080.

The survey will be given the first week of college, September 2-5, 2008. It will be given again the tenth week of classes November 10-14, 2008. The survey instrument will attempt to measure adjustment to college and that information will be compared in declared and undeclared students.

This field study will consist of four additional chapters. Chapter Two will review the literature of adjustment theory, undeclared students, and retention. Chapter Three will cover the methodology. Chapter Four will review the results of the study. Chapter Five will summarize the study, review limitations, and offer recommendations as determined by the study.

Chapter II: Literature Review

This chapter includes a comprehensive literature review of undeclared students and adjustment to college. The sections addressed in this chapter are: undeclared students, student development and adjustment to college, today's college students, forming perceptions, retention and attrition, and a summary of the review of literature.

Undeclared Students

The literature refers to students without a major as 'undeclared', 'undecided', or 'pre-major'. This literature review will refer to all students without a major as 'undeclared'.

To do a true review of the literature on undeclared students it might be helpful to review the original work of Emanuel Berger (1967) and his work with understanding undeclared students. He was one of the first to write about the pressure that high school seniors and college freshmen were experiencing in terms of their vocational choice and area of study in college. He described most people at this age as tentative and thought encouraging students to 'decide' on a major before they have tested their limits in college was a mistake. He argued that although there was certainly more freedom in the 60's (compared to prior generations) in terms of vocation, there were also many more choices and possibilities that added to the complexity of deciding on a major.

As a psychologist, Berger saw many students who experienced increased anxiety, lower motivation to do well, poorer grades, and often an increased attrition rate due to struggling with their future and which direction to head.

He blamed many people for adding to this pressure; parents, relatives, community in general, high school guidance counselors, and high school teachers. Parents, for example, are invested in helping their children find a vocation that will be fulfilling and lucrative. However

parents were and are often paying some of the college expenses so they are invested and wanted to ensure their children were making good choices. This discussion of making a 'career choice' or 'major decision' makes it seem like there is only one decision to be made and it has to be made. It is as if people don't think that all of the self-growth that happens in college is imperative to one's life direction and the choices made (in regards to life and work).

Berger saw that students were committing themselves too early to a vocational choice. When that choice is no longer a reality due to grades, money, amount of schooling or interest, the student may feel like a failure. This should instead be seen as a step in the discovery process. For many students, deciding on a major begins with ruling out majors that are not feasible. Pascarella and Terenzini (1991) cite that a large portion of major changes happen because of mobility across disciplines national or regional shifts in employment possibilities, or the selection process of being admitted into very competitive fields.

Berger concludes that attrition and retention can be impacted when a student feels like they need to stop out for awhile to 'discover themselves' in hopes that their time away from college will provide them the answers they are seeking in terms of their future. For some students, that is certainly true, however others need to be in college to help make those discoveries.

Understanding ones' strengths and limitations is really critical to deciding on a major. Although some realization is inherent in high schools, it is more likely that this awareness will come more rapidly through a student's college experience.

Adjustment to College

Arthur W. Chickering (Chickering & Reisser, 1993) is known to many as the leader in Student Development Theory. His theory of student development was created and written for

university administrators and faculty in 1969 to enhance their understanding of college students. It is classified as a psychosocial theory.

His seven vectors for college student development were not written as a stage theory. Rather they were written to help guide professionals in the tasks that college students will face and try to master throughout their time at college. However, some tasks are most likely to be encountered earlier than others.

Chickering's seven vectors of student development are listed below (Chickering & Reisser, 1993).

- Developing Competence (p. 53)
- Managing Emotions (p. 83)
- Moving Through Autonomy Toward Interdependence (p. 115)
- Developing Mature Interpersonal Relationships (p. 145)
- Establishing Identity (p. 173)
- Developing Purpose (p. 209)
- Developing Integrity (p. 235)

Developing Competence. This is using one's mind. A student won't make it long in a university setting without doing this. This is often one of the first vectors achieved. Students need to feel confident in their abilities (physical, interpersonal and intellectual) in order to succeed. The obtaining of competence has a lot to do with a student's successful transition to college and the university setting.

Managing Emotions. A student will experience more frequent or intense emotions in college. The key is not to ignore these emotions but rather to identify and manage them and what they represent. These emotions can be positive emotions too, such as sympathy and compassion.

Moving Through Autonomy Toward Interdependence. Coming from high school (as most students do) they are used to looking to their peers for approval for many things. This vector has to do with becoming more comfortable in your skin and who you are. It also involves students starting to think critically. They become able to assess a situation and make an informed decision.

Developing Mature Interpersonal Relationships. This task has to do with appreciating differences and a person's capacity for true intimacy. College relationships should be more long-lasting and mature in nature than high school relationships. Many students struggle with making new friends in college since they are not the lifelong friendships they experienced in their hometown.

Establishing Identity. There are entire classes in identity development from gender, to sexual orientation, to race. This is about understanding all of the pieces that make up one's self. This vector has to do with reflection and usually some experimentation.

Developing Purpose. This has to do with deciding who you want to become. What is your life going to be about? It includes deciding on your vocation and discovering what you want to do while understanding what you are good at. Later these decisions will become critical, according to Erickson (1963) as adults face *Generativity vs. Stagnation* as they reflect back on their life and the choices they have made in terms of work, civic duties and family. Holland (1966) developed a career development theory that explains better the world of work and the choices that students make in this area and the values that need to be considered.

Developing Integrity. What are your core values and beliefs? What is right and wrong? A student will begin to think deeper about things that were once considered black and white in their mind. They may think about the person they are and the person they want to be.

Chickering's theory was based on the works of Erickson (1963), Perry (1970), Kohlberg (1971), Gilligan (1977), Holland (1966), and Marcia (1966) and how they apply to student development theory.

Although the transition to college is a normal life event, it is also a very stressful period in the life of the student and their support system. Most adults will look back and think of going away to college as one of the major events of their lives.

There are so many factors that can be considered when measuring how students adjust to college; adjusting to the academic demands of college, developing relationships with other students and faculty, and having a sense of community on the campus, etc. (Lindgren & Keim, 2005). What is happening with students both in and out of the classroom should be considered.

Friedlander, Reid, Shupak and Cribbie (2007) noted that little attention has been paid to how different sources of social support (i.e., friends, family) and types of self-esteem or competence (i.e., academic, social, global) differentially predict various facets of adjustment. In a longitudinal study, they examined the joint contribution of perceived social support (i.e., friends, family), self-esteem (i.e., academic, social, global), and stress as predictors of academic, social, personal-emotional, and overall adjustment across time. The researchers were interested in (a) how changes in these factors jointly contributed to changes in adjustment, (b) the extent to which support from family versus friends would contribute to changes in adjustment, and (c) maintaining specificity in students' domains of self-esteem (e.g., social self-esteem) in relation to changes in the related domain of adjustment. It was discovered that stress and peer-support were the two biggest predictors of adjustment to college. Family-support was also important.

In fact Wintre and Sugar (2000) studied the relationship with parents and how it helped factor into transition to college. It was discovered that authoritative parenting style served

students best indirectly in their adjustment to college in an emotional, academic and personal context. This was because of authoritative parents' high level of control, clear and direct communication with their child and age-appropriate expectations.

They found that these relationships based on mutual trust, open and honest communication and equal treatment seem to be best in helping a student adjust to college. They also found that both parents are critical. For daughters, their relationship with their father was most influential.

Personality is also a factor in this transition. Wintre and Sugar (2000) found that conscientiousness is linked to academic ability and GPA. Extraversion is negatively correlated with the stress of transitioning to college. This study used five variables to measure adjustment to college: GPA, Institutional Adjustment, Personal and Emotional, Social and Academic.

Attachment can also impact a student's adjustment to college. Howard, Morey and Briancesco (2003) find that if a student does not have a secure attachment to a significant other (parent, guardian, friend, etc) they will struggle forming new relationships. College is all about forming new relationships whether it is with a professor, roommate, or adviser. In fact the fearful students did report fewer friendships in college. Fearful students also didn't believe they would make more friends in the future. Just as most would predict, the secure students adjusted the best to college. Preoccupied students (defined as having a negative self view and as being dependent on others) were likely to use the support system offered to them.

Astin (1975) showed the importance of student participation in clubs and organizations and found that out-of-class activities, living in the residence halls, and working on campus had positive effects on student retention.

A study by Swenson, Nordstrom and Hiester (2008), looked at adjustment to college in relation to peer relationships. Swenson, Nordstrom and Hiester recognized that many factors influence a student's adjustment to college. Using Erickson's (1963) model of development, the importance of peers and establishing close intimate relationships in a student's early 20's is a critical task during this time. Because students usually leave home at this time, Swenson, Nordstrom and Hiester stated they will start needing these friendships in different ways. It is likely that students will turn to their peers, instead of their family when they need help.

The Swenson, Nordstrom and Hiester study did note that although high school relationships were important, the real predictor for a successful adjustment to college came from those new friendships which were formed and the quality of those relationships.

The results from Swenson, Nordstrom and Hiester (2008) showed that during the first two weeks having a positive past relationship (ie. high school friend) was critical because the student needed someone with whom they could open and honest. When the group was tested again 10 weeks later, it was important that the student was no longer looking outside the institution for their primary peer relationships. College friendships were found important in terms of social, academic, and institutional adjustment. It was critical for a student to find peers who share common interests and who they consider loyal. Students who did not have relationship stressors were found to be more able to become academically engaged in the institution.

Forming Perceptions

Freeman (1991) described the definition of perception as:

The brain seeks information, mainly by directing an individual to look, listen and sniff.

The search results from self-organizing activity in the limbic system (a part of the brain

that includes the entorhinal cortex and is thought to be involved in emotion and memory), which funnels a search command to the motor systems. As the motor command is transmitted, the limbic system issues what is called a reafference message, alerting all the sensory systems to prepare to respond to new information. (p. 78)

He states:

Perception cannot be understood solely by examining properties of individual neurons, a microscopic approach that currently dominates neuroscience research. We have found that perception depends on the simultaneous, cooperative activity of millions of neurons spread throughout expanses of the cortex. Such global activity can be identified, measured and explained only if one adopts a macroscopic view alongside the microscopic one. (Freeman, 1991, p. 85)

We need perception to filter all of the information we are gathering.

When a student arrives on a college campus, they are overwhelmed with information. They will use their developmental tasks to filter through all of these new stimuli to create perceptions about college and their experiences.

Weaver and Qi (2005) found that students' perceptions of and experiences within the social organization of the classroom play a crucial role in shaping the students' participation in class. They believe that how a student perceives the informal and formal structure of the classroom will impact their participation in that class.

Several variables from their survey of students' perceptions exhibit influence on self-reported participation. The two formal structures that mattered were *faculty-student interaction* and *perception of faculty as the authority of knowledge*. Two measures of informal structures that mattered were *fear of peer disapproval* and *para-participation* (willingness to communicate

with faculty outside of participation in class). The two attributes that mattered for students were *age* and *confidence*. According to the researchers, the greatest take-away was that faculty-student interaction outside of the classroom matters and can make a big difference in terms of students' perceptions. This impacts things such as speaking up in class and visiting a professor during his or her office hours.

This study was based on students' perceptions. These can be different from the information an external observer may collect, however they are real.

Today's College Students

Developmentally people age 18-25 are called Emerging Adults (Teese & Bradley, 2008). In their particular study they attempt to measure a way to predict recklessness. They discovered that in this age group, emerging adults are using perceived risks verses perceived benefits in most of their decisions.

Arnett (2000) points out that this emerging adult developmental task is only found in cultures that allow young adults a long period of exploration and identity formation. Because of the demographic changes over the past few decades, this period offers numerous options for establishing the direction of one's life. It is the perfect time for exploration and trial and error.

Arnett (2000) points out that a change for this generation is the perception of attending college. More students than ever are going onto pursue a college degree after high school (60%). However they are doing it in different ways. They are working more and taking more breaks in their college education. Their perception of college is 'non-linear,' meaning they don't see the 'four years and you are out' mentality of the past.

In past generations college students perceived themselves as adults. This is a change for this generation since they no longer see themselves as adolescents and they do not believe they

are full-fledge adults. Arnett (2000) found that until the emerging adults felt they could 1) accept responsibility for one's self, and 2) make independent decisions, and 3) become financially independent, they did not feel they were officially an adult.

Howe and Strauss (2000) discusses this new millennial generation which encompasses the majority of students on today's college campuses. These students were born between 1982 and 2002. They are described as 'more numerous, more affluent, better educated and more ethnically diverse.' This generation was given the 'millennial' descriptor because the first group was born in 1982 and graduated from high school, and many entered college, as the new millennium began in the year 2000.

Levine and Cureton (1998) states today's college students are distrustful of national leaders and they are seeking to make a difference in their communities. Today's students are reluctant to be involved if they feel like they will have little input. Students today have a lot of worries; crime, money, and lack of quality relationships just to name a few. At UW-Eau Claire students report their number one concern when coming to college is 'paying for college.' Levine believes there are four things that a college student needs from their educational experience: hope, responsibility, acceptance of others, and efficacy.

The demographics of students coming to college continue to change (Gardner & Hansen, 2003). Soon one in three students will be nonwhite. Actually students will be more diverse in every sense of the word (race, age, gender, sexual orientation, etc.). Howe and Strauss (2000, page 15) found that 35.5% of millennials are considered non-white or Latino ethnicity. Gardner also states they will also be taking longer to graduate, commute more from home, and be older. Because of the rising costs of college it can also be expected that more students may start out at two-year colleges and will likely be working more to pay for college.

This generation also has the most highly educated parents. According to Howe and Strauss (2000, page 80), 41% of college freshmen have a mother with a college degree and 44% have a father with a college degree. This is compared to only 20% of mothers and 32% of fathers having college degrees back in 1973.

Because not every student that enters college is a white, heterosexual 18 year old straight from high school, Nader and Miller (1999) found that transition needs for multi-ethnic students are different and more complex. Student Affairs professionals must apply age, race, sexual orientation, and gender in anticipating a student's adjustment to college and what they will need to be successful.

Durodoye, Bodley and Hildreth's study (1997) focused on ethnic minorities and the complexities of their career development. It was concluded that more education needs to be done with career counselors in terms of ethnic influences in career choice. Many minorities are not even aware of all of their career possibilities and may be making their decisions based on family pressure and financial strains. The African-Americans and Hispanics in this particular study were over-representing in careers within business, social sciences, and education. They were underrepresented in math and science.

The two issues for women, which differ from men, when they adjust to college have to do with self-esteem and vocational interests (Pope, 2002). Having nurturing women in roles to teach and support female students seems to be helpful in their transition. An open and welcoming climate is also beneficial for female students in terms of reaching out for help and utilizing offered student services. This is especially important when dealing with nontraditional female students.

Crary (2007) reported on a study which found that college students today are way more narcissistic than past years. This can be problematic when it comes to relationships. Power and ambition may be more important. However it can also be difficult when it comes to career options since many students believe they can be anything they want to be, since they have been told that since birth.

Attrition and Retention Among Undeclared Students

Because many label undeclared student as attrition-prone, a lot of energy and resources are expended at the university level to help students with this process of 'deciding' and staying in college. Across the nation, in all types of institutions, the retention rate is falling (Postsecondary Education Opportunity, 2002). It is believed by many that a commitment to one's educational and career goals may be the strongest factor associated to degree completion and an institution's retention rate (Wyckoff, 1999). However there are many other reasons students are undeclared.

Lewallen (1993) reports that undeclared students have often been labeled as attrition-prone. Although Lewallen disagrees, Gordon (1995) states that 'personal commitment to either an academic or occupational goal is the single most important determinant of college persistence.' In fact some suggest undeclared students should be referred to as 'exploratory' or 'investigative' instead of 'undeclared.' For many their reasons for being undeclared are both healthy and appropriate.

Noel (1985) indicates that the number one reason talented students give for dropping out of college is uncertainty about what to study. Simms (1983) believed that the empirical connection between being undeclared and dropping out of college was not clear. However he felt that this 'indecision' was a major reason why college students leave college prior to graduation.

Lewallen does not believe this period of being undecided necessarily means that a student is any less committed to their college education and goals.

There are some findings about students and attrition that are useful to provide a context:

1. Three of every four students are uncertain or tentative about their career choice at college entry (Tittle & Titley, 1980).
2. Uncertainty among new students frequently increases rather than decreases during the first two years of college (Tinto, 1993).
3. Over two thirds of entering students change their major during their first year (Kramer, Higley & Olson, 1993).
4. Between 50% and 75% of all students who enter college with a declared major change their mind at least once before they graduate (Noel, 1985).
5. Only one senior out of three will major in the same field they preferred as a freshman (Willingham, 1985).

Whether an undeclared student decides to continue on and pursue a degree may have something to do with the institution's attitude about undeclared students. Are students being pressured to decide by a certain point in their academic career? Are they given lots of resources to fully explore their options? Do faculty/staff embrace this decision making process? In 2003 the Policy Center on The First Year of College found that 44% of institutions reported that they either strongly encouraged or required students to select a major.

Many resources have been devoted to save the undeclared student from attrition. Conferences have been devoted to retention and undeclared students. The state of California even started a government program in the 1990's to move students along in this process.

What has been learned about attrition and retention is that it is definitely multi-dimensional. Undecidedness may be one factor, but it certainly isn't alone when predicting a student's likelihood of graduating. Astin (1975) found a comprehensive list of factors that mattered in student persistence; good college grades, strong prior academic achievement, residence-hall living, and involvement all significantly contributed to persistence.

Summary

Although the literature is conflicted if being 'undeclared' leads to attrition, it seems clear that being undeclared may cause stress and anxiety for our students. Stress and anxiety definitely impact a student's adjustment to college and overall satisfaction with college does impact retention.

Taking what is known about undeclared students and their adjustment to college and potential for attrition, institutions should strongly consider a model that welcomes students as undeclared. Instead of forcing or pressuring students into a decision that we know most are not developmentally ready to make, we could instead offer exploratory resources for all and treat those 'decided' students as the exception.

Chapter Three will cover the methodology of the study addressing the planned procedures and instrumentation.

Chapter III: Methodology

Sections addressed in this chapter include the purpose of the study, method of study, description of subjects, sample selection, instrumentation, procedures followed, methods of analysis and limitations.

A literature review was completed to examine undeclared students, adjustment to college, and retention. The study was created to find any information that might be helpful in aiding undeclared students during their adjustment to college.

Purpose Statement

One of the major factors in student retention is adjustment to college. If students do not have a pleasant start to college and they don't experience institutional fit, they will likely contribute to the university's attrition rate (Howard, Morey & Briancesco, 2003). Therefore it is possible that the reason for the higher attrition rate for undeclared students at UW-Eau Claire is that they do not adjust to college as well as declared students.

Adjustment to college will be measured for first-year students at UW-Eau Claire. Declared and undeclared students will be compared and recommendations will be made, if necessary, to better aid undeclared students in their adjustment to college. Hopefully this will increase retention for undeclared students through potential programmatic changes targeted at undeclared students. The needs of undeclared students and the objectives of the advisers are reviewed each semester. It is anticipated this research will add to what is known about the group and give insight into improvements that can be made.

The University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire is not currently collecting data on students' transition to college and how that might be impacting the retention of students, either declared or undeclared.

Method of Study-Subject Selection and Description

The subjects in this study were all first-year students at UW-Eau Claire who were enrolled in a First-Year Experience (FYE) course. The freshmen class for the 2008-09 academic year at UW-Eau Claire was about 2028 students. Seventy-seven sections of FYE were offered for Fall 2008. About 71% or 1460 of those students were enrolled in a First-Year Experience course. Students self select into a FYE class. In past years 85% of freshmen enroll in an FYE course, but in 2008-2009 that percentage was much smaller due to the university offering fewer sections. The primary reason for fewer sections was an issue of course availability and budget constraints. Because the sections are smaller (20 students), some departments were not able to offer as many as in the past. The University expected to hear more complaints from students who wished to enroll in an FYE class but could not due to availability. However, they did not hear from any potentially disappointed students.

Only freshmen are allowed to enroll in FYE classes. Students make the decision to enroll in FYE during summer orientation when they select their fall courses. As explained under instrumentation, there was no differentiation in terms of undeclared and declared students and their likelihood to enroll in an FYE course.

The researcher planned to contact some FYE instructors and ask for their participation in the survey. However based on feedback from the committee, all FYE instructors were given the option of having their FYE class participate in this study. This happened through an email 'Email to Faculty' which can be found in Appendix A. Because the instructors were given the option of forwarding on the survey or having the researcher contact the students directly, it is impossible to know how many of the 1460 students were offered the survey. However, 27 sections (540 students) were contacted directly from the researcher based on the approval of the FYE

instructor. The week one cover letter can be found in Appendix B. The week one survey can be found in Appendix C.

Table 1

Selection of Participants for Study

Invitation to Participate	Instructors	Sections	Students
Total	55	77	1460
Positive Response	16	27	~540
No Response	39	50	~1000
Negative Response	0	0	0

Of the 540 students sent the survey, a total of 325 FYE students (60.19%) completed the week one survey. Three surveys were not used because the respondents were under 18 years old. This decision was made based on the advice of the researcher's field study committee. At the recommendation of the field study committee, parental notification was suggested for students under 18. Since that was not possible to gather, the cover letter asked students not to complete the survey if they were not yet 18. The cover letter also informed students that if they were under 18 and still chose to complete the survey, their answers would not be used in the study.

All 325 students who had completed the week one survey were contacted and ask to complete the week 10 survey. The week 10 cover letter can be found in Appendix D. The week 10 survey can be found in Appendix E. A total of 113 (of 325 or 35%) surveys were returned for the week 10 survey. Two were again removed due to the respondent not being 18.

One hundred and six (106) students took both the week one and week 10 survey out of the potential 540 (20.37%). Because 113 students completed the week 10 survey (seven more than completed both surveys) it is likely that students entered an incorrect user name when completing their week one or week 10 survey since the researcher was not able to match the participants.

The return rate was 22.2 % (n=325) for the week one survey of the total 1460 freshmen enrolled in an FYE course. The return rate for the week 10 survey was 34% since 111 of the original 322 eligible students completed the survey.

As part of the survey, students were asked to determine if they were 'declared' or 'undeclared.' It was the sixth question. This was the only data collected to determine if a student was undeclared.

Instrumentation

These surveys were modeled after two surveys used to measure adjustment to college. The first is the *CIRP Freshman Survey* and follow-up *Your First College Year Survey*. This survey is designed to be administered at the beginning of a student's first and second years of college. It is created by the Higher Education Research Institute at the University of California, Los Angeles.

The second survey modeled was the *Student Adaptation to College Questionnaire* (SACQ). It is administered by Western Psychological Services. This survey is used to assess overall adjustment to college, detect problems, guide interventions, and promote retention.

The CIRP was most helpful when looking at demographics and how this information was collected. Although it collected some demographic information that wasn't necessary for this survey (ACT scores, how many miles is your college from your permanent home, citizenship

status, etc.), it did collect some useful demographic information that was replicated (sex, age, on-off campus status, etc.).

The concept of asking questions about how the student thought they would do (*CIRP Freshman Survey*) and then following up with a second survey (*Your First College Year Survey*) asking how they were actually doing was modeled after these surveys. For example the week one survey would ask if the student would feel confident visiting a professor during his or her office hours or if a student would feel confident speaking up in class. The week 10 survey follows up with asking the student if they did visit a professor during his or her office hours or if the student did speak up in class.

The SACQ was modeled to get at a student's apprehension and adaption to college. The survey was modeled after switching questions around and not assuming all students were adjusting well. For example, under *personal-emotional development* in the week one survey a question was stated 'I have been feeling lonely at college lately' and under *attachment to institution* a student was asked to respond to the statement 'I wish I were at another college/university.' The second statement was formed from the SACQ survey. Those same two questions were repeated in the week 10 survey.

The researcher then worked with her field study committee to develop the survey. The initial week one version contained 16 sections and no subheadings. The initial week 10 version contained 19 questions and no subheadings.

The field study committee made many recommendations for improvements to the survey. Instead of collecting ID numbers, it was suggested the researcher use 'user name' since that is public information and students were more likely to know their user name the first week of classes since it is also their email address. It was also suggested that a pull-down menu be

included for multicultural status (race) using the same categories used by the UW System. It was advised that the researcher add a comment box at the bottom of the survey to collect any additional information. It was also suggested the researcher ask about 'confidence' instead of 'comfort' in the week one survey.

The final recommendation from the field study committee was to use adjustment categories to put the questions into sections that directly related to the adjustment factors. Therefore the four categories of: Academic Integration, Social Integration, Personal-emotional Adjustment and Attachment to Institution were added. Through the researcher's EDUC 816 course, the survey was created and tested.

The purpose of this study is to measure adjustment and compare undeclared and declared students. Open-ended and a five-point Likert scale questions (strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree, and strongly disagree) were developed for this purpose. The final version of the week one survey consisted of 24 questions. The final version of the week 10 survey consisted of 29 questions. Most of the 24 questions were mirrored in the week 10 survey. The week one survey focused on the student's perception of how they would do and the week 10 survey focused on how they were actually doing so far.

Demographic questions were created to collect background information on each subject.

Demographic information collected included:

1. Students entered their user name.
2. Students entered 'sex' as 'male', 'female', or 'other.'
3. Students entered their age.
4. Students selected 'on campus' or 'off campus' for living arrangements.

5. Students selected their race from a pull-down menu. They had 15 options including 'other' and 'I choose not to respond.' These categories were the same as used by the University of Wisconsin System on their application to college.
6. Students were then asked if they had declared their major. They had the choice of 'yes' or 'no.'
7. If yes to question six, students were asked to type in their major.
8. Students were then given a 10 point Likert scale asking how certain they were of their major. A '1' was extremely uncertain. A '10' was extremely certain.
9. For question 9 and 10 students were asked the highest education level of their parent/guardian 1 and parent/guardian 2.

For the remaining question they were put into different categories: Academic Integration, Social Integration, Personal-Emotional Adjustment, and Attachment to the Institution for both the week one and week 10 survey.

Academic Integration measured the students' likelihood to speak up in class, ask questions, visit a professor outside of class, and meet with their adviser. In week 10 the survey followed up with their expected grades to this point, if they had done the things they predicted, and how they are enjoying their FYE class.

Social Integration measured the likelihood to attend a campus event, join a campus club or organization and to make friends. The week 10 survey measured if they had actually done these things.

The Emotional and Social Adjustment section measured loneliness, confidence and family support at week one and week 10. Since the research showed that family support

mattered, the perception of family support needed to be measured. In the review of literature Friedlander, Reid, Shupak and Cribbie (2007) were able to demonstrate that family support did impact a student's adjustment to college.

Attachment to the Institution measured the student's perception on their adjustment, desire to graduate, and likelihood of continuing their education at UW-Eau Claire. This can be very helpful information for the University's retention committee since they are constantly trying to assess why students leave and when they are making that decision.

The final section was an open ended comment box for students to report anything they would like to add in regards to their adjustment to college thus far. Participants were free to tell the researcher in their words how they were adjusting.

The week one survey was emailed to FYE instructors on Tuesday, September 2, 2008. It was the first day of classes for the Fall term. Students had until Monday, September 8, 2008 to complete the survey since it was to measure their perception and confidence during the first week of college.

The post survey (week 10) was sent the tenth week of classes, November 10, 2008, to the 325 students who completed the week one survey. Students submitted their user names in the week one survey. Those user names were used to reach the students through email. The students again had one week to complete the survey since it was measuring the realities of the tenth week of college and their adjustment thus far. The surveys were then sent to the campus (University of Wisconsin-Stout) statistician for analysis.

Procedures Followed

The surveys were reviewed for the final time by the field study committee. Many suggestions were made such as collecting more demographic information about the student such

as race. They also suggested additions to the choices for parental highest education attainment. The suggestion of using more categorical headings that were in line with the research on college student adjustment was also suggested. The final survey was approved by the research chair. At that point the researcher gained official approval by the IRB at UW-Stout and UW-Eau Claire. Once it was officially approved, an email solicitation was sent out to all First-Year Experience instructors.

The email was sent to all FYE instructors the last week in August asking if they would allow their students to participate in this study. If they agreed, they either forwarded the survey on to their class or asked the researcher to do so. Twenty-four sections (480 students) were sent the survey directly by the researcher.

The survey was given the first week of college, September 2-5, 2008. The survey was emailed with a cover letter to all students who were given access based on their FYE instructor. The week 10 survey was emailed directly to those students who completed the week one survey, the tenth week of classes November 10-14, 2008. The survey attempted to measure adjustment to college and that information was compared in declared and undeclared students.

The Institutional Review Board (IRB) at both UW-Stout and UW-Eau Claire approved the cover letter since UW-Eau Claire students were the subjects and the researcher is a student at UW-Stout. The cover letter gave an explanation of the survey (how many questions, how long it would take, what the research was being used for, etc.). It also included disclaimers for students under 18 so they would know their answers would not be used and letting people know their comments would not be followed-up. Instead of being contacted directly, it listed different places on campus a student may go for help if they were in need of assistance.

The survey was an online survey. It was available through a link in the cover letter. Each survey took around ten minutes to complete. On the final day of week one and week 10, the survey was no longer accessible. Students trying to access the survey after the closing date contacted the researcher. However to remain true to week one and week 10, it was a firm deadline. That information was covered in the cover letter.

Once data was received, it was reviewed and analyzed, and used to write Chapter Four and Five of the Field Study.

Unknowns . There are many unknowns in this survey.

1. One unknown in this study is how many instructors would allow access to their class to distribute the survey. Because of this, it was unknown if the goal of 150 completed surveys (10 percent) would be reached.
2. Although being undeclared is a primary factor of this study, it was not known in advance how many survey respondents would be undeclared.
3. Because this instrument has not been used before, it is possible it would not offer any meaningful or helpful data.
4. It was unknown if students were less honest with their answers based on the survey being confidential, not anonymous.

Data Analysis

On September 2 and November 10, 2008 the surveys were electronically sent to the students with a link to the web-based survey. The students had one week to respond to each survey in order to capture the true first and tenth week of the semester.

The results went into an Excel file. The data was converted from a Likert scale (Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree) to a scale with assigned numerical values. This data was used to convert averages for each question.

Limitations. This study has the following limitations:

1. Many variables affect a student's adjustment to college. The research includes everything from parental style to attachment theory classification; from personality type to involvement in college. It would be impossible to measure all possible variables when it comes to a student's adjustment to college.
2. There are many different ways to measure adjustment to college. Some people may assume that if a student is retained from year one to year two, the student has successfully adjusted to college. A researcher developed instrument to measure adjustment will be used to measure adjustment.
3. This is the first major research project performed by this novice researcher. Because of this, there may be greater limitations to the study found in Chapter Five.
4. Because this study is not longitudinal, it will not be known if improved adjustment to college in undeclared students will lead to increased retention.
5. The students were selected for this study based on which First Year Experience instructors allow this research to happen by providing access to their class roster.
6. This study is limited because the data collected will be restricted to student-reported perception.
7. This study is limited because there is little uniformity in First-Year Experience classes and this could impact their adjustment to college positively or negatively.

Summary

The instrumentation and data analysis for this study were based on the primary research questions. The objective of this data analysis was to identify any differences between the groups to determine if there was any significant difference. Results will be shown in Chapter Four. Answers to these research questions will be based on these findings in Chapter Five.

Chapter IV: Results and Discussion

Chapter Four addresses the findings of the research on new students which was completed at the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire. One of the major factors in student retention is adjustment to college. If students do not have a pleasant start to college and they don't experience institutional fit, they will likely contribute to the university's attrition rate (Howard, Morey & Briancesco, 2003). Therefore it is possible that the reason for the higher attrition rate for undeclared students at UW-Eau Claire is that they do not adjust to college as well as declared students.

Adjustment to college was measured for first-year students at UW-Eau Claire. Declared and undeclared students were compared to increase understanding of undeclared students in their adjustment to college in hopes it will increase retention for undeclared students. The University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire is not currently collecting data on students' transition to college and how that might be impacting the retention of students, either declared or undeclared.

Methods

Student participation in the survey was offered to all First-Year Experience instructors. Of the 50 FYE instructors, 16 either forwarded the survey onto their students or gave the researcher permission to email his or her students directly. All students who completed the week one survey were then emailed the week 10 survey during the tenth week of classes. See Table 2, Data Results for tabulation of week one and week 10 results. Five hundred and forty (540) week one and 325 week 10 surveys were distributed. Three hundred and twenty-five (325) were returned for week one (60% return rate) and 113 (34.7% return rate) for week 10.

Two of the reasons fewer surveys were completed during week 10 may be that students are less and less likely to do what is asked once they realize what is required and what is

optional. Participation in this survey was optional. They also may have become too busy in their other classes. Week 10 is when mid-term grades are issued and the withdrawal deadline happens so stress levels, especially for freshmen, are often high during that time.

Table 2

Data Results

	Surveys distributed	Surveys returned	Return rate
Week 1	540	325	60%
Week 10	325	113	34.7%

The first ten questions of both surveys collected demographic information (user name, sex, age, ethnicity, major, living arrangements, parental educational level). One hundred and six (106) respondents completed the week one and week 10 surveys (n=106). Students were paired by their user name. Students were asked at the beginning of both surveys to enter their user name. For respondents who took the week one survey the majority (70.5%) were female (n=227). Ninety-five percent (95%) (n=306) lived on campus and 92% were white (n=296). This is very representative of the UW-Eau Claire student body. About 30% of the respondents were undeclared (n=95). The University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire defines 'first generation' as a student whom neither parent has graduated with a four-year degree or higher. This was important to see if being a first-generation college student impacted the student's adjustment to college. There is certain programming that is directed at first-generation students since it is known it can be a factor for potential attrition.

For students who took the week 10 (n=111) survey the majority (79.3%) were female (n=88). Seventy-one percent (71%) were 18 years old (n=79). Ninety-four percent (94%) (n=104) lived on campus and 95% were white (n=106). This is also very representative of the UW-Eau Claire student body. About 28% of the students were undeclared (n=31) and 47% (n=52) were first-generation. Two of the respondents were removed since they were not yet 18.

For respondents who took both the week one and week 10 survey the majority (92.5%) of the respondents were 18 years old (n=98). The ages ranged from 18 to 19 years old. Most of the respondents (79%) were female (n=84). All respondents under 18 years old (n=3 in week one and n=2 in week 10) were removed due to not being able to collect permission from a parent/guardian.

The sample was very representative of the UW-Eau Claire freshmen class as reported in the 2008 Characteristics of Freshmen document (2008). In 2008, 62.2% of the freshmen were female. Almost 6% of the freshmen class is multi-cultural. Around 45% of students are first-generation. Close to 93% students lived on campus.

After the demographic information the following questions were part of the survey. They were listed in four subcategories: academic integration, social integration, personal-emotional adjustment, and attachment to institution.

Week One survey:

ACADEMIC INTEGRATION

11. I would feel confident visiting a professor during his or her office hours.
12. I would feel confident speaking up in class.
13. I would feel confident meeting or contacting my Academic Adviser.
14. I plan to earn C's or better this semester.

SOCIAL INTEGRATION

- 15. I plan to attend a campus event. (performances, lectures, discussion, sporting events)
- 16. I plan to join a campus club, intramural team, and/or organization.
- 17. I am confident I will make friends.

PERSONAL-EMOTIONAL ADJUSTMENT

- 18. I have been feeling lonely at college lately.
- 19. I feel confident I will be able to deal in a satisfactory manner with future challenges here at college.
- 20. My family is supportive of me.
- 21. My family is supportive of my college education.

ATTACHMENT TO INSTITUTION

- 22. I plan to return to UW-Eau Claire for Spring 2009.
- 23. I wish I were at another college/university.
- 24. I am adjusting well to UW-Eau Claire.

Week 10 survey:

ACADEMIC INTEGRATION

- 11. I have visited a professor during his or her office hours.
- 12. I have spoken in class.
- 13. I have met or contacted my Academic Adviser.
- 14. I will be in good standing (C average or higher) after this semester.
- 15. My first year experience (FYE) course has been a positive experience so far.

SOCIAL INTEGRATION

16. I have attended campus events. (performances, lectures, discussions, sporting events)

17. I have joined a campus club, intramural team, and/or organization.

18. I have made friends.

PERSONAL-EMOTIONAL ADJUSTMENT

19. I am having difficulty feeling at ease with other people at college.

20. I have been feeling lonely at college lately.

21. I feel confident I will be able to deal in a satisfactory manner with future challenges here at college.

22. My family is supportive of me.

23. My family is supportive of my college education.

ATTACHMENT TO INSTITUTION

24. I will return to UW-Eau Claire for Spring 2009.

25. I will return to UW-Eau Claire for Fall 2009.

26. I plan to earn a bachelors degree from UW-Eau Claire.

27. I wish I were at another college/university.

28. I am adjusting well to UW-Eau Claire.

Many of the questions are parallel between the two surveys with one focusing on intentions of the student (week one) and one focusing on action by the student (week 10). Both surveys ended with a final question asking students to comment on their adjustment.

Findings

Once the data was compiled the hope was to discover any statistical differences between undeclared and declared students. The second review of data was used to judge any difference between week one and week 10 for declared students and then again for undeclared students.

Statistical significance was judged using a significance value of 0.05 and 2-tailed tests. The differences were considered statistically significant if the “sig” was less than 0.05 and not significant if the “sig” was greater than or equal to 0.05.

For comparison purposes only students who responded to the week one and week 10 surveys were used in the analysis. One hundred and six (106) students responded to both surveys.

When looking for differences between undeclared and declared students, there was only one significant difference found. In the Week One survey question 16 asks each student if they plan to join a student organization or club. The difference was significant in terms of undeclared students anticipating their participation in an on campus club or organization. Undeclared students were less likely to say they would join a club or organization (sig = .015). See Table 3 for the results.

Table 3

T-test for Equality of Means-Week One Undeclared Students

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means		
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Question 16	Equal variances assumed	1.407	.238	-2.473	104	.015

Table 4 demonstrates the highest means for declared students in the Week one survey were question 14 ‘I plan to earn C’s or higher’ (mean=4.89), question 21 ‘my family is supportive of my education’ (mean=4.79), question 20 ‘my family is supportive of me’ (mean=4.74) and question 22 ‘I plan to return for Spring 2009’ (mean=4.69).

Table 4 shows the highest means for undeclared students were three of the same questions. Question 21 'my family is supportive of my college education (mean=4.85), question 14 'I plan to earn C's or higher' (mean=4.77) and question 20 'my family is supportive of me' (mean=4.65).

The lowest means in week one for declared students were question 23 'I wish I were at another college' (mean=1.94) and question 18 'I have been feeling lonely' (mean=2.86). For undeclared students the lowest means were the same two questions with means of 2.15 for question 23 'I wish I were at another college' and 2.69 for question 18 'I have been feeling lonely.'

Table 4

Difference Between Declared and Undeclared Students by Question for Week One

	Declared status for week one	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
11. I would visit a professor	undeclared	26	4.00	.566
	declared	79	4.13	.705
12. I would speak up in class	undeclared	25	3.48	.823
	declared	78	3.77	1.018
13. I would meet/contact Academic Advisor	undeclared	26	4.08	.845
	declared	78	4.03	.837
14. I plan to be in good standing (C or better)	undeclared	26	4.77	.514
	declared	79	4.89	.358
15. I plan to attend a campus event	undeclared	26	4.46	.582
	declared	80	4.66	.550
16. I plan to join a campus club	undeclared	26	4.12	.864
	declared	80	4.51	.656
17. I am confident I will make friends	undeclared	26	4.31	.618
	declared	79	4.47	.782
18. I have been feeling lonely	undeclared	26	2.69	1.158
	declared	80	2.86	1.166
19. I feel confident I will be able to deal with future changes at college	undeclared	26	4.08	.628
	declared	80	4.09	.679
20. My family is supportive of me	undeclared	26	4.65	.562
	declared	80	4.74	.545
21. My family is supportive of my college education	undeclared	26	4.85	.368
	declared	80	4.79	.441
22. I plan to return for Spring 2009	undeclared	26	4.54	.647
	declared	80	4.69	.587
23. I wish I were at another university	undeclared	26	2.15	.925
	declared	80	1.94	1.023
24. I am adjusting well to UW-EC	undeclared	26	4.12	.588
	declared	80	4.20	.719

Table 5 demonstrates the highest means for declared students in the Week 10 survey were question 23 'my family is supportive of my college education' (mean=4.86), question 24 'I will return to UW-Eau Claire for Spring 2009' (mean=4.78) and question 22 'my family is supportive of me' (mean=4.78).

Table 5 shows the highest means for undeclared students were the exact same three questions although the means were not as high. Question 23 'my family is supportive of my college education (mean=4.65), question 24 'I will return to UW-Eau Claire for Spring 2009' (mean=4.62) and question 22 'my family is supportive of me' (mean=4.42).

The lowest means in week 10 for declared students were question 27 'I wish I were at another college' (mean=2.23) and question 19 'I am having difficulty feeling at ease' (mean=2.38). For undeclared students the lowest means were the same two questions with means of 2.12 for question 27 'I wish I were at another college' and 2.27 for question 19 'I am having difficulty feeling at ease.'

The earlier significant difference between undeclared and declared students and their plans to join a club or organization were gone in week 10. When asked in question 17 if they had joined a club or organization the means were almost identical with undeclared students reporting a mean of 3.81 and declared students reporting a mean of 3.85.

Table 5

Difference Between Declared and Undeclared Students by Question for Week 10

	Declared status for Week one	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
11. I have visited a professor	undeclared	26	2.65	1.413
	declared	80	3.24	1.389
12. I have spoken in class	undeclared	26	4.00	.800
	declared	80	4.09	.783
13. I have met/contacted my Academic Advisor	undeclared	26	3.92	.891
	declared	80	4.06	1.035
14. I will be in good standing (C or better)	undeclared	26	4.31	.679
	declared	80	4.55	.727
15. FYE has been positive so far	undeclared	26	3.96	1.038
	declared	79	3.92	1.130
16. I have attended campus event	undeclared	26	4.04	.871
	declared	80	4.18	.868
17. I have joined a campus club	undeclared	26	3.81	1.266
	declared	80	3.85	1.284
18. I have made friends	undeclared	26	4.38	.898
	declared	78	4.38	.841
19. I am having difficulty feeling at ease	undeclared	26	2.27	1.002
	declared	80	2.38	1.140
20. I have been feeling lonely	undeclared	26	2.50	1.273
	declared	80	2.43	1.111
21. I feel confident I will be able to deal with future changes at college	undeclared	26	4.08	.628
	declared	80	4.09	.660
22. My family is supportive of me	undeclared	26	4.42	.902
	declared	80	4.78	.551
23. My family is supportive of my college education	undeclared	26	4.65	.629
	declared	80	4.86	.381
24. I will return for Spring 2009	undeclared	26	4.62	.496
	declared	80	4.78	.573
25. I will return for Fall 2009	undeclared	26	4.19	1.021
	declared	80	4.39	1.153
26. I plan to earn a degree from UW-EC	undeclared	26	3.92	1.164
	declared	80	4.18	1.240
27. I wish I were at another college	undeclared	26	2.12	1.177
	declared	79	2.23	1.270
28. I am adjusting well to UW-EC	undeclared	26	4.19	.749
	declared	78	4.14	.817

When comparing the week one and week 10 surveys for each specific group, additional significant differences were discovered. For undeclared students their intent for visiting a professor outside of the classroom was a 4.0 in week one. However by week 10 the group only rated a 2.65 for visiting a professor during his or her office hours. See Table 6, pair 1.

Undeclared students underestimated how much they would speak in class. During the week one survey their mean was 3.48. However during the week 10 survey the mean rose to 3.96. See Table 6, pair 2.

Almost all undeclared students thought they would earn a C average or higher in their classes (4.77) in week one. By the tenth week students had received some feedback as to the grades they would likely receive for the semester. Midterm grades had been issued by that time. The mean dropped to 4.31. See Table 6, Pair 4.

Finally undeclared students overestimated how likely they were to attend a campus event. During week one the mean was 4.46 stating they would, while the week 10 responses showed a mean of 4.04 had attended a campus event. See Table 6, pair 5.

Table 6

Undeclared Students Samples Statistics

		Mean	N	Std. Deviation
Pair 1	I would feel confident visiting a professor	4.00	26	.566
	I have visited a professor	2.65	26	1.413
Pair 2	I would feel confident speaking up in class	3.48	25	.823
	I have spoken in class	3.96	25	.790
Pair 3	I will feel confident meet/contact Academic Advisor	4.08	26	.845
	I have met/contacted Academic Advisor	3.92	26	.891
Pair 4	I plan to earn C's or better this semester	4.77	26	.514
	I will be in good standing (C or better)	4.31	26	.679
Pair 5	I plan to attend a campus event	4.46	26	.582
	I have attended campus event	4.04	26	.871
Pair 6	I plan to join a campus club	4.12	26	.864
	I have joined a campus club	3.81	26	1.266
Pair 7	I am confident I will make friends	4.31	26	.618
	I have made friends	4.38	26	.898
Pair 8	I have been feeling lonely	2.69	26	1.158
	I have been feeling lonely	2.50	26	1.273
Pair 9	I feel confident I will be able to deal with future changes at college	4.08	26	.628
	I feel confident I will be able to deal with future changes at college	4.08	26	.628
Pair 10	My family is supportive of me	4.65	26	.562
	My family is supportive of me	4.42	26	.902
Pair 11	My family is supportive of my college education	4.85	26	.368
	My family is supportive of my college education	4.65	26	.629
Pair 12	I plan to return to UWEC in spring09	4.54	26	.647
	I will return to UWEC spring09	4.62	26	.496
Pair 13	I wish I were at another college	2.15	26	.925
	I wish I were at another college	2.12	26	1.177
Pair 14	I am adjusting well to UW-EC	4.12	26	.588
	I am adjusting well to UW-EC	4.19	26	.749

As for declared students they also had some significant differences between week one and week 10. Like undeclared students, declared students overestimated their interaction with faculty outside of class. The week one mean was 4.13. By week 10 the mean dropped to 3.22. See Table 7, pair 1.

When anticipating if declared students would speak in class, they also underestimated if they would do it. Pair 2 (Table 7) shows the difference being 3.77 in week one and 4.08 in week 10.

They also overestimated how well they would do in terms of grades. Pair 4 (Table 7) shows a mean of 4.89 in week one dropping to a mean of 4.54 in week 10.

Like undeclared students they also anticipated they would be attending more campus events than they did during their first ten weeks on campus. Pair 5 (Table 7) shows that during week one the mean was 4.66. By week 10 the mean had dropped to 4.18.

There was also a significant difference in the loneliness they reported. Pair 8 (Table 7) reports that the mean was 2.86 during week one. By week 10 the mean had dropped to 2.43. This difference was not reported as significant by the undeclared student respondents.

Finally pair 13 (Table 7) shows a statistical difference for declared students when asked about their wishes to attend a different university. During week one the mean was only 1.95. By week 10 the mean had increased to 2.23 (higher than the week 10 undeclared mean).

Table 7

Declared Students Samples Statistics

		Mean	N	Std. Deviation
Pair 1	I would feel confident visiting a professor	4.13	79	.705
	I have visited a professor	3.22	79	1.384
Pair 2	I would feel confident speaking up in class	3.77	78	1.018
	I have spoken in class	4.08	78	.786
Pair 3	I will feel confident meet/contact Academic Advisor	4.03	78	.837
	I have met/contacted Academic Advisor	4.05	78	1.043
Pair 4	I plan to earn C's or better this semester	4.89	79	.358
	I will be in good standing (C or better)	4.54	79	.730
Pair 5	I plan to attend a campus event	4.66	80	.550
	I have attended campus event	4.18	80	.868
Pair 6	I plan to join a campus club	4.51	80	.656
	I have joined a campus club	3.85	80	1.284
Pair 7	I am confident I will make friends	4.47	77	.788
	I have made friends	4.40	77	.831
Pair 8	I have been feeling lonely	2.86	80	1.166
	I have been feeling lonely	2.43	80	1.111
Pair 9	I feel confident I will be able to deal with future changes at college	4.09	80	.679
	I feel confident I will be able to deal with future changes at college	4.09	80	.660
Pair 10	My family is supportive of me	4.74	80	.545
	My family is supportive of me	4.78	80	.551
Pair 11	My family is supportive of my college education	4.79	80	.441
	My family is supportive of my college education	4.86	80	.381
Pair 12	I plan to return to UWEC in spring09	4.69	80	.587
	I will return to UWEC spring09	4.78	80	.573
Pair 13	I wish I were at another college	1.95	79	1.024
	I wish I were at another college	2.23	79	1.270
Pair 14	I am adjusting well to UW-EC	4.22	78	.714
	I am adjusting well to UW-EC	4.14	78	.817

Summary

Due to the amount of data collected, a pool of data was gathered to assist the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire and their understanding of adjustment to college and their new students. Using the data gathered and results from Chapter Four, conclusions, recommendations and a summary of the study will be provided in Chapter Five.

Chapter V: Summary, Conclusions and Recommendations

This chapter reviews the study, discusses the conclusions based on the research objectives, and presents recommendations as a result of the study and recommendation for improvements to the study.

Summary

This research study was meant to be an introduction to studying undeclared students at UW-Eau Claire and how similar or different they are to declared students. The attitudes in regards to undeclared students at UW-Eau Claire are very mixed. Some feel that being undeclared is a natural part of a student's development process, others believe no one is truly undeclared and instead students are leaning toward a certain major or type of majors, and still others believe that being undeclared means you are not ready to be at college.

Although undeclared students are a hot button issue at UW-Eau Claire, very little data is collected on these students. The university doesn't have a great knowledge of how they differ from declared students. Some people are interested in this group primarily because their retention rate is historically a bit lower, and no one is sure exactly why. The purpose of the study was to hopefully begin answering some of those questions or at least gathering some information to develop further study.

The purpose of the instrument was to capture students' perceptions of their intentions and their actions during week one and week 10 of their first year of college. For that reason some of the questions overlapped. The hope was to look at undeclared students and declared students to see the differences within each group (did their intentions live up to their actions?). After that the plan was to compare declared and undeclared students and look for any significant differences between the groups.

The response to the survey was good. Many first-year experience faculty and staff were very willing to help distribute the survey. However more would have likely agreed if the researcher had followed up the solicitation email with a telephone call and/or conversation. They are also very interested in the results. They will be shared at the conclusion of the study.

The university has discussed creating policies specific for undeclared students. The most recent discussion involved having students declare their major by 60 credits (junior standing). Because of these very issues, it will be important to continue the study of undeclared students including their adjustment to college and its impact on the university's retention rate.

The plan was that this study would offer more in terms of differences and similarities as well as insights on how to better support undeclared students. A lot of those differences were not discovered or they are not present.

Limitations. This study has the following limitations:

1. Many variables affect a student's adjustment to college. The research includes everything from parental style to attachment theory classification; from personality type to involvement in college. It would be extremely difficult to measure all possible variables when it comes to a student's adjustment to college.
2. There are many different ways to measure adjustment to college. Some people may assume that if a student is retained from year one to year two, the student has successfully adjusted to college. A researcher developed instrument to measure adjustment was used to measure adjustment and since there is no true definition if a student has 'adjusted' or not, this is a difficult concept to capture.
3. This was the first major research project performed by this novice researcher.

4. Because this study was not longitudinal, it is not known if improved adjustment to college in undeclared students would lead to increased retention.
5. The students were selected for this study based on which First Year Experience instructors would allow this research to happen by providing access to their class roster.
6. This study was limited because the data collected was restricted to student-reported perception.
7. This study was limited because there is little uniformity in First-Year Experience classes and this could have impacted their adjustment to college positively or negatively.
8. The researcher used the students' definition of if they were 'declared' or 'undeclared.' However if they said they were a declared 'Biology' major but listed their certainty of their major as a '1' or '2' they would still be categorized as declared in this study even though many people would consider that student as 'undeclared.'
9. Because of the way the survey was distributed (forwarded from instructors) it was not possible to know the exact number of students who received the study. This impacted the return rates and made them approximates.
10. Because the concept of 'adjustment' is difficult to measure, it may have made more sense to just look at retention of undeclared students.

Conclusions

The following research objectives were listed in Chapter One and will now be restated and answered.

Research Objective 1. Determine the first-year undeclared students' perceptions on adjustment to UW-Eau Claire.

This was completed by collecting information from undeclared students through the week one and week 10 surveys. The majority of undeclared students felt they were adjusting to college quite well. Although they did not have a major, they still felt the support of their family toward themselves and their education.

Although most of their answers were slightly lower than those of declared students' answers, the difference was not significant in all but one case. Significant differences within undeclared students between week one and week 10 did appear. Undeclared students intended to visit a professor outside of class more than they had actually done by week 10. They also anticipated speaking up in class less than they actually had done it by week 10. They had also predicted they would earn C's or better at a higher rate during week one than their predictions as of week 10. Finally they intended to attend more campus events during week one than they had actually done by week 10.

Research Objective 2. Determine the first-year declared students' perceptions on adjustment to UW-Eau Claire.

This was completed by collecting information from declared students through the week one and week 10 surveys. Declared students seemed to be adjusting well most notably in their desire to stay at UW-Eau Claire and in their support of their families.

The comparisons showed significant differences that they intended to visit a professor outside of class more than they had by week 10. They also did not anticipate they would speak up in class as much as they did. They also felt that they would earn all C's or better during week one. By week 10 they were less confident this would happen. They also anticipated attending more campus events than they did. By week 10 more declared students wished they were

attending another college or university than during week one. Lastly, declared students reported feeling significantly less lonely by week 10.

Research Objective 3. Identify the differences in first-year undeclared students and declared students on adjustments to UW-Eau Claire.

The only significant difference was undeclared students in the week one survey was they were less likely to think they would get involved. However by week 10 the difference was no longer significant. Hopefully this is because the undeclared students have thoroughly reviewed all 230 student organizations. Most are not major-related so undeclared and declared students should be just as likely to join and get involved. UW-Eau Claire also offers 'SOAP' a group for 'Students On A Path' which is targeted to undeclared students. All undeclared students received an email about joining SOAP from their Undeclared adviser by the tenth week of classes.

If students were looking for something major-related they could either join SOAP or would be welcome in most major-related clubs even if they are just considering the major or area of study. Getting involved in major-specific student organizations provides a way to learn more about a field and is highly encouraged by the undeclared advisers at UW-Eau Claire.

Research Objective 4. Identify difference in the perception of adjustment based on selected contributors to adjustment such as student involvement, faculty interaction, peer relationships, and classroom participation.

In so many areas of comparing undeclared and declared students their differences were nonexistent. If only looking at this study, someone might come away with the understanding that there may be very little difference between declared and undeclared students in all areas when it comes to adjustment to college.

Recommendations

There are many recommendations for further study in this area. Each should address meeting the needs of undeclared students which could provide more areas for future study.

Recommendations Based on Research Findings

1. Create a living/learning community for undeclared students.

The University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire anticipates doing much more in regards to living/learning communities. If undeclared students lived together in a residence hall (wing or building) it may be much easier to do targeted programming for this group. Although UW-Eau Claire does not have living/learning communities for declared students, many universities offer these for major specific students (Engineering, women in science, etc.).

2. Create a student organization for undeclared students.

It is possible that undeclared students felt they were less likely to join a student club or organization because so many clubs and organizations are related to majors. Therefore the Advising and New Student Initiatives Office started a student group for undeclared students in 2008. They named the group SOAP (Students on a Path).

The group has achieved some success. This might be an area to study in terms of which students choose to get an involved and what benefits they experience. The group was started by two advisers within the Advising and New Student Initiatives Office. They have found student interest and are working with these students to take more ownership in the group, even once they have declared a major.

3. Purchase a survey to use each year.

The University might also choose to invest in purchasing one of the two surveys used to create this study ‘*CIRP Freshman Survey* and follow-up *Your First College Year Survey* or the *Student Adaptation to College Questionnaire*. They could then use the information collected about UW-Eau Claire’s population and benchmark it against other campuses.

Recommendations for Improvements to Current Study

4. The researcher could actually observe for information requested in week 10 instead of just asking for the students’ perception.

This could be done through tracking from the instructor or having researchers observe class. It would take a lot more time, but it would take the ‘perception’ out of the study.

5. Only offer the survey to a smaller group of new students.

Because of the way the survey was administered it was difficult to have a good handle on how many students received the survey and how many chose not to complete the survey (in week one). In the future it may be best to focus on a smaller, more controllable group of new students.

6. Involve the Advising and New Student Initiatives Office more in the study.

At UW-Eau Claire, the staff of the Advising and New Student Initiatives Office are the people who work most directly with undeclared students. Although that group was consulted to test the survey instrument and offer feedback, the staff should have been more involved from the start and throughout the project due to the feedback and ideas they would have offered.

7. Collect qualitative data from undeclared students before designing the instrument.

It would have been helpful to talk with undeclared students and ask them about their adjustment to college before designing the survey. The comment section showed some students had strong feelings about their adjustment and it would have been helpful to consider their comments before designing the study.

8. Review the lower return rate for the week 10 survey.

The return rate for the week one survey was 60%. It fell to 34% in week 10. It may be worth trying to offer the follow-up survey (week 10) a bit earlier in the semester. Respondents may have been more invested since they would better remember their participation during the week one survey and they may be less overwhelmed with the responsibilities of the final six weeks in the semester.

Another option would be to offer the post survey at the start of the second semester. Although research on student development highlights the critical first six weeks of a student's college experience, many students will cite their first semester as the time period it took to feel adjusted to the institution and college life.

The percentage of males and undeclared students also dropped between week one and week 10. It would be interesting to do more data analysis as to the significance of who didn't complete the week 10 surveys and why.

9. Pair each question between week one and week 10.

Although most of the questions were paired between the week one and week 10 surveys, they were not all paired. It truly was the paired questions that offered the greatest insight and provided some comparison for the data analysis. The questions should be reviewed to see if more questions could take on the pre-post format.

10. Revisit the definition of 'undeclared.'

For the purpose of this study students selected if they were 'undeclared' or 'declared.' It would be helpful to use the 'certainty of major' scale to do more data analysis in terms of true impact of being uncertain of major and adjustment to college. Because it was found there was very little difference between undeclared and declared students and their adjustment to college, this study did not reveal a lot of helpful information. Hopefully it did begin to get people thinking about adjustment to college and undeclared students at UW-Eau Claire.

Even though it showed only one statistically significant difference between undeclared and declared students, it did offer some insight into students' perceptions verses actions.

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Appendix A
Letter to FYE Faculty

From: Bonneville, Jacqueline K.

Sent: Tuesday, September 02, 2008 8:09 AM

To: Freymiller, Mitchell A.; Lonzarich, David; Eklund, Julie L.; Mahaffy, Ellen D.; Jamelske, Eric M.; Preston-Simon, Elizabeth; Heiser, Lindsay Anne; Krotzman, Jasmine L.; Emerson, Kent-Erik; Benson, Erica J.; Cronje, Ruth J.; Thomas-Card, Traci L.; Bailey, Jacqueline M.; Welch, Karen A.; Rex, Cathy J.; Westerlund, Blake R.; Jones, David M.; Hildebrand, John S.; Oates, Scott F.; Krotzman, Jasmine L.; Guyant, Valerie L.; Thomas-Card, Traci L.; Sen, Asha; Stirn, Jan C.; Barker, Debra K. S.; Krotzman, Jasmine L.; Woodward, Rachel; Garland, Max; Wolter, Lynsey K; Loomis, Jonathan R.; Turner, Stephanie S.; Kelly, Erna M.; Woodward, Rachel; Pace, Joel F.; Thomas-Card, Traci L.; Bailey, Jacqueline M.; Kemp, Theresa D.; Vogeler, Ingolf K.; Sanislo, Teresa M.; Sanislo, Teresa M.; Mann, John W. W.; Chollar, David T.; Mowry, Donald D.; Howe, R. Michael; Howe, R. Michael; Penkava, Michael R.; Reynolds, Donald F.; Applebaugh, Gwendolyn N.; Meyer, Matthew P.; Evans, Matthew M.; Dunham, Douglas J.; Hendrickson, J. Erik; Leibham, Mary Beth; Martin, Claire E.; Kennedy, Kathryn W.; Spina, Stephen J.; Forman, Pamela J.; Valero, Jose A.; Santos-Phillips, Eva L.; Kernan, Barbara L.; Kieffer, Laurel B.; Kernan, Barbara L.; Smith, B. Jill; Collins, Shannon M.; Lehman Caldwell, Julia C

Cc: Mowry, Donald D.

Subject: Survey for FYE students

Hello FYE Instructors~

Thank you again for all of your work last week during Phase II Orientation. We truly could not do it without you.

Now I need to ask a favor. I am currently working on my Ed.S. degree at UW-Stout and plan to graduate this Spring and then hopefully complete my doctorate at the U of M. The final portion of my Ed.S. is a Field Study and I've chosen to study *adjustment to college in our first-year students*. I plan to have new freshmen answer a survey the first week of class and the tenth week of class.

I am asking you to please do one of two things.

1. Cut and paste the survey letter below (survey is included) to your FYE class and encourage them to complete the survey. It should only take 5 to 10 minutes.

Or

2. Give me permission to email your students directly.

Thank you and let me know if you have any questions.

Jacqueline

Jacqueline Bonneville
 Coordinator for New Student Orientation
 226 Schofield Hall, 105 Garfield Ave.
 University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire
 Eau Claire, WI 54702-4004
 ph/715.836.3487 fx/715.836.4939

Appendix B

Week One Letter to Participants

September 2, 2008

Dear UW-Eau Claire First-year Student~

As we welcome you back to campus, I am writing to ask for your participation in a quick survey on your perceptions about your adjustment to college. The information gained from this survey will help us better understand what expectations you have about your upcoming adjustment to college.

There will be a follow-up survey in mid November 2008 very similar to this one in which we will ask you to respond to your actual experiences thus far at UW-Eau Claire.

The survey can be accessed by clicking on the link below. It consists of 24 questions.

http://www.uwec.edu/advising/advisereval/undeclaredsurvey_week1.htm

Participation in the survey requires approximately five minutes of your time.

I would greatly appreciate if you could complete this survey no later than Tuesday, September 9, 2008.

If you are 17 or younger, please do not complete this survey. If you do, your data will not be used in this study.

Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary. Your participation in this survey will imply your consent. You may choose not to participate without any adverse consequences to you. Although we ask your user name, there will be complete confidentiality of this information. You will not be contacted in any way in regards to your responses, nor will your identity be revealed to anyone. (If you are struggling with your adjustment to college, please contact your Academic Adviser, Hall Director, or a member of our Counseling Services for assistance).

This study has been reviewed and approved by the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire's Institutional Review Board (IRB) and by the University of Wisconsin-Stout's Institutional Review Board (IRB). The IRB has determined that this study meets the ethical obligations required by federal law and university policies. If you have any questions before or after participating, I will be glad to respond. I can be reached at 715-836-5053 or via e-mail at bonnevj@uwec.edu. Should you have any concerns regarding your treatment as a participant in this study, you may contact Dr. Don Bredle, IRB Chair, HSS Room 168. 715.836.2373.

I look forward to receiving your response and I thank you in advance for your assistance in this important research.

Sincerely,
Jacqueline Bonneville

Jacqueline Bonneville
Coordinator for New Student Orientation
226 Schofield Hall, 105 Garfield Ave.
University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire
Eau Claire, WI 54702-4004
ph/715.836.3487 fx/715.836.4939

Appendix C

Week One Survey

University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire

First Semester Survey

Week 1

Please Note: The results of this survey are COMPLETELY confidential.

User name:

Sex:

 Male Female Other

Age:

Living arrangements:

 On campus Off campus

Race:

Have you declared your major?

 Yes No

If yes, what is your major?

How certain are you about a major? (Answer even if you are undeclared.)

 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Extremely
Uncertain

>

Extremely
Certain

Highest education level of Parent/Guardian 1:

Parent/Guardian 2:

Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements:

ACADEMIC INTEGRATION

Strongly Agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly Disagree

I would feel confident visiting a professor during his or her office hours.

I would feel confident speaking up in class.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I would feel confident meeting or contacting my Academic Adviser.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I plan to earn C's or better this semester.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

SOCIAL INTEGRATION

Strongly Agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly Disagree

I plan to attend a campus event. (performances, lectures, discussion, sporting events)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I plan to join a campus club, intramural team, and/or organization.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am confident I will make friends.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

PERSONAL-EMOTIONAL ADJUSTMENT

Strongly Agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly Disagree

I have been feeling lonely at college lately.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I feel confident I will be able to deal in a satisfactory manner with future challenges here at college.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My family is supportive of me.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My family is supportive of my college education.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

ATTACHMENT TO INSTITUTION

Strongly Agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly Disagree

I plan to return to UW-Eau Claire for Spring 2009.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I wish I were at another college/university.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am adjusting well to UW-Eau Claire.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Comments on your adjustment:

Submit	Clear
--------	-------

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey. I appreciate your participation!

Appendix D

Week Ten Letter to Participants

From: Bonneville, Jacqueline K.
Sent: Monday, November 10, 2008 9:09 AM
To: Bonneville, Jacqueline K.
Subject: Survey for FYE students

November 10, 2008

Dear UW-Eau Claire First-year Student~

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey the first week of classes. Now we are ten weeks into the semester and it is time for the second, and final, portion of this survey. This follow-up survey is very similar to the first one but now we will ask you to respond to your actual experiences thus far at UW-Eau Claire.

The survey can be accessed by clicking on the link below. It consists of 29 questions.

http://www.uwec.edu/advising/advisereval/undeclaredsurvey_week10.htm

Participation in the survey requires approximately five minutes of your time.

I would greatly appreciate if you could complete this survey no later than Friday, November 14, 2008.

If you are 17 or younger, please do not complete this survey. If you do, your data will not be used in this study.

Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary. Your participation in this survey will imply your consent. You may choose not to participate without any adverse consequences to you. Although we ask your user name, there will be complete confidentiality of this information. You will not be contacted in any way in regards to your responses, nor will your identity be revealed to anyone. (If you are struggling with your adjustment to college, please contact your Academic Adviser, Hall Director, or a member of our Counseling Services for assistance).

This study has been reviewed and approved by the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire's Institutional Review Board (IRB) and by the University of Wisconsin-Stout's Institutional Review Board (IRB). The IRB has determined that this study meets the ethical obligations required by federal law and university policies. If you have any questions before or after participating, I will be glad to respond. I can be reached at 715-836-5053 or via e-mail at bonnevjk@uwec.edu. Should you have any concerns regarding your treatment as a participant in this study, you may contact Dr. Don Bredle, IRB Chair, HSS Room 168. 715.836.2373.

I look forward to receiving your response and I thank you in advance for your assistance in this important research.

Sincerely,
Jacqueline Bonneville

Jacqueline Bonneville
Coordinator for New Student Orientation
226 Schofield Hall, 105 Garfield Ave.
University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire
Eau Claire, WI 54702-4004
ph/715.836.3487 fx/715.836.4939

Appendix E
Week Ten Survey

University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire

First Semester Survey

Week 10

Please Note: The results of this survey are COMPLETELY confidential.

User name:

Sex: Male Female Other

Age:

Living arrangements: On campus Off campus

Race:

Have you declared your major? Yes No

If yes, what is your major?

How certain are you about a major?
 (Answer even if you are undeclared.)

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Extremely Uncertain ----- **Extremely Certain**
 >

Highest education level of Parent/Guardian 1:

Parent/Guardian 2:

Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements:

ACADEMIC INTEGRATION	Strongly Agree (Frequently)	Agree	Neutral (Some)	Disagree	Strongly Disagree (Never)
I have visited a professor during his or her office hours.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I have spoken in class.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I have met or contacted my Academic Adviser.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I will be in good standing (C average or higher) after this semester.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My first year experience (FYE) course has been a positive experience so far.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

SOCIAL INTEGRATION

Strongly Agree (Frequently) **Agree** **Neutral (Some)** **Disagree** **Strongly Disagree (Never)**

I have attended campus events.
(performances, lectures, discussions, sporting events)

I have joined a campus club, intramural team, and/or organization.

I have made friends.

PERSONAL-EMOTIONAL ADJUSTMENT

Strongly Agree **Agree** **Neutral** **Disagree** **Strongly Disagree**

I am having difficulty feeling at ease with other people at college.

I have been feeling lonely at college lately.

I feel confident I will be able to deal in a satisfactory manner with future challenges here at college.

My family is supportive of me.

My family is supportive of my college education.

ATTACHMENT TO INSTITUTION

Strongly Agree **Agree** **Neutral** **Disagree** **Strongly Disagree**

I will return to UW-Eau Claire for Spring 2009.

I will return to UW-Eau Claire for Fall 2009.

I plan to earn a bachelors degree from UW-Eau Claire.

I wish I were at another college/university.

I am adjusting well to UW-Eau Claire.

Comments on your adjustment:

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey. I appreciate your participation!