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## Developing a profile of factors associated with excellent students at Metropolitan Technical Community College

Ann Rosenblatt  
*University of Nebraska at Omaha*

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DEVELOPING A PROFILE OF FACTORS  
ASSOCIATED WITH EXCELLENT STUDENTS AT  
METROPOLITAN TECHNICAL COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Presented to the

Graduate Faculty  
University of Nebraska  
at Omaha

in Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Specialist in Education

University of Nebraska at Omaha

by

Ann Rosenblatt

December, 1986

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FIELD PROJECT ACCEPTANCE

Accepted for the Graduate Faculty, University of Nebraska, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree Specialist in Education, University of Nebraska at Omaha.

Supervisory Committee

Department

Name

Edward J. Adler  
Thomas A. Cobue

TED  
Nov 18 1986

Darrell Bellamy  
Chairman

11-18-86  
Date

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## Chapter I

### Introduction

The excellent student at the community college level has personal characteristics which are related to success. The institutional goals and characteristics of the community college are interrelated to the goals of successful students. Studies of four-year institutions have found that from 30 to 50 percent of the students who enter college do not finish their programs in the prescribed time frame.

Studies of successful and unsuccessful college students seem to fall into two general categories: the college itself and the individual student. The choice of the college (Pitcher, 1970, and Gladstein, 1967) is extremely important. The goals of the college (Gladstein, Astin, 1975, and Beal and Noel, 1980) should match the goals of the student. The choice of major (Pitcher), the courses offered (Charters, 1980), the costs (Basonic, 1982, Astin, Beal and Noel), class size, identification with faculty and staff (Basonic, Beal and Noel, Cope and Hannah, 1975, and Charters), the relevance of education to the student, the abilities of

the students in relationship to the abilities desired by the college: all these things contribute to the success or failure of college students.

There are many personal attributes of successful college students. Included are factors such as first semester grade point average (Basonic, and Dunham, 1973), self-direction (Van der Embse and Childs, 1979, Baird, 1969, Hackman and Taber, 1979, Edwards, 1977, Pitcher, and Smith, 1965), assumption of responsibility (Pitcher), problem-solving abilities, personal and study habits (Smith, and Brown and Dubois, 1964), attitude (McGauvran), desire to succeed, emotional and physical adjustment (Levin, 1980), potential (Baird, 1969), high school ranking and activities (Smith, Baird, Basonic, and Foote, 1980), long-range goals (Baird), language ability (Pitcher, Bailey, 1983), communication effectiveness (Bailey), family relationships (Berg and Ferber, 1983), marital status, sex, race, and age (Dunham, Von der Embse and Childs, Levin, Basonic), and need or desire for personal contact with students and faculty (Berg and Ferber, Basonic).

A study of Metropolitan Technical Community College students by the Office of Planning and Development revealed that 58 percent of students completed the course work and 42 percent of the students in seven

classes throughout the three campuses failed to complete the courses. This limited sample study did not include why students failed to complete their program.

Considering a 42 percent noncompletion rate, the administration and staff of Metropolitan Technical Community College need to reduce real or perceived barriers to success. Answers must be found to questions such as: How do completers identify with the college? How do the goals of the faculty compare with the goals of the students? How does the college meet the needs of completers?

The problem is to identify the characteristics of successful students at Metropolitan Technical Community College and implement procedures to facilitate success among the potential dropouts. The purpose of the study is to identify the barriers to success blocking the 42 percent dropouts.

#### Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to develop a profile of the institutional and student factors associated with excellent students at Metropolitan Technical Community College. The following questions were answered:

1. What personal characteristics of students are related to success, i.e. sex, age, race, and marital status?



2. In what ways do successful students identify with the college?

3. Do successful students demonstrate greater self-direction with clear-cut goals?

4. Is a caring attitude exhibited by faculty and staff toward successful students?

5. Do the successful students demonstrate more effective communication skills?

6. Do the successful students demonstrate a stronger desire to succeed?

#### Delimitations

The population for this study involved only students who are or were associated with Metropolitan Technical Community College.

#### Procedures

To answer question No. 1, What personal characteristics of students are related to success, i.e. sex, age, race, and marital status?, a questionnaire was developed that asked respondents to indicate their personal characteristics.

To answer question No. 2, In what ways do successful students identify with the college?, the questionnaire asked respondents to indicate ways in which they identify with the college.

To answer question No. 3, Do successful students demonstrate greater self-direction?, the questionnaire elicited ways in which students demonstrate self-direction.

To answer question No. 4, Is a caring attitude exhibited by faculty and staff toward successful students?, a questionnaire was developed to indicate how faculty and staff showed a caring attitude toward the students.

To answer question No. 5, Do the successful students demonstrate more effective communication skills?, the questionnaire requested ways in which students have demonstrated effective communication skills.

To answer question No. 6, Do the successful students demonstrate a stronger desire to succeed?, the questionnaire requested ways in which students demonstrated a stronger desire to succeed.

A list of successful and unsuccessful students was randomly taken from the Office of Educational Services at Metropolitan Technical Community College.

A sampling of 30 students in a College class was taken.

The questionnaire was mailed, analyzed, mean scores calculated, and tested for significant differences.

### Definitions

Successful students in this study were defined as progressing in a regular college program with an accumulation of 30 credit hours or more, continuous attendance for two quarters or more, with a grade point average of 3.5 or higher.

Dropout was defined as not continuing in a program after 15 credit hours and having a grade point average of 1.5 or lower.

### Organization of the Project

Chapter I--Introduction

Chapter II--Related Literature

Chapter III--Methodology

Chapter IV--Presentation of Data, Findings, or Reportings

Chapter V--Summary, Conclusions, and Recommendations

## Chapter II

### Review of the Related Literature

This review of the literature covers the topics of the adult learner's approach to college, a self-analysis that may be completed by a college student, the causes of failure in college studies, retention characteristics of colleges, and some individual studies that have been completed concerning characteristics of selected groups of college students and their relationship to success or failure.

#### The Adult Learner in College

Both two-year and four-year colleges have adult learners. The typical college student is thought of as an 18-year-old person right out of high school. The realities are that college students can be of many ages. What may be the public's perception of the older college student? Cottle (1977) says "society does not know how to treat a person in his mid-forties engaged in a role that seems inappropriate . . . We ask 'What's he doing there? How can a man that old suddenly shift careers? What's he trying to prove?'" (p. 55). Besides these perceptions Cottle has observed that older adult learners tend to be rigid in their work habits. They carefully read textbooks and underline key phrases and keep notes from classes carefully tucked away in folders.

It is interesting to examine which groups of older college students do well academically. Adult learning theory proposes that "the adult's readiness to learn is a product of the evolving social roles and the adult's learning orientation, problem-centered rather than subject centered" according to Von der Embse and Childs (1979, p. 476). Their study suggested that "the adult's problem-solving orientation to learning and a desire to immediately apply new knowledge contribute to higher academic achievement" (p. 477). They found that the older student is influenced by a more "self-directed commitment to educational goals . . . the older student is more likely than the younger student to be a high achiever" (p. 478). They found that both older and younger women who were married were high achievers. The authors of the study felt their results held implications for colleges. They said "it may be necessary to prepare faculty and staff for a new set of academic challenges as well as for a greater variety of personal and social needs . . . they will seek more information and assistance from student personnel officers and from faculty . . . these older, more self-directed students will contribute positively to the academic climate and to the total campus atmosphere as well" (p. 479).

A study of men and women graduate students contains somewhat different outcomes. Berg and Ferber (1983) found that women graduate students tend to have higher

undergraduate grade-point averages than men. They said there is evidence that "women are less confident than men and that this is likely to influence their career plans . . . women are more likely to complain of lack of ability as a barrier to success and are viewed as less dedicated and less promising by faculty" (p. 631).

There is a tendency for women graduate students to be more successful when graduate faculties have women members. Berg and Ferber state: "The positive effect of women faculty on women students might be stronger if women faculty were themselves of higher rank and perceived as more successful" (p. 631). "It is clear that students and faculty of the same sex interact most comfortably" (p. 639).

Another aspect of their study dealt with family support. Berg and Ferber found that "More women (60 percent) than men (40 percent) reported receiving a great deal of moral support from their parents, 48 percent of married women but only 29 percent of married men reported receiving support from their spouse. The implication is that women are less likely than men to embark on graduate studies when these kinds of support are not forthcoming" (p. 635).

#### Causes of Failure Among College Students

A study of prediction of excellence among college students must first include a look at "dropouts." According to Harvard University psychiatrist Armand M. Nicholi (1971),

almost "half of all college dropouts are bright students subject to self-doubt and depression . . . the decision to leave, once made, brings considerable relief" (Chahbazi, p. vii). Nicholi also has found that "students who attended private preparatory schools before coming to college are more likely to drop out than their public school equivalents" (Chahbazi, p. 115). Kerns found in a study that "'overachieving' freshmen attended college for 'intellectual reasons,' whereas the 'underachieving' students attended for 'negative' reasons, for example, 'getting away from home'" (Chahbazi, p. 116). McGauvran found that "attitude toward school was found to be related to scholastic success" (Chahbazi, p. 116). Weigand's study found that "successful students were able to persist toward their objectives in the face of adversities while the unsuccessful ones were not" (Chahbazi, p. 119).

According to Cope and Hannah (1975) " . . . 30 to 40 percent of entering students never earn degrees. Men and women discontinue, stopout, transfer, and so on in approximately equal proportions . . . The primary factor in 'holding power' is the student's identification with the college" (p. 101, 102).

Pitcher (1970) selected ten elements and ranked them in the following order in terms of their relative contribution to failure: (1) lack of potential, (2) inadequate concept of

the meaning of work, (3) the importance of other activities, (4) interference from psychological problems, (5) failure to assume responsibility, (6) inhibition of language functions, (7) lack of internalized standards of quality, (8) inappropriate choice of major, (9) vagueness about long-range goals, (10) selection of the wrong college (p. 25-39).

A study of evening college students was reported by Charters (1980). He felt there were 10 areas which determine satisfaction or dissatisfaction with college. They were "feelings about treatment by instructors and other college officials, help in resolving personal, vocational and educational problems, attitudes about adequacy of the school's offering, participation in student activities, level of achievement--feeling of growth, work load, teaching methods, adequacy of equipment, most liked and most disliked feature of the college, and attitudes toward value of studies" (p. 44).

A group of developmental students were studied at Harrisburg Area Community College by Basonic (1982). She was studying patterns of academic performance and persistence. Following are some of her findings: "The first semester grade point average seems to be positively related to the staying power of the students" (p. 77). She found a difference in characteristics between students who completed the courses and those who did not. The variables included



"age, ethnic background, financial aid status, high school from which student graduated, and curriculum in which enrolled" (p. 79). Blacks were less successful at completing the courses. Thirty-three percent of the noncompleters graduated from city schools as compared to 8.7 percent of the group who completed. Sixty-seven percent of the complete group received financial aid in comparison to 51 percent of the noncompleters. The students in the completed group attempted twice as many credits and earned more than three times as many credits as the noncompleters. Basonic says: "A surprising finding in this study is that there was no difference in the mean entry reading grade level of the students who successfully completed the developmental courses and those who did not" (p. 82). Students who worked on campus or who participated in activities tended not to drop out. Basonic says: "They tend not to feel isolated. Students who form a close relationship with a faculty member, counselor or some other person on campus also develop a feeling of belonging and tend not to feel isolated" (p. 85).

A study of students' reasons for dropping out of college was done by Astin. (1975) The following reasons were given from the most frequent to the least frequent: boredom with courses, financial difficulties, some other reason, marriage, pregnancy, or other family responsibilities, poor grades, dissatisfaction with requirements or regulations, change in

career goals, inability to take desired courses or programs, good job offer, illness or accident, difficulty commuting to college, and disciplinary troubles (p. 14).

### College Student Retention and Success

A large part of being successful in college studies is the ability to persist. What factors are involved in student retention? How are these factors related to the student clientele in the community college?

When comparing the college and the student relationship, the most important positive factor according to Beal and Noel (1980) is the caring attitude of faculty and staff. The next factors in descending order are high quality of teaching, adequate financial aid, student involvement in campus life, and high quality of advisement (p. 43). Beal and Noel identify the following factors as being dropout-prone: low academic achievement, limited educational aspirations, indecision about major/career goal, and inadequate financial resources (p. 43).

The student clientele of community colleges have certain characteristics as defined by Palinchak (1973). (1) The community college should open its doors to the nonstudent and be prepared to advance the individual from his level of entry to as far as his abilities and interests permit. (2) Concern for adults and part-time students should become a priority. (3) The community college must address itself to racial

imbalance. (4) Human self-renewal is a goal. (5) The "salvage" function is a unique contribution. (6) A primary mission of the community college is to develop independent, self-directed individuals. . . . (8) Excellence in the traditional-elitist sense should not be a major part of the community college philosophy. . . . (9) Tuition should be assessed in some proportion to those who can afford it (p. 259, 260). Palinchak appears to believe that community colleges are the place to salvage those who do not belong anyplace else. However, the image of the community college seems to be changing as more good, academic students are attending classes because of rising costs at four-year institutions and other factors.

Much research has been conducted on student retention and several studies have been done on the reasons for academic success among students. Some studies are in agreement and others find different outcomes, but all studies seem to share some common traits.

Freshman-level men students of high ability at Iowa State University were studied by Brown and Dubois (1964). They made three general conclusions. "First, different student characteristics are rewarded in colleges with different curricular emphases--even when the two colleges are within the same University . . . biographical and study habits data were effective predictors . . . efficient study

habits may be useful predictors when, by virtue of limitations of time and work load, efficiency is necessary" (p. 604, 605).

Smith (1965), at the University of Kentucky, also studied high-ability freshmen. Here is a summary of his conclusions. "More nonachievers came from metropolitan areas of 600,000 population and over . . . the largest group of achievers came from communities of 50,000 to 100,000 population . . . more achievers were protestant and were more religious than nonachievers. Most achievers graduated from high schools of 900 to 1200 enrollment . . . large percentage of nonachievers graduated from large high schools of 1300 to 3000 enrollment. Achievers had done significantly better in high school. Achievers had put forth more effort in high school. Most achievers reported good study habits. Achievers felt they applied their own pressure for grades. Nonachievers were more negative and hostile in their attitude. Nonachievers were significantly more concerned with status, money and the 'good' life . . . achievers were more concerned with cultural aspirations and service to humanity. Achievers participated in a greater variety of extracurricular activities . . . Significantly more of the nonachievers perceived that they had personal problems . . . Achievers were satisfied with their choice of subject major. None of the achievers were dissatisfied with their

departmental staff . . . All achievers felt they were academically adjusted, while 81 percent of the nonachievers felt they had not made an adequate adjustment. Achievers were of the opinion that grades were important. The peer associates of achievers also achieved satisfactory grades in 81 percent of the cases . . . the peer associates of nonachievers failed to achieve a satisfactory standing in 60 percent of the cases . . . Nonachievers varied significantly from achievers in that, if they had the choice to make again, they would not choose the University of Kentucky; achievers would again choose this University" (p. 10, 11). The preceding data was collected by means of interviews.

Edwards (1977) found group peer rating to be an "effective technique for developing reliable measures of personality . . . Individual traits which were highly correlated with wages, supervisor's ratings and school grades were 'consistent attender,' 'practical,' 'dependable,' 'emphathizes,' 'identifies with job/school,' and 'quitting.' Three dimensions of behavior--rules orientation, habits of predictability and dependability, and internalization of goals and values--demonstrate high test-retest and . . . reliability . . . represent a significant advance in the attempt to specify particular relations between motivation and personality variables and 'success' in schooling and work" (p. 137).

A vice president of the College Board, Adrienne Bailey (1983), has chosen six competencies as necessary for success in college. They are "reading, writing, speaking and listening, mathematics, reasoning, and studying" (p. 3). She further says the competencies must be "developed abilities" (p. 3). Bailey says "effective, interactive communication is the overarching goal" (p. 4). The foregoing competencies certainly are what the College Board includes in its testing process.

Successful and nonsuccessful students differ significantly "in terms of academic majors chosen, grades received, and honors won . . . The various nonsuccessful types differ in their tendencies to require leaves of absence and to withdraw from college" according to Hackman and Taber (1979, p. 137). They identify patterns of performance related to success in college. They found seven patterns of successful students. They were categorized as "Leaders . . . rated highly in almost every area of college performance . . . self-directed and demonstrate effort and achievement in their academic work. Scholars . . . rank highest in all areas of intellectual performance . . . highly self-directed. Careerists . . . have determined their career plans. Grinds . . . emphasis on the academic dimensions . . . outrank all others in mathematical proficiency. Artists . . . exceptionally high levels of

artistic performance. Athletes . . . exceptionally high in athletic performance and is moderately high in ethical behavior and in personal growth. Socializers . . . relatively high rankings on interpersonal sociability and low rankings on the academic dimension. The authors also identified five patterns of unsuccessful student performance. They are: "Disliked . . . negative personal and interpersonal behavior . . . Extreme grinds . . . do not balance academic work with nonacademic aspects of college life . . . Alienated . . . alienation from formal academic life . . . Unqualified . . . lowest of all types in cognitive and communication proficiencies . . . Directionless . . . are not suited to the college" (p. 126, 127).

Leonard L. Baird (1969) of the American College Testing Program has done a study of achievement. He believes that "past achievement is the best predictor of current achievement." The relevant "potential and competency scales are usually the next best predictors. The next level of consistent predictors includes the relevant life goals and self-ratings" (p. 251). In summary, Baird says that "achievement or creative performance involves much conscious, rational, and directed effort, whatever its unconscious or preconscious roots" (p. 252). Again in this study, as before, there is a recurring theme of self-directed, conscious effort.

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Dunham (1973) looked at achievement motivation as a predictor of academic performance. He isolated non-intellective factors which included "self-concept scores, a family relations factor, and birth order. Sex and a past performance measure of high school GPA also were utilized" (p. 70). High school GPA and sex were found to be the best predictors of success. He found that ego needs were an important predictor also.

Levin (1980) studied black and white students in two- and four-year colleges. He made three major conclusions. (1) Low aptitude blacks are over represented at four-year colleges. (2) Blacks are less likely than are whites to meet their aspirations to four years of college while high aptitude and high socio-economic status both augur well for the realization of four-year aspirations. (3) Initial attendance at a two-year college is related to a reduced probability that a planned four-year education will be realized (p. 192). The author thinks the third conclusion is controversial. An emerging role of the community colleges has been preparation for the four-year college. Levin mentions that other possible variables would include "full time vs. part time status, academic load, dormitory effects, motivation levels, and/or personal problems" (p. 192).

Hilton and Myers (1967) give their opinions on the contribution of questionnaire data resources to academic prediction. They state that "although biographical data do not predict as well as objective test scores, they are less time consuming and less expensive to obtain and that these virtues outweigh the loss in predictability" (p. 79). Their study affirmed the use of questionnaires as a fairly easy way to collect data rather than the use of testing procedures.

#### Individual Studies

The studies in this section of the literature review deal with one segment or aspect of academic achievement. The first study compares determined- and undetermined-major students. Foote (1980) found that the determined group "was more likely to remain in school and to achieve greater academic success than the undetermined group. More women tended to have declared majors than men" (p. 29). In relationship to grades earned, he found that "determined persisters were more successful in university coursework. They achieved high grades, while completing more courses." He further states that "High school percentile rank and ACT entrance test scores appeared to be more related to persistence in college than major designation" (p. 33). Once again, previous performance and definite goals are determining factors in excellence prediction.

Rovezzi-Carroll and Thompson (1980) investigated four variables as predictors for college graduation among low-income students. They found the variables were not predictive in any combination. They state that the SAT-verbal and mathematics, "the rank in class, and annual income were not effective predictors of college graduation, withdrawal or academic dismissal status" (p. 343).

The relationship of life events to grade point average was studied by Knapp and Magee (1979). They found that "desirable" life events had little effect on grade point averages. They state that "Life events have been shown to correlate with psychopathology, physical illness, and impaired performance . . . the relationship between life events and academic performance can be accounted for mainly in terms of the undesirability of the life events" (p. 501).

A study of the effects of contingency contracting with community college students was done by Lewis and Wall (1979). Their results supported the theory that "contingency contract procedures and contract managers increase academic achievement of the rural community college students . . . negotiating with community college students regarding academic tasks and their consequences was an effective instructional strategy which increased their academic performance" (p. 208, 209).

### Student Self-Analysis

Gladstein (1967) wrote a book which details an approach to succeeding in college through a process of self-analysis and self-improvement. It is interesting because of the many areas he covers for study. He says students should study the college and themselves first. Next they must look at attitudes and potential problems. Other areas of self exploration include reasons for going to college, abilities, learning style, course demands, self-demands, habits, goals, reading ability, ability to listen and question, remembering, writing, speaking, problem solving, integrating, creating, ability to change or modify behaviors. The book is a very comprehensive collection of attributes necessary to success in college.

### Summary

The foregoing review of literature covers a multitude of factors which may or may not contribute to academic success in college work. Several factors are recurring. The congruence of the goals of the students with the goals and mission of the college is important. The students choose Metropolitan Technical Community College, are successful, and remain in school because their goals match the goals of the college. Successful students identify with the college and the faculty and staff. The students feel that they are important and are given support by faculty and staff. The

offerings and programs of the college are appropriate and relevant to the successful student. The student feels that the background and training received at the college is relevant and timely and will help in securing gainful employment. The pattern of personal characteristics of students is important in determining a profile of the successful student at the college. Successful students are stable and are able to progress through their programs.

## Chapter III

### Methodology

The purpose of this study was to identify differences and likenesses between academically successful students and unsuccessful students at Metropolitan Technical Community College. By identifying characteristics of successful students, the college may implement procedures to facilitate success among potential dropouts and failures.

#### Instrument and Procedure

A survey was developed along with a cover letter and a page of instructions. Information on the following characteristics of respondents was included at the top of the survey form: age, racial/ethnic group, sex, current grade point average, marital status, high school size, first quarter grade point average, financial aid use, parent attendance at college, high school or GED graduate, and contacts used at Metro. A series of 28 statements were included on the same form. These statements were designed to answer the following questions: Do successful students identify with the college? Do successful students exhibit self-direction? Do successful students enjoy a caring attitude by college faculty and staff? Do successful students exhibit good communication skills? Do successful students have a strong desire to succeed? An even number of statements (28) were developed and a mixture of 12 negative

and 16 positive statements was incorporated. The College Office of Planning and Development aided in the construction and mailing of the project.

The survey, the cover letter, and the instructions were given to a class of students at Metro. As a result, no changes were made in the survey, but the instruction sheet was more clearly marked to indicate that responses were to be marked only on the survey sheet.

### Subjects

The next step in the procedure was to mail a total of 994 surveys to former and present Metro students. This project took place in the spring of 1986. From Fall quarter, 1983, to Winter quarter, 1985, 480 students who had accumulated 15 credit hours or more earned a 3.5 grade point average or better. In the same time span, 514 students had earned a 1.5 grade point average or less and had accumulated at least 15 credit hours. These students comprised the two control groups in the study. Grades at Metro include A, B, C, D, and F with an A worth 4 points and a D worth 1 point. Thus, a 3.5 grade point average would be considered successful; and a 1.5 grade point average would be D+ or academically unsuccessful.

After the surveys were returned to the College Office of Planning and Development, results were tallied by characteristic and other findings for both the 3.5 GPA group and the 1.5 GPA group. Numerous crosstabulations of data were done by computer analysis using SPSS.



## Chapter IV

### Presentation of Data, Findings, or Reportings

The purpose of this study was to identify characteristics of academically successful students at Metropolitan Technical Community College. This was accomplished by comparing a group of academically successful students with a group of nonsuccessful students. A survey was developed and mailed to 994 former and present students of MTCC. The personal characteristics and traits which were included were suggested by research to be related to academically successful students.

From a total of 994 surveys that were mailed, 162 replied. This was a return of 16.3 percent. It should be noted that of 162 respondents, sometimes the respondents did not answer all survey items. Of those responding, 55.3 percent were in the age range of 21 to 35 years; 29.3 percent were 36 to 50 years old. Far more whites (93.4 percent) than blacks (5.3 percent) or Spanish/Latino (1.3 percent) responded. Females responded in larger numbers (57.6 percent) than males. Eighty-four percent of respondents had current grade point averages of 3.5 or better. Sixteen percent of respondents had a 1.5 grade point average or lower. A number of respondents (51.4 percent) were married; 16.2 percent were either divorced, separated, or widowed; and 32.4 percent were single. Those who were receiving some kind

of financial aid comprised 41.7 percent of the total respondents. The size of the high school attended by the respondents was divided into the following categories and percentages: less than 300, 29.7 percent; 301-900, 29.7 percent; 901-1,299, 12.8 percent; and 1,300-3,000 or more, 27.7 percent. Of those responding, the first quarter of attendance grade point average was 3.5 or higher for 84.4 percent of respondents. Only 2 percent had 1.9 or lower. Of those responding, 65.3 percent had parents who did not attend college. Ninety-seven percent of the respondents were high school or GED graduates.

A breakdown of characteristics of students and contacts used at Metro in relation to their present grade point average follows in Tables I through XI. Characteristics are expressed according to number of respondents and the percentage of those responding.

Table I presents the grade point average distribution among the age ranges of from less than 20 to more than 60.

Table II presents the distribution of grade point averages among the racial categories of black, white, and Spanish/Latino.

Table III presents the grade point average distribution between the categories of male and female respondents.

Table IV presents the current grade point averages of respondents.

TABLE I  
Age of Respondents

Age Range	3.5 GPA		1.5 GPA	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
less than 20	8	6.2	1	5.0
21 - 35	71	54.6	12	60.0
36 - 50	38	29.2	6	30.0
51 - 60	10	7.7	1	5.0
more than 60	3	2.3	--	0.0

TABLE II  
Race/Ethnic Group of Respondents

Race	3.5 GPA		1.5 GPA	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Black	3	2.3	5	25.0
White	126	96.2	15	75.0
Spanish/Latino	2	1.5	--	0.0

TABLE III  
Sex of Respondents

Sex	3.5 GPA		1.5 GPA	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Male	54	41.2	8	40.0
Female	75	57.3	12	60.0

TABLE IV  
Current Grade Point Average of Respondents

GPA Range	3.5 GPA		1.5 GPA	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
1.0 - 1.4	--	0.0	2	14.3
1.5 - 1.9	1	.8	3	21.4
2.0 - 2.4	--	0.0	4	28.6
3.0 - 3.4	2	1.6	--	0.0
3.5 or greater	123	97.6	5	35.7

Table V presents the marital status of respondents according to grade point averages in the categories of single, married, separated, divorced, or widowed.

Table VI presents the grade point distribution among respondents who do and do not receive financial aid.

Table VII presents the grade point distribution among categories of size of high school attended by respondents according to the following ranges of size: less than 300, 301 to 900, 901 to 1,299, 1,300 to 3,000 or more.

Table VIII presents the grade point averages earned during the first quarter of attendance by both groups of respondents.

Table IX presents the grade point average distribution of respondents according to whether or not their parents attended college.

Table X presents the grade point average distribution among respondents according to whether or not they were high school or GED graduates.

Table XI presents the grade point average distribution among respondents and the number of contacts they used at Metro according to the following categories: student activities, counseling, financial aid, library, food service, book store, day care, learning center, placement services, and faculty advising.

TABLE V  
Marital Status of Respondents

Marital Status	3.5 GPA		1.5 GPA	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Single	36	28.1	12	60.0
Married	73	57.0	3	15.0
Separated	2	1.6	1	5.0
Divorced	15	11.7	4	20.0
Widowed	2	1.6	--	0.0

TABLE VI  
Financial Aid Recipients

	3.5 GPA		1.5 GPA	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Receive aid	50	38.2	13	65.0
Do not receive aid	81	61.8	7	35.0

TABLE VII  
Size of High School Attended

Range of Size	3.5 GPA		1.5 GPA	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
less than 300	40	31.3	4	20.0
301 - 900	37	28.9	7	35.0
901 - 1299	17	13.3	2	10.0
1300 - 3000 or more	34	26.6	7	35.0

TABLE VIII  
First Quarter Grade Point Average

GPA Range	3.5 GPA		1.5 GPA	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
3.5 or greater	121	93.8	3	16.7
3.0 - 3.4	8	6.2	6	33.3
2.0 - 2.9	--	0.0	5	27.8
1.0 - 1.9	--	0.0	3	16.7
below 1.0	--	0.0	1	5.6

TABLE IX  
Parent Attendance at College

	<u>3.5 GPA</u>		<u>1.5 GPA</u>	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
yes	44	33.8	8	40.0
no	86	66.2	12	60.0

TABLE X  
High School or GED Graduate

	<u>3.5 GPA</u>		<u>1.5 GPA</u>	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
yes	129	99.2	15	83.3
no	1	.8	3	16.7



TABLE XI  
Contacts Used at Metro

	3.5 GPA		1.5 GPA	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Student Activities	17	2.9	1	1.1
Counseling	74	12.8	13	13.8
Financial Aid	49	8.4	13	13.8
Library	107	18.4	15	16.0
Food Service	71	12.2	8	8.5
Book Store	123	21.2	19	20.2
Day Care	3	.5	--	0.0
Learning Center	27	4.7	12	12.8
Placement Services	25	4.3	6	6.4
Faculty Advising	84	14.5	7	7.4

Research suggests that academically successful students strongly identify with the college (Gladstein, Astin, Beal and Noel), demonstrate self-direction (Van der Embse and Childs, Baird, Hackman and Taber, Edwards, Pitcher, Smith), feel there is a caring attitude demonstrated by faculty and staff members (Berg and Ferber, Basonic), demonstrate effective communication skills (Bailey), and have a strong desire to succeed (Levin).

Table XII presents the number and percentage of 3.5 GPA respondents and 1.5 GPA respondents and how they responded to five statements on the survey form which were designed to measure if students identified with the college.

Table XIII presents the number and percentage of 3.5 GPA respondents and 1.5 GPA respondents and how they responded to six statements on the survey which were designed to measure if students exhibited self-direction.

Table XIV presents the number and percentage of 3.5 GPA respondents and 1.5 GPA respondents and how they responded to six statements on the survey which were designed to measure the students' perception of the caring attitude of faculty and other staff at the college.

Table XV presents the number and percentage of 3.5 GPA respondents and 1.5 GPA respondents and how they responded to five statements on the survey designed to measure their communication skills.

TABLE XII  
 Identification with the College

Item No.	Statement	3.5 GPA				1.5 GPA			
		Agree		Disagree		Agree		Disagree	
		No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
1	I feel good about attending Metro	130	96.3	5	3.7	23	92.0	2	8.0
6	The students at Metro are immature	16	11.9	118	88.1	3	13.6	19	86.4
11	I have participated in activities offered by Metro other than classroom activities	39	28.7	97	71.3	6	24.0	19	76.0
16	I am in no particular hurry to finish my schooling	42	31.1	93	68.9	8	32.0	17	68.0
21	Metro offers the program I wanted	121	89.6	14	10.4	23	92.0	2	8.0

TABLE XIII  
Self-Direction

Item No.	Statement	3.5 GPA		1.5 GPA	
		Agree No. %	Disagree No. %	Agree No. %	Disagree No. %
2	I want to learn and my grades are secondary in importance	86 64.2	48 35.8	14 58.3	10 41.7
7	I know what I want to do with my life, and I know how to go about it	110 81.5	25 18.5	24 96.0	1 4.0
12	I just want to get a good job	61 45.9	72 54.1	13 52.0	12 48.0
17	I plan to get as much education as I can	116 85.9	19 14.1	22 88.0	3 12.0
22	I blame others when I fail	3 2.2	133 97.8	1 4.0	24 96.0
27	I don't know how to accomplish classroom assignments	4 2.9	132 97.1	2 8.0	23 92.0

TABLE XIV  
Caring Attitude of Faculty and Staff

Item No.	Statement	3.5 GPA		1.5 GPA					
		Agree %	Disagree %	Agree %	Disagree %				
3	My instructors know who I am	127	93.4	9	6.6	19	76.0	6	24.0
8	I never see my advisor	48	35.3	88	64.7	5	20.0	20	80.0
13	My instructors are readily available for help	110	81.5	25	18.5	18	72.0	7	28.0
18	Metro staff other than faculty are willing to help	123	91.8	11	8.2	22	88.0	3	12.0
23	I do not feel welcome here	9	6.6	127	93.4	5	20.0	20	80.0
26	I like most of my instructors	132	97.1	4	2.9	23	88.5	3	11.5

TABLE XV  
Communication Skills

Item No.	Statement	3.5 GPA				1.5 GPA			
		Agree		Disagree		Agree		Disagree	
		No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
4	Sometimes I do not understand my instructors	52	38.5	83	61.5	13	52.0	12	48.0
9	I take part in classroom discussions	125	91.9	11	8.1	21	84.0	4	16.0
14	I am reluctant to speak in classes	10	8.4	109	91.6	4	16.7	20	83.3
19	I enjoy writing papers	37	27.6	97	72.4	6	26.1	17	73.9
24	Others understand my ideas	127	93.4	9	6.6	18	75.0	6	25.0

Table XVI presents the number and percentage of 3.5 GPA respondents and 1.5 GPA respondents and how they responded to six statements on the survey designed to measure the students' desire to succeed.

TABLE XVI  
Strong Desire to Succeed

Item No.	Statement	3.5 GPA				1.5 GPA			
		Agree		Disagree		Agree		Disagree	
		No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
5	I rarely miss a class	128	94.1	8	5.9	20	80.0	5	20.0
10	I don't mind getting a C or D in a class	8	5.9	128	94.1	6	24.0	19	76.0
15	I go to my instructors whenever I have questions	111	81.6	25	18.4	21	84.0	4	16.0
20	I usually complete out-of-class assignments	131	96.3	5	3.7	21	91.3	2	8.7
25	I really don't care about school	4	2.9	132	97.1	--	0.0	25	100.0
28	I can't tell if my classroom work is good or poor	10	7.4	126	92.6	7	28.0	18	72.0



## Chapter V

### Summary, Conclusions, and Recommendations

#### Summary

The purpose of this study was to develop a profile of characteristics of excellent students at Metropolitan Technical Community College. By developing a profile, the College may be able to help students who are not successful to stay in school and get an education.

The response to the survey was heavily weighted on the side of the successful students. This response indicates that successful people are proud of their accomplishments and respond more readily to research surveys and questionnaires done by the College. Such a small return hinders a realistic comparison between the two control groups. There was a great deal of similarity with respect to responses between the control groups.

The age range of all respondents fell in the 21 to 35 years of age category. The 3.5 GPA group had 54.6 percent and the 1.5 GPA group had 60 percent representation.

The race/ethnic grouping showed that 96.2 percent of 3.5 GPA students were white, while 75 percent of the 1.5 GPA group were white.

There was little difference between the groups in regard to sex.

In the 3.5 GPA group, 97.6 had a 3.5 GPA or higher in comparison to 28.6 percent of the 1.5 GPA group who had 2.0 to 2.4 GPAs. There possibly was some erroneous marking of surveys by the 1.5 GPA group.

In the 3.5 GPA group, 57 percent were married. Only 15 percent of the 1.5 GPA group were married. Sixty percent of the 1.5 GPA group were single.

In the 3.5 GPA group, 38.2 percent receive financial aid. Sixty-five percent of the 1.5 GPA group receive financial aid.

In the 3.5 GPA group, over 60 percent attended a high school ranging in size from less than 300 to 900. Fifty-five percent of the 1.5 GPA group attended high school in the same size range.

In the 3.5 GPA group, almost 94 percent earned a 3.5 GPA or higher during their first quarter of attendance at Metro. Only 16.7 percent of the 1.5 GPA group had a 3.5 GPA for their first quarter.

There was little difference between the two groups in regard to parents attending college. In both cases, most of the respondents' parents did not attend college.

In the 3.5 GPA group, 99.2 percent were graduated from high school or a GED program. Eighty-three percent of the 1.5 GPA group were high school or GED graduates.

Neither group participated much in student activities.

Neither group used counseling services to any great extent.

It was noted that 8.4 percent of the 3.5 GPA group received financial aid, and 13.8 of the 1.5 GPA group received financial aid.

There were no wide differences in usage of the library, food service, book store, day care, and placement services.

When comparing learning center usage, 4.7 percent of the 3.5 GPA group used their services, and 12.8 percent of the 1.5 GPA group used their services.

In the 3.5 GPA group, 14.5 percent availed themselves of faculty advising, and 7.4 percent of the 1.5 GPA students did.

There were several survey items which showed considerable differences between the two groups. Survey item No. 28, "I can't tell if my classroom work is good or poor," showed a difference of 20.6 between the 3.5 GPA group and the 1.5 GPA group.

Item No. 24, "Others understand my ideas," showed a difference of 18.4 between the two groups.

Item No. 10, "I don't mind getting a C or D in a class," showed a difference of 18.1 between the two groups.

Item No. 3, "My instructors know who I am," showed a difference of 17.4 between the two groups.

Item No. 5, "I rarely miss a class," showed a difference of 14.1 between the two groups.

Item No. 4, "Sometimes I do not understand my instructors," showed a difference of 13.5 between the two groups.

Item No. 23, "I do not feel welcome here," showed a difference of 13.4 between the two groups.

### Conclusions

1. The successful student is between the ages of 21 to 35.
2. The successful student is white.
3. The successful student is married.
4. The successful student does not receive financial aid.
5. The successful student attended a moderately-sized high school rather than large.
6. The successful student earned a high school or GED diploma.
7. The successful student uses faculty advising.
8. The successful student was very successful academically the first quarter of attendance.
9. From the indicators researched in this study, the successful student has a strong desire to succeed.
10. The successful student communicates well and understands others.

11. The successful student feels there is a caring attitude of faculty and staff.

#### Recommendations

Based upon the data collected in this study, the researcher recommends the following:

1. Students who are not ready for college-level courses must be brought up to the level of other students before they are introduced to the competitive atmosphere of the classroom.

2. There must be more emphasis on writing, speech, and conversational skills. A curriculum should be developed to be integrated into as many classes as possible to aid students in writing and thinking "on their feet."

3. In light of the response from the survey that both groups of students did not use counseling services to much extent, further study should be done to determine why students use counseling services so infrequently.

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A

Dear Student:

We want to find out as much as we can about our student body so that we can better serve your needs.

We want to find out more about you and your educational background and experiences at Metro. Enclosed is a short survey for you to complete. Please return it to us in the enclosed postage-free envelope within the next two weeks.

Instructions on how to complete the survey are on the next page. You may be assured of complete confidentiality in the handling of your completed survey. We thank you for taking the time to fill out and return your survey to us.

Yours truly,



Ann Rosenblatt, Instructor  
Secretarial Science

**B**

**NOTE: PLEASE DARKEN YOUR RESPONSE TO QUESTIONS 1 THROUGH 12 (see below) ON THE SURVEY FORM, NOT THIS SHEET. DARKEN APPROPRIATE CIRCLE (S) IN UPPER RIGHT-HAND PORTION OF SURVEY. THEN PROCEED TO ANSWER THE 28 NUMBERED STATEMENTS.**

INSTRUCTIONS FOR COMPLETION OF STUDENT SURVEY

53

Use a No. 2 lead pencil only to complete your responses on the accompanying form. Mark the proper circles according to the following directions.

Each numbered rectangle at the top of the numbered circles stands for the following list of personal characteristics:

1. **Your age**--mark the circle under the first rectangle which is your age group. 1) less than 20 2) 21-35 3) 36-50 4) 51-60 5) more than 60
2. **Racial/ethnic group**--mark one circle only to correspond with the following numbers:
  - 1) Black/Afro American
  - 2) American Indian
  - 3) Oriental/Asian American
  - 4) White/Caucasian American
  - 5) Chicano/Spanish American
3. **Sex**--mark one circle only. 1) male 2) female
4. & 5. **Current grade point average at Metro**--mark one circle under each. Example: 2 4 would represent 2.4 grade point average
6. **Marital status**--mark only one circle to correspond to the following:
  - 1) single
  - 2) married
  - 3) separated
  - 4) divorced
  - 5) widowed
7. **Financial aid**--do you receive financial aid? 1) yes 2) no
8. **Size of high school last attended**--mark only one circle.
  - 1) less than 300 enrollment
  - 2) 301-900 enrollment
  - 3) 901-1299 enrollment
  - 4) 1300-3000+ enrollment
9. **First quarter grade point average at Metro**--mark only one circle.
  - 1) 3.5 or better
  - 2) 3.0-3.4
  - 3) 2.0-2.9
  - 4) 1.0-1.9
  - 5) below 1.0
10. **Did either of your parents attend any college?** 1) yes 2) no
11. **Are you a high school or GED graduate?** 1) yes 2) no
12. **Mark any or all circles of other contacts used at Metro.**
  - 0) student activities/organizations
  - 1) counseling
  - 2) financial aid
  - 3) library
  - 4) food service
  - 5) book store
  - 6) day care
  - 7) learning center
  - 8) employment/placement service
  - 9) faculty advisor

Next, respond to each statement by marking the first circle if you agree and marking the next (second) circle if you disagree. Be sure to complete both sides of the survey. Mail your completed survey only in the enclosed pre-addressed envelope within the next two weeks. No additional postage is necessary.

c



Administrative Offices • P.O. Box 3777 • Omaha, Nebraska, 68103

STUDENT CHARACTERISTICS

(GPA)

														54					
0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4
5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5
6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6
7	7	7	7	7	7	7	7	7	7	7	7	7	7	7	7	7	7	7	7
8	8	8	8	8	8	8	8	8	8	8	8	8	8	8	8	8	8	8	8
9	9	9	9	9	9	9	9	9	9	9	9	9	9	9	9	9	9	9	9

MARKING DIRECTIONS

EXAMPLES

- Use black lead pencil only (No. 2 or softer)
- Do not use ink or ballpoint pens.
- Make heavy black marks that fill the circle completely.
- Erase completely any answer you wish to change.

WRONG  
1 (1) (X) (3) (4) (5)

WRONG  
2 (1) (2) (✓) (4) (5)

WRONG  
3 (1) (2) (3) (●) (5)

RIGHT  
4 (1) (2) (3) (●) (5)

Darken the first circle (1) if you agree and the second circle (2) if you disagree.

1. I feel good about attending Metro. 1 2  
○ ○ ○ ○ ○
2. I want to learn and my grades are secondary in importance. ○ ○ ○ ○ ○
3. My instructors know who I am. ○ ○ ○ ○ ○
4. Sometimes I do not understand my instructors. ○ ○ ○ ○ ○
5. I rarely miss a class. ○ ○ ○ ○ ○
6. The students at Metro are immature. ○ ○ ○ ○ ○
7. I know what I want to do with my life, and I know how to go about it. ○ ○ ○ ○ ○
8. I never see my advisor. ○ ○ ○ ○ ○
9. I take part in classroom discussions. ○ ○ ○ ○ ○
10. I don't mind getting a C or D in a class. ○ ○ ○ ○ ○
11. I have participated in activities offered by Metro other than classroom activities. ○ ○ ○ ○ ○
12. I just want to get a good job. ○ ○ ○ ○ ○
13. My instructors are readily available for help. ○ ○ ○ ○ ○
14. I am reluctant to speak in classes. ○ ○ ○ ○ ○

(over)

Darken the first circle (1) if you agree and the second circle (2) if you disagree.

- |   | 1                     | 2                     | 55                    |                       |                       |
|---|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| 15. I go to my instructors whenever I have questions.     | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 16. I am in no particular hurry to finish my schooling.   | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 17. I plan to get as much education as I can.             | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 18. Metro staff other than faculty are willing to help.   | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 19. I enjoy writing papers.                               | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 20. I usually complete out-of-class assignments.          | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 21. Metro offers the program I wanted.                    | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 22. I blame others when I fail.                           | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 23. I do not feel welcome here.                           | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 24. Others understand my ideas.                           | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 25. I really don't care about school.                     | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 26. I like most of my instructors.                        | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 27. I don't know how to accomplish classroom assignments. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 28. I can't tell if my classroom work is good or poor.    | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

**DO NOT WRITE  
IN THIS SPACE**