

Running head: IMPROVEMENT OF NON-MAJOR FRESHMEN STUDENTS' AT WINDY  
STATE UNIVERSITY LACKING BASIC SKILLS

Improvement of Non-Major Freshmen Students' at Windy State University Lacking Basic Skills

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## Table of Contents

Abstract.....	
Chapter I: Introduction.....	4
Problem Statement.....	4
Purpose.....	4
Description of Community.....	4
Description of Work Setting.....	6
Writer's Role.....	7
Chapter II: Study of Problem.....	8
Problem Description.....	9
Problem Documentation.....	9
Literature Review.....	13
Causative Analysis.....	22
Chapter III: Outcomes and Analysis.....	24
Goals.....	24
Expected Outcomes.....	24
Measurements of Outcomes.....	25
Analysis of Results.....	26
Chapter IV: Solution Strategy.....	27
Problem Statement.....	27
Discussion.....	27
Selected Solutions/Calendar Plan.....	31
Chapter V: Results and Recommendations.....	

Results.....	
Discussion.....	
Recommendations.....	
References.....	33
Appendix A.....	36
Appendix B.....	38
Appendix C.....	40
Appendix D.....	44
Appendix E.....	46
Appendix F.....	49
Appendix G.....	52
Appendix H.....	54

# Improvement of Non-Major Freshman Students' at Windy State University Lacking Basic Skills

## Chapter I: Introduction

### *Problem Statement*

The problem is that 40% of Windy State University non-major freshmen students lack basic skills in writing, research, math, and critical-thinking based on tests, observations, and graded assignments. This problem can be assessed weekly within a three month period.

### *Purpose*

The purpose of this study is to bring awareness to a growing problem at Windy State University. Some of the high school graduates are attending college for the first time unprepared academically. The goal is to help struggling non-major freshmen improve their chances for success while attending Windy State University.

### *Description of the Community*

Windy State University (WSU) is located on the far Southside of Chicago, IL. The community around WSU has four colleges that consist of science, education, business, and art. The area is mostly African American. At WSU, the student population is 5000 while the faculty, and staff combined population is 400. The university is located northwest of the United States and is committed to helping students to be successful in their academic endeavors (Chicago State University, 2008).

The community surrounding WSU has gone through rapid changes in which student enrollment has increased at slow rates (Otto, 2007). The community population is changing around WSU since so many people are losing their homes and jobs due to the economy. The current freshmen population within WSU is finding an increasing need for more financial aid with limited financial resources.

The Chicago socio-economic status near WSU community once flourished with many minority small business owners. Windy State University created strategic alliances which built better networking opportunities for students. Older alumni students provided generous financial support that enabled students to receive the financial help needed in completing their programs.

Median household income was 4.3% higher in 2006 making it easier for families to support the educational needs of their children (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2008). The unemployment rate in Chicago has risen to 8.2% causing WSU and surrounding communities to cut back on programs and jobs (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2008). According to a household survey, payroll dropped sharply with over 516,000 individuals without employment (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2008). Businesses surrounding WSU community one-by-one began to diminish as consumers' income began to take a direct hit (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2008).

Windy State University has made similar job layoffs as other businesses which are reflected in the Illinois unemployment rate (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2008). With jobs being cut, some programs at WSU end up being minimized due to low enrollment. The U.S. Department of Education has data that reflects the current state of African Americans during the economic crisis (New Evidence, 2007).

Students entering WSU from high school are finding it difficult to maintain academic studies with limited financial resources (Collapse College Endowments, 2008). Increasing tuition prices make it difficult for WSU students to keep up economically. Windy State University provides additional sources in which students can apply for scholarships through various entities. With most of the scholarship information that has been provided to students, they must possess good writing skills in order to receive the financial resources they need for college.

### *Description of Work Setting*

The research project will take place at Windy State University located in the urban area of the community of Chicago. The atmosphere of WSU is surrounded by 100 acres of beautiful green landscape with tall leafy trees (Chicago State University, 2008). The university sits mostly in a residential area that is just two minutes away from accessible transportation (Chicago State University, 2008). The faculty body on WSU campus consists of 300 full-time and 100 part-time (Chicago State University, 2008). The cultural diversity on WSU is 73% African American, 12% Caucasian, 10% Hispanic, 4% unknown, 1.4% Asian, and .2% Indian (Chicago State University, 2008).

The remote face-to-face traditional academic setting of WSU has a dynamic group of faculty members that are dedicated in helping each student succeed academically. The student-to-teacher ratio is typically 20:1. Each faculty member has a master's to doctorate degree within his or her profession. The mission of Windy State University is to provide a cultivating academic environment that will provide the necessary keys for lifelong learning success.

Windy State University offers bachelor and master degrees in business, arts, science, and education (Chicago State University, 2008). The university has clubs and organizations in which students can become active members (Chicago State University, 2008). The campus of WSU hosts and competes in sporting events such as basketball, volleyball, track, and tennis (Chicago State University, 2008). Windy State University has been recognized as the "Top 100 Colleges" to attend (Chicago State University, 2008). Within the WSU campus, students have constant access to the career development center. Students can get coaching on setting up to creating professional resumes. In addition, businesses network with WSU in providing workshops, internships, and potential job opportunities (Chicago State University, 2009).

### *Writer's Role*

The writer holds a bachelor of science degree in hospitality management from Chicago State University in 2003. The writer was a member and representative for the hospitality club on campus. While an active member of the hospitality club, the writer helped in the operations of the fine dining restaurant on campus for two years before the hospitality program was dropped. The writer was a school representative at the National Restaurant Association in Chicago for three consecutive years. The writer holds a master of business administration degree from University of Phoenix in 2006 and is currently working on a second master's in adult education and training. The writer has been in the area of education for over eight years working in various capacities as an educator, mentor, tutor, advisor, trainer, speaker, and entrepreneur.

At Windy State University, the writer's role is to work closely with the Dean of Non-Traditional students in developing a freshman orientation class for academic success. The writer is responsible for collecting necessary data, resources, and materials needed for non-major freshmen students. The writer is responsible for setting up interviews with various faculty members and non-major freshmen students. The writer consults with other faculty members in various areas on campus who have freshmen students who cannot perform at college level. The writer performs online surveys for both faculty and students in generating data regarding "college readiness." The writer is an active member in the Alumni Affairs that helps generate the necessary resources for the improvement of the institution. The writer volunteers on campus shadowing a veteran professor that teaches in the non-traditional program for non-major students. The writer presently tutors and mentors undergraduate students who need help and are new to the campus. In addition to assisting students on campus, the writer spends more time teaching adult learners voluntarily how effectively to use their computers at home.

## Chapter II: Study of the Problem

### *Problem Description*

The problem is that 40% of the non-major freshmen students are unable to complete their work successfully. These students lack the basic skills in writing, research, math, and critical-thinking based on tests, observations, and graded assignments. Some of the students who are performing below college level happen to be close to 50% of the high school graduates coming from the public school sector in Chicago. Through personal observation in various classes, students were not turning in homework assignments on time. Some students who had writing assignments in other classes would plagiarize by using the copy and paste feature without properly citing information.

Some of the professors at Windy State University have at some point noticed and caught 15% of their students cheating during a test or a quiz. Some of the students who have been caught cheating either failed to study or had a lack of test taking skills. These students who lack academic ethics mainly repeat the same habits they have acquired during their elementary through high school years. Based on a survey conducted on campus, 8% of the students admitted that they have cheated throughout their elementary and high school years.

Besides repeated bad habits, some students who are having a difficult time in adjusting to the demands of college expectations end up missing class or dropping out altogether. Students who have never taken advanced courses or college preparatory classes feel cheated when they come to college with high expectations of feeling prepared. Then, later they find out the harsh reality that their high school experience did not properly prepare them for higher learning. Most of the burden has fallen upon many universities in bringing students up to spend (Boser & Burd, 2009).



Information for the past three years has showed a steady decline of freshmen students completing their degrees within a four to six year time frame. With the constant rise in student retention rates, fewer students attending WSU has increased cut backs in faculty members' jobs and programs on campus.

The faculty who teaches the non-major freshmen students has encountered the various problems that deal with limited basic skills for academic learning. This problem has plagued the faculty at WSU for over three years. Faculty members were unable to deal with this issue head on due to layoffs, audit investigations, and adjusting to a new president. Windy State University's administrators have been busy trying to repair the reputation and image of the campus. Things have been at a standstill since the university had to repair internal issues on an administration level.

#### *Problem Documentation*

Freshmen students coming directly from high school not having the basic skills in writing, research, math, and critical-thinking is a serious concern for Windy State University. This problem exists through students receiving poor grades on tests, quizzes, and class assignments. Looking over the data retrieved from the Department of Research and Statistics at Windy State University, where the graduation rate is at 16%, WSU is the lowest university to graduate students within the state. Compared to other universities in Illinois, that is by far the worst. Those students who are academically unprepared eventually drop out.

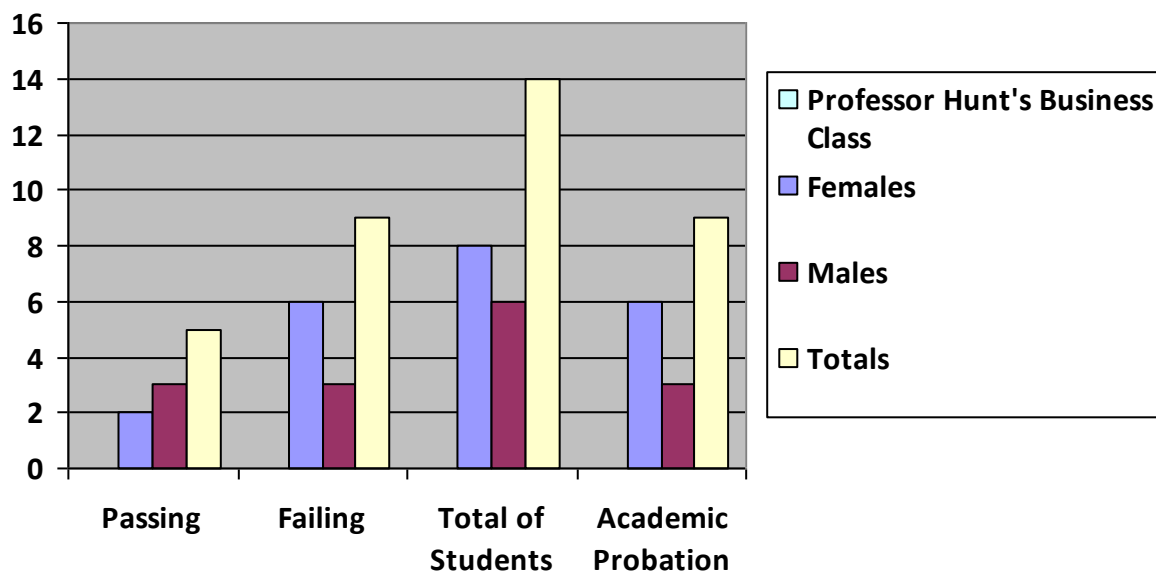
Nearly over half of WSU freshmen students receive some form of financial aid. When students receive failing grades, their financial aid ends up being jeopardized. According to policies and mandates set forth by Windy State University, students who receive below a 2.0 grade point average will be placed on academic probation. Any financial aid, grants,

scholarships, and loans will be put on hold. Students are then forced to pay for their tuition out of pocket during the next semester.

In Professor Mahdi's math class, only five of his students are performing at grade level. In reviewing the work that students have turned in, some students lost major points for not showing their work with only answers. The quizzes and test that students completed showed very low scores. Below is a table reflecting grades for all students in the class.

Professor Mahdi's Math 160 Class	Quizzes	Tests	Homework Assignments	Class Assignments
Jane	C	A	B	A
Erica	D	D	F	C
Michael	F	F	F	F
Anton	C	C	B	A
Ricky	B	C	C	B
Lisa	F	D	D	D
Corey	A	A	-A	A
Angela	B-	A-	B	B
Paula	F	F	F	D
Sam	F	F	D	D
Tabitha	F	F	D-	D
Kim	D-	D-	D-	F
Cynthia	F	D-	D	D-
Steve	F	F	C-	D-

Professor Joyce Hunt teaches introduction to business to freshmen and sophomores. Samples of all freshmen students' completed work were displayed. Students had to find an article or journal and write a one page summary stating what they learned and how it applies to key concepts. Six out of 10 students received low grades based on their poor writing abilities. One student completely plagiarized the article by paraphrasing the information and not citing it properly. Five students could not make the proper connection with what they read and the key concepts learned in class. The six students who did not do well on the assignment had major grammar and spelling issues. Each of the failing students had taken remedial courses, since they had low ACT and admission scores. Included below is data showing the number of students placed on academic probation and percentage of failing students in the class. This chart shows the number of students placed on academic probation versus those who are performing academically.



After documenting and listing student academic information, another source was used in evaluating student interaction, participation, and engagement. The use of observation student reports gave a general overview of the failing students' performance in Professor Hunt's business class. Out of 10 freshmen students, six with poor grades were observed. During in class discussions, these students did not participate much. Three of the six students were constantly late to class. The qualities of the students' work were below even high school level during the process of six weeks. As seen in the observation chart in Appendix D, many other factors were recognized along with poor grades and test scores.

## *Literature Review*

Conley (2008) addresses the issues surrounding high school students not being prepared professionally or academically. A major separation exists between high school and college preparation. When some high school students graduate and enter into college, they feel in some cases unprepared academically in meeting the demands that post-secondary education requires. The curriculum for high school is mostly tailored around the standards based on state and federal guidelines under the direction of the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB).

Conversely, post-secondary education's curriculum is more tailored around the needs of the student. Regardless how the curriculum is setup, students are finding themselves not being able to keep up academically. First time college students who enter into the class may find it a bit of a challenge in keeping pace with assignments. In high school, students may be accustomed to reading a chapter or two. While in college, an instructor may request students to read five to eight chapters at a time. Upon attending college, students will find themselves taking remedial courses that do not apply towards their graduation. Remedial courses are usually classes that a student should have already covered or taken during high school. Some high school teachers are limited or unaware of how to get students prepared for college.

College instructors assume that students attending college already know how to do research, write correctly, and interpret information and so on. Therefore, educators find that students did not learn the basic skills from high school in order to perform their duties. In some cases, instructors are forced to spend more time in getting students to the area they need to be. An instructor at Windy State University had to spend most of her time going over how to do research to a beginning class that lack the basic fundamentals to the whole process. With college

courses moving so rapidly, some first year students have become intimidated or afraid and would either do poorly or drop out as a result.

States are spending extra on students who are unable to perform in higher education. One state spent over 20 million dollars in getting high school graduates adequately prepared for college (New Higher Education, 2009). Nearly a third of high school graduates are unable to do college level writing and math (New Higher Education, 2009). Being accepted into college is not a determining factor if high school graduates cannot perform basic tasks (New Higher Education, 2009). Some high school teachers unknowingly give the wrong impression to students that they are ready for college, when they are not (New Higher Education, 2009). Taxpayers and parents are paying a heavy price for those high schools not properly preparing students for college (New Higher Education, 2009).

Strong American Schools (2008) revealed the cost associated with high school graduates taking remedial courses and re-learning what they should have mastered in high school (Strong American Schools, 2008). A “Diploma to Nowhere” study states that higher learning “institutions spend millions in remedial services that high schools should be providing” (Strong American Schools, 2008, para.2). Some high schools are failing in providing a quality education to those students who desire to attend college (Strong American Schools, 2008). In a report from Strong American Schools (2008), it stated that a diploma from high school is no longer the criteria for entering college (Strong American Schools, 2008).

Organizations that collect data provide relative information on the performances of high school students and assess their readiness for attending college (Data Student Preparation, 2007). Some of the resources used to provide data on student preparation and achievement are as follows:

- “The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP)” (Data Student Preparation, 2007).
- “High School Survey of Student Engagement (HSSSE)” (Kuh, 2007).
- “National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE)” (Kuh, 2007).
- “Educational Testing Service (ETS)” (Kuh, 2007).
- “Faculty Survey of Student Engagement (FSSE)” (Kuh, 2007).
- “Beginning College Survey of Student Engagement (BCSSE)” (Kuh, 2007).

In the faculty survey more than half stated that working with students who are unprepared increases stress. From various institutions, “41% of the faculty stated that most students lack the necessary skills in performing college-level work.” High school students indicated in a survey that half of them spend four hours or less in preparing for class. High school students indicated in a survey that 36% of them have only done a writing assignment that requires up to five pages of writing (Data Student Preparation, 2007).

High school graduates with low ACT scores are looking to junior colleges as an alternative to getting into a university. If a student attends a community college, it does not guarantee definite success when transferring into a university. Those students who had access to special educational services may seek to attend a community college for more durability. Those high school students with special needs tend to be poor in writing and math. Meanwhile, going to a community college is more economical for students with limited income (Bay State, 2008).

The burden of college preparation seems to rest in the hands of American secondary school teachers. Both middle schools and high schools lack the necessary preparation in getting students ready for college. Some of middle and high school teachers lack experience in the subject matter they are teaching (Boser & Burd, 2009). A fourth of classes in middle and high

schools are taught by teachers who did major in the specific areas such as math, science, social studies, and others. Students are lacking the classes they need to properly prepare for college. High schools do not require students to take pre-college courses to increase their chances for college preparation. The high schools' graduation requirements are not in harmony with the requirements to enter into college (Boser & Burd, 2009).

Two-thirds of high school graduates enroll in college not knowing the barriers they will face with being successful when entering higher learning institutions. High school graduates who have been passed along in school will have a difficult time in meeting the demands of their college professors. The majority of community colleges accept most high school students who are admitted (Boser & Burd, 2009). Many high school students who enroll in community colleges were unable to meet the admission requirements of the university (Boser & Burd, 2009). The high school graduates who attend a community college or university will take remedial courses before handling courses that apply toward their degrees (Boser & Burd, 2009). High school graduates who are not prepared for college will probably not complete a degree (Boser & Burd, 2009).

Therefore, these same students who are not prepared for college will be the same in the workforce (Boser & Burd, 2009). Participants in a survey mostly agree that elementary through high schools are doing a poor job in preparing students for the workforce (Boser & Burd, 2009). More than 50% participants stated in a survey that high school graduates and general education development (GED) recipients are unable to perform entry-level jobs at work (Boser & Burd, 2009). In a survey, less than 50% of high school graduates admitted they were unable to perform the duties of the workplace environment. In a similar survey, nearly 50% of the employers stated that most of the unprepared high school graduates will have a difficult time advancing to higher



positions. Within the same survey, employers rated their high school graduate employees as being “deficient” in basic skills needed in performing their task. More than 70% of employers expressed that their high school graduate employees have poor writing abilities (Boser & Burd, 2009).

Unprepared high school graduates are a direct reflection of more than just high schools. Policy makers and legislators play a significant role regarding the state of our American educational system (Boser & Burd, 2009). Each state has standards regarding preparation for college with little understanding for post-secondary expectations (Boser & Burd, 2009). Both state and federal levels do not focus enough attention on high school graduates transitioning into college (Boser & Burd, 2009). The graduation standards for high schools are not in alignment to the expectations of community colleges and universities (Boser & Burd, 2009). States that require high schools to pass an exit exam do not reflect the requirements and expectation of higher learning (Boser & Burd, 2009).

High school graduates are oftentimes unaware how unprepared they are for college. Students who enter their first year of college are usually surprised to find they lack the necessary basic skills for college success (Boser & Burd, 2009). First year freshmen thought their high schools prepared them for college, but in fact, they did not (Boser & Burd, 2009). College freshmen students are learning the facts behind why they are having a difficult time in meeting the demands of college (Boser & Burd, 2009). High school graduates from poor performing schools have no clue as to the requirements for college readiness (Boser & Burd, 2009).

In the 80s, less than 50% of high school graduates attended college. A high school degree was acceptable for employment and an individual could advance to higher positions within the company. A few decades later, a high school graduate will need a college degree in

order to find a good paying job (Boser & Burd, 2009). With the economic changes and the entrance of technology, the demand for college degrees began to increase as high school diplomas become obsolete. The demand for college degrees will increase sharply within the next eight years according to “The Department of Labor” (Boser & Burd, 2009, p.7).

The cost of students being short changed for a lack of high schools not preparing students for college has become a shortfall for America (Boser & Burd, 2009). High school graduates who are unprepared for college end up suffering the worst (Boser & Burd, 2009). Students with higher incomes are better prepared for college than low-income students (Boser & Burd, 2009). The number of freshmen students with higher incomes taking remedial courses is 6% less than low-income students (Boser & Burd, 2009). Students who achieve completing their bachelor degrees will have an earning potential double that of what high school graduates make (Boser & Burd, 2009). Students who achieve beyond a bachelor’s degree will financially earn four times more than high school graduates (Boser & Burd, 2009).

Being unprepared for college certainly has a domino effect on students. If improvements are not being made by the educational system, students will be locked into the following disadvantages mentioned. Being unprepared for college certainly has a domino effect on students. If improvements are not being made by the educational system, students will be locked into disadvantages resulting in unfortunate outcomes. High school graduates failing to complete a college degree decrease revenue for all forms of government, earns lower wages, faces the hardship of raising a family and is usually unable to afford purchasing a home. Additionally finding employment and the ability to pay back college debt is more difficult than that of a college graduate (Boser & Burd, 2009).

First year college students who drop out face a greater chance of their loans being in default (Boser & Burd, 2009). Freshmen students who dropped out of college and have loans that defaulted will not receive financial aid (Boser & Burd, 2009). Employers suffer the cost of student employees being unprepared for college with limited basic skills in writing and math (Boser & Burd, 2009). Employers have stated in a “survey that they spent over \$500 million on remedial education” (Boser & Burd, 2009, p.7). Conversely, the United States military has spent millions on “remedial training” which should have been received during high school (Boser & Burd, 2009, p.7). With high school graduates lacking basic skills, American businesses and taxpayers will continue to pay the price (Boser & Burd, 2009).

Financial stresses are inevitable for colleges that struggle with maintaining the proper resources to help struggling students who lack fundamental skills from high school (Zeidenber, 2008). In some states, high school graduates are being introduced more to community colleges during financial hard times (Zeidenber, 2008). Community colleges have an added burden of receiving the necessary funding to accommodate an increasing enrollment of high school graduates (Zeidenber, 2008). Community college faculty receives lower pay than university faculty which adds to the stresses of dealing with unprepared incoming students (Zeidenber, 2008). Faculty shortages at community colleges make it difficult to maintain student retention (Zeidenber, 2008). Universities stand a greater chance of receiving financial support from wealthy alumni members than community colleges (Zeidenber, 2008). Forty percent of students entering a community college will lack one of the basic skills in writing, math, and reading (Byrd & MacDonald, 2005). In addition, universities rely heavily on placement tests to determine how prepared incoming students are for college level work (Byrd & MacDonald, 2005).

Specialized testing has been used for years to determine how prepared high school students are for college. Byrd and MacDonald (2005) states that these tests do not take into account social, academic, and cultural issues (Byrd & MacDonald, 2005). Minorities who live in poverty do not have the same access to an affordable quality education as their white counterparts. Minorities in poor performing schools do not have access to pre-college to advanced courses as elite schools have. Student placement tests versus the individual's academic performance are not a determining factor for college success (Byrd & MacDonald, 2005). Academic performances are a determining factor in student retention rates (Byrd & MacDonald, 2005).

Beside academics, students receiving financial aid can impact the flow of free financial support if retention rates are not improved upon (Byrd & MacDonald, 2005). Self-esteem and personality issues play a crucial role in a student's success for college. Since success is placed on the student in college, the student determines the outcome. Some students coming from various backgrounds lack the tacit in coming to class on time, completing homework assignments, and working in teams (Byrd & MacDonald, 2005). Time management skill has been highly noted as a crucial point in a student's success.

Educational institutions and businesses are spending millions on remedial services in helping our high school graduates gain skills in which some high schools have failed to deliver. Remediation may be an answer to some but it is costing Americans millions. In a survey of 688 college students', the cost for remediation services was over a billion dollars within post secondary education (Strong American Schools, 2008). Two year colleges spend \$1500 to \$2000 per student. Meanwhile, four year universities spend roughly \$2020 to \$2500 per student (Strong American Schools, 2008). For some high school graduates, remediation is a waste of

time since they have done well academically in high school (Strong American Schools, 2008). Those high school graduates who had high test scores and took advanced classes were shocked to not pass the university's admissions test (Strong American Schools, 2008). Taxpayers are forced to pay for the remedial services not received in high school. In addition, taxpayers are paying again while high school graduates entering college having to take a basic skills course already learned in high school (Strong American Schools, 2008).

High schools students would take tests such as ACT's and SAT's which determine their readiness for college. Low scores will sometimes lead college freshmen to take remedial courses which do not apply towards their graduation (Strong American Schools, 2008). High school students who have been tested for college readiness for Illinois are still alarming. According to ACT data, 98% of the high graduates were tested, but only 22% passed the test for college readiness in Illinois (American College Testing, 2009).

American College Testing (2009) has benchmarks set in place in which states can easily identify. These same benchmarks allow educational institutions to determine whether a student is prepared academically. Since universities have relied on the ACTs scoring system for years, some institutions will continue undoubtedly with the same traditions of selective enrollment process.

### *Causative Analysis*

America's high schools are the cause for so many students not being fully prepared for college. Nearly 90% of first year freshmen end up taking remedial courses just to learn writing, research, math, and critical-thinking skills which should have been learned while in high school (Boser & Burd, 2009). High school juniors and seniors in America are not receiving the quality education they rightfully deserve in order to compete globally (Boser & Burd, 2009). Some high schools that have a limited curriculum do not offer pre-college courses to help students transition successfully into college. More than half of high school graduates were never required to take college prep classes. Sixty percent or more high school graduates were never challenged by their high school teachers in performing better. Less accountability for high school students turning in mediocre to no work at all has become the norm. The blame goes beyond just a shortage of qualified teachers (Boser & Burd, 2009).

Colleges and universities have fallen short in expressing to high school graduates what is expected of them. Freshmen students have a difficult time delivering what faculty members want due to lack of communication and understanding. Faculty members make the assumption that students know how to do a particular assignment without leaving time for questions and answers. Faculty members spend more time lecturing the whole period instead of leaving time for students to engage in a class activity in order to assess their understanding. Faculty members do not provide the appropriate feedback in aiding students during their educational experience (New Evidence, 2007).

The government plays a crucial role in the way American schools teach and deliver instruction to the students. Even Pre-K is lacking the necessary policies in preparing them in the beginning for the basic skills they later will need in order to be successful in the future for college. Some states lack the government intervention in making sure funds are being used

appropriately within the school systems in America. This means no tracking system is in place in order to review the progress of students before college years (New Evidence, 2007).

High school graduates who lack basic skills are simply not fully prepared for the workforce. These same graduates that do not perform well in college end up dropping out with school debt to pay. Transition from high school to college can be difficult without any financial support. Student graduates who have been passed along through high school will increase their chances of not receiving a decent job in order to take care of themselves. It also means that those with college degrees will be in a better position of receiving work than those without degrees (New Evidence, 2007).

Limited income prevents high school graduates from getting the necessary help they need to be college ready. Students who are in poverty usually end up dropping out of school and never make it to college. Those students living in poverty increase their risk of getting involved in illegal activities with college never being an option. In the end, students have to face the possible challenges of dying young due to gun violence. As a result, students living in poverty are not given many options in bettering their chances for success for college (New Evidence, 2007).

Racial and social status has played a part in preventing fair and equal achievement for all nationalities. High school students have faced some form of discrimination which has prevented them access to the same quality education as others. Students living in better neighborhoods have easier access to college preparation than those living in poverty. Elite high schools have the necessary tools for student success for college while poverty stricken high schools are limited on financial and educational resources (Social Class, 2009).

### Chapter III: Outcomes and Analysis

#### *Goals and Expectations*

The goal of the study is to reduce the amount of students dropping out from Windy State University. By curbing the issue surrounding the student retention rate, the goal would be to increase the amount of graduates finishing their degrees successfully. Meanwhile, the plan is to provide a freshman orientation course that will enable students to increase their basic skills in writing, research, math, and critical thinking.

#### *Expected Outcomes*

There are six specific outcomes that students at WSU will achieve as a result of the freshman orientation course.

1. More than 81% (65 out of 80) of non-major freshmen students at Windy State University will complete assigned homework successfully on a college level.
2. Less than 10% (8 out of 80) of non-major freshmen students at Windy State University will suffer academically based on poor attendance.
3. Less than 8% (6 out of 80) of non-major freshmen students with learning disabilities at Windy State University will receive a C or less in their academic studies.
4. Less than 21% (17 out of 80) of non-major freshmen students at Windy State University will not pass the admissions test resulting in taking remedial courses.
5. More than 80% (64 out of 80) of non-major freshmen students at Windy State University will return to the university after their first semester.
6. More than 88% (70 out of 80) of non-major freshmen students at Windy State University taking a freshman orientation course will improve their basis skills in math, research, writing, and critical-thinking.



### *Measurement of Outcomes*

The expected outcomes will be measured based on grades, questionnaires, and collected data. Information will be given to faculty members to list the number of students who have turned in completed assignments on a college level. There will be six classes involved in the study. Four of the six classrooms with non-major freshmen students will be placed in the freshman orientation course in addition to attending their regular classes on campus.

The students will be provided with an attendance sheet for each day they report to class. By having the students sign in on the attendance sheet, students can be easily tracked and their academic progress can be examined. Student attendance will be placed in an Excel spreadsheet to compare the differences between those who attend or do not attend a freshman orientation class.

Both students with or without learning disabilities progress will be examined based on graded homework assignments, tests, and quizzes. Any non-major freshmen students who did not pass the admissions test at Windy State University will have scores ranging from 84 and below. A score of 85 and higher on the admissions test at Windy State University is considered passing. Those students who did not pass the admissions test will be placed in remedial courses.

Non-major freshmen students who have gone through the freshman orientation course have a higher probability of better academic performance than those who did not take the course. Student retention has decreased for those who have gone through the freshman orientation course successfully.

The data and information collected will be displayed through graphs, tables, charts, and checklists. These measurement tools are used to give a projection of the academic performances of non-major freshmen students' progress while attending Windy State University.

### *Analysis of Results*

The results of the study will be evaluated by using descriptive statistics. The data and information collected from each class will be displayed by the use of charts, graphs, and tables. A frequency table within the study will determine the number of data represented in the same set. Bar graphs will be used to indicate the number of students who fall between certain ranges based on weekly pre-test scores. An observational checklist will be used in the study to keep track of participants before and after pre-testing, while line graphs will be used to determine scores of students over a current period.

The scores on the admissions test of the freshmen students from previous years will be displayed in a visual bar graph. The results from each year will show the number of students who passed and failed the admissions test. The grades from homework assignments, tests, and quizzes will be compared with students who are involved in the study and those who are not.

After comparing the graded homework assignments, attendance, tests, and quizzes during the four weeks, it will be determined that the solution for student success was based on academic progress. It is expected for students who are taking the freshman orientation course to show improvements in the areas of math, research, writing, and critical-thinking skills.

## Chapter IV: Solution Strategy

### *Problem Statement*

The problem is that 40% of Windy State University non-major freshman students lack basic skills in writing, research, math, and critical-thinking based on tests, observations, and graded assignments.

### *Discussion*

Research information from the literature review has established that high school graduates are entering college with limited basic skills in writing, math, research, and critical-thinking. However, the literature review does not reveal any information on the use of freshman orientation courses. Additional research has to be conducted in order to explain the effectiveness of incorporating a freshman orientation course at Windy State University.

Davig and Spain (2004) stated student retention rates have improved through the use of freshman orientations course at some universities. Those students who participate in freshman orientation courses or seminars perform better academically versus non-participants. The use of freshman orientation courses has resulted in students returning back to the same institution the following year. Freshman dropout rates are much lower than non-participants. The use of freshman orientation courses have benefited universities with concerns regarding student recruitment and graduation rates (Davig & Spain, 2004).

Some universities have created freshman orientation courses to fit into each major. Students who are non-major students would take an academic orientation course listed as “GSO 100”, while business majors’ academic orientation class would be named “BTO” (Davig & Spain, 2004, p.308). Ultimately, the goal of most universities is to increase and maintain student enrollment.

College success is a top priority for all universities. It can be intimidating for high school graduates entering college for the first time. Some institutions have conducted surveys in order to gather information that addresses the needs of students on campus. Within some freshman orientation classes, students learn about support groups, clubs, and organizations to meet new friends and interact with other students sociably (Jacobs & Archie, 2008).

The use of freshman orientation classes is not limited to just academics and student retention issues. Student-to-teacher relationship is important especially during freshman year. Orientation classes help students learn how to meet the expectations of the instructor or professor. Students will learn what a syllabus is and how to get the most out of it. Following the syllabus is one of the major keys to student success in the classroom. The syllabus usually has the instructor's full name, office hours, time, contact information, name of the course, course number, basic ground rules, expectations, and much more.

Students starting off their freshman year right will get a more rewarding experience. Students will learn the importance of attending all classes. One of the bad habits that students will learn to avoid is skipping classes. Students missing class can get behind in their studies and their grades will begin to suffer. While students learn the importance of class attendance, they will also learn how to balance their class load. Additionally, they will learn to manage their time and school schedule wisely.

For students to learn the fundamentals of time management, they will be given a list of services on campus. The university has services for students with learning disabilities. In this department, students would have full access to the following: tape recorders, textbooks on tape or CD, note takers, test readers, tutoring, and much more. Students with disabilities may need additional time to complete homework assignments, tests, and quizzes. Windy State University

will provide the necessary accommodations and an environment conducive to learning. Support groups are available on campus to allow students with disabilities to interact with their peers and learn from others.

Incorporating a freshman orientation course last semester proved to be effective for those that attended college for the first time. Students who participated last semester were able to meet new friends and become familiar with the services provided at Windy State University. Students learned about the available resources that were available to students for free on campus. Those students who were struggling with math and writing could have attended labs. The math and writing labs provided tutors who were proficient in these particular areas. Students could walk in and sign his or her name on an available slot. Prior to signing up, students must have their assignment already completed.

Students who are enrolled in the freshman orientation course will be able to reap the benefits that it has to offer. A financial aid advisor will present important information to the students regarding how and when to apply for grants, scholarships, and loans. Students also will receive pamphlets regarding the steps to apply for financial aid online and the information that is usually needed. Students will learn about the types of loans they can apply for and the maximum amount that they can receive.

In addition to receiving financial aid information, students will learn how to map out their course schedule on a four to six year plan. The academic advisor will discuss how a student can graduate earlier or on time. First, students will be introduced to their student catalog. In the student catalog, students will be able to obtain the following: code of ethics, academic resources, financial aid, admissions, registration, academic regulations, special academic programs, course

listings information, academic resources and much more. Students will participate in an exercise in which they would use the catalog to put together their courses for the next semester.

To help students become familiar with the environment of WSU, the students will also be given a tour of the campus. During the tour, students will learn about the career center and how to create resumes, cover letters, find employment, and participate in mock interviews with well-known companies (Chicago State University, 2008).

### *Selected Solution/Calendar Plan*

The freshman orientation course has been implemented to improve the academic performances of non-major freshmen students. The freshman orientation workshop will be conducted at Windy State University campus. Each of the workshops will be conducted each week for three months. Orientation workshops will be held in the summer, fall, and spring semesters for incoming freshman students who are non-majors. These workshops will function just like a regular class in which students will be responsible for completing and participating in all assignments given.

Currently, Windy State University is conducting a freshman orientation workshop for the four classes that have non-major freshmen students. In addition, two more classes with non-major freshman students who will be examined that are non-participants in of the current workshop. Faculty members who are involved in the study will continue to document student progress weekly and attendance.

Mentors will be provided for each of the workshops, to allow students an opportunity to network among their peers and become familiar with the environment of WSU. These mentors will receive compensation through the work study program. There are guidelines mentors will have to follow in order to take part in the study and receive compensation. First, mentors must be in their junior or senior years maintaining a GPA of 2.75 and higher. Second, mentors must be on time for the workshops that are being conducted on campus.

Students who are participating will have a choice in which workshop they would like to sign up for. The workshops will be given on the following days and times displayed in Appendix H.

An instructor will be directing the workshops during the course of the three months. Some of the guest speakers that will come and speak with the students will be financial aid advisors, academic counselors, alumni students, and graduate students. These individuals will provide helpful information that will guide and direct students during their educational journey at WSU.

The freshman orientation course will be listed as FHO101. In the orientation workshop, information will be delivered as follows: campus life, policies, study skills, writing, research, critical-thinking, time management, and much more. Students in the study will be assessed through completed homework assignments, short quizzes, and tests for each of the weeks. Appendix C will have detailed descriptions of what will be covered for each week during the freshman orientation workshop.



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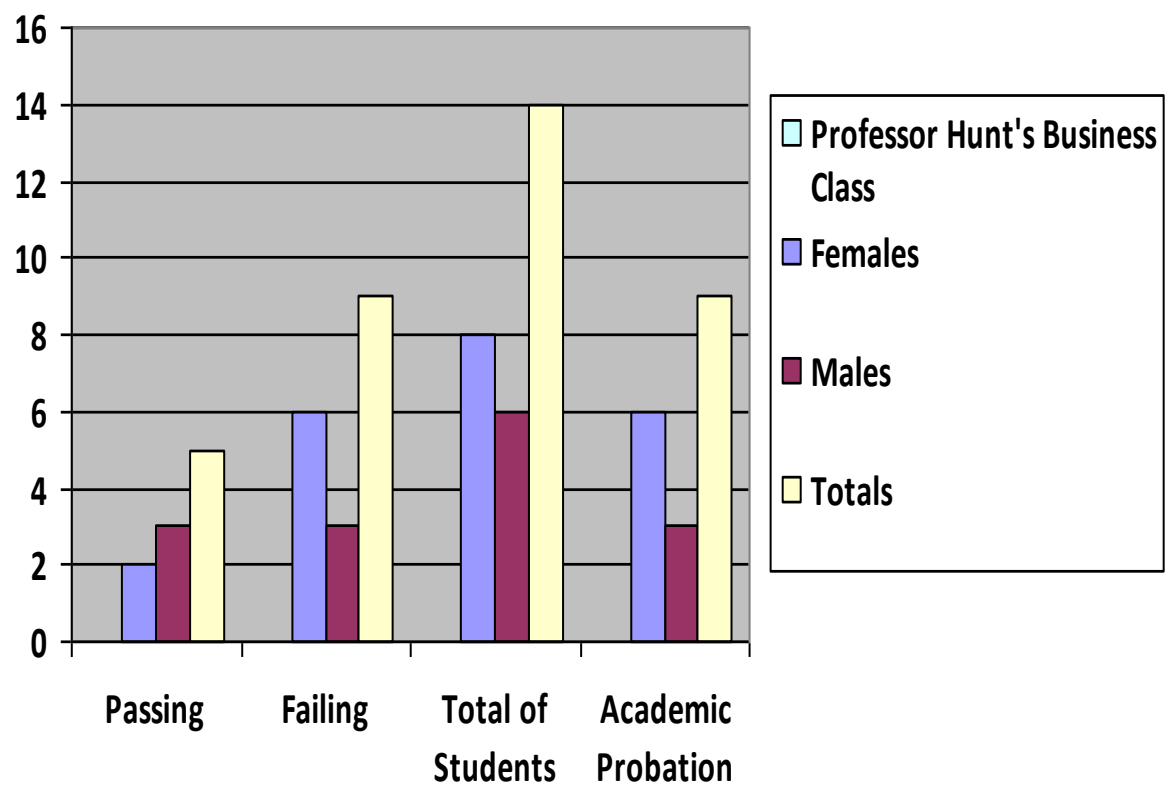
## Appendix A

### Sample Summary of Non-Participant Overall Academic Grades from 2008

Professor Mahdi's Math 160 Class	Quizzes	Tests	Homework Assignments	Class Assignments
Jane	C	A	B	A
Erica	D	D	F	C
Michael	F	F	F	F
Anton	C	C	B	A
Ricky	B	C	C	B
Lisa	F	D	D	D
Corey	A	A	-A	A
Angela	B-	A-	B	B
Paula	F	F	F	D
Sam	F	F	D	D
Tabitha	F	F	D-	D
Kim	D-	D-	D-	F
Cynthia	F	D-	D	D-
Steve	F	F	C-	D-

## Appendix B:

Sample Summary of Non-Participants Overall Academic Progress in Business Class



## Appendix C:

### Sample of Freshman Orientation Workshop Three Month Plan



## Freshman Orientation Workshop Three Month Plan (12weeks)

<i>Week 1</i>	Information about Windy State University	Each of the students will spend 15 to 30 minutes learning about the campus. Next 30 to 45 minutes students will be given a tour of the campus. The last 15 minutes students will be given information about all the various activities and services held on campus. The assignment for the week is for students to select an activity or service that they will attend and write a short summary of their personal experience.
<i>Week 2</i>	Guest Speaker Financial aid advisor	The financial advisor will discuss in detail about the grants, scholarships and loans that students can apply for. After the discussion students will engage in a question and answer session. The homework assignment is for students to fill out a mock financial aid application. Students will take a short quiz on what they have learned on this week.
<i>Week 3</i>	University policy and procedures	Students will be given a university course catalog. Information will be addressed regarding student conduct and course withdrawal information. Students will be given a treasure hunt four page activity for the week. Students will use information from their university catalog to answer each of the questions.
<i>Week 4</i>	How to map out your class schedule	A presentation will be given showing students how to use the course catalog in choosing their classes. Students will learn about the general education requirements that must be completed before graduation. For an assignment on this week, students will be given a sheet with a major on it. Students will need to fill in information that is required and pertaining to the specific major.
<i>Week 5</i>	Understanding the expectations of the instructor	Students will learn how to develop a proper relationship with their instructors. How to ask appropriate questions relating to the task at hand. In addition, students will learn what is and what is not appropriate for speaking with an instructor. Students will receive four scenarios in which students will indicate the best approach to each of them.

<i>Week 6</i>	Time management strategies	This week students will learn the importance of using their time effectively. Students will receive a time management guide that will give tips to studying, preparing for exams, quizzes, and finals. Students will be given a task on this week to choose a strategy for the courses in which they are taking. The students will list and document the strategy for each of their courses and how they approach their assignments.
<i>Week 7</i>	Student services	Packets will be given to students of the various services that are available to them on campus. Some of these services include math and writing labs, specialized assistance, career development, and more. Students will be given a short math and writing assignment. They will need to make an appointment at the appropriate labs and receive assistance.
<i>Week 8</i>	College research	Students will go through a brief library orientation. Students will learn how to research journals, articles, books, and newspapers online. Information will be covered about citing and references sources. During this week, students will be given two topics to research and will need to put references in APA and MLA.
<i>Week 9</i>	Effective writing skills	For 30 minutes, there will be a discussion on effective writing skills. Students will be given different sample exercises in which they will be writing the information correctly. For an assignment, students will be given an assignment in which they will be required to visit the writing lab. After students have completed that task, they will go to the computer lab to type and email their papers to the instructor.
<i>Week 10</i>	Critical-thinking 101	This week students will learn what critical-thinking is and is not. Students will be engaged in a brainstorming activity that allows them to use logic, reasoning, comparison, sequencing, cause, effect, and more. Students will complete an assignment in which they will indicate what each scenario represents.
<i>Week 11</i>	Guest Speaker Academic	An academic counselor will discuss with students the role of the academic counselor. Students will be given information about when to see their counselors. Students will be given a

	counselor	directory that will tell them how to reach and make appointments. On this week, students will need to create five questions relating to their academics. Next, students will make an appoint to speak with their counselors and get their questions answered.
<i>Week 12</i>	Guest Speaker Alumni and Graduate Students	This final week, students will be listening to the experiences of students who have successfully completed their students. Each will give their perspectives and how they have applied what they have learned both personally and professionally. As an assignment, students will list their goals, strengths and weaknesses. In addition, students will include how they will turn their weaknesses to strengths.

## Appendix D:

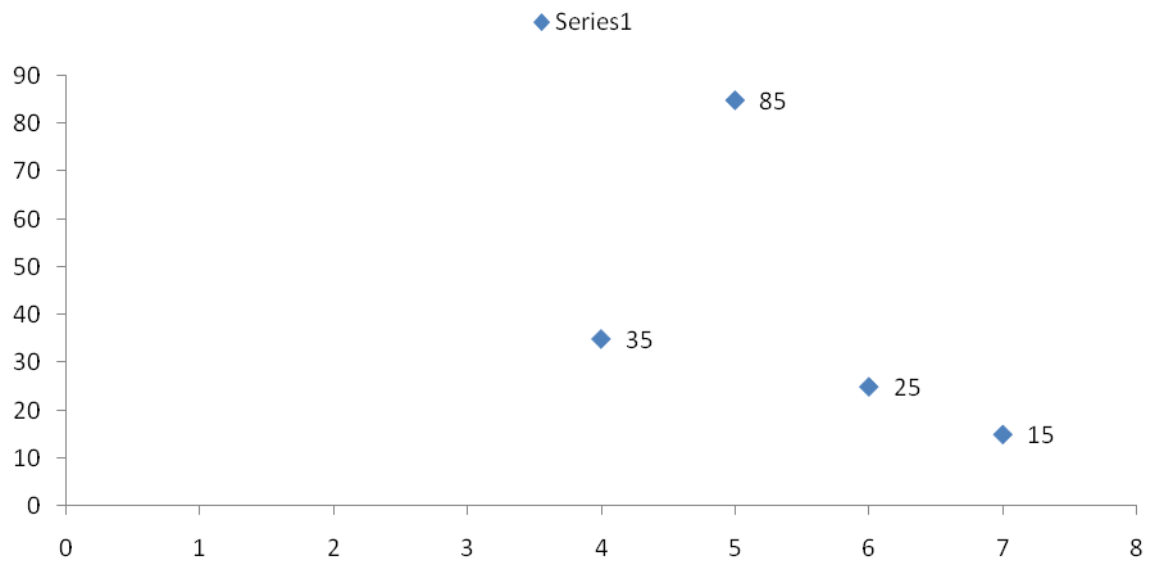
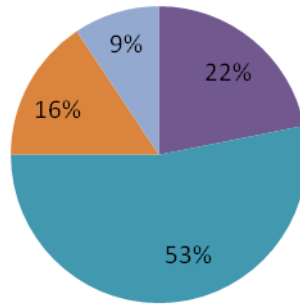
### Observation List on Failing Non-Participant Students

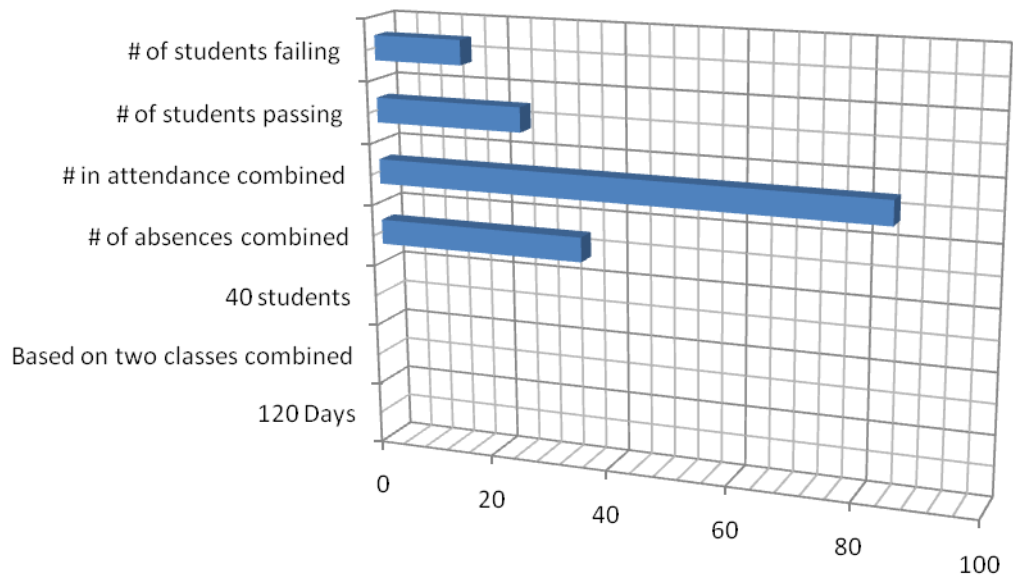
Observation List on Failing Students	
Students contribute to the class discussions.	Need Improvement
Students have turned in quality work.	Need Improvement
Students come to class with completing reading and homework assignments.	Need Improvement
Students are able to relate key concepts to real world experiences.	Need Improvement
Students have completed drafts prior to turning in the final written assignment.	Need Improvement
Students use the academic services on campus such as the writing and math labs.	Need Improvement
Students need assistance in completing academic work.	Not Apply
Students ask questions pertaining to information that has been covered in class.	Need Improvement

## Appendix E:

### Non-Participant Overall Attendance in 2009

- 120 Days
- Based on two classes combined
- 40 students
- # of absences combined
- # in attendance combined
- # of students passing
- # of students failing

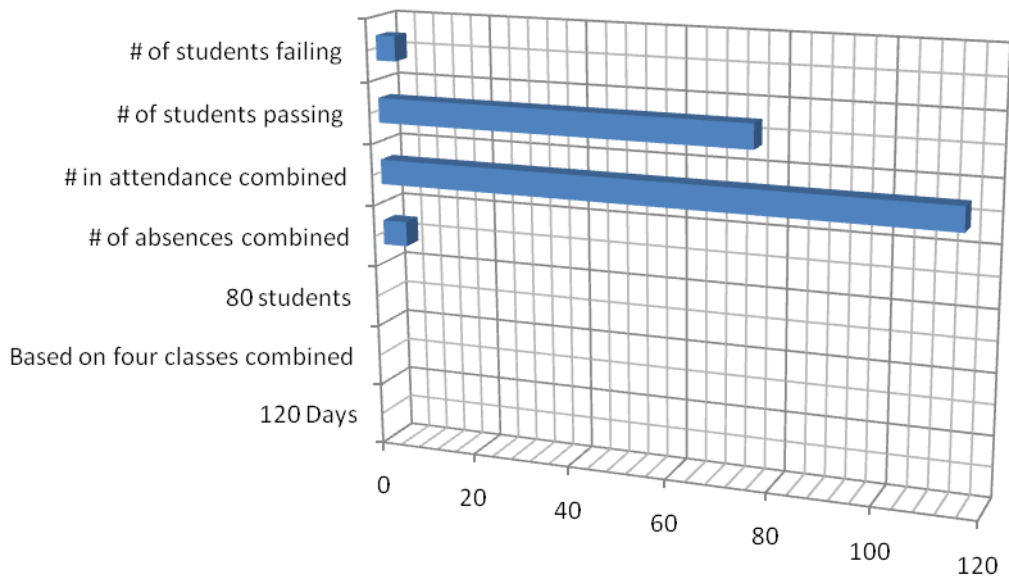




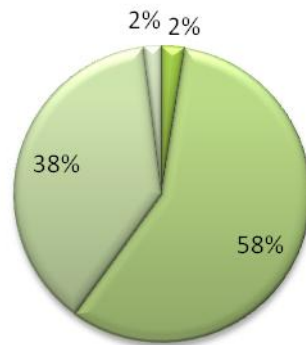


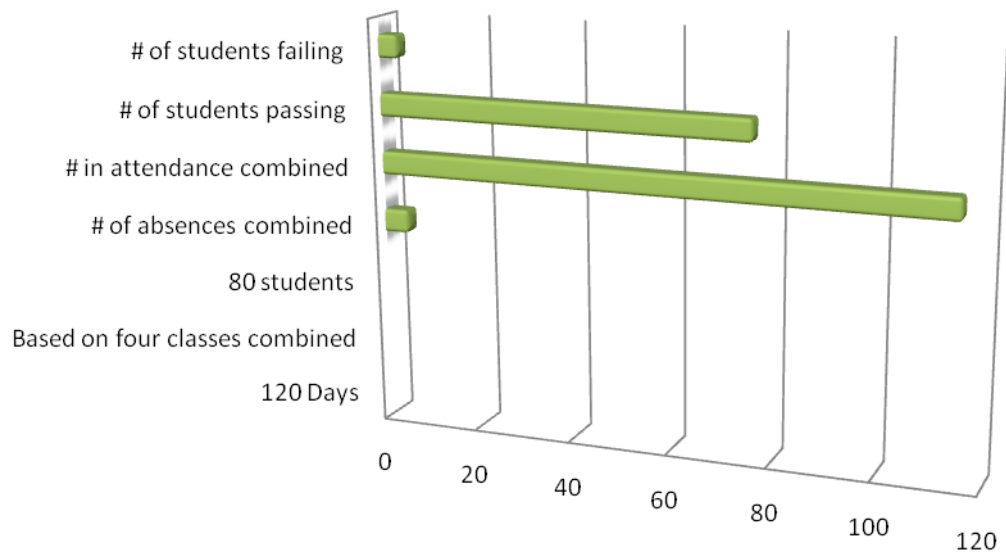
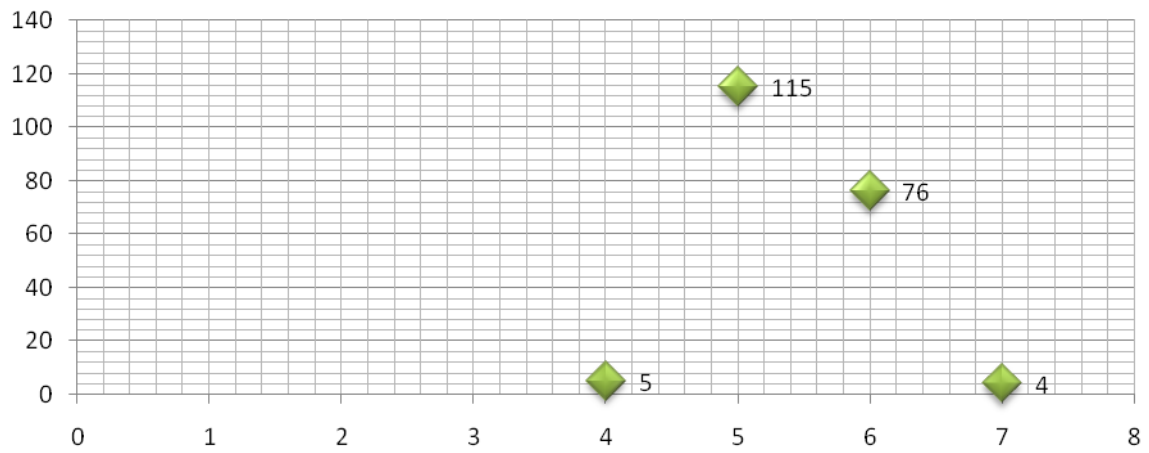
## Appendix F:

### Participants Overall Attendance



- 120 Days
- Based on four classes combined
- 80 students
- # of absences combined
- # in attendance combined
- # of students passing
- # of students failing





## Appendix G:

### Online Questionnaire

1. Reflecting back on your high school years, did you feel adequately prepared for college? Briefly explain why or why not.
2. What were your grades like in high school?
  - a. 90 & up
  - b. 80 & up
  - c. 70 & up
  - d. 60 & up
  - e. A mixture of a through d
3. Approximately, how many hours did you dedicate to your studies during your junior and senior of high school?
  - a. 5 hours or less weekly
  - b. 5 to 9 hours weekly
  - c. 10 to 15 hours weekly
  - d. 16 hours or more weekly
4. Have any members of your family ever attended college?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
5. What is your status in college?
  - a. Freshman/1<sup>st</sup> year
  - b. Sophomore
  - c. Junior
  - d. Senior
  - e. Graduate
6. How many hours do you dedicate each week to your studies each week approximately in college?
  - a. 5 hours or less weekly
  - b. 5 to 9 hours weekly
  - c. 10 to 15 hours weekly
  - d. 16 hours or more weekly
7. How comfortable are you with writing, research, math, and critical-thinking at the college level. Indicate your answer with 1 being the lowest and 5 being the highest (1-5) rating scale.
  - a. Writing
  - b. Research
  - c. Math
  - d. Critical-thinking
8. Has there ever been a subject you had a weakness in and what did you do to improve? Briefly explain.
9. In college, what was the typical class size?
  - a. 10 to 19

## Appendix H:

### Freshman Orientation Workshop Schedule

<b>Monday</b>	<b>3pm-4:30pm</b>
<b>Monday &amp; Wednesday</b>	7am-8:30am
<b>Tuesday</b>	3pm-4:30pm
<b>Tuesday &amp; Thursday</b>	7am-8:30pm
<b>Wednesday</b>	3pm-4:30pm
<b>Thursday</b>	3pm-4:30pm
<b>Saturday</b>	9am-12pm