

2008

Conquering Counseling: Postsecondary Students and Successful Strategies for Preparedness

William Broome

The College at Brockport, william_broome25@hotmail.com

Follow this and additional works at: http://digitalcommons.brockport.edu/edc_theses



Part of the [Student Counseling and Personnel Services Commons](#)

Repository Citation

Broome, William, "Conquering Counseling: Postsecondary Students and Successful Strategies for Preparedness" (2008). *Counselor Education Master's Theses*. 13.

http://digitalcommons.brockport.edu/edc_theses/13

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Counselor Education at Digital Commons @Brockport. It has been accepted for inclusion in Counselor Education Master's Theses by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons @Brockport. For more information, please contact kmyers@brockport.edu.

Running head: POSTSECONDARY STUDENTS AND SUCCESSFUL STRATEGIES

Conquering Counseling: Postsecondary Students and Successful Strategies for Preparedness

William Broome

The College at Brockport, State University of New York

Acknowledgements

This thesis is a tribute to all who have crossed my path. In crossing my path you have added something into my life that made me pursue greater things for myself and my family. For that I am truly thankful. First and foremost I would like to say thank you to my mom who raised me to continue to push forward in the midst of resistance. Mom, you supplied me with the unconditional love and care that was needed during my teenage years. You are a visual reflection of never giving up. You are my role model and for playing that role, I thank you.

Here is a big shout-out to my two little boys, Braelen and Cameron. You two are the reason that I get up in the morning and continue to push forward. You are that pot of gold that many seek at the end of the rainbow. To my friends, you freakin' rock. Thanks for all your support and love. I cannot thank you enough. There are not enough words to express my gratitude.

A big thank you goes out to my professors and coworkers. You too are a critical part of my success. You were supportive, encouraging, helpful and honest. Those qualities gave me the opportunity to bring out the best in myself. You were willing to give feedback (constructive of course), yet did not shy away from confronting me (constructively of course) to keep me centered and on the right path. You believed you could pull out more from me and when you did it was a change that was irreversible. Thank you for your patience, I believe it was worth the wait.

Also, I would like to thank my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. You have shown me that there is a more productive way to life. That putting my trust in you is the best decision that I could ever make. I thank you Father for aligning my steps with your vision for my life. As said

in Isaiah 40:31 “Those who wait on the lord shall renew their strength. They shall mount up with wings as eagles. They shall run, and not be weary, and walk, and not faint.”

Is it possible to show thanks to someone when you do not feel there are not enough thank you's to go around? Yes, and I believe it would go something like this. To my lovely wife I cannot say how much of a soldier you have been in this process. I truly believe that they do not make many women like you anymore, and if not I am glad I have had the opportunity to share my life and this experience with you. I have never seen someone so supportive, sympathetic, accommodating and combative. You believed in me when others did not, and when I doubted myself. You demonstrated a knack for being able to be critical and compassionate at the same time. You never held your tongue and were willing to build me up when you observed that I was broken down. I truly cannot thank you enough. With these words I wanted to acknowledge that my accomplishments are not merely mine but ours. You truly are a great friend, and what makes things more perfect is that you are my wife. Thank you for everything Sara, I love you.

Lastly, this is a thank you to those who thought I would never make it. Those that had the thought of me never accomplishing or finishing graduate school. I am pleased to let you know I am done. Without you I would not have had the determination and drive to continue. You gave me the motivation to fight through adversity, pain, sleepless nights and self doubt. So guess what? This one is for you. You all know who you are. Give yourself a pat on the back. Do not worry, I will make you proud. Tootles!

Table of Contents

Acknowledgements.....	2
List of Tables.....	5
List of Figures.....	6
Abstract.....	7
Introduction.....	8
Literature Review.....	11
State of Urban Schools.....	11
Student Pressures.....	13
Lack of Resources.....	16
Social Capital Theory.....	19
Programs that are working.....	21
The Transition to College.....	27
Method.....	31
Setting.....	32
Participants.....	32
Procedure.....	32
Results.....	33
Discussion.....	46
Limitations.....	48
Future Research/Implications for Counselors and Other Helping Staff.....	49
Conclusion.....	49
References.....	51

Appendix A..... 57

Appendix B..... 58

Appendix C..... 59

List of Figures

Figure 1: Survey Question 1.....	33
Figure 2: Survey Question 2.....	33
Figure 3: Survey Question 3.....	34
Figure 4: Survey Question 4.....	35
Figure 5: Survey Question 6.....	36
Figure 6: Survey Question 7.....	37
Figure 7: Survey Question 8.....	38
Figure 8: Survey Question 9.....	39
Figure 9: Survey Question 10.....	40
Figure 10: Survey Question 11.....	41
Figure 11: Survey Question 12.....	42
Figure 12: Survey Question 13.....	43
Figure 13: Survey Question 14.....	44
Figure 14: Survey Question 15.....	45

Abstract

This study examines the needs of urban high school students, in regards to college preparedness and readiness. Using one urban high school's junior class, students filled out an anonymous survey pertaining to their knowledge of the overall college admission process. This research is being conducted under the premise that, as educators, we want our urban minority students to pursue a form of higher education after high school. According to the research, a majority of urban students do not have the support that is needed to complete the multiple tasks of applying to college and *de facto* stratification by income has been occurring for over two hundred years. The findings implicate that there are areas that the student's are lacking in knowledge. The areas include lack of knowledge about student aid programs and equal opportunity programs. In addition, the research shows that a majority of the students do not have sufficient time with their counselors in order to develop plans for college. Using literature and the research results, the information will not only be aiding counselors in discovering what students may already know but also providing recommendations as to how to fill in the knowledge gap. Suggestions for counselors are made, as well as areas for future research.

Conquering Counseling: Postsecondary Students and Successful Strategies for Preparedness

The state of America's urban public schools can be described as nothing short of hazardous. The hazards are in the physical buildings themselves, and in the quality and deliverance of academics. There are some urban schools and districts that are an exception to this, but overwhelmingly, when we look at our countries large cities, the schools that lie within them are failing on multiple levels, (Kozol 1967, Kozol; 1991; Kretovics & Nussel 1994). This failure, too often, prohibits minority students from postsecondary success. Post-secondary education does not provide equal opportunities for all, because it is not equally attainable for all. Thirty-two percent of African American students and twenty percent of Latino students attend college compared to forty one percent of White students; this college and this attendance gap has persisted since the civil war and emancipation, (National Center for Education Statistics, 2001,-;2005). This gap helps to maintain the status quo in our society, and as educators and counselors, we must face this reality in order to work at changing it.

The urban centers throughout our country are housing a diverse group of people, but overwhelmingly the children in the public schools are struggling on many levels (Kozol, 1991). The undeniable fact is that these city school districts serve mostly the disadvantaged youth of the community, i.e. the economically poor and mostly Black and Latino students. According to Kozol (1991), the dismal economic factors, embedded in most urban communities, is profoundly affecting the school systems. Therefore, economic background and race are sadly correlated with school success. By knowing the severity of low achieving students, one must acknowledge that race and heritage is a major factor for inequality (Ward, 2006). The state of these schools creates an entirely different scenario for these students than their mostly White suburban and economically stabilized counterparts, especially when it comes to going to college.

The schools are often lacking in resources, and conditions continue to deteriorate (Kozol, 1967,-; Kozol 1991). According to Kopkowski (2005), urban public schools show evidence of being hazardous through proof that regardless of academic standing, getting into college is difficult and often futile. This is a national problem because, when our youth are not educated, they are more likely to be out committing crimes within their microcosmic communities, thus bringing further strife among the urban disenfranchised.

This state of the dire urban public high schools and the low number of students of color attending a four year college with success is an issue our country needs to look at more carefully (Masursky 1997; Slaughter 2009). Moreover, as found by Kuh, Cruce, Shoup, Kinzie, and Gonyea (2008), it is now more than ever, important to have a college degree for economic self-sufficiency. As it used to be a high school diploma that was needed to succeed, it is no longer the case. A post-secondary degree is almost always needed to help guarantee financial success. A college education benefits ones family, future generations, and it increases ones quality of life. Because post-secondary education is essential in order to be successful in a career in society, should not we be making college equally attainable for all prepared high school seniors?

Once called vocational education, the pedagogical movement to college preparedness seems to be an urban educational foci; however, urban school districts in the United States are graduating academically deficient student who will, most likely, not survive either college or the workforce with such high illiteracy numbers. Kozol (1990) explains that illiteracy figures continue to grow worse and worse in urban schools. Knowing that these great discrepancies exist creates an imperative for change, but more importantly we must look at the factors that cause these discrepancies.

One of the causes of the great discrepancy between urban teens and their suburban counterparts is that of poverty. Students from low socioeconomic urban communities face many hardships that are different than the stressors faced by middle and upper class suburban children. College is not something that the families and communities can not appropriately focus on due to the many struggles of the locality. As stated by an interviewee in a study by Gehring (2000), “My students think that college is for rich people,” she said recently after class...If we don’t show them more, this is not in their world. We need to open their eyes ”(p. 6).” This demonstrates that college seems unattainable for some because of economic reasons.

The stressors facing urban communities include poverty, crime, lack of resources and health care, noise pollution, lack of role models, lead toxicity, and many more. These negative situations create a downward spiral on the quality of life resulting in physical and mental health issues, crime, and many other quandries. The spiral needs to be stopped from continually heading downward. This can be done through education. The current state demonstrates that the impact of the struggling community on the public school systems is profound (Kozol, 1991).

To stop, or even slow the downward spiral and uplift American culture in general, we must look at the disheartening trends of our urban public school systems and the issues facing the children in these schools. Looking at the trends will help in assisting those in need most effectively. After researching student stressors and the roots of these stressors, a review of what is working to help these youth succeed to and in college will be addressed. Ideally, assisting this cohort of students to attend and succeed at post-secondary education is the goal, and therefore the paper will look at college preparation and college transitional programs that are helping urban students to succeed. In addition, the research will look at surveys completed by urban high school students and their knowledge or lack of knowledge on different aspects of college

preparation and college attendance. Following will be recommendations for school counselors and teachers in order to address the shortcomings of the student's college knowledge and to assist them to 'see' and 'be' college graduates. As the Latin saying goes, "to think, to do, to be".

Review of the Literature

In reviewing the literature, the paper will look at the many aspects of the life of an urban teenager. First the literature will address the pressures and struggles of urban teens, and how this is different than non-urban teenagers. More specifically, the research addresses the state of urban schools, student pressures, and lack of resources. Two theories are discussed in relationship to these stressors, Maslow's Hierarchy of Need and the social capital theory. The literature then transitions into using this background knowledge of the urban student's struggles, to take a close look at programs that are working. The section on programs that are working looks carefully at several programs with proven success. In addition, the research looks into the transition to college, especially for first-generation college students and urban students in comparison to their White suburban counterparts.

State of Urban Schools

One must, in reviewing the literature, address the fact that many secondary students are not graduating. Graduation from high school is an important prerequisite to attending college. Cabrera and LaNasa (2001) looked closely at the essential prerequisites to attending college. They found that the only way a high school student can go to college depends on acquiring at least minimal college qualifications, actually graduating from high school, and applying to a 4-year college or university. Because these are essential prerequisites, it becomes a major problem when there are barriers in place that block the attainment of these prerequisites. That is the reality for many of our urban teenagers. Getting to high school graduation has many barriers for

them, in and of itself. The numbers for urban minority students graduating is disproportionate and we are losing too many who are falling away from the educational pipeline. One study describes the graduation rate for white students at seventy-five percent, and only about fifty percent for Black, Hispanic, and Native American students (Orfield, Losen, Wald, and Swanson 2004). This gap between the achievement of White students and students of color, referred to as the achievement gap, and dropout trends are often debated topics in the education field. Most continue to struggle with finding the right answers to a very difficult dilemma. This cohort of students is a continually growing number and according to Laguardia (1998), recently, quickly growing college aged freshmen have also revealed extremely low graduation rates. So, even when an urban youth graduates high school, the likelihood of them succeeding in college is low. Therefore, the process of working on getting students enrolled in college is not the end all be all. The preparation for the students to gain access, and then be successful once on campus is essential and dually important.

Too often, one of the outcomes of living the life of a poor urban teenager is dropping out of school. Poverty is closely correlated with high dropout rates. According to Kretovics and Nussel (1994), the research discusses how the economic depression of inner cities relates directly to the despair in urban schools. As expressed by Cabrera and La Nasa (2000) in their description of socioeconomically disadvantaged eighth graders, by twelfth grade, the number of eighth graders from the lowest socioeconomic background to secure at least minimal college qualifications was only two hundred eighty-five out of one thousand. Choosing to drop-out of school may seem like giving up, but for some urban teens, it occurs when there seems to be no other way. With the many stressors they are facing, school may no longer be easily attended. These stressors include poverty, homelessness, social conflict, interpersonal violence, unwanted

pregnancy, sexual or physical abuse, incarceration, loss of loved ones, and personal health threats (Miller and Townsend, 2005). In addition this paper includes the pressure of not “acting white” when achieving in school. These stressors make it difficult to prioritize academics. According to Rumberger (1987), in looking at the correlation between economic factors and dropout rates, they found that twenty percent of dropouts did so because of the need to help their families by working. Working became a priority over attending school, and this barrier is not present when socioeconomic struggles are not in place.

Student Pressures

Attending and dedicating yourself to an English or Math class may be far from a priority when one is hungry or overwhelmed by worldly factors. In a high school in California in a study done by Ochoa (1994), it was found that fifty-two percent of students must work. As previously stated, often the harsh reality is that students have to work to help support themselves or their family members. Often, because of parent/guardian work schedules, students become the primary caregivers of their siblings. When this occurs, they are not able to focus on their education as a first priority. Education is not always at the forefront for many low-income urban high school students (Ochoa, 1994). In addition to dropping out and having the need to work, there are other stressors that face teenagers as well.

In looking at one area of stress, the research (Veronneau, Vitaro, Perderson, and Tremblay, 2008) shows that having aggressive and disruptive friends, lowered graduation rates. Teens are influenced by their peers, and the peer relationship or peer interaction is important to their overall image. Youth struggle with fitting into peer groups, and also with the issues around acceptance and rejection of their peers. According to Peterson-Lewis and Bratton (2004), some African American youths avoid social and academic achievement behavior. This is done in order

to avoid the peer rejection and alienation that may befall them when they are accused of “acting white.” Socially, this is just another pressure that can add to the stress of doing well in school. Fordham and Ogbu (1986) studied the “acting white” social dynamic and found it realistically creating social and psychological pressures against academic achievement and effort. This particular stress on urban youths has a long history in this country. The Uncle Tom phenomenon has long been an inner struggle for Blacks. An Uncle Tom is a Black person that is seen as having a subservient manner to White authority. This stretches back to slavery time, and still plays out for many Blacks today, who do not want to be perceived as trying to willingly comply to Whites in control and therefore they may feel a sense of remorse about doing well in school.

In addition to the stressors addressed, many teens, especially urban teens, feel pressures from the feelings of disconnectedness with their education and school. This disconnectedness comes in many forms from curriculum to lack of school pride. Ochoa (1994) expressed the need of the curriculum to integrate the contributions that different ethnic groups in our society have made in the development of our nation. Simply having a safe, clean building and a curriculum that may help the students feel valued, could make a big difference for some students. Many urban teens go to school in buildings with cracked and broken walls, graffiti outdoors, poor air quality, asbestos, lead paint, and poor desks. This alone may have strong effects on whether or not a child feels good about being in school and whether or not the student will graduate (Ochoa, 1994).

The issue of stressors faced by urban teens is important to look at because, in order to help them succeed, as adults in their lives, counselors need to alleviate or eliminate some of their pressures. If children do not have their basic needs met, both physically and mentally, they will not be able to succeed academically, much less graduate. Maslow’s Hierarchy of Need theory

addresses why students cannot theoretically achieve academically, until they have certain basic needs met.

Maslow's Hierarchy of Need is a theory revealing the steps needed to be taken before other steps (levels) can be met. In children, especially the urban poor, their main focus may still be very basic levels. Therefore, because they cannot yet focus on education and self-esteem, they are failing in the school systems. Maintaining angst on the most base levels, these levels cause anxiety and behavior problems, resulting in academic retention and failure. As explained by Maslow himself (1943):

It is quite true that man lives by bread alone-when there is no bread. But what happens to man's desires when there is plenty of bread and when his belly is chronically filled? At once other (and "higher") needs emerge and these, rather than physiological hungers, dominate the organism. And when these in turn are satisfied, again new (and still higher) needs emerge and so on. This is what we mean by saying that the basic human needs are organized into a hierarchy of relative prepotency (p. 375).

Maslow's Hierarchy of Need is a sixty-seven year old theory which still holds relevance in today's society. In serving people in the counseling discipline, it is evident that before students can be successful, many factors (internal and external) need to be met in order for them to succeed. It is evident that in relating the hierarchy of needs to urban youth, one would have to look clearly at the implications of poverty on these children.

Many children who are living in poverty may be stuck in the bottom two levels, not being able to move up the levels. For example, as stated by Daniels (1992), Maslow's framework

helps assist school counselors when looking at the compromised development of a child as a result of being a member of a homeless family. We have many children in our educational system today who live in homeless shelters, or in unstable homes. Before their educational needs, or esteem needs can be met, their basic survival needs must be addressed.

We can also learn something from Prescott and Simpson (2004), from their in-depth study on the Hierarchy of Need and higher education. They found that failure to address basic issues of a student's course of study can lead to absenteeism and withdrawal. They found that environmental conditions must be satisfied before progress to the other levels will succeed. This study directly relates to secondary education. When administrators grapple with causes behind poor attendance and drop-out rates, they often fall short of explanations and solutions.

Attendance was found to be directly related to a student's not having certain conditions met, for example living needs and emotional supports. Unfortunately schools today need to address the struggles of children who may be lacking in having their needs met at home. It is essential for them to feel a sense of belonging at school or school becomes a disconnected place for them. Therefore, when attempting upward mobility to college for these students, it is important to have this hierarchy at the forefront.

Lack of Resources

As discussed earlier, urban teenagers are at an economic disadvantage. Not only is this evidenced in their family income levels, but it is also most likely true in regards to the resources devoid into their public education. The physical state of the buildings, the slim numbers of staff and support, the lack of extracurricular activities, and even the poor quality of field trips is unequal around the country in our public schools (Kozol, 1991).

Many do not think about the burden these lacking resources places on the senior preparing for college. Kopkowski (2005), in interviewing a high school guidance counselor found that many urban kids cannot afford an SAT prep course or private consultants. The counselor interviewed in the study advises four hundred students, which is one-fifth of the school. This demonstrates that college advisement is often one of the last areas prioritized for funding and creating better ratios. This lack of money does make a difference, and can make or break the college application process for some. According to the study by Levine and Nidiffer (1996), they essentially found that poor students can go to college anywhere, and that institutions have traditionally boasted this. But in reality, de facto stratification by income has been occurring for over 200 years. New research is being conducted on the dire links between economically disadvantaged manifestations like poor food, poor sleep, and poor resources and their link to poor performance.

The lack of resources can quickly become overwhelming when one is economically disadvantaged. There are extreme effects of poverty on teens, and some that do not seem so extreme, like a lack of technology. But, a lack of technological resources creates a huge barrier to postsecondary education for high school juniors and seniors. We must take into account that the financially disadvantaged students do not have the same web access as their peers with home computers. This can create a large barrier when needing to access online SAT schedules, visit college websites, or fill out applications for scholarships or financial aid. In addition, taking the SAT becomes a trigger mechanism; in that once you take the SAT you begin to receive college information packets. In a study by Hossler, Schmit, and Vesper (1999), they followed eight students through the college aspiration process. Three of the students did not take the SAT and therefore did not receive much college information. In addition, when a student is evicted and

forced to move, third class mail is not forwarded and they therefore do not receive the mass mailing of college information materials. This is an area that again, is less likely to be problematic for an economically stable student.

As we continue to look at the barriers and lack of resources facing urban students, we also need to look at the differences in the placement of funds within the schools. When looking at the resources within the schools dedicated to college preparation, the balance is again unequal. The sheer number of counselor to student ratios is unequal from school to school, with the discrepant ratio being the largest in large urban districts. According to Boyer (1986), the research showed that urban school counselors are not able to make college guidance a priority. The counselor explained that college advisement did not happen automatically, but only when a student requested it by appointment. When this occurs, it is almost inevitable that lower numbers of students will attain information and apply to colleges. This same issue was also found by Falsey and Heyns (1984) in their study of private versus public schools. They found that private schools, in the sample, have more counselors per student; a larger proportion of students reported that counselors influenced their post-secondary education plans. This study found a significant difference between public and private schools in terms of college attendance. Also, success rates were much greater for private school attendees. The study concluded that one of the reasons was that the private schools devoted more resources to advising and counseling college bound students. This can be a situation where some will make it to college and others will not, simply based on the school counselor supports. The situation can become dependent on whether or not a student will have someone available to help them through the college application process. This is especially that case because many urban students are first-generation college students and do not have family members to help them through the

application process. Farmer-Hinton and McCullough (2008), discuss the concern of students of color getting the college counseling that they need. They found in their study that counselors are especially important because they often provide and distribute information to students and explain college expectations (social capital) that are necessary to successfully transition to a four year college. The social capital phenomenon is imperative for students who lack experience in college life and expectations.

Living in an economically disadvantaged area negatively affects the school district within the area (Kozol, 1991). The affects are disparaging and as stated throughout this section, there are undeniable connections between poverty and the lack of school success. Having a lack of resources, whether it technology or financially, the struggle is real for too many of our urban students. Therefore, in order to combat this hindrance, one must expose the students to a different way of life through education. This exposure and lifestyle change is done through the theory of social capital.

Social Capital Theory

One progressive way to look at the struggles of disadvantaged youth is through the social capital theory. The theory, when applied to urban students, attempts to ideally submerge the student into the college way of life by exposing them on many levels to college living and expectations. In theory the students would be able to maneuver in different worlds by knowing the expectations of the college world that was once foreign to them. According to Stanton-Salazar and Dornbusch (1995), the theory is defined as, “social relationships from which an individual is potentially able to derive various types of institutional resources and support” (p. 116). Many studies have addressed this theory and tested it in different environments. Most of these studies are attempting to hypothesize why low socio-economic status children of color

struggle so much to succeed in the school setting. In further research by Stanton-Salazar (1997), he examines how youth must manage in multiple worlds and develop relationships with institutional agents in order to succeed. He explains that, for many minority children and youth, learning the dominant culture is difficult. He continues to explain that operating in multiple worlds has borders. When borders are obstructive and stressful, as they often are for minority children and youth, movement between the borders is often difficult and adaptation within alien terrain is problematic. Therefore, the adult agents (i.e. parents, coaches, teachers, counselors) in the child's life must be prepared to help them through this process and support them as they cross the borders to post-secondary education as well as and negotiate with them through the uncomfortable terrain of college applications and college life. Kim and Schneider (2005) describe social networks in their study in relationship to social capital. They explain social networks as status-bridging that can occur when individuals tap into resources through created social ties. Social capital occurs when the social networking actually connects individuals to the resources. When goals are made and interpersonal networks facilitate paths for opportunity, then social capital is in action. This theory has great relevance in that disadvantaged students have to negotiate their way through uncomfortable territories in order to gain the resources they need to succeed at graduating high school and beyond. In addition, the theory benefits the student beyond college because it teaches the skill of social networking which is a job-seeking and life-long skill to have.

A lack of interpersonal networks may give some clearer insight into the inequalities in our society; yet how do we combat this problem? According to the social capital theory, students will experience college life by witnessing campus life and hearing college jargon. However, there is inequality in access to social capital (Farmer-Hinton and McCullough, 2008).

Social capital theory suggests that by combating the inequalities in access to social capital, the individuals experiencing the status bridging will find great success. There are programs that line up theoretically with the social capital theory and success has been manifested.

Programs that are working

If there are so many barriers that keep urban youth from graduating and going to college, then how are some students able to negotiate these obstacles? In spite of the odds, some of teenagers are persevering and have found ways to become high school graduates, finding entrance to and success in post-secondary education programs. There are programs in this country that are changing the lives of these students and overcoming the status quo by giving them access to social capital.

One such program was researched by Percy-Calaff (2008). This program looked carefully at the role of teachers and counselors in getting the students to college. The program also tried to fill in gaps where the students had a lack in resources. They and found that by setting high expectations, but also supporting the culture and language of the students, the Latino students in their school were able to find success. Technology supports were also a large part of this program. The school being studied received many local and national awards; the school prides themselves on embracing the student's cultural and linguistic backgrounds. The important pieces to their success are aspects that help the students feel not only a connection to their school but also a sense of belonging. This sense of belonging creates both pride and motivation around the educational process. The school assisted the students in feeling as though college was attainable for them by filling in the gaps (language supports, increased counseling and family supports, assistance in endeavors outside of school i.e. college, jobs) that they needed and made college seem real.

Many schools and the districts that struggle are looking to reform and to use innovative ways to increase the success rates of their schools. Charter schools have the flexibility to create structures that promote innovative educational methods and programs because they are not regulated in the same way public schools are regulated (Farmer-Hinton & McCullough, 2008). According to Farmer-Hinton & McCullough (2008), charter systems are able to offer non-traditional school structures and smaller student enrollments. This is extremely valuable in order to allow counselors the freedom to address a problem that has not historically been prioritized – the un-tracking of academically and socioeconomically vulnerable students in order for them to transition to college. Many charter schools have attempted to design their schools around reform, some have been successful and.

In addition to the efforts of charter schools, a new trend in attempting to serve high school students is that of the college preparatory programs (Farmer-Hinton & Adams, 2006). These can be charter schools that focus on college preparedness; or they can be public schools with special course offerings geared towards college readiness. Many of these schools are designed so that the counselors have more time to support a college readiness focus. Counselors know that having a mentor that has the right amount of time to spend with students on college preparation is extremely important. According to Farmer-Hinton & Adams (2006), four year university students had greater access to their high school counselors. In their study of a college preparatory high school for Black students, they found the school to be successful because of the foci of the school counselors. The counselors maintained a different role than the school counselors in the suburban schools. The study found that counselors purposely addressed a student population with limited college experience or knowledge and worked to create norms

around college access and options. Ultimately they were to convince predominantly first-generation college-bound students that college was definitely an option.

As stated prior, in large urban districts, the school counselors are often not able to prioritize college advisement, and they spend much of their time on other tasks. In terms of college preparation, the counselor in an urban school has an even larger job to do than their counterparts; they must first convince the students that college is attainable and then make it familiar to them. This can seem overwhelming, but there is a program that has found a way to make college familiar on many levels. The national program is called GEAR UP and it stands for Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs. This unique program has been implemented in many states across the country and has many success stories. GEAR-UP, according to Ward (2006), is a promising educational reform initiative that's goal is to increase the rate of low-income and minority undergraduates in institutions of higher education. GEAR-UP attempts to do this by promoting high standards and rigorous course-work. GEAR-UP, in an effort to promote high standards for the students, encourages community and local colleges to aid them in the effort. Also in Ward's study (2006), it was demonstrated that the GEAR-UP program requires collaboration between school districts and university partners. This is to ensure that curriculum standards fully prepare students for college and college life. There are many different aspects to the GEAR-UP program. There are expanded educational enrichment opportunities extended to all students (e.g., tutoring, college excursions, 6 week summer program, and preparation for college entrance examinations). Also included in the reform are professional development workshops for teachers, as well as parent programs, and important financial gap-filling scholarships. GEAR-UP has become a national program adopted by many states.

The GEAR-UP program in Louisiana hosts a summer learning camp. This camp has a variety of activities that help the student experience college life first hand. Beer, LaBlanc, and Miller studied this in their research (2008) and found that students could gain an understanding of college life through living in dormitories, eating in the student centers, conducting research with college faculty, and attending classes. In addition, the camp focused on tutoring, math and science exploration, leadership training, and college life experiences. Embedded in all of this were admission and financial aid informational sessions.

Each program encompasses its own unique style with major themes throughout the GEAR-UP program. This unique program provides opportunities not only for students and teachers, but for parents as well. It is playing out the social capital theory with positive results. The GEAR-UP program is looking for parents to be key components in the success of the program and their child's education. According to Hewett & Rogers (2003), the critical piece to student's successful participation in GEAR-UP is the involvement of parents and guardians. Therefore, GEAR-UP has programming and workshops that help parents to understand the college process, understand the opportunities for their child, and how to take advantage of the opportunities.

The GEAR-UP program initiative has established some help to a population long in need. It is not only serving the teenagers with social capital, but it is providing the schools, and families with the social capital needed as well. According to Gehring (2000), nationally, evidence is mounting that GEAR-UP is making an impact on the target population. Educators credit GEAR-UP with helping to more than double participation in a program in Oklahoma that enrolls low-income students in rigorous academic work and makes them eligible for free college tuition. A program such as GEAR-UP has given middle school and high school students a

chance to live a dream that they did not even know was attainable. Students saw college as an aspiration; but, really, they did not know how to obtain those hopes and dreams. By gaining social capital through the GEAR-UP program, the goal of college bound students and college graduates from the starting point of a disadvantaged urban teens is reached. As addressed by Moser (2006), in an interview with the cofounder of the Citizen Schools Program, discussed that the GEAR-UP program gives students a taste and feel of the prize they are going after. This is done through the on-campus experience. Their eyes are opened to seeing in color what science, for example, at the college level looks like. One student in the study attributed GEAR-UP for her early thoughts of college attainment. The student graduated from an underperforming middle school and will be majoring in math at Hamilton College.

The GEAR-UP program has proven success (Gerhing 2000; Hewett and Rogers, 2003; Moser, 2006; Ward 2006). The GEAR-UP program specifically tracks their students to determine the effectiveness of the program. They continually assess and evaluate the progress by using pre and post tests as well as other types of observations. As stated by Hewett & Rodgers (2003) in reporting about the Citadel GEAR-UP program, report cards (grades), teacher comments, behavior changes, pre and post tests, program attendance, and parent teacher conferences are used to evaluate the growth of the students throughout the program.

Through looking at the assessments used to track progress, one finds a lot of support for the GEAR-UP program due to the positive correlations between the program and increased success in students reaching and succeeding in post-secondary education (Gerhing 2000; Hewett and Rogers, 2003; Moser, 2006; Ward 2006). More recently, some programs are being set-up that mock the operations of the GEAR-UP program because of its high success rate.

In addition to charter schools and specifically designed programs to address urban students, some are looking for new ways to reach urban teenagers, and many organizations in society are attempting to find ways to do their part as well. One study in Indianapolis looked at the high rate of college attendance of low-income students by participating in a program where they were given the role and responsibility of a research assistant in a laboratory. This program was building social capital in a different way and found that more than three quarters of the participants of the ACS's Summer Educational Experience for the Disadvantaged (SEED) scheme went on to obtain college degrees (Macilwain, 1993). By thinking of non-traditional ways to create social capital and giving these students' experiences that help them to feel comfortable in academic situations, the organizers found a way to be part of the solution to this long standing problem. The students work in biology labs, where they become comfortable with a lot of sophisticated material and language. This program has helped students gain confidence, and social capital, to continue their education beyond high school.

In addition to several organizations reaching out to find solutions to this problem as a whole, some have found that assisting on the individual level can also make a difference. Mentoring has been a long standing concept that has proven to work on many levels. The mentor must be fully committed for the period necessary for the mentoring to work. A true mentor can be a family member, a church or school staff or member, or a complete stranger (Levine & Nidiffer, 1996). In the research done by Levine & Nidiffer (1996), they studied the success stories of poor first-generation college students. They found a similar theme throughout all of the success stories and that was the presence of a mentor of some kind. They concluded that the recipe for getting a student to college is in simple terms, "one arm around one child; one mentor with one poor person" (p. 139). Disadvantaged students need only one adult to change

their lives, blood or not blood related. Therefore, combating the problem on the small, individual level has proven effective in getting disadvantaged urban students to college as well.

Therefore, there are many programs today that are working to increase the success rates of urban teenagers reaching and succeeding in post-secondary education. Most of these programs work because gaining social capital is the underlying foci embedded in the agenda. As many gain social capital, they become more comfortable with the realities of college life. These programs help with the transition to college, because it can be quite a culture shock. To move from one disadvantaged neighborhood, to a bubbly and busy campus dorm can be a difficult transition on many levels.

The Transition to College

The focus of this study is to look carefully at ways to help disadvantaged teens with the college preparation process. The focus is not simply on college entrance, but also finding college success. The goal of assisting disadvantaged teens through the college preparation process is to have them attend, as well as graduate from college. Because post-secondary conferral is the ultimate goal, one must take a closer look at the trends towards college success. Most disadvantaged teens will be first-generation college students.

A first generation college student is one with neither parent having completed a four-year college degree program (Pascarella, Pierson, Wolniak, and Terenzini (2004)). In discussion regarding first generation college students, Pascarella, Pierson, Wolniak, and Terenzini (2004) found that, the weight of evidence from the research indicates that, first generation college students tend to be at a distinct disadvantage with respect to basic knowledge about postsecondary education (e.g. costs of application process), educational degree expectations and planning, and level of family income and support in comparison with their peers. In addition,

The National center for education statistics, (2005) found that first generation college students are less likely to graduate than peers who have at least one parent with a college degree.

The lack of success can be for many reasons. A study by Collier & Morgan (2007), looked at the faculty expectations of students and then at the students' understanding of those expectations. The study concluded that a lack of social/cultural capital and background information regarding post-secondary education limits the first-generation student from knowing how to effectively take on the role of college student. This disproportionately affects first-generation college students. In addition, this study found that students who came from more educationally advantaged families performed better in college, even in comparison to students with similar academic abilities.

When looking more closely at the struggles of first-generation college students, one sees that the social capital theory is again relevant. The theory looks at the social relationships used to obtain resources. Because college is a very new environment for first-generation students, acquiring social relationships in order to improve success may be very difficult, especially when a student does not fully understand each aspect of college life. In a study by Collier (2008), in interviewing a first-generation college student found that the student had no idea what a syllabus was or the importance of the syllabus. Another student from this study explained his concern that he did not know what was expected of him in college and that a lot of students had more of an understanding than him. The student gave examples of the types of writing styles, and how he just did not know anything about them, when others seemed to have a clear understanding. The lack of social capital in these examples puts these first-generation college students at an extreme disadvantage in comparison to their peers who have the college life understandings. This dilemma will affect the first-generation student both academically and socially. In addition,

there are communication barriers between staff and students; this was demonstrated by yet another student in this study who stated, “I didn’t understand what office hours were all about.... I mean, the hours are there on the syllabus. “Ok, what’s that got to do with anything? What am I supposed to do with office hours? I didn’t know that a teacher was available at a certain time for me to come and talk if I had a problem” (p. 439). According to the social capital theory, in order to be successful when crossing academic borders, relationships need to be built with social agents. If a student does not know where or how to face the barriers, than they are unequal to their peers, who have an understanding in this area. Moschetti & Hudley (2008) studied the social capital theory in relation to first-generation college students and found similar findings. They found that communication with social agents was strongly related to grade point average outcomes and that first-generation, working class males may be less likely to access institutional agents than their counterparts. If the understandings around college protocol are not present, and acceptable communication between the students and professors is not present, than it has been demonstrated that the student will have more of a struggle in succeeding in college.

Since it is quite obvious that urban youth face many obstacles in the educational process, the first priority is high school graduation. If this is attained, then preparing the student for the difficult barriers and “borders” of college life should be the next goal. The success rate of these disadvantaged first-generation students does not look good. Extending research to find outcomes of why first-generation college students, and students from low socio-economic status, do not graduate and ways to combat this problem is needed. There are several propositions and recommendations for the increase of post-secondary educational success. Fischer (2007) examined the factors contributing to the decision to leave college. He looked at school level characteristics, the college environment, precollege characteristics, and social and academic

adjustment. The study conducted by Fischer measured students who left college by the end of their junior year and reasoning for their departure. According to Fischer (2007), students who had more formal ties (i.e. friends) resulted in less likelihood of dropping out of college. Extracurricular activities made a difference for minority students. The likelihood of leaving college was reduced by at least 83% for minority students who were involved in extracurricular activities. Therefore, it is important for students, especially first-generation students to become engaged in school activities, including social events.

College success is not found in simply attending a college or university but also obtaining the education and the successful completion of a degree. According to ASHE Higher Education Report (2007), a few methods can be recommended or implemented to aid student success in postsecondary education; ensure rigorous academic preparation, increase the information and quality of information about colleges to families lacking (including aid and real costs), provide support networks (including early warning systems and safety nets), align financial aid policies and packages with student needs, and improve post-secondary teaching to include a better understanding of student experience. The recommendations refer to what the literature considers to be conditions that matter to student success. ASHE Higher Education Report (2007) passionately explains that it is now important to be consistent in bringing promising policies and effective practices to college programs in order for more students to be prepared, accepted, and successful once they are there. There are innumerable ways for programs to be set up and successful in helping with this transition. A careful look at programs to support the transition would pay off in the long run.

Therefore, there needs to be support on every academic level for the disadvantaged teens of our country, from middle school up through college or post-secondary education. As

determined from this literature review, the pressures begin early for many of these children; the implications of this stress continue beyond graduation from high school. The focus of the research conducted for this paper cannot solve, or even attempt to solve, the problems of inequality, and poverty. As found by Levine (1996), race, religion, gender and birthplace should not be hindrances to the college process. There should be many, many more poor people in college than are currently attending. Therefore, the area of focus is not only regarding ways to help urban high school students realize that it is possible for them to be college graduates, but also to show them the clear steps to this attainable goal.

Method

The purpose of this research was to look at urban high school student's preparedness and awareness in regards to the overall college process. The research would then focus on the areas that the student's fell short in. An added objective in this research was to provide recommendations to counselors. In order to find out what the students were and were not prepared for in regards to applying for college, information directly from the students was needed. In tackling this objective, an anonymous survey was used to gather the data. The Likert-type scale survey consisted of 15 questions with questions all related to post-secondary decisions and knowledge. The purpose of the survey was to gain the honest assessment of the student's knowledge about college without compromising their confidentiality. From the surveys, the areas of need would be highlighted for discussion, and they would serve as direct suggestions for counselors to work on in the discrepant areas. The recommendations could be used to continue a successful plan of attack and help students gain a better understanding of college and the college application process.

Setting

The research was conducted in an urban high school in the northeast United States. According to the New York State District Report Card 2007-2008, the district serves 32,147 students K-12. More specifically, there were 1,563 students in the high school where the study took place. The average class size in the district was twenty four students. The percentage of students eligible for free lunch was seventy-three percent and with eight percent receiving reduced-priced lunch. Nine percent of the population was students that are limited English proficient. The demographic profile of the district is as follows: sixty-five percent are Black/African American, twenty-one percent are Hispanic/Latino, two percent are Asian or Native American/Other Pacific Islander, eleven percent is White/Caucasian, and one percent are multi-racial (<https://www.nystate.gov/publicweb-rc/2007/87/AOR-2008-261600010000.pdf>). The median household income in this school district is \$30,927 (<http://www.topix.com/information/rochester-ny>, 2008).

Participants

The study consisted of juniors from an urban high school in western New York. Authorization to conduct the research came from the Principal of the school (Appendix A) and the Institutional Review Board of the school district. The junior class was chosen with the premise that as juniors, they would be encountering the college application process soon. In gaining the knowledge from this junior class, it would help us as educators be more cognizant of their knowledge, which in turn could help us be more effective in aiding them in this area.

Procedure

The student received an informed consent form (Appendix B) explaining the survey and its purpose. The students had a choice to fill out the survey or decline. The survey (Appendix

C) was distributed in English classrooms. The teacher distributed and collected the assessment at the beginning of class. The assessment was collected and placed in a large manila envelope. The total number of juniors that could have participated in this specific study was sixty eight students. The total number of juniors that participated in the study was fifty six, with twelve declining participation.

Results

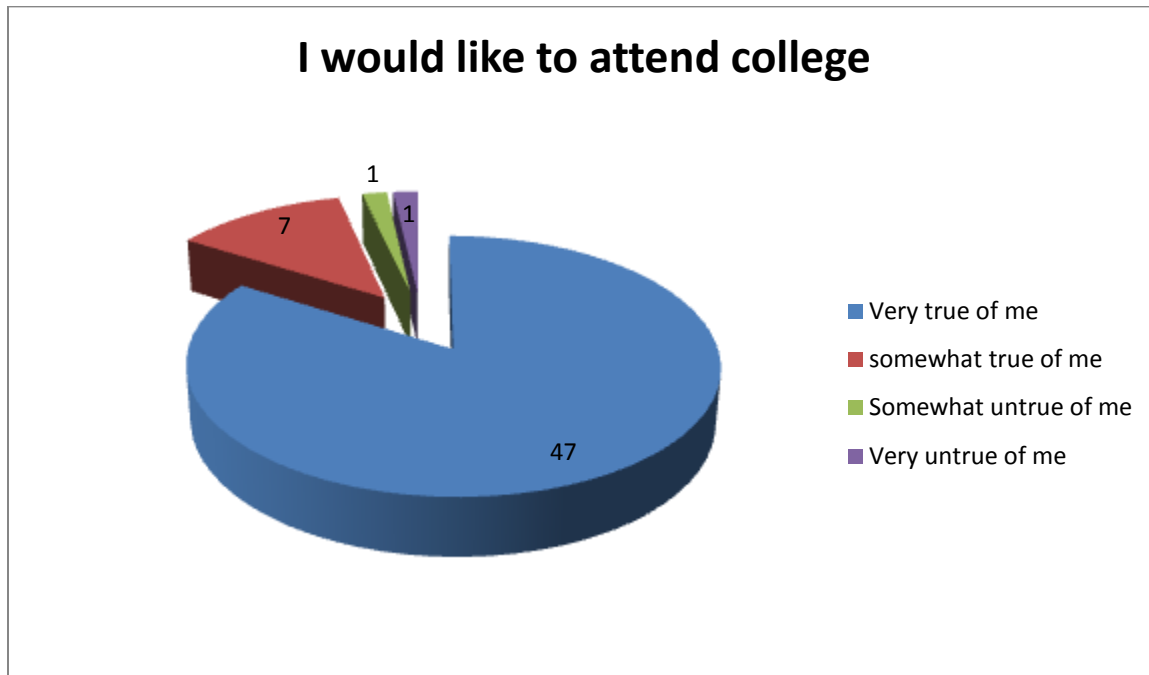
The data below is compiled of both quantitative and qualitative parts. The quantitative portion of the study consisted of a 15 item, anonymous Likert-type scale survey questions. The survey looked to evaluate the student's knowledge or lack thereof pertaining to the overall college process. Also, there were three qualitative questions that were used as follow-ups to three specific quantitative questions. The rationale for using this method was to incorporate the student's insight and reasoning behind their quantitative answer. In the information below you will find specific results to each question asked on the survey. Also, incorporated into this section will be the qualitative responses grouped separately or together depending on trends or themes presented by the findings.

Question #1

Students identified whether or not they would like to attend college. According to the 56 students surveyed, 47 students stated it very true of me, seven stated it somewhat true of me, one stated it somewhat untrue of me and one stated it very untrue or me. The data indicated that a majority of the students have the interest in attending college. The answer to this question was consistent with the question that followed, why or why not? In response to this question, two themes arose. The first was that going to college is an essential part of being successful in life. Many responded with answers stating that going to college would make them successful. The

other theme that manifested was that the student wanted to prove that they could be successful. Their statements made it apparent that being successful meant proving to themselves and family members that they did have determination to succeed even among some doubts. (see Figure 1)

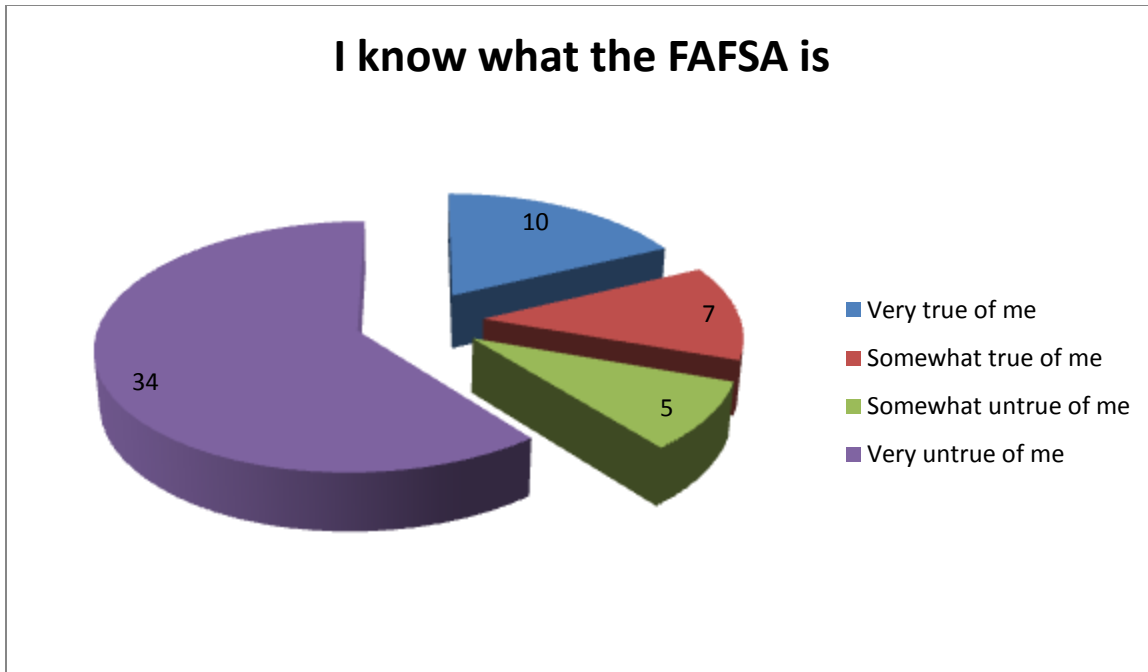
Figure 1: Survey Question #1



Question #2

Students identified their knowledge in the “FAFSA” Federal Student Aid. According to the fifty-six students surveyed, ten stated it very true of me, seven somewhat true of me, five somewhat untrue of me and 34 very untrue of me. The results specify that a large group of students lack the knowledge of the Federal Student Aid process. This is an area of concern and an area for further discussion. (see Figure 2).

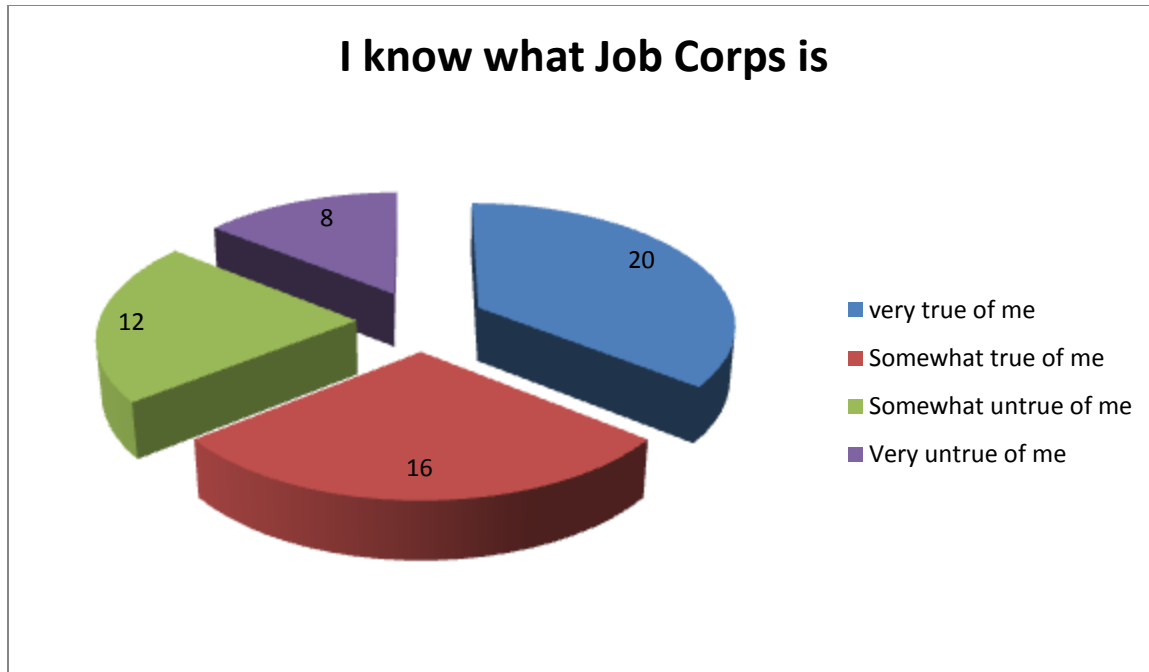
Figure 2: Survey Question #2



Question #3

Students identified their knowledge of the Job Corp program. According to the fifty-six students surveyed, 20 stated it very true of me, 16 somewhat true of me, 12 somewhat untrue of me and eight very untrue of me. The results show that a bulk of the students has some prior knowledge of the Job Corp program. (see Figure 3)

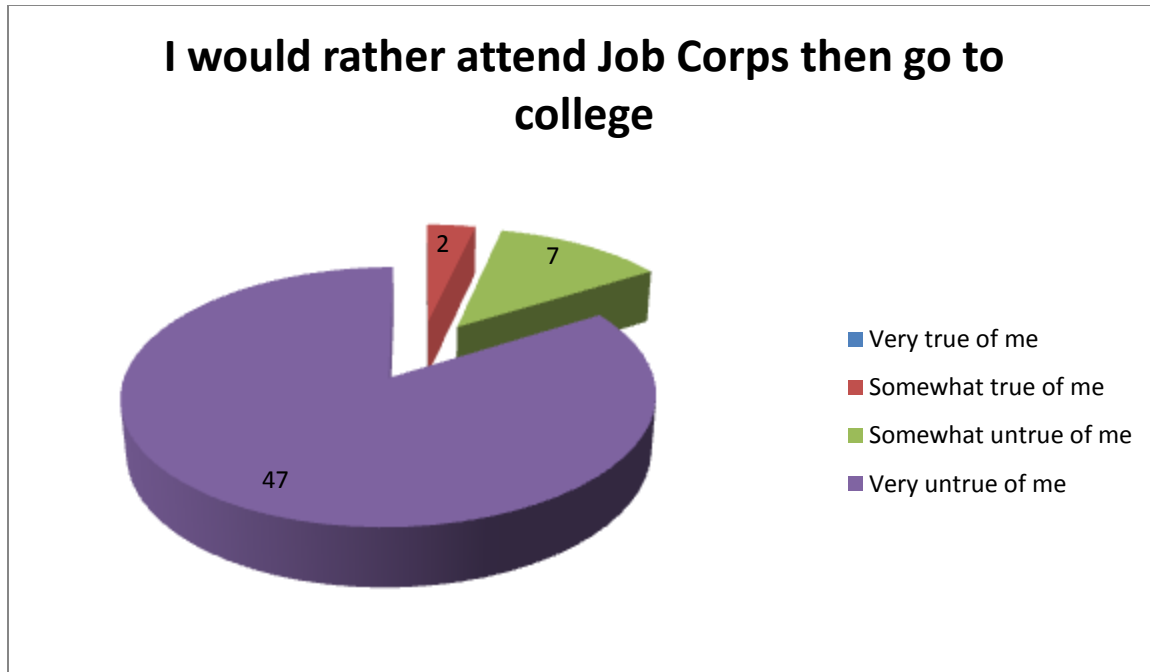
Figure 3: Survey Question #3



Question #4

Students identified their choice in attending Job Corp or attending college. The question asked if they would rather attend Job Corp. According to the fifty-six students surveyed, zero responded very true of me, two somewhat true of me, seven somewhat untrue of me, and 47 very untrue of me. The research results demonstrate that students prefer the option of college to job trade training. Consistent with this data was the qualitative answer the students shared. The question simply stated “Why or Why not?”. A theme arose among the answers here, and it was that a job was not more important than the chance of obtaining more education. Student’s suggested that a job will come but with more education your chances of success in life are greater. (see Figure 4)

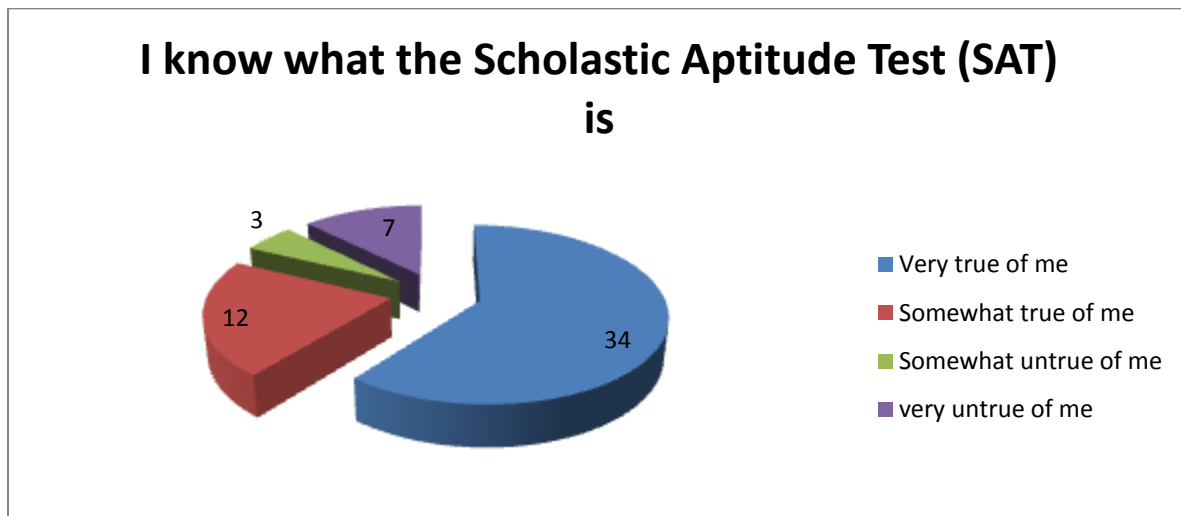
Figure 4: Survey Question #4



Question #5

Students were asked to identify their knowledge of the “SAT” Scholastic Aptitude Test. According to the 56 students surveyed, 34 stated very true of me, 12 somewhat true of me, three somewhat untrue of me and seven very untrue of me. The majority of students had some knowledge of the SAT. (see Figure 5)

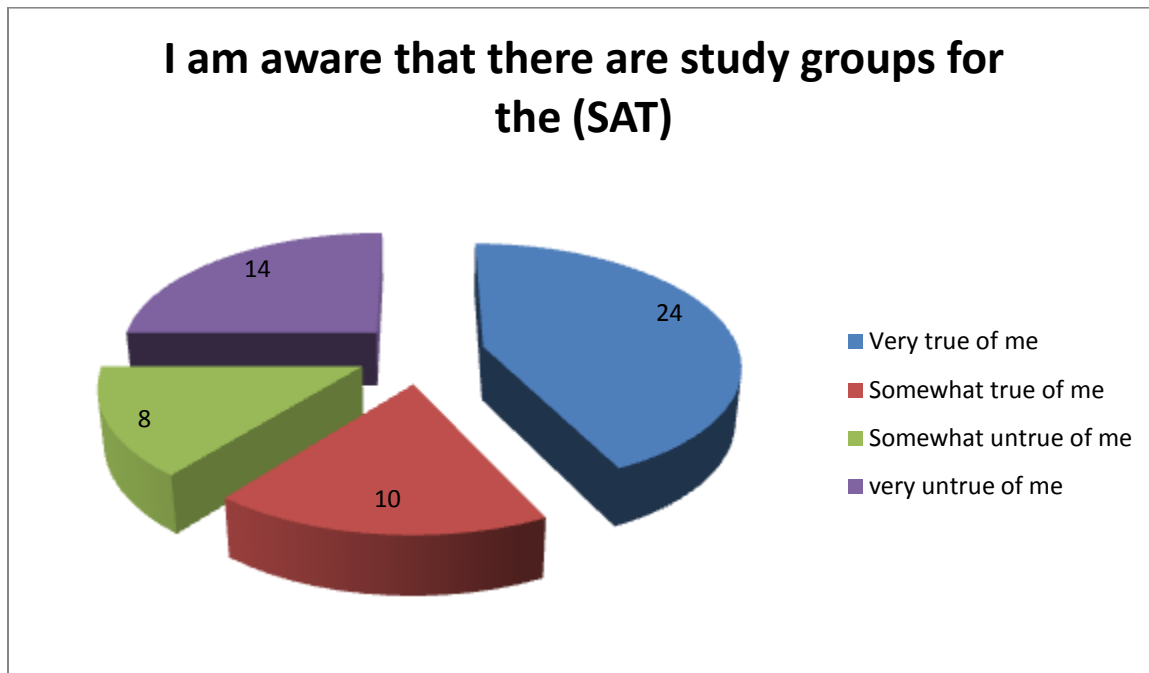
Figure 5: Survey Question # 5



Question #6

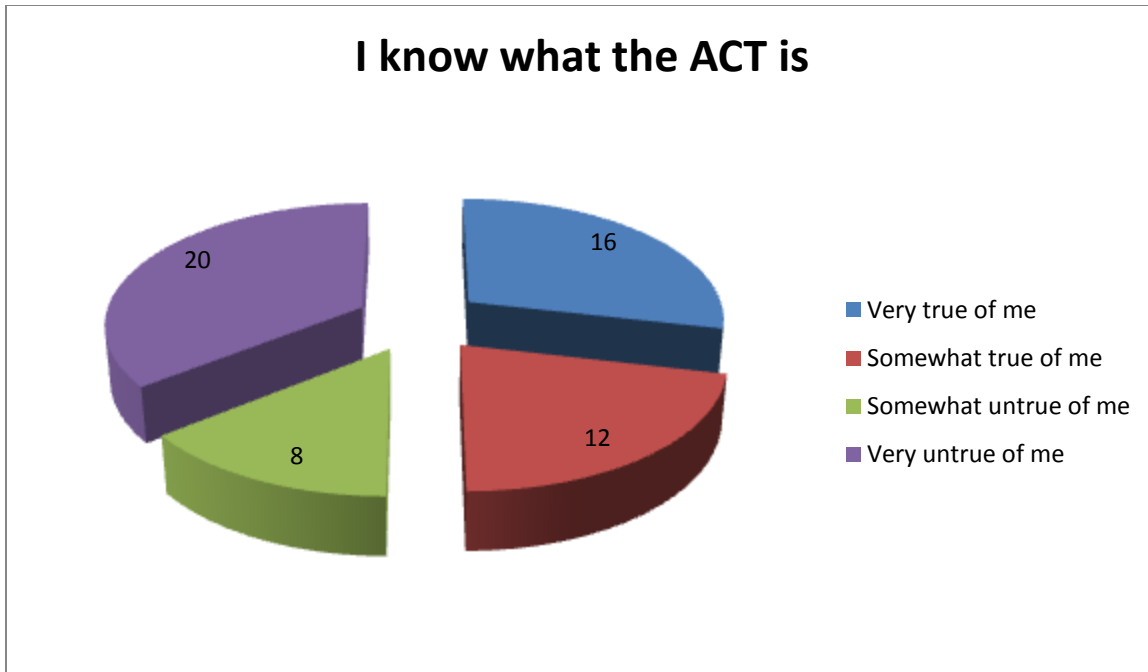
Students were asked if they were aware of SAT study groups. According to the 56 students surveyed, 24 stated very true of me, ten somewhat true of me, eight somewhat untrue of me, and 14 very untrue of me. The data shows that there is a split between the students knowing what the SAT is and the option of enrolling in a study group. (see Figure 6)

Figure 6: Survey Question #6

*Question #7*

Students were asked to identify their knowledge of the ACT aptitude test. According to 56 students surveyed, 16 stated very true of me, 12 somewhat true of me, eight somewhat untrue of me and, 20 very untrue of me. This data indicates that students again are split in having knowledge of the ACT. (see Figure 7)

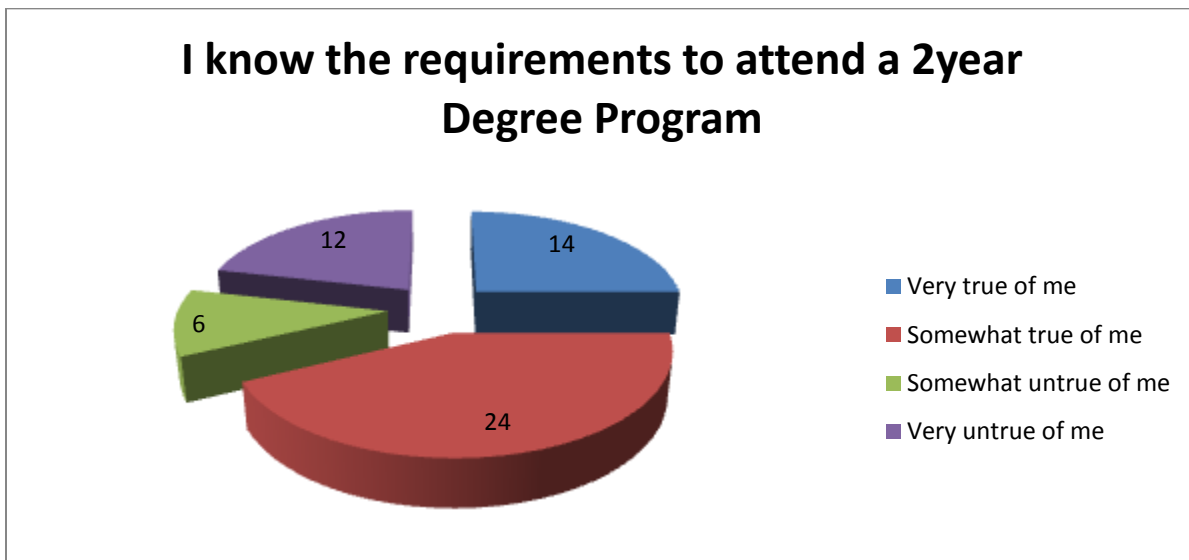
Figure 7: Survey Question #7



Question #8

Students were asked about their knowledge of the entrance requirements of a two year college degree program. According to the 56 students that were surveyed, 14 stated very true of me, 24 somewhat true of me, six somewhat untrue of me and 12 very untrue of me. (see Figure 8)

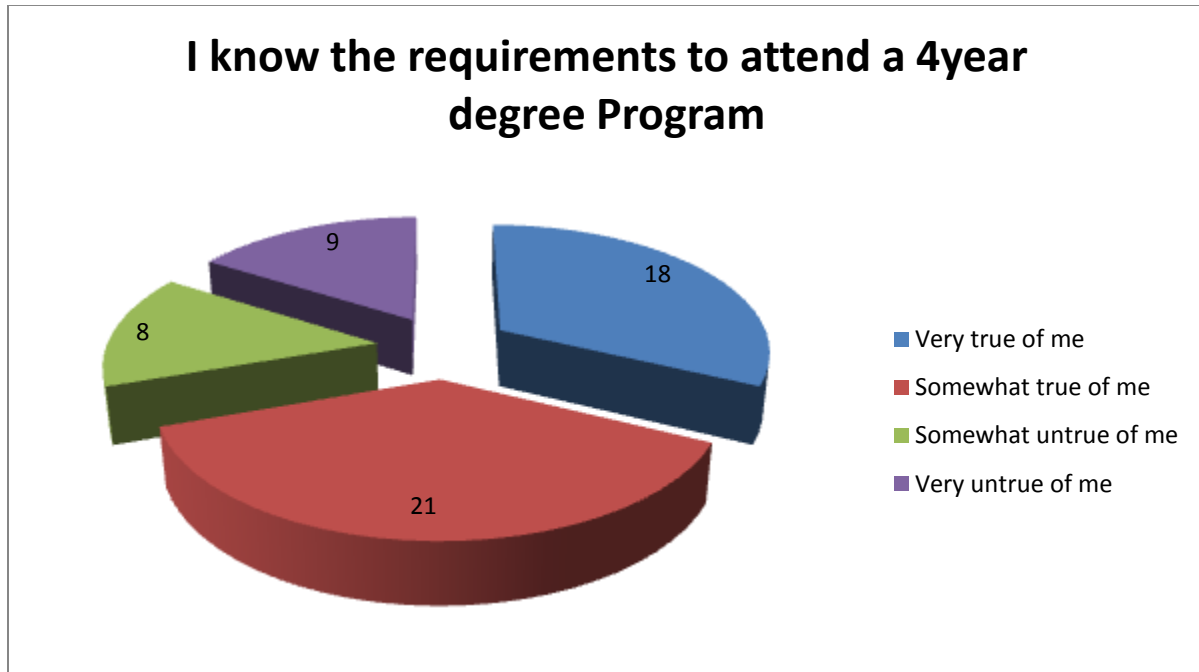
Figure 8: Survey Question #8



Question #9

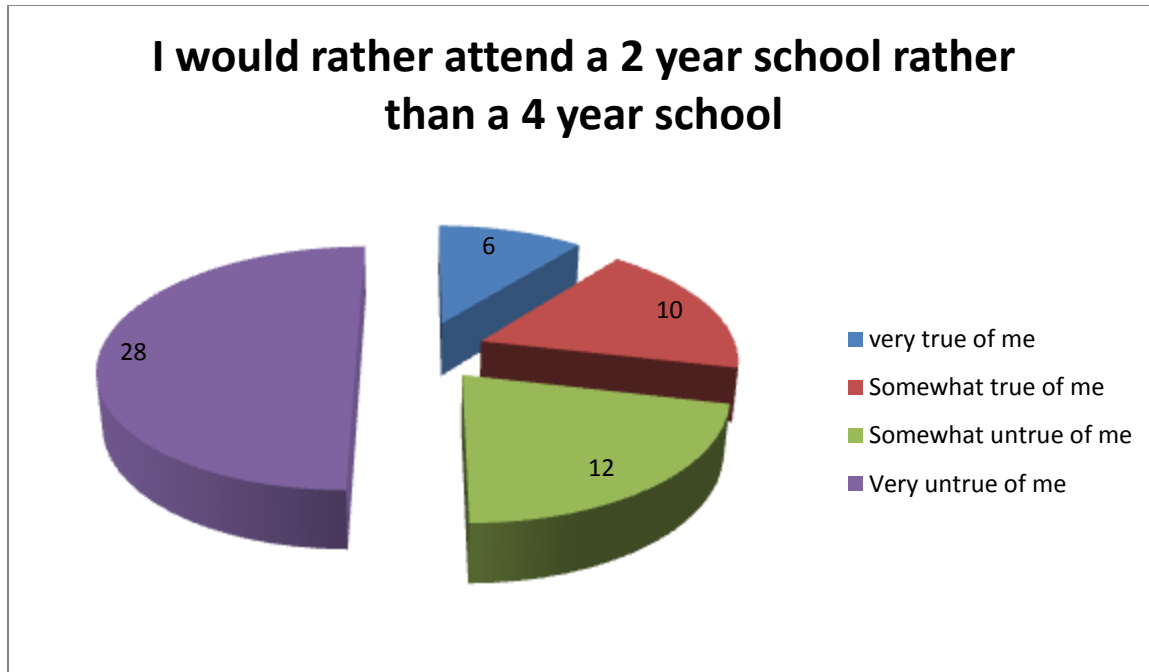
Students were asked about their knowledge of the entrance requirements of a four year college degree program. According to the 56 students that were surveyed, 18 stated very true of me, 21 somewhat true of me, eight somewhat untrue of me and nine very untrue of me. (see Figure 9)

Figure 9: Survey Question#9

*Question #10*

Students were asked if they would rather attend a two or four year college. According to the 56 students surveyed, 28 students stated very true of me, 12 somewhat true of me, ten somewhat untrue of me and six very untrue of me. This question was consistent with the follow-up question, why or why not? The majority of the students indicated that they will be the first one in the family to go to college. They also expressed that earning a four degree gives them a better chance in attaining their goals. (see Figure 10)

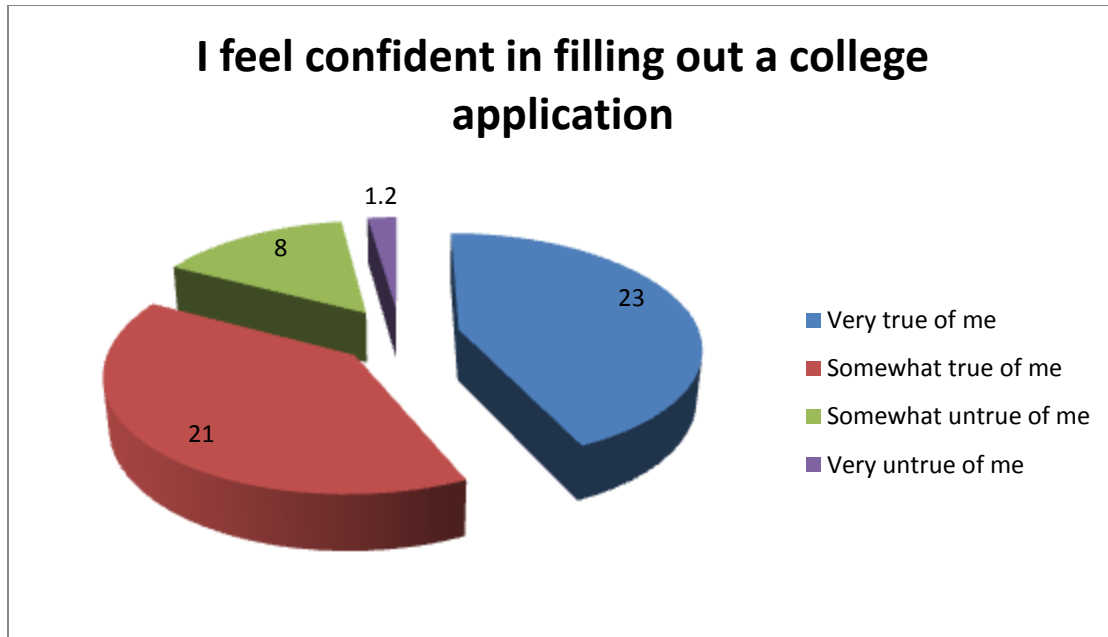
Figure 10: Survey Question #10



Question #11

Students were asked about their confidence level in filling out a college application. According to the 56 students surveyed, 23 students stated very true of me, 21 somewhat true of me, eight somewhat untrue of me, and four very untrue of me. In looking at the data it was apparent that the students were mostly comfortable in filling out a college application. (see Figure 11)

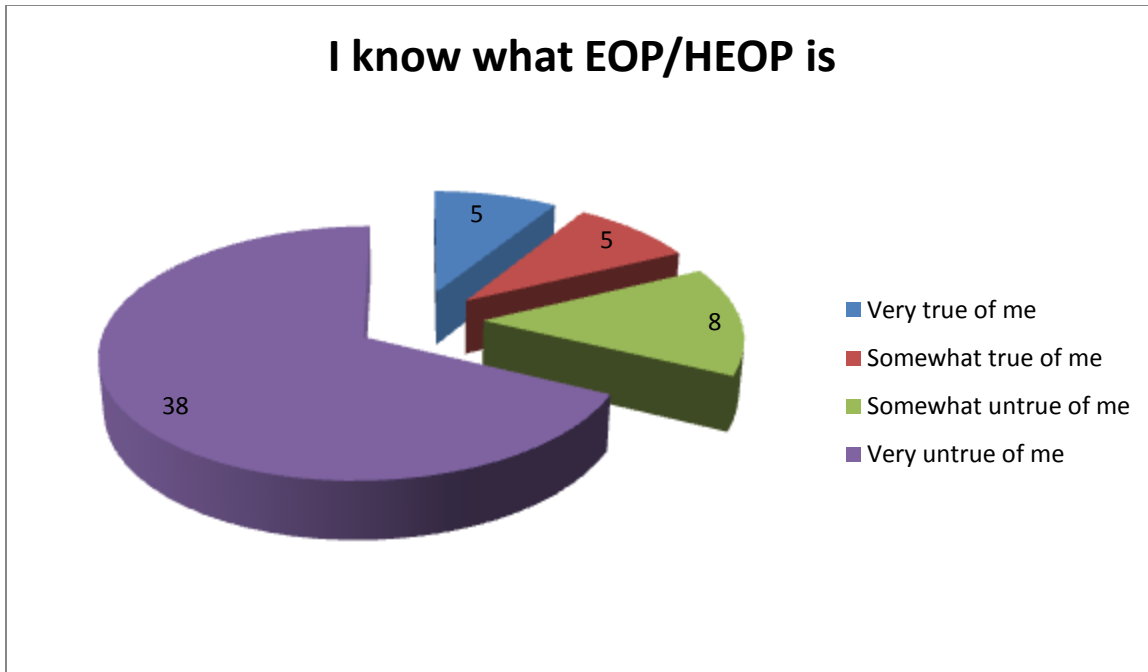
Figure 11: Survey Question #11



Question #12

Students were asked about their knowledge of the HEOP/EOP programs. According to the 56 students surveyed, 38 indicated very untrue of me, eight somewhat untrue of me, five somewhat true of me and five very true of me. The data shows the students lack of knowledge or awareness of this program. (see Figure 12)

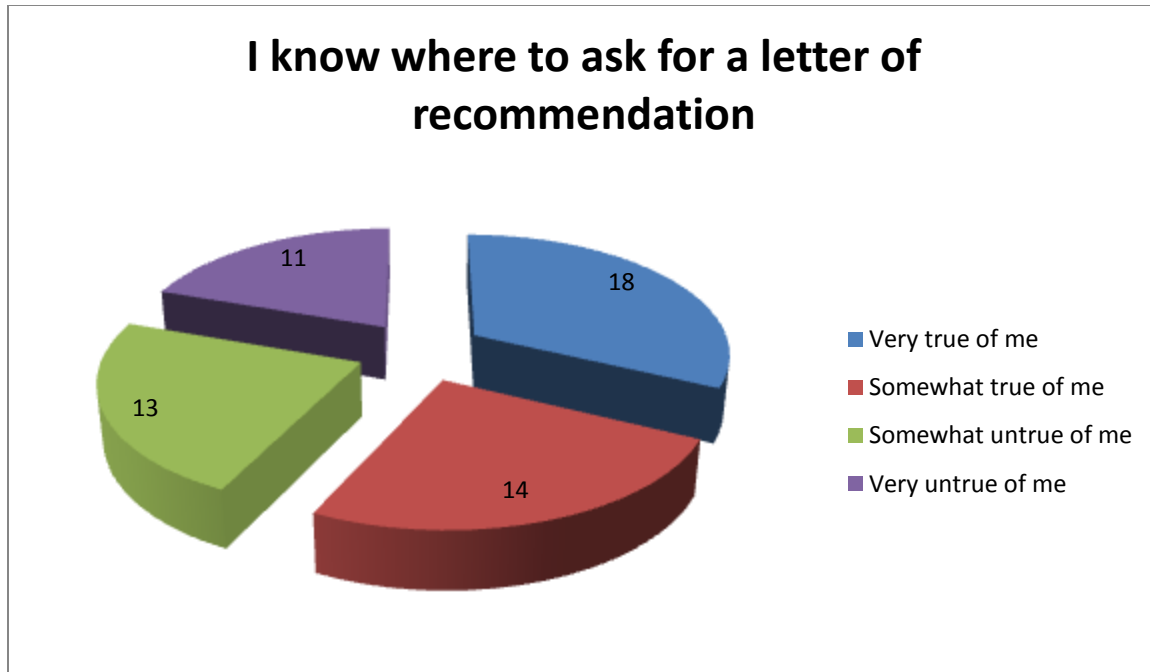
Figure 12: Survey Question #12



Question #13

Students were asked about their knowledge of where to inquire about a letter of recommendation. According to 56 students surveyed, 18 stated very true of me, 14 somewhat true of me, 13 somewhat untrue of me and 11 very untrue of me. (see Figure 13)

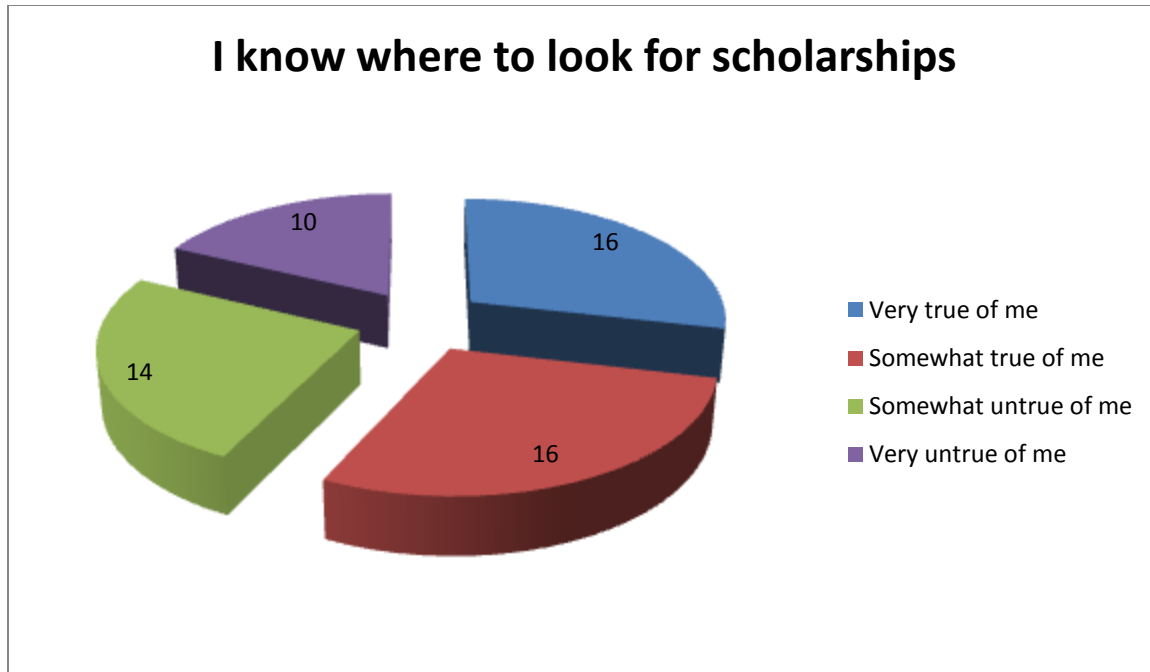
Figure 13: Survey Question #13



Question #14

Students were asked about their knowledge of where to look for scholarships. According to the 56 students surveyed, 16 stated very true of me, 16 stated somewhat true of me, 14 somewhat untrue of me and ten very untrue of me. (see Figure 14)

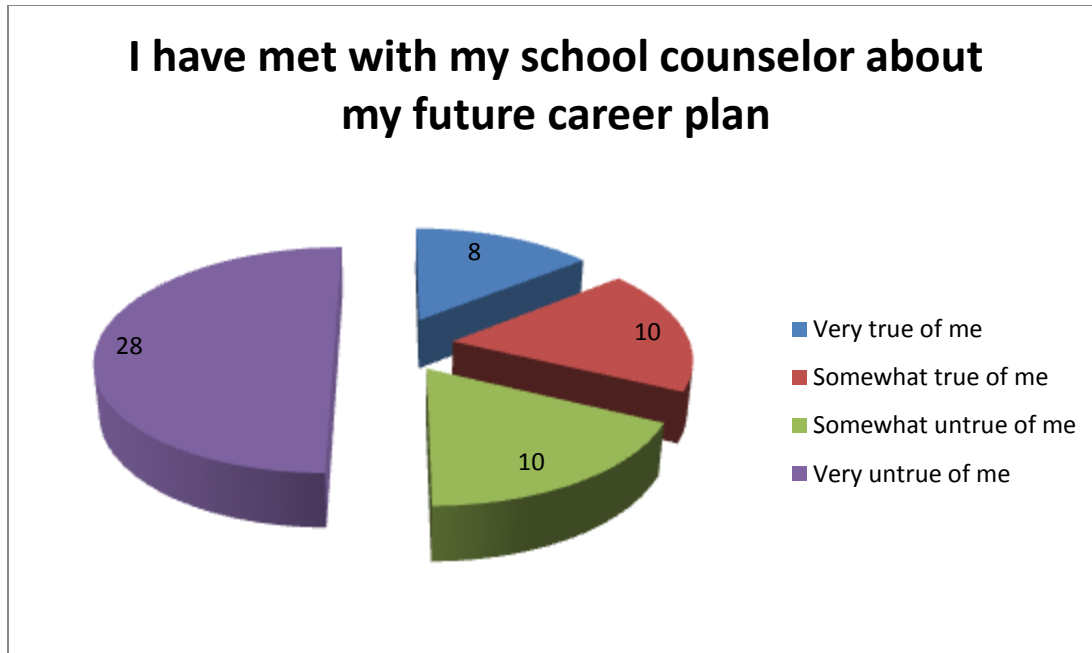
Figure 14: Survey Question #14



Question15

Students were asked about meeting with their counselor about their future career plan. According to the 56 students surveyed, eight stated very true of me, ten somewhat true of me, ten somewhat untrue of me, and 28 very untrue of me. The data above show that a majority of the students have not met with their counselor about their future plans. (see Figure 15)

Figure 15: Survey Question #15



Discussion

The current study intended to investigate the college readiness and preparedness of urban high school juniors. It was hypothesized that the students in this setting would follow the national trend that urban students are not as prepared for college as they should be and are at a disadvantage in comparison to their suburban counterparts. According to the results yielded from the anonymous survey, students had some common knowledge of the overall college process. In spite of some knowledge, it is apparent that students are lacking valuable pieces in their pursuit of obtaining higher education. The results showed the students only possessed a part of what it takes to be prepared for the college process. Students did state that they wanted to pursue a form higher education. Unfortunately, students lacked sufficient knowledge of the essential parts to obtaining this.

One particular piece that is important in the college process is having knowledge of the “FAFSA” Federal Student Aid process. It was evident that the students were lacking in this area.

In the survey of 56 students, 60 % of the students lacked information in this area. The cost of college is rising in terms of tuition, books and room and board. According to Kopkowski (2005), a student should be prepared to pay a bill that ranges anywhere between \$2,000 and \$27,500. This is dependent on where the student is headed and of course, how much financial aid scholarship money is awarded. It is imperative that students understand the financial aid process, which can aid students who could not afford to attend college. This process can be complicated, overwhelming and downright scary if you are not familiar with it. Having this large percent of students unaware of this key component to college entrance should be an area for counselors to address with their students.

In addition to the awareness of the financial aid process, the student's familiarity with the EOP/HEOP Equal Opportunity Program assists students not only financially, but also academically. As big of an impact as the EOP program could make in one student's chances in attending college, only seventeen percent of the students surveyed possessed prior knowledge of the program. This is a very important program because students who have been traditionally overlooked may be recruited through the EOP programs. EOP is designed to be the student's advocate by promoting and implementing flexible admissions procedures, special financial aid, and counseling and tutoring assistance (Somerville, 2001).

The most profound finding was that in question 15. The results yielded almost a staggering 70% of students having not yet met with their counselor about future career plans. Meeting with your school counselor during junior and senior year is important. During that time you are at the beginning of the college process. That process starts with reviewing your four year high school plan. This plan not only provides the student with their progress up to this point but also helps them determine what is needed to attend colleges or universities that interest them.

There is a direct link between access to high school counselors and attendance at four year universities. Whereas, students in community colleges had less access to their high school counselors than those in four year colleges (Gonzalez et. al, 2003). Therefore, the student counselor ratio and the time spent with college planning is an important area to address from the findings. This lack of communication left the students in the study without significant information necessary to make the college process less daunting. This trend also aligns with the research in that Farmer-Hinton & Adams (2006) found that Black students received lesser amounts of counselors' resources and time, especially in the area of college planning. Falsey & Heyns (1984) also found that counselors spent a lot of time enforcing order and mediating discipline issues in public schools in comparison to more affluent private schools where the counselors focused on college advisement. Therefore, it is imperative that this be an area that future research focuses on and school districts address, because school counselors have the power to be institutional change agents in the area of college preparedness.

Limitations

There were some limitations throughout the research study. The anonymous survey could yield more questions that would explain student's actual knowledge of the college process. When looking at those data it appears that the student's answers in some questions were not consistent and that more qualitative questions may have alleviated this. It becomes visible that the way the survey was administered yielded less than truthful responses. It could be possible that students may have shared answers, which would show inconsistencies in the student responses on the survey. Also, the small sample size of study may be another area that could be addressed. Using a larger sample size from a variety of school districts with different socio-economic status could provide data to support the rationale of the research. Inquiring input from

the school counselors on their knowledge of the overall college process could be helpful as well. Another limitation is the use of the survey only once during the academic year. This does not measure growth. It would be beneficial to have the counselors address the areas of concern with the junior class, and then to have a post-survey to see if improvement in knowledge has occurred.

Future Research and Implications for Counselors and Other Helping Professionals

The research in this area, postsecondary education, has focused a lot on the inequalities and problems with the educational system. Increased sharing of data should occur on a more regular basis, and therefore changing the focus from problem centered to solution centered. By switching the focus to a more solution base, the future research should be looking further into programs that are working. There are many programs throughout the country that are working well in attempting to create social capital for urban students. Research on these programs would now be the most beneficial in creating greater success rates.

By sharing the data to provide better solutions to the problem, it is hoped that districts would increase the number of high school counselors in order to address the student counselor ratio. By having more counselors, the focus of many counselors should then be on more college advisement. In addition to college advisement, the research implies that counselors in this urban school should be addressing the areas that the students had the least amount of knowledge in. In this particular study, the students had the least amount of knowledge about financial aid and EOP/HEOP programming and benefits.

Conclusion

An entire generation of young people and our nation depends on the expansion of programs that nurture the talents of our youth (Lopez, 2000). As we read the literature we can all agree that there is a problem. Thirty-two percent of African American students and twenty

percent of Latino students attend college compared to forty one percent of White students; this college and this attendance gap has persisted since the civil war and emancipation, (National Center for Education Statistics, 2001,-;2005). This gap helps to maintain the status quo in our society, and as educators and counselors, we must face this reality in order to work at changing it. Urban teenagers need our help. It is time to stop assessing the problem and provide solid research to move forward and provide a solution. The issue is that urban teenagers do not know enough about the essential parts of the post-secondary process. Taken together, the various sections of this paper demonstrate that there is a clear gap in knowledge and social capital for urban youth in comparison to their white suburban counterparts. Some districts are failing on multiple levels to address this effectively (Kozol, 1967), while other districts have found programs and methods for yielding success in some students. The research demonstrates, just as the literature does, that students in urban high schools are not as prepared as they should be to attend college. Therefore, counselors need to be agents of change. They need to pick up where the schools have left off, to fill in where the knowledge is missing, to give experience where experience is lacking, and to teach parents when the social capital is missing. It is a hefty job, but in order to conquer counseling, create post-secondary success, and breakdown the status quo, all of the steps must occur. We cannot leave this group of children behind, adequate preparation is the key.

References

- Baker, M. S. (1995). Solution-focused social work: Metamessages to students in higher education opportunity programs. *Social Work* , 40 (2), 225-232.
- Batada, A. C. (2006). Urban African American adolescent voices on stress: The shifting the lens project. *The Prevention Researcher* , 13, 3-7.
- Beer, G. &. (2008). Summer learning camps: Helping students to prepare for college. *College Student Journal* , 42 (3), 930-938.
- Boyer, E. L. (1986). Smoothing the transition from school to college. *Higher Education* (December), 283-287.
- Cabrera, A. D.-A. (2006). Increasing the college preparedness of at-risk students. *Journal of Latinos and Education* , 5 (2), 79-97.
- Cabrera, A. F. (2000). Three critical tasks America's disadvantage face on their path to college. *New Directions for Institutional Research* (107), 23-29.
- Cabrera, A. L. (2001). On the path to college: three critical tasks facing America's disadvantaged. *Research in Higher Education* , 42 (2), 119-149.
- Collier, P. J. (2008). "Is that paper really due today?": Differences in first-generation and traditional college students, understandings of faculty expectations. *High Education* , 55, 425-446.
- Daniels, J. (1992). Empowering homeless children through school counseling. *Elementary School Guidance and Counseling* , 27 (2), 104-112.

- Falsey, B. &. (1984). The college channel: Private and public schools reconsidered. *Journal of Sociology of Education* , 57, 111-122.
- Farmer-Hinton, R. &. (2008). College counseling in charter high schools: Examining the opportunities and challenges. *The High School Journal* (April/May), 77-90.
- Farmer-Hinton, R. &. (2006). Social capital and college preparation: Exploring the role of counselors in a college prep school for black students. *The Negro Educational Review* , 57 (Spring/Summer), 101-115.
- (2005). *First generation students in post-secondary education: A look at their college transcripts*. National Center for Education Statistics.
- Fischer, M. (2007). Settling into campus life: Differences by race ethnicity and college involvement and outcomes. *The Journal of Higher Education* , 78 (2), 125-161.
- Francis, T. &. (2008). Communication apprehension: Levels of first generation college students at 2-year institutions. *Community College Journal of Research and Practice* , 32, 38-55.
- Gehring, J. (2000, November). Middle school students "gear up" for college. *Education Week* , 20 (10), pp. 6-10.
- Gibson, D. M. (2006). The effect of perceived parental involvement and the use of growth-fostering relationships on self-concept in adolescents participating in GEAR UP. *Adolescence* , 41, 112-125.
- Hewett, S. &. (2003). The Citadel GEAR-UP program and learner-centered education: Together, a framework for student success. *Education* , 124 (1), 86-91.

- Hossler, D. S. (1999). *Going to college: How social, economic, and educational factors influence the decisions students make*. Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press.
- Ickovics, J. M. (2006). Urban teens: Trauma, posttraumatic growth, and emotional distress among female adolescents. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology* , 74 (5), 841-850.
- Ishiyama, J. (2007). Expectations and perceptions of undergraduate research mentoring: Comparing first generation, low income White/Caucasian and African American students. *College Student Journal* , 41 (3), 540-549.
- Jensen, P. &. (2008). Students' behaviors, grades & perceptions in an introductory biology course. *The American Biology Teacher* , 70 (8), 483-487.
- Kezar, A. G. (2008). Examining organizational contextual features that affect implementation of equity initiatives. *The Journal of Higher Education* , 79 (2), 125-159.
- Kim, D. &. (2005). Social capital in action: Alignment of parental support in adolescents' transition to postsecondary education. *Social Forces* , 84 (2), 1181-1206.
- Kopkowski, C. (2005, November). The college game. *NEA Today* , pp. 24-31.
- Kuh, G. C. (2008). Unmasking the effects of student engagement on first-year college grades and persistence. *The Journal of Higher Education* , 79 (5), 541-563.
- Laguardia, A. (1998). A survey of school/college partnerships for minority and disadvantaged students. *The Urban Review* , 30, 167- 186.
- Levine, A. &. (1996). *Beating the Odds: How the poor get to college*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Inc., Publishers.

- Lopez, N. (2000). The missing link: Latinos and educational opportunity programs. *Equity and Excellence in Education* , 33 (3), 53-58.
- Macilwain, C. (1993, August 26). Lab practice helps poor kids. *Nature* , 364, p. 749.
- Maslow, A. H. (1943). A theory of human motivation. *Psychological Review* , 50, 370-396.
- Mayer, A. (2008). Expanding opportunities for high academic achievement: An international baccalaureate diploma program in an urban high school. *Journal of Advanced Academics* , 19 (2), 202-235.
- Moschetti, R. &. (2008). Measuring social capital among first-generation and non-first generation, working class, White males. *Journal of College Admission (Winter)*, 26-30.
- Moser, K. (2006). Early visits lure poor into college. *Christian Science Monitor* , 98 (70), 14-16.
- Ochoa, A. M. (1994). *Evaluation of student perceptions of dropout prevention*. San Diego: San Diego State University.
- Orfield, G. L. (2004). *Losing our future: How minority youth are being left behind by the graduation crisis*. Cambridge, MA: The Civil Rights Project at Harvard University.
- Pascarella, E. P. (2004). First generation college students. *Journal of Higher Education* , 75 (3), 250-284.
- Percy Calaff, K. (2008, June). Supportive schooling: Practices that support culturally and linguistically diverse students' preparation for college. *National Association of Secondary School Principals Bulletin* , 92 (2), pp. 95-110.

Peterson-Lewis, S. &. (2004). Perceptions of "acting black" among African American teens: Implications of racial dramaturgy for academic and social achievement. *The Urban Review* , 36, 81-100.

Prescott, A. &. (2004). Effective student motivation commences with resolving 'dissatisfies'. *Journal of Further and Higher Education* , 28 (3), 247-257.

Priebe, L. R. (2008). Exploring the role of distance education in fostering equitable university access for first generation students: A phenomenological survey. *International Review of Research in Open and Distance Learning* , 9 (1), 1-12.

(2007). *Propositions and recommendations for student success in postsecondary education*. ASHE Higher Education Report.

Rosenbaum, J. E.-A. (2006). *After admission: From college access to college success*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation.

Slaughter, T. (2009, January). Creating a successful academic climate for Urban students. *Techniques* , 4.

Somerville, W. (1971). The future of educational opportunity programs in colleges and universities. *Education* , 92 (1), 14-21.

Stanton-Salazar, R. D. (1997). A social capital framework for understanding the socialization of racial minority children and youths. *Harvard Educational Review* , 67 (1), 1-40.

Stanton-Salazar, R. D. & Dornbusch, S. M. (1995). Social capital and the reproduction of inequality: Information networks among Mexican-origin high school students. *Sociology of Education* , 68, 116-135.

Statistics, N. C. (2001). *Educational achievement and black-white inequality*. Washington, D.C.

Statistics, N. C. (2005). *Youth indicators 2005: trends in the well-being of american youth*.

Washington,DC.

Veronneau, M.-H. V. (2008). Do peers contribute to the likelihood of secondary school graduation among disadvantaged boys? *Journal of Educational Psychology* , 100 (2), 429-442.

Ward, N. L. (2006). Improving equity and access for low-income and minority youth into institutions of higher education. *Urban Education* , 41, 50-70.

Weiher, G. H. (2006). Hispanic college attendance and the state of Texas gear up program. *Review of Policy Research* , 23 (5), 1035-1051.

Appendix A

Research Approval

I, the principal of _____ High School have read William Broome's research proposal and give my permission for him to conduct his research in my specific school, pending the RCSD Review Board approval. I understand that he is a graduate student at The College at Brockport and is conducting research for his thesis. I am also aware that this research proposal will be reviewed by the City School District Review Board.

Principal's Signature _____

Principal's Name (Please Print) _____

Date _____

William Broome
 Graduate Student: College at Brockport, State University of New York
 Counselor Intern: Global Media Arts High School at Franklin

Thomas Hernandez, Ed.D., LMHC
 Faculty Advisor, College at Brockport, State University of New York
 thernandez@brockport.edu
 (585)395-2258

RCSD Institutional Review Board
 Jeanette Silvers ED. D
 Chief of Accountability

Appendix B

Student Informed Consent

Dear Student:

Attached to this letter is a survey. You have the option to complete or decline the following survey. If you choose to complete the survey please answer the questions honestly. The information will help your school provide more resources for students in regards to college preparation and college readiness. Your name or any other demographical information is not needed for the survey. The survey is completely anonymous. If you have any questions pertaining to the survey, feel free to drop into office 28b. The office, 28b, is located on the same floor as the student cafeteria. Thank you for your participation.

Sincerely,

William Broome
Graduate Student: College at Brockport, State University of New York
Counselor Intern: Global Media Arts High School at Franklin

Appendix C

STUDENT SURVEY**Please answer the following questions using the scale below:**

Very Untrue of me 1	Somewhat Untrue of me 2	Somewhat True of me 3	Very true of me 4
------------------------	----------------------------	--------------------------	----------------------

1. I would like to attend college _____
Why or why not?

2. I know what the FAFSA is _____
3. I know what the Job Corps is _____
4. I would rather attend Job Corps then go to college _____
Why or why not?

5. I know what the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) is _____
6. I am aware that there are study groups for the SAT _____
7. I know what the ACT is _____
8. I know the requirements to attend a 2 year college degree program _____
9. I know the requirements to attend a 4 year college degree program _____
10. I would rather attend a 2 year school than a 4 year school _____
Why or why not?

11. I feel confident in filling out a college application _____
12. I know what EOP/HEOP is? _____
13. I know where to ask for a letter of recommendation _____
14. I know where to look for scholarships _____
15. I have met with my school counselor about my future career plan Y_____ N_____

Name 4 colleges that are of interest to you

 1. _____
 2. _____
 3. _____