

TRANSITIONING FROM HIGH SCHOOL TO COLLEGE: FIRST-GENERATION  
COLLEGE STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF SECONDARY SCHOOL  
COUNSELOR'S ROLE IN COLLEGE PREPARATION.

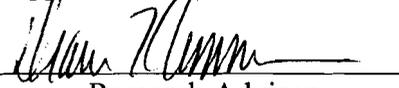
by

Bethany A. Delong

A Research Paper  
Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the  
Requirements for the  
Master of Science Degree  
in

Guidance and Counseling

Approved: 2 Semester Credits

  
Research Advisor

The Graduate School  
University of Wisconsin-Stout

May, 2006

**The Graduate School  
University of Wisconsin-Stout  
Menomonie, WI**

**Author:** Bethany A. DeLong

**Title:** *First-generation College Students' Perceptions of Their High School Guidance  
Counselor's Role in College Preparation*

**Graduate Degree/ Major:** MS Guidance and Counseling

**Research Adviser:** Diane Klemme, Ph.D.

**Month/Year:** May, 2006

**Number of Pages:** 75

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

ABSTRACT

Potential first-generation college students should have the option to obtain equal information regarding post-secondary preparation from their high school guidance counselors. According to the American School Counseling Association (2005) and the Wisconsin School Counseling Association (2002) a high school counselor's developmental guidance program should include information on future planning, career exploration, academic success, post-secondary planning assistance, and personal/social development to promote lifelong success. First-generation college students are often short-changed by their school counselors simply because school counselors server as these students sole source of information regarding college preparation. First-generation college students often feel overwhelmed during the college selection process and admissions procedures.

The purpose of this study was to investigate University of Wisconsin- Stout freshman first-generation college students' perceptions of their high school guidance counselor's role in college preparation. This study examined the effectiveness of the high school counselors' role in college preparation including: academic resources, social learning education, career exploration, and post-secondary information on selection, admissions, and applications.

The results of this study show that high school counselors could focus on providing first-generation college students with additional information regarding career opportunities and social/coping skills. In addition, the first-generation college students thought their parents could benefit by receiving more information regarding college admissions procedures. The students felt that the high school counselors were able to successfully provide both academic resources as well as information regarding post-secondary planning.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank Dr. Diane K. Klemme Ph.D. who served as my thesis advisor. Her feedback, honesty, and thoroughness were greatly appreciated. Thank you to my peers who graciously listened to several possible research topics, directions, and ideas; their honesty, practicality, and intelligence were appreciated. Thank you to all of the Guidance and Counseling professors, they graciously answered my random questions and helped accelerate this process.

I would like to thank my parents for enduring both the stressful environment and challenging attitudes that occurred throughout this entire process. They were always loving, encouraging, and willing to assist me in any way possible. Finally, I would like to thank the girls of 1021 Main Street; thank you for always proving me with an open door, encouragement, and serenity. This could not have been possible without your love and support.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
.....	Page
ABSTRACT.....	ii
List of Tables.....	vii
Chapter I: Introduction.....	1
<i>Statement of the Problem</i> .....	4
<i>Research Question</i> .....	5
<i>Definition of Terms</i> .....	5
<i>Assumptions</i> .....	6
<i>Limitations</i> .....	7
Chapter II: Literature Review.....	8
<i>Introduction</i> .....	8
<i>Characteristics of Today's College Student</i> .....	8
<i>First-generation College Student's Limitations</i> .....	12
<i>Family Support</i> .....	13
<i>Academic Preparation</i> .....	14
<i>College Knowledge</i> .....	15
<i>Secondary School Counselors Role in College Preparation</i> .....	16
<i>Secondary School Counselors Adapt to First-Generation College Students</i> .....	20
Chapter III: Methodology.....	23
<i>Introduction</i> .....	23
<i>Subject Selection and Description</i> .....	23
<i>Instrumentation</i> .....	23

<i>Data Collection</i> .....	24
<i>Data Analysis</i> .....	24
<i>Limitations</i> .....	24
Chapter IV: Results.....	26
<i>Demographic Information</i> .....	26
<i>Item Analysis</i> .....	31
<i>Discussion</i> .....	38
<i>Summary of Data</i> .....	43
Chapter V: Discussion.....	45
<i>Discussion</i> .....	45
<i>Limitations</i> .....	51
<i>Conclusions</i> .....	52
<i>Recommendations for High School Counselors of First-generation College Students</i> .....	52
<i>Recommendations for Future Research</i> .....	53
References.....	56
Appendix A: IRB approval letter.....	59
Appendix B: Cover Letter.....	60
Appendix C: Survey.....	61

## LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: Gender Participants.....	27
Table 2: Ethnic Participants.....	28
Table 3: Participants Graduating Class Size .....	29
Table 4: Number of High School Counselors.....	30
Table 5: Family Support.....	31
Table 6: School Counselors Performance .....	37
Table 7: Effectiveness of High School Counselors.....	40

## Chapter I: Introduction

The process would have been easier for me if the school had reached out to my parents, or somebody in my house. Find them tools that are useful, like how to visit a college, find the major you're interested in, fill out the application itself, and find a recommendation. Getting my parents really interested in helping me go to college was hard because nobody knew about college. They all had kids to take care of, and everybody was in their own little world. - Aileen Rosario (Cushman, 2005 p. 21)

Educational expectations for all types of employment continue to increase across the nation; as a result, high school graduates are seeking all types of post-secondary training (McCollum, 2005). In America, six out of ten jobs require some sort of specialized training. Among the jobs that did not require a college education, 70% required workers to deal with customers, 61% required workers to read or write paragraphs, 65% required arithmetic, and 51% required the use of computers. In addition, 71% of jobs required a high school diploma and 61% required specific vocational experience. There are very few jobs in the workforce for a limited skilled American worker; hence, it is now societal normality to enroll in some type of post-secondary educational training. In 2004, 66.7% high school seniors enrolled in some type of post-secondary training compared to only 44% enrollment 1970. This educational trend has been consistently rising over the past 25 years. This trend is expected to continue and thus create annual post-secondary enrollment records.

As a result of the continuously increasing enrollment, post-secondary admission standards are becoming more competitive with each passing year (McCollum, 2005). This is often intimidating for high school seniors, taxing for secondary school counselors, and incomprehensible for most uneducated or limited parents.

Cushman (2005) suggested that post-graduation planning is often an overbearing task for most high school seniors because they are attempting to understand an entirely new educational system; furthermore, being a first-generation student increased the stress level drastically. Many high school seniors spend a substantial amount of time completing college applications, scholarship applications, and financial aid applications, arranging for high school transcripts to be sent to colleges, and asking individuals to write letters of recommendation. About 73% of students applying for postsecondary education have parents that have completed at least some sort of post-secondary education; thus, about 27% of students applying for college are first-generation college students (Gibbons & Shoffner, 2004). First-generation students often find accessing the post-secondary educational system frustrating. Cushman (2005) suggested that first-generation students' struggles are often linked to fact that they are unable to utilize their parents as resources.

Today's secondary school counselors are attempting to perform a widespread role within the public school system for an overwhelming number of students. The American School Counseling Association (ASCA) suggests a student-to-counselor ratio of 250:1. The current national average ratio is 488:1. Wisconsin is ranked number 37, averaging 461 students per counselor. The highest state average ratio is Washington D.C. averaging 1,308 students per counselor while Wyoming has the lowest ratio with 222 students per counselor. Due to the increased caseload, school counselors are becoming more ineffective; as a result, many students' needs and post-graduation desires are misguided, limited, or overlooked (Fallon, 1997). Fallon (1997) implied the needs of prospective first-generation college students are often overlooked by counselors working with these overwhelming caseloads.

When preparing first-generation students for post-secondary education, secondary school counselors often refer to these students as challenging and time consuming (Van T. Bui, 2002). These students require a lot of one-on-one attention. It is often difficult for first-generation students to seek and find answers independently because the system of higher education appears to be completely foreign to most of these students. First-generation students are often forced to rely solely on secondary school counselors for post-secondary information (Gibbons & Shoffner, 2004). Gibbons and Shoffner's (2004) research indicated that first-generation students often experience minimal parental involvement in regards to educational decisions. As a result, first-generation students neglected to enroll in rigorous college preparatory academic courses. Due to lack of exposure, first-generation students often develop misleading perceptions of the post-secondary educational system; hence, secondary school counselors must work hard to demystify their skewed expectations. Overall, most first-generation students show a lack of knowledge regarding the post-secondary system (Gibbons & Shoffner, 2004).

When first-generation students are able to navigate themselves in to some type of post-secondary educational program, most campuses categorize these students as academically at-risk. Research has indicated that first-generation students have a distinct set of limiting characteristics above and beyond the commonalties found within their millennial peer group (Sax, 2003). First-generation students are more likely to be an ethnic minority, low socioeconomic status, solely responsible for personal finances, and have a variety of work related skills (McCollum, 2005).

To enhance the success rate of first-generation college students, secondary school counselors need to consider the unique characteristics of these students (Fallon, 1997). To avoid limiting, misdirecting, or overlooking first-generation students' post-graduation needs, it is important to help these students understand how their interest, skills, and abilities relate to the

world of work (Gibbons & Shoffner, 2004). Career exploration is often much more time consuming when working with a prospective first-generation college student because of their lack of information. To simplify the process, first-generation students could be exposed to the post-secondary system. Exposure will increase awareness, decrease fears, and help actualize expectations.

School counselors have significant daily demands; however, first-generation students make up a notable percentage of students seeking post-secondary education (Gibbons & Shoffner, 2004). These students deserve to have their unique needs met. Research has indicated that the needs of first-generation students are easily overlooked by today's K-12 educational system (Rodriguez, 2003). Their needs are often not understood nor do school counselors have the time to designate to their specific needs. To increase the effectiveness of secondary school counselors, it is important to understand the voice and perception of today's first-generation college students.

### *Statement of the Problem*

First-generation college students encompass several limiting characteristics; thus, these students are forced to overcome many challenges that often go unnoticed in both the secondary and post-secondary educational settings. It is not uncommon for a first-generation student to become overwhelmed by the plethora of information regarding post-secondary planning. Not all prospective first-generation college students are able to navigate through the multiple admissions processes found within higher education; hence, some prospective students lose hope and opt to avoid post-secondary educational training.

The purpose of this study is gain awareness of UW-Stout's first-generation freshmen college students' perceptions of effectiveness performed by their secondary school counselor's

role in college preparation. This information will be collected through a confidential on-line survey issued to all first-generation freshmen at University of WI-Stout in October of 2005.

### *Research Questions*

There are five main research questions that this study will address. They are:

1. Do first-generation college students view their secondary school counselor's role in college preparation as effective?
2. Do first-generation college students feel that their secondary school counselor provided academic resources?
3. Do first-generation college students feel that their secondary school counselor provided adequate social learning resources?
4. Do first-generation college students feel that their school counselor provided adequate career exploration opportunities?
5. Do first-generation college students feel that their school counselor provided adequate information on post-secondary selection and application processes?

### *Definition Terms*

The following key terms are defined to help clarify the content of this research paper.

These are:

*Academic at-risk student* - According to Andrew Cseter (personal communication, July 1, 2005) the director of UW-Stout's Aspire program, an academically at-risk student must meet at least one of the selected criteria that fall below the university's published admissions standards: graduation class rank in the top 50%, GPA at least 2.75 , or an ACT scores of 22 or SAT equivalent; previous diagnostic/special educational testing; college GPA is below specific

program requirements; placement scores at remedial level; failing college course(s); and/or has been removed from the education setting for five or more years.

*Effective* – Fifty percent or more of the respondents indicate that a specific performance is either helpful or extremely helpful on the instrument.

*Ethnic minority* – A racial or ethnic group regarded as different from the larger group of which it is part. For the purpose of this study the all racial group selections on available on the survey will be considered a minority with the exception of the group titled White (not Hispanic/Latino).

*Low economic status* – a family of four earning less than \$25,000 (Chen, 2005).

*First-generation college student* - an individual seeking an undergraduate degree whose parent(s) did not complete a baccalaureate degree (Naumann, 2003).

*Millennials* - people making up generation Y must be born 1980-2000 (Howe & Strauss, 2000).

*Role* - An assumed normal or characteristic position taken by a secondary school counselor.

### *Assumptions*

This study assumes that each student filling out the survey is a UW-Stout first-year freshman student who will answer the survey openly and honestly. It also assumes that each student was serviced by or had access to a secondary school counselor who actively participated in post-secondary preparation. It assumes that each survey question was clearly understood. The survey design sought responses that specifically address the research questions.

*Limitations*

A limitation in this study is not all high school students have access to a secondary school counselor who partakes in post-secondary preparation. Students may not answer the survey honestly. This study is limited to specific demographic area only students that are attending University of Wisconsin-Stout will partake in the survey. This study only included students who have already been admitted and are attending a four-year institution; thus, these students have somehow successfully navigated their way into a four-year institution.

## Chapter II: Review of Literature

### *Introduction*

This chapter will discuss common trends among today's incoming college students. More specifically, it will examine specific limiting characteristics among first-generation college students including: family support, academic preparation, and knowledge of the higher education system. This chapter will also clarify the role of a secondary school counselor regarding post-secondary preparation. In addition, this chapter will discuss possible methods of adaptation for secondary school counselors when working with first-generation students. This section will include the following sections: characteristics of today's college students, first-generation college student's limitations, secondary school counselor's role in college preparation, and school counselors adapt to first-generations college students.

### *Characteristics of Today's College Students*

Determining common characteristics among today's incoming college students is a challenging prospect (Sax, 2003). Many factors need to be considered when analyzing trends among today's incoming college students; the American K-12 educational system is under constant reform, family dynamics are ever changing, college admissions standards are increasing, and technology is more prevalent with each passing day (Howe & Strauss, 2000). Each of these factors may depict the trends observed among today's incoming college students.

Today's incoming college students are known as the "millennials" (Howe & Strauss, 2000). College students today are technology gurus. As a member of this information management era, today's students arrive on college campuses equipped with many technological gadgets such as: personal computers, cell phones, MP3 players, multiple video game players, televisions, and DVD players. These gadgets often work to the advantage of students, but

function as a distraction as well. Technology is a form entertainment for many college freshmen; hence, technology can be very distracting in an academic environment. Howe and Strauss (2000) indicated that college students typically spend around three hours per day playing video games, chatting on-line, e-mailing friends, or talking on the phone. Controversy, technology also enhances the educational environment both at home and in the classroom. This increased accessibility, ease of use, and technological capability, allows many students to use these instruments to assist in time management, organization, obtaining information, develop projects and communicate. Communication is at an all time high for college students (Sax, 2003). Communication is at an all time high for college students (Sax, 2003). Students engage in multiple forms of communication daily and often times this easy of communication allows more communication with family members. This increased level of communication has led to an increased level of parental involvement (Shellenbarger, 2005).

Parents of today's incoming freshman college students are more involved than any preceding generation. They are also more engaged in their student's educational environment. It is not uncommon for parents to communicate with professors, academic advisors, hall directors or residential advisors. Parents comfortably contact university personnel expressing concerns for their child; 25% of parents of today's college student have been labeled as helicopter parents (Shellenbarger, 2005). These parents tend to hover over their children. They are so involved in their child's college education; they are hampering their child's chance to develop independence.

Today's incoming college freshmen have also endured the most intense college admission standards ever. College admission has become increasingly stressful and competitive with each passing year (Sax, 2003). Sax's (2003) reported that incoming freshman appear to have strong academic skills; 47.5% are earning an A average in high school. Controversy, Sax

(2003) noted grade inflation, teacher attitudes, and strenuous admissions standards are rooted to the influx of today's grade point averages. In 1968, 17.6% of students were earning an A average while 23.1% were earning a C average or lower. Today a record low of 5.3% earn lower than a C average in high school. Teachers do not use true bell curves when grading in today's classroom. As noted above the majority of students in each class receive and grade of A or B. As a result, high school grades do not often reflect the true academic abilities of incoming students. Admissions offices are forced to examine high school course selection, curriculum content, and rigor of daily schedule to help determine possible success rate.

To off set competitive admissions standards, many high schools offer weighted grading scales. Students who enroll in an advance placement courses or college preparatory courses will receive additional grade points that correspond with their earned letter grade. On a standard 4.0 grading scale a letter grade of A is worth 4.0 grade points. If a letter grade of A was earned in a college preparatory course then 5.0 grade points will be awarded. Weighted grading provides college bound students the opportunity to increase both their grade point average and class rank. Students in the top 25% of their class are usually recognized as college bound while students in the bottom 25% of their class are often denied admittance at most four-year universities. In 2005, UW-Stout passed an admissions policy stating that any student ranked in the bottom 25% of their graduating class, regardless of other admission qualifications, will not be admitted into UW-Stout.

Today's incoming college students express a positive attitude about succeeding at college academics. In a survey conducted by Sax (2003), 60.3% of incoming college freshman believed that they would earn a grade point average of B average or better; while 20% believed that they would graduate with honors. Ironically, today's college students also reported declining

commitment in completing homework; a record low of 33.4% of incoming students devote six or more hours a week to homework compared to 47% in 1987. By reviewing these statistical findings one has a better understanding as why many incoming freshmen have an unrealistic perception of academic success within the higher education system.

Another unrealistic perception of college-age students is the assumed high rates of drug abuse. According to Sax (2003), alcohol and drug use is declining among incoming college students. The incoming freshman of 2002 reported using less alcohol and tobacco than previous decades. Students are also reporting an all time low average of time spent partying. In 2002, 25.1% of student claim to party more than six hours per week compared to there predecessors in 1987; 36.8% claimed to party more than six hours a week. In addition, 39.7% of incoming freshman have reported an all time high in showing support toward legalizing marijuana. This is the highest level of support in the past three decades. Sax's (2003) research indicates that growth in support for legalizations has traditionally indicated an increase in use. Over the past decade marijuana use has greatly increased among high school students. Currently 81.8% of high school seniors claim that they have used marijuana at least once in their lifetime.

Incoming college freshman students reported an increased interest in social activism. Sax (2003) reported 82.6% of freshman students have spent time volunteering during their last year of high school. Students today feel empowered to help make a difference in local communities. Students have showed interest in working through schools, religious groups, and service orientated organizations (Prancer, Pratt, Hunsberger, & Alisat, 2004) Contrarily, today's incoming college students have expressed a decreased interest in cleaning up the environment and encouraging racial understanding (Sax, 2003).

College freshman also identify many financial issues that may influence college activities. Sax (2003) found 65.3% of students have financial concerns and 47.1% of students believed that it was necessary to obtain a job during their freshman year. College women were more concerned about finances than men (Sax, 2003).

#### *First-generation College Student's Limitations*

Research has indicated that about 27% of high school graduates are prospective first-generation college students (Gibbons & Shoffner, 2004). University of WI-Stout accepts a high number of first-generation students. According to Andrew Cseter, director of TRIO/Aspire, about 50% of each class is made up of first-generation college students (personal communication, July 1, 2005).

Nationally, it has become apparent that first-generation students encompass a specific set of characteristics above and beyond the commonalities found among their millennial peer group (Naumann, 2003). First-generation college students are more likely to be an ethnic minority, low-economic status, solely responsible for personal finances, and have a variety of work related skills (McCollum, 2005). First-generation students are often viewed as academically at-risk students among the higher education system; because, the students often lack family support, academic preparedness, and knowledge of the higher education system (Fallon, 1997).

First-generation students are more likely to be of an ethnic minority group. According to U.S. Department of Education (as cited in Chen, 2002) 35.9% of first-generation students are of an ethnic minority group while only 21.2% of the continuing generation students are ethnic minorities. In our nation, there an ever present educational achievement gap between Caucasian Americans and all other American minority groups. There have been many research projects dedicated to demystifying this achievement gap. According to Chubb and Loveless (2002) many

elements contribute to this ever present and expanding educational achievement gap. Many minority groups report language barriers, lower educational expectations, few college educated role models, less peer support, and ethnic tracking for non-college-bound futures (Chubb & Loveless, 2002). Oftentimes minorities are forced to challenge or overcome several cultural boundaries before they can even consider a college-bound future. In some cultures the concept of leaving their family at a young age to seek education is viewed as culturally inappropriate.

### *Family Support*

According to the U.S. Department of Education (2002), 50.3% of first-generation student were raised in homes earning an annual income of less than 25,000 dollars. An additional 34.3% were raised in homes that earned an annual income between the ranges of \$25,000 to \$49,999. A majority of first-generation students stress over financial issues regarding post-secondary education. Many first-generation students experience financial barriers when paying application fees, housing contracts, and other initial fees that occur prior to financial aid assistance arrives. As a result of circumstance, many first-generation students may not be able to live in a residence hall; hence, many choose a college close to home and reside with their parents. Living at home often leads to additional responsibilities which in turn limit campus involvement.

Family support is an underlying variable in a child's decisions to attend college (Fallon, 1997). Research has indicated a strong correlation between parental education level and post-secondary enrollment (McDonough, 2004). The higher the parental educational level, the more likely the students is to attend college. Fallon (1997) claimed that parents often communicate their life goals and expectations to their children based on their educational level and experiences. Parents who have no experience in post-secondary education often view college as insignificant, impractical, and intimidating. First-generation students considering post-secondary

education are often forced to deal with their parents' unrealistic expectations, fears, falsities, and frustrations along with their own personal concerns. Due to the lack of experience, it is hard for families to comprehend the workload, reading requirements, and homework commitments required to achieve academic success (Fallon, 1997).

Families with a prospective first-generation college student have concerns that go beyond the classroom (Fallon, 1997). Families often fear they may lose their current connection with their child. Families know that post-secondary education is going to expose their child to new experiences, opportunities, social status, cultures, and life-styles. Families often fear that this exposure will create a shift in values, attitudes, and behaviors that will place stress on the relationship. It is not uncommon for a first-generation college student to begin rejecting homegrown values, peers, and community interest. These students are eager to take on the values, attitudes, and behaviors of those within their aspiring career.

Family support plays a role in how feasible the student views their transition from high school to college. First-generation families may feel overwhelmed by the institution selection process, applications, admission, living arrangements, and costs (Fallon, 1997). This family stress often creates apprehensiveness for the incoming student.

### *Academic Preparation*

Low academic expectation is also viewed as a limitation among first-generation college students. Families with minimal educational experience often have lower academic expectations of their children (Fallon, 1997). Parents who send this message to their children may hamper their child's chance of achieving academic success. Academic preparation for college begins as early as middle school (McDonough, 2004). Many first-generation students have the cognitive abilities to succeed at college but have not been exposed to the rigorous college preparatory

curriculum. First-generation students often elect to avoid advanced level math, science, and language courses. This minimizes their opportunities to gain academic skills that will be needed at the post-secondary level (Fallon, 1997). In reality, potential first-generation college students do not choose to attend college until late in their high school career. It is often too late to enroll in any rigorous academic courses. Since first-generation students are often viewed as non-college bound students, parents, teachers, counselors, and administrators tend not to stress rigorous academic tracks. As a result, first-generation students are often inadequately prepared for post-secondary academics.

According to the U.S. Department of Education (2002) indicates that only 10.3% of first-generation students ranked in the high level, top 10%, for their ACT/SAT scores while 38.7% of continuing generational students ranked in the high level. First-generation students may arrive on campus with out being totally prepared. The U.S. Department of Education indicates that a first-generation student is more likely to arrive on campus lacking placement test scores, incomplete schedules, lower credits loads, and requiring remedial course work. Four in ten first-generation students require at least one remedial course. First-generation students are more likely to enter college undecided about their major. According to the U.S. Department of Education only 33% of first-generation students are unable to select a major upon arrival compared to only 13% of student who are continuing generation students.

### *College Knowledge*

First-generation students may also lack knowledge of the higher education system (Fallon, 1997). First-generation students often have few role models within the higher education system; hence, they lack exposure to the system. Higher education portrays an environment much different than high school. Higher education consists of different rules, values, regulations,

expectations, and vocabulary. Concepts such as class selection, schedule planning, note taking, lecture halls, time management, and approaching professors may be unfamiliar concepts.

McDonough (2004) presented the idea that first-generation students arrive on college campuses with a double assignment. All students regardless of generational status are expected to successfully transition to their new academic expectations, daily schedule, and living arrangements along with their new found independence; however, first-generation college students often carry around a little more weight in their backpack. McDonough (2004) implies that first generation students need to overcome many of the elements in their immediate surroundings before they can focus on academic success.

Some first-generation students are greatly challenging their cultural values and family expectations just by moving to the college campus. Oftentimes first-generation students are forced to find employment immediately upon arrival. Some students even send a portion of their pay check home to contribute to the family income. Fallon (1997) 80% of first-generation college student are employed part-time. Cushman (2003) indicates that it is not uncommon for a first-generation student to arrive on campus unprepared in regards to environment. The concept of walking around campus versus driving, campus identification, cafeteria food, laundry mats, organizations, clubs, intramural sports, sorority, fraternities may be entirely new concepts to first-generation college student. Vocabulary of the higher education system is often challenging for first-generation students as well. Words such as credit, dean, chancellor, registrar, and degree audit are often words are quickly added to their vocabulary. Limited exposure to the college setting often causes confusion and frustration for the first several weeks.

### *Secondary School Counselors Role in College Preparation*

The field of school counseling has drastically changed over the past few decades. Many modern school counseling models view school counselors as mental health professionals who are capable of responding to today's diverse student population. It is important for these school counseling models to reflect the needs of the students consistent with the environment of today's public school. Wisconsin school counselors are being trained to follow either the newly revised American School Counseling Association National Model (2005) or the Wisconsin Developmental Guidance Model (WDGM) which is currently under revision (Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, 2004). Each of these models suggests content areas, time allotment, and role clarification.

ASCA (2005) believes that school counselors must integrate their students' academics, career, and personal/social domains into a comprehensive, developmental framework. School counselors are to provide classroom guidance, individual counseling, responsive services, and system support. To further assist students' school counselors schools work collaboratively with students, parents, teachers, administration and community resources (ASCA, 2005).

ASCA (2005) has developed national standards for each of the three domains: academics, careers, and personal social development. In the area of academics, ASCA (2005) suggests objectives related to life long learning skills, academic success, and connecting academics to the world of work, home, and community. Career objectives relate to investigation skills pertaining to the world of work, employment skills needed to achieve success within the work place, and understanding the relationship between personal qualities, education, and the world of work. The personal/ social objectives related to respect for others, self esteem, decision making skills, goal setting, safety and survival skills. The standards can be met by implementing suggested

objectives created by ASCA (2005). The delivery method of each objective is determined by the school counselor.

ASCA (2005) suggests time allotment for secondary school counselors. Secondary school counselors spend 15% to 25% of time delivering guidance curriculum; 25% to 35% of time conducting individual student planning sessions; 25% to 35% responding to daily needs and services; and 15% to 20% providing system support.

Classroom guidance is a useful delivery method often used as effect way of distributing general information. A school counselor could conduct lessons on specific post-secondary preparation such as general post-graduation planning strategies, college application processes, and financial aid information (ASCA, 2005). Counselors may also include career exploration exercises, aptitude assessments, and career awareness.

Individual counseling will take place in a one-on-one setting. Individual meetings directly related to post-graduation planning will include topics such as: goal setting, academic plans, career plans, transition plans, problem solving, and exploration of self in relationship to the world of work. It is essential for school counselors to be up-to-date on current changes in application processes, admissions standards, financial aid issues, and academic testing. It is the school counselor's duty keep up with the ever-changing post-secondary environment. School counselors also provide responsive services when needed. Secondary school counselors are required to deal with many of the daily issues that occur in a school. Fallon (1997) refers to secondary school counselors as firefighters; school counselors often spend most of their time extinguishing many small burning issues among students, teachers, and administration. The more responsive services required of a school counselor the less time there is for individual guidance and classroom instruction.

System support is also important to school counselors. As a result of the newly revised ASCA model and WDGM model many school counseling programs are under revision. School counselors need time to plan, organize, and manage their school counseling program. It is also important for the school counseling program to complement all of the other programs occurring in the schools. Fallon (1997) research indicates frustration among school counselors. Many counselors feel that they do not have time to make necessary changes to their programs which ultimately could affect the entire student body.

The WDGM (2003) resembles the ASCA (2005) in many ways. The WDGM consist of nine competency including: (1) connecting family, school, and work, (2) solve problems, (3) understand diversity, inclusiveness, and fairness, (4) work in groups, (5) manage conflict, (6) integrate growth and development, (7) direct change, (8) make decisions, and (9) set and achieve goals (Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, 2003, p. 1). As noted in ASCA (2005) the WDGM (2003) agreed on the four main delivery methods of guidance curriculum, individual counseling, responsive services, and system support. The WDGM also replicates the three domains : personal/social, career, and educational. WDGM (2003) also echoes the relationship structure of ASCA (2005) between the counselor, student, parents, teachers, administration and community. The WDGM (2003) provides a definition and rationale for each of the nine competencies. There also performance indicators listed according to level that may be used as a reference for school counselors. If a student is able to perform an indicated skill it indicates that the student has learned the described competency area. These performance indicators are similar to the standards discussed above in the ASCA (2005).

School counselors across the nation are experiencing a consistent increase in their caseloads (ASCA, 2005). Education has suffered several budget cuts in the past few years. As a

result, school counseling positions across the nation are being downsized. The American School Counseling Association (ASCA) suggests a student-to-counselor ratio of 250:1 (ASCA, 2005). The current national average ratio is 488:1. Wisconsin is ranked number 37 averaging 461 students per counselor. The highest state average ratio is Washington D.C. averaging 1,308 students per counselor while Wyoming has the lowest ratio with 222 students per counselor. School counselors across the nation are struggling to complete the multiple aspects within their role. Because of the current ratios in some schools it is impossible for school counselors to be effective in all aspects of their job. The needs of today's first-generation college students are being misdirected, limited, or overlooked.

#### *Secondary School Counselors Adapt to First-Generation College Students*

Secondary school counselors have significant demands placed on them daily; however, first-generation students make up a notable 27% of students seeking post-secondary education (Hinchner & Tiff-Hinchner, 1996). When preparing first-generation students for post-secondary education, school counselors often refer to these students as challenging (Van T. Bui, 2002). These students know very little about the higher educational system; as a result, school counselor need to explain all of the information in great detail when working with a prospective first-generation college student. According to Cushman (2005) first-generation students often feel overwhelmed just talking about post graduation options. Oftentimes school counselors refer to test, terms, and forms that first-generation students are unfamiliar with. Most first-generation students need extra explanations, examples, references, or definitions. This is often time consuming and challenging for a school counselor.

One way secondary school counselors can adapt to the needs of first-generation college students is by developing prevention group guidance units focusing on career exploration

(Fallon, 1997). Career exploration is a process that could begin in elementary school. All students need to start learning about career options, as well as, post-secondary education options early in their educational career.

A preventative school counseling program will address all students; allowing all students to understand the difference between educational options and career paths. To benefit first-generation college students, secondary school counselors could deliver guidance curriculum containing lessons on educational options discussing the advantages, disadvantages, and opportunities. Additional lessons on college testing, application processes, deadlines, and financial aid should also be delivered to all students. By delivering these lessons, school counselors will be providing exposure to first-generation students. All secondary students should be given this information. They should not have to seek the information out individually.

Counselors must also consider working with the parents of first-generation college students. Research shows that parents play a strong role in post-graduation planning (Fallon, 1997). Parents will need to access and understand all of the information given to their child. By providing parents with information, they may be more knowledgeable of the post-secondary setting which leads to comfort and support.

Secondary school counselors also have to consciously provide equal guidance for all students. All students have the right to enroll in or access college-bound curricula. School counselors need to avoid tracking students into non-college bound situations. In order to meet college admissions standards, students need a strong academic foundation. School counselors play a role in student motivation and expectations. Potential first-generation students may need specific guidance relative to the importance of academic achievement, individual potential, and college bound options.

School counselors play a vital role in the success of a potential first-generation college student. Their role includes education, support, planning, and believing in the student. School counselors need to work to create equal opportunities for all students.

## Chapter III: Methodology

### *Introduction*

The purpose of this study is to gain awareness of UW-Stout's first-generation freshman college students' perception of effectiveness performed by their secondary school counselor's role in college preparation. This chapter consists of information about the selected sample, a description of the sample, and the instrument being used. Explanations of data collection and data analysis procedures are provided. Methodology limitations will also be discussed.

### *Subject Selection and Description*

The subjects of this study consist of all University of WI-Stout first-year freshmen with an enrollment start date of Fall, 2005. UW-Stout consists of mostly Caucasian students of all types of socioeconomic backgrounds. All freshman students were invited to complete the survey by an electronic letter explaining the purpose of the study, a consent agreement notification, and a confidential survey. The information will be sent to the students UW-Stout e-mail account. A copy of the letter and the consent agreement notification is located in Appendix B. Both males and females will be asked to participate in the study. First-generation and continuing generation students will be completing the survey.

### *Instrumentation*

Prior to beginning the study, the instrument was submitted and approved by the UW-Stout Institutional Review Board. A copy of the letter is located in Appendix A. The survey is designed to fill out on-line. It will include 6 demographic questions and 21 Likert scale items. Specific survey questions correlate with specific research questions. Survey items eight through 27 refer to research questions number one: *Do first-generations college students view their secondary school counselor's role in college preparation as effective?* Survey items eight

through 11 specifically refer to research question two: *Do first-generation college students feel that their secondary school counselor provided academic resources?* Survey items 22 through 27 specifically refer to research question three: *Do first-generation college students feel that their secondary school counselor provided adequate social learning resources?* Survey items 12 through sixteen specifically refer to research question four: *Do first-generation college students feel that their school counselor provided adequate career exploration opportunities?* Survey items fourteen through 21 specifically refer to research question five: *Do first-generation college students feel that their school counselor provided adequate information on post-secondary selection and application processes?*

The survey was originally designed to meet the specific needs of this study. It was constructed after reviewing literature and similar surveys. As a result of its original design, there are no measures of validity or reliability on this instrument. There is a copy of the survey located in Appendix C.

Students received a letter explaining the purpose of the study, consent notification, and the survey link: <http://www.uwstout.edu/survey/admin/public/survey.php?name=CollegPrep>. A copy of this letter can be found in Appendix B.

### *Data Collection*

The researcher obtained permission from the Institutional Review Board. A copy of this can in permission notice is located in Appendix A. The advisement center produced a queried a list utilizing the subject's first name, last name, enrollment start date of fall 2005, freshman status, and UW-Stout e-mail address. This data list was e-mailed to the researcher at [delongb@uwstout.edu](mailto:delongb@uwstout.edu). Using the blind carbon copy technique, the researcher e-mailed all listed subjects a letter explaining the purpose of the study, consent notification, and the survey link:

<http://www.uwstout.edu/survey/admin/public/survey.php?name=CollegPrep>. The survey link was active for two weeks. After the survey link expired, the researcher deleted the quarried list of subjects.

The survey was sent to 1,733 UW-Stout freshman students; 343 surveys were completed 3 surveys were undeliverable as a result of the students full mailbox. The ending response rate was 20%.

### *Data Analysis*

The data was collected electronically and entered into a computerized statistics package called SPSS-X. The data is nominal, ordinal, and ratio. Descriptive statistics were calculated and analyzed. In addition, cross tabulations were done to compare the responses of first-generation college students with varying demographics such as: gender, ethnicity, graduating class size, number of school counselors and family support.

### *Limitations*

A limitation of the study is that subjects will be self-selecting their generational status, thus some of the data may be flawed. This study is limited to only one university; therefore all data should be cautiously inferred to universities of similar size. University of WI-Stout accepts an abnormally high number of first-generation college students. Approximately 50% of the students accepted at UW-Stout are first-generation students; hence, the collected data may be skewed. The instrument being used has no measures of validity or reliability documented.

## Chapter IV: Results

The purpose of this study was to document the perception of UW-Stout first-generation freshmen students regarding the role of their secondary school counselor in college preparation. An on-line assessment was distributed by the researcher. Data was collected from UW-Stout freshman students.

This chapter will give demographic information on the participating subjects. This chapter will include an analysis of each survey question. It will answer the research questions of the study.

1. Do first-generation college students view their secondary school counselor's role in college preparation as effective?
2. Do first-generation college students feel that their secondary school counselor provided academic resources?
3. Do first-generation college students feel that their secondary school counselor provided adequate social learning resources?
4. Do first-generation college students feel that their school counselor provided adequate career exploration opportunities?
5. Do first-generation college students feel that their school counselor provided adequate information on post-secondary selection and application processes?

### *Demographic Information*

In November of 2005, 1733 were electronically sent to the all new UW-Stout freshman with an enrollment start date of Fall of 2005. The students were instructed to click on a link and complete the survey within two weeks. Three-hundred-forty-three surveys were completed. This results in a 19.5% return rate. Of the 343 respondents 73 people or 21.4% identified themselves

as first-generation college students, 264 people or 77% identified themselves as continuing generation students while six of the respondents obtained an undeterminable generational status. This study is based on first generation college students; thus, this results section will only report the data of the first-generation college students. Of the 73 respondents, one parent had a completed education level of middle school or less while 72 parents had completed education level of high school or less.

Both male and female genders were represented within the first-generation sample. Twenty-one people or 29.2% of the first-generation students were male while 51 people or 70.8% were female.

Table 1. Gender Participants

Gender	Total Respondents	Percent of Total Responses
Male Respondents	21	29.2%
Female Respondents	51	70.8%

All ethnic categories were represented with the first-generation college student sample; 69 people or 94.5% of the respondents identified themselves as White (not Hispanic/ Latino) while 4 people or 5.5% identified themselves as a minority, one person is American Indian, one person in Hispanic/Latino, and two people identified themselves as other.

Table 2. Ethnic Participants

Racial/Ethnic Categories	Total Respondents	Percent of Total Respondents
White (not Hispanic/Latino)	69	94.5%
American Indian	1	1.3%
African American	0	0%
Asian American	0	0%
Hispanic/Latino	1	1.3%
South East Asian/Pacific Islander	0	0%
Other	2	2.7%

Of the 73 first-generation college student respondents, they attended various sized high schools. 7 respondents or 9.6% graduated with a class sized of 50 students or less, thirteen people or 12.8% had 51-100 students, nine people or 12.3% had 101-150 students, six people or 8.2% had 151 - 200 students, five people or 6.8% had 201 to 250 students, seven people or 9.6% had 251 to 300 students, three people or 4.1% had 301 to 350 students and 23 people or 31.5% had 351 or more students.

Table 3. Participants Graduating Class Size

Range of Graduating Class	Total Respondents	Percent of Total Respondents
0 – 50 Students	7	9.6%
51 – 100 Students	13	12.8%
101 – 150 Students	9	12.3%
151 – 200 Students	6	8.2%
201 – 250 Students	5	6.8%
251 – 300 Students	7	9.6%
301 – 350 Students	3	4.1%
350 or More Students	23	31.5%

These students also had various numbers of high school counselors ranging from 0-5 or more. Two first-generation student respondents or 2.8% had less than one high school counselor, 19 people or 26.4% had one high school counselor, 15 people or 20.8% had two high school counselors, nine people or 12.5% had three high school counselors, nine people or 12.5% had four high school counselors, and 18 people or 25% had five or more high school counselors.

Table 4. Number of High School Counselors

Number of High School Counselors	Total Respondents	Percent of Total Respondents
Less than one	2	2.8%
One	19	24.6%
Two	15	20.8%
Three	9	12.5%
Four	9	12.5%
Five or more	18	25%

The first-generation students expressed varying degrees of family support regarding college search, selection, application and admission. Of the 73 respondents, one person or 2.7% indicated that their family was unsupportive, seven people or 9.6% showed that their family was a little supportive, eight people or 11% showed their family to be neutral, 29 people or 39.7% had a supportive family, and 27 people or 37% found their families to be extremely supportive.

Table 5. Family Support

Levels of Family Support	Total Respondents	Percent of Total Respondents
Unsupportive	7	9.6%
A little supportive	10	13.7%
Neutral	14	19.2%
Supportive	31	42.5%
Extremely supportive	11	15.1%

*Item Analysis*

This section will include item analysis on each Likert scale question in the survey.

Each question is based on a specific task performed by a school counselor. All of the listed tasks pertain to at least one of the three domains: academic, personal/social and career planning. All subjects we instructed to rate their high school counselor's performance on each specific task as extremely helpful, helpful, neutral, a little helpful, or unhelpful (did not provide this information)

Item eight states: my high school guidance counselor(s) was \_\_\_\_\_ at encouraging rigors academic to aid in college preparation. Of the 73 respondents, 9.6% reported that their high school counselor was unsupportive or did not provide this information, 13.7% reported them to be a little helpful, 14% reported a neutral rating, 42.5% reported that they were helpful, and 15.1% indicated that their school counselor was extremely helpful. The t-score of .432 shows that there is no significance among the answers of the first-generation college students.

Item nine states: my high school guidance counselor was \_\_\_\_\_ at monitoring academic progress, credit total, and graduation requirements. Of the 73 respondents, 11% reported that their high school counselor was unsupportive or did not provide this information, 20.5% reported them to be a little helpful, 8.2% reported a neutral rating, 41.1% reported that they were helpful, and 19.2% indicated that their school counselor was extremely helpful. The t-score of -0.527 shows that there is no significance among the answers of the first-generation college students.

Item ten states: my high school guidance counselor(s) was \_\_\_\_\_ at providing access to academic support resources. Of the 72 respondents, 8.3% reported that their high school counselor was unsupportive or did not provide this information, 16.7% reported them to be a little helpful, 18.1% reported a neutral rating, 40.3% reported that they were helpful, and 16.7%

indicated that their school counselor was extremely helpful. The t-score of 1.003 shows that there is no significance among the answers of the first-generation college students.

Item 11 states: my high school guidance counselor(s) was \_\_\_\_\_ at providing opportunities to gain organizational, study, and test-taking skills. Of the 73 respondents, 24.7% reported that their high school counselor was unsupportive or did not provide this information, 19.2% reported them to be a little helpful, 16.4% reported a neutral rating, 31.5% reported that they were helpful, and 8.2% indicated that their school counselor was extremely helpful. The t-score of -0.298 shows that there is no significance among the answers of the first-generation college students.

Item 12 states: my high school guidance counselor(s) was \_\_\_\_\_ at assisting in future career planning. Of the 73 respondents, 15.1% reported that their high school counselor was unsupportive or did not provide this information, 21.9% reported them to be a little helpful, 17.8% reported a neutral rating, 28.8% reported that they were helpful, and 16.4% indicated that their school counselor was extremely helpful. The t-score of -0.231 shows that there is no significance among the answers of the first-generation college students.

Item thirteen states: my high school guidance counselor(s) was \_\_\_\_\_ at providing adequate career exploration opportunities. Of the 73 respondents, 15.1% reported that their high school counselor was unsupportive or did not provide this information, 16.4% reported them to be a little helpful, 20.5% reported a neutral rating, 37.0% reported that they were helpful, and 11% indicated that their school counselor was extremely helpful. The t-score of -0.082 shows that there is a significance relationship among the answers among the first-generation college students.

Item 14 states: my high school guidance counselor(s) was \_\_\_\_\_ at providing information on college entrance exams. Of the 72 respondents, 4.2% reported that their high school counselor was unsupportive or did not provide this information, 13.9% reported them to be a little helpful, 8.3% reported a neutral rating, 45.8% reported that they were helpful, and 27.8% indicated that their school counselor was extremely helpful. The t-score of 0.555 shows that there is no significance among the answers of the first-generation college students.

Item 15 states: my high school guidance counselor(s) was \_\_\_\_\_ at arranging college and military recruiters to visit school. Of the 73 respondents, 6.8% reported that their high school counselor was unsupportive or did not provide this information, 13.7% reported them to be a little helpful, 19.2% reported a neutral rating, 31.5% reported that they were helpful, and 28.8% indicated that their school counselor was extremely helpful. The t-score of -0.871 shows that there is no significance among the answers of the first-generation college students.

Item 16 states: my high school guidance counselor(s) was \_\_\_\_\_ at providing information on various colleges and/or technical schools. Of the 73 respondents, 4.1% reported that their high school counselor was unsupportive or did not provide this information, 16.4% reported them to be a little helpful, 13.7% reported a neutral rating, 37% reported that they were helpful, and 28.8% indicated that their school counselor was extremely helpful. The t-score of 0.019 shows that there is no significance among the answers of the first-generation college students.

Item 17 states: my high school guidance counselor(s) was \_\_\_\_\_ at assisting with college applications. Of the 73 respondents, 12.3% reported that their high school counselor was unsupportive or did not provide this information, 21.9% reported them to be a little helpful, 8.2% reported a neutral rating, 30.1% reported that they were helpful, and 27.4% indicated that their

school counselor was extremely helpful. The t-score of -0.024 shows that there is no significance among the answers of the first-generation college students.

Item 18 states: my high school guidance counselor(s) was \_\_\_\_\_ at providing information on financial aid, grants, loans, and scholarships. Of the 72 respondents, 13.9% reported that their high school counselor was unsupportive or did not provide this information, 13.9% reported them to be a little helpful, 11.1% reported a neutral rating, 38.9% reported that they were helpful, and 22.2% indicated that their school counselor was extremely helpful. The t-score of 0.849 shows that there is no significance among the answers of the first-generation college students.

Item 19 states: my high school guidance counselor(s) was \_\_\_\_\_ at providing signatures for college admissions applications. Of the 73 respondents, 4.1% reported that their high school counselor was unsupportive or did not provide this information, 8.2% reported them to be a little helpful, 11% reported a neutral rating, 43.8% reported that they were helpful, and 32.9% indicated that their school counselor was extremely helpful.. The t-score of 0.214 shows that there is no significance among the answers of the first-generation college students.

Item 20 states: my high school guidance counselor(s) was \_\_\_\_\_ at providing letters of recommendation upon request. Of the 72 respondents, 13.9% reported that their high school counselor was unsupportive or did not provide this information, 11.1% reported them to be a little helpful, 23.6% reported a neutral rating, 26.4% reported that they were helpful, and 25% indicated that their school counselor was extremely helpful. The t-score of -0.601 shows that there is no significance among the answers of the first-generation college students.

Item 21 states: my high school guidance counselor(s) was \_\_\_\_\_ at providing parents/guardians with opportunities to learn about college admissions process. Of the 71

respondents, 23.9% reported that their high school counselor was unsupportive or did not provide this information, 12.7% reported them to be a little helpful, 32.4% reported a neutral rating, 26.8% reported that they were helpful, and 4.2% indicated that their school counselor was extremely helpful. The t-score of .432 shows that there is no significance among the answers of the first-generation college students.

Item 22 states: my high school guidance counselor(s) was \_\_\_\_\_ at providing social education opportunities to obtain an understanding self and others. Of the 72 respondents, 22.2% reported that their high school counselor was unsupportive or did not provide this information, 13.9% reported them to be a little helpful, 29.2% reported a neutral rating, 26.4% reported that they were helpful, and 8.3% indicated that their school counselor was extremely helpful. The t-score of 0.114 shows that there is no significance among the answers of the first-generation college students.

Item 23 states: my high school guidance counselor(s) was \_\_\_\_\_ at providing information on coping strategies. Of the 73 respondents, 32.9% reported that their high school counselor was unsupportive or did not provide this information, 16.4% reported them to be a little helpful, 19.2% reported a neutral rating, 21.9% reported that they were helpful, and 9.6% indicated that their school counselor was extremely helpful. The t-score of -0.097 shows that there is a significant among the answers of the first-generation college students.

Item 24 states: my high school guidance counselor(s) was \_\_\_\_\_ at providing information on peer relationships and effective social skills. Of the 72 respondents, 36.1% reported that their high school counselor was unsupportive or did not provide this information, 18.1% reported them to be a little helpful, 16.7% reported a neutral rating, 23.6% reported that they were helpful, and 5.6% indicated that their school counselor was extremely helpful. The t-

score of -1.038 shows that there is no significance among the answers of the first-generation college students.

Item 25 states: my high school guidance counselor(s) was \_\_\_\_\_ at providing substance abuse education. Of the 72 respondents, 34.7% reported that their high school counselor was unsupportive or did not provide this information, 13.9% reported them to be a little helpful, 20.8% reported a neutral rating, 15.3% reported that they were helpful, and 15.3% indicated that their school counselor was extremely helpful. The t-score of -0.582 shows that there is no significance among the answers of the first-generation college students.

Item 26 states: my high school guidance counselor(s) was \_\_\_\_\_ at providing multicultural/diversity awareness. Of the 73 respondents, 39.7% reported that their high school counselor was unsupportive or did not provide this information, 16.4% reported them to be a little helpful, 15.1% reported a neutral rating, 23.3% reported that they were helpful, and 5.5% indicated that their school counselor was extremely helpful. The t-score of -1.7432 shows that there is no significance among the answers of the first-generation college students.

Item 27 states: my high school guidance counselor(s) was \_\_\_\_\_ at providing information on communication skills, problem-solving, decision-making, conflict resolution, and study skills. Of the 72 respondents, 34.7% reported that their high school counselor was unsupportive or did not provide this information, 18.1% reported them to be a little helpful, 15.3% reported a neutral rating, 19.4% reported that they were helpful, and 12.5% indicated that their school counselor was extremely helpful. The t-score of -1.090 shows that there is no significance among the answers of the first-generation college students.

Table 6. School Counselors Performance

Item #	Role of School Counselor	Unhelpful	A little helpful	Neutral	Helpful	Extremely Helpful	T-Score
8	Encourage rigorous academics	9.6%	13.7%	19.2%	42.5%	15.1%	.432
9	Monitor academic progress, credit total, and graduation	11.0%	20.5%	8.2%	41.1%	19.2%	-.527
10	Provide access to academic support resources	8.3%	16.7%	18.1%	40.3%	16.7%	1.003
11	Organizational, study, test-taking skills	24.7%	19.2%	16.4%	31.5%	8.2%	-.298
12	Future career planning	15.1%	21.9%	17.8%	28.8%	16.4%	-.231
13	Career exploration opportunities	15.1%	16.4%	20.5%	37.0%	11.0%	-.082*
14	Information on college entrance exams (ACT/SAT)	4.2%	13.9%	8.3%	45.8%	27.8%	.555
15	School visits of college and military recruiters	6.8%	13.7%	19.2%	31.5%	28.8%	-.871
16	Information on various colleges/tech schools	4.1%	16.4%	13.7%	37.0%	28.8%	.019
17	Aid with college applications	12.3%	21.9 %	8.2%	30.1 %	27.4%	-.024
18	Financial aid, grants, loans, and scholarships	13.9%	13.9%	11.1%	38.9%	22.2%	.849
19	Signatures for college admissions applications	4.1%	8.2%	11.0%	43.8%	32.9%	.214
20	Letters of recommendation	13.9%	11.1%	23.6%	26.4%	25.0%	-.601
21	Inform parents of college admissions processes	23.9%	12.7%	32.4%	26.8%	4.2%	-1.618
22	Social skills education – understand self and others	22.2%	13.9%	29.2%	26.4%	8.3%	.114
23	Education on coping strategies	32.9%	16.4%	19.2%	21.9%	9.6%	-.097*
24	Education on peer relationships	36.1%	18.1%	16.7%	23.6%	5.6%	-1.038
25	Substance abuse education	34.7%	13.9%	20.8%	15.3%	15.3%	-.582
26	Providing multicultural/diversity awareness	39.7%	16.4%	15.1%	23.3%	5.5%	-1.750
27	Education problem solving skills	34.7%	18.1%	15.3%	19.4%	12.5%	-1.090

\* Significance at .05 or >

### *Discussion*

The survey was given to answer the previously mentioned research questions. The data collected help determine first-generation college students perception of how effective their high school guidance counselor is helping the student prepare for college.

*Research Question 1: Do first-generations college students view their secondary school counselor's role in college preparation as effective?* All of the survey questions are either directly or indirectly related to a school counselor's role in college preparation. According to the survey results, school counselors were found to be 50% effective. Ten of the 20 survey items were rated effective while the other ten items were rated as less that effective. Of the 73 respondents 57.6% indicated that their high school counselor(s) effectively encouraged of rigorous academics; 60.3% indicated that their high school counselor(s) monitored academic progress, credit total and graduation; 57.0% felt that their high school counselor(s) effectively provided access to academic support resources; 73.6% indicated that their high school counselor(s) effectively informed them on college entrance exams; 60.3% indicated that their high school counselor(s) effectively provided school visits from college and military recruiters; 65.8% indicated that their high school counselor(s) effectively informed them on various colleges and technical schools; 57.5% indicated that their high school counselor(s) effectively assisted with college applications; 61.1% indicated that their school counselor effectively provided with financial aid, grants, loans, and scholarship information; 76.6% indicated that their high school counselor(s) effectively provided signatures for college admissions applications; and 51.4% indicated that their high school counselor(s) effectively provided letters of recommendation.

The 73 respondents indicated that their high school counselor(s) are less than effective on ten of survey items. Of the 73 respondents 60.3% indicated that their high school counselor was less than effective at providing opportunities to obtain organizational, time management, and study skills; 54.8% indicated that their high school counselor(s) were less than effective at providing future career planning; 52.0% indicated that their school counselor(s) were less than effective at providing career exploration activities; 69.0% indicated that their school counselor(s) were less than effective to inform parents of college admissions processes; 64.3% indicated that their high school counselor(s) were less than effective at providing social skills education; 69.5% indicated that their high school counselor(s) were less than effective at providing education on coping strategies; 60.8% indicated that their high school counselor(s) were less than effective at providing education on peer relationships, 69.4% indicated that their high school counselor(s) were less than effective at providing substance abuse education; 71.2% indicated that their high school counselor was less than effective at providing multicultural awareness, and 68.1% indicated that their high school counselor(s) were less than effective at providing education on decision making skills.

Table 7. Effectiveness of High School Counselors

Survey Item	Survey item topic	Percent of subjects that found their school counselor to be effective	Percent of subjects that found their school counselor to be less than effective
8	Encourage rigorous academics	57.6%	42.7%
9	Monitor academic progress, credit total, graduation	60.3%	39.7%
10	Provide access to academic support resources	57.0%	43.0%
11	Organizational, study, test-taking skills	39.7%	60.3%
12	Future career planning	45.2%	54.8%
13	Career exploration opportunities	48.0%	52.0%
14	Information on college entrance exams (ACT/SAT)	73.6%	26.4%
15	School visits from college and military recruiters	60.3%	39.7%
16	Information on various colleges/tech schools	65.8%	34.2%
17	Aid with college applications	57.5%	42.5%
18	Financial aid, grants, loans, and scholarship information	61.1%	38.9%
19	Signatures for college admissions applications	76.7%	23.3%
20	Letters of recommendation	51.4%	48.6%
21	Inform parents of college admissions processes	31.0%	69.0%
22	Social skills education (understand self and others)	35.7%	64.3%
23	Education on coping strategies	31.5%	69.5%
24	Education on peer relationships	39.2%	60.8%
25	Substance abuse education	30.6%	69.4%
26	Providing multicultural/diversity awareness	28.8%	71.2%
27	Education problem solving skills	31.9%	68.1%

*Research Question 2: Do first-generation college students feel that their secondary school counselor provided academic resources?* On the survey, there were four items regarding academic resources. The results showed that high school counselors were effective on three of the four items. Of the 73 respondents 57.6% indicated that their high school counselor(s) effectively encouraged rigorous academics; 60.3% indicated that their school counselor(s) effectively monitored academic progress, credit total, and graduation requirements; 57.0% indicated that their high school counselor(s) provided access to academic support resources. Of 73 respondents, 60.3% indicated that their high school counselor(s) were less than effective at providing opportunities to obtain organizational, study and test-taking skills.

*Research Question 3: Do first-generation college students feel that their secondary school counselor provided adequate social learning resources?* The survey contained six items regarding a school counselor's role in social/emotional development. The 73 respondents indicated that their school counselors were less than effective on all six of the survey items. Of the 73 respondents, 64.3% indicated that their high school counselor(s) were less than effective at providing social skills education; 69.5% indicated that their high school counselor(s) were less than effective at providing education on coping strategies; 60.8% indicated that their high school counselor(s) were less than effective at providing education on peer relationships, 69.4% indicated that their high school counselor(s) were less than effective at providing substance abuse education; 71.2% indicated that their high school counselor was less than effective at providing multicultural awareness, and 68.1% indicated that their high school counselor(s) were less than effective at providing education on decision making skills.

*Research Question 4: Do first-generation college students feel that their school counselor provided adequate career exploration opportunities?* The survey instrument contained

five items regarding career exploration. The results indicate that school counselor were effective on three items and less than effective on two items. Of the 73 respondents 73.6% indicated that their high school counselor(s) effectively informed them on college entrance exams; 60.3% indicated that their high school counselor(s) effectively provided school visits from college and military recruiters; 65.8% indicated that their high school counselor(s) effectively informed them on various colleges and technical schools. The results indicate that high school counselors were less than effective at proving career planning and career exploration activities. Of the 73 respondents 54.8% indicated that their high school counselor(s) were less than effective at providing future career planning; 52.0% indicated that their school counselor(s) were less than effective at providing career exploration activities.

*Research Question 5: Do first-generation college students feel that their school counselor provided adequate information on post-secondary selection and application processes?* There are eight items that regard post-secondary selection and application processes. The survey results illustrate that high school counselors are effective on seven of the item and less than effective at on one item. Of the 73 respondents 73.6% indicated that their high school counselor(s) effectively informed them on college entrance exams; 60.3% indicated that their high school counselor(s) effectively provided school visits from college and military recruiters; 65.8% indicated that their high school counselor(s) effectively informed them on various colleges and technical schools; 57.5% indicated that their high school counselor(s) effectively assisted with college applications; 61.1% indicated that their school counselor effectively provided with financial aid, grants, loans, and scholarship information; 76.6% indicated that their high school counselor(s) effectively provided signatures for college admissions applications; and 51.4% indicated that their high school counselor(s) effectively provided letters of

recommendation. Of the 73 respondents 69.0% indicated that their high school counselor(s) were less than effective at assisting parents/guardian with college admissions processes.

### *Summary of Data*

As a whole, first generation college students viewed their high school guidance counselors 50% effective in their role of college preparation. Survey items eight through 27 investigated the multiple aspects of a high school counselor's role in preparing first-generation college students for college. These various roles regarding college preparation are those depicted by both the American School Counselors Association as well as the Wisconsin School Counseling Association. Of the 20 items 10 of them were rated as effective.

Research question number two regards a secondary school counselor's role in providing academic support. Survey items eight through 11 specifically investigated the issue of academic support. The first-generation respondents indicated that high school counselors were effective in three out of the four questions used to investigate academic support. The respondents indicated that the high school counselors were less than effective at providing opportunities to gain organizational, study, or test taking skills; however, they were found effective at encouraging rigors academics, monitoring academic progress, and providing access to academic support resources.

Research question number three references the secondary school counselor's role in providing adequate social learning resources. Survey items 22 through 27 were designed to investigate the secondary school counselor's role in providing first-generation students with effective social learning resources. The first-generation respondents indicated that their high school counselors were less than effective on all six of the surveyed items. The secondary school counselors were found to be less than effective at providing social education opportunities obtain

an understanding of self and others, coping strategies, peer relationship skills, substance abuse education, multicultural/diversity awareness, or problem-solving/decision making skills.

Research question number four references the secondary school counselor's role in providing adequate career exploration opportunities. Survey items 12 through 16 were designed to investigate the effectiveness of a first-generation college student high school guidance counselor's role in providing career exploration. The first generation respondents indicated that high school counselors were effective in three of the five surveyed items. Secondary school counselors of first generation college students were found to be less than effective at assisting in future career planning and providing adequate career exploration opportunities; however, they were found to be effective at providing information on college entrance exams, arranging recruiters of all types to visit the schools and provide information on various schools.

Research question number five references the secondary school counselor's role in providing adequate information on post-secondary selection and application processes. Survey items 14 through 21 were designed to investigate the effectiveness of a first-generation school counselor's role in providing adequate information regarding post-secondary schools and application process. The first-generation respondents indicated that high school counselors were effective in six of the seven surveyed items. The first-generation college students secondary school counselors were found to be less than effective at providing parents with information about post-secondary admissions process; however, they were found effective at providing information on college entrance exams, arranging recruiters to visit their schools, providing information on various post-secondary schools, assisting with college application processes, providing information on financial aid, providing signatures for admissions applications, and providing letters of recommendations.

## Chapter V: Discussion

This chapter will provide a discussion of the study, conclusions made from the study, limitations of the study, recommendations for high school counselors working with first-generation college bound students, and recommendations for future research on this topic.

### *Discussion*

The results to this study regarding ethnic minority status were inconsistent with previous research. The results of this study show that only 6.3 % of the respondents classified themselves as an ethnic minority. According to U.S. Department of Education (Chen, 2002) 35.9% of first-generation students are of an ethnic minority group. UW-Stout population is made of mostly Caucasian Americans; hence these results reflect the population of this specific university. In the state of Wisconsin has limited diversity as well. According to the United States Census Bureau (2000), Wisconsin's state population consisted of 88.9 % Caucasian Americans, 1.7 % Asian Americans, 5.7 % African Americans, 3.6 % Hispanics, and 0.9% American Indian.

The results of this study were comparable to prior research regarding the percentage of enrolled first-generation students; 27.6 % of the respondents identified themselves as first-generation college students. Research has indicated that about 27% of high school graduates are prospective first-generation college students (Gibbons & Shoffner, 2004).

The American School Counselor Association (2002) and the Wisconsin School Counseling Association have created developmental guidance models indicating that a high school counselor is responsible for providing potential college students with college preparation materials. The role of college preparation includes providing adequate resources in the areas of: academics, social learning, career exploration, and post-secondary admissions processes. This

study was used to investigate first-generation college students' perceptions of effectiveness performed by their high school counselor regarding college preparation.

Overall the first-generation college student respondents indicated that their high school counselors were 50% effective in fulfilling their multi-faceted role regarding college preparation services. The ASCA model was implemented in 2005 while the WDGM is currently under revision again and is expected to be released in 2006. This revision of models may play a role in the respondents indicating an effectiveness rating of 50%. Several of the school counselors working in the field have not yet been trained on the new developmental guidance models. Others have been trained on the model and are working to implement the model into their current program. Updating some of the secondary programs could take some time. It is very likely that the students surveyed attended schools that provided a developmental guidance program that included all of the various aspects listed above; hence, the result of effectiveness may be skewed because of this change in program expectations.

Another reason why the respondents indicated an effectiveness rating of 50% relates to the dependency of potential first-generation college students on high school counselors. Gibbons & Shoffner (2004) indicated that high school counselors often experience difficulty in meeting the various needs of potential first-generation college students. First-generation college students often have limited knowledge about the system of higher education; hence, these students are forced to rely slowly on their high school guidance counselor for all information regarding post-secondary planning processes. As a result of this dependency it is often both difficult for the both the potential college student, as well as, school counselor. Many high school counselors working today are being asked to perform more duties and manage larger student caseloads while implementing newly revised developmental guidance models from both the American School

Counseling Association and the Wisconsin School Counseling Association. As a result, secondary school counselors often feel pressed for time and unable to service all students effectively. ASCA (2002) suggests a student ratio to counselor ratio of 250:1; the national average is 488:1. This study shows that first-generation college students are some of the students that school counselors are not able to serve as effectively as desired. Lacking external resources, first-generation students are often forced to rely on the school counselor for post-secondary planning information. In most cases parents are unable to assist with post-secondary planning due to their lack of knowledge, resources, and experience with in the system of higher education. This lack of guidance from home is often stressful for both the potential first-generation college students and their parents. If a high school student is potentially college bound, it is likely that their parent(s) have served as strong academic advocates and resources through out their child's educational career thus far.

Academic resources are to be provided by the school counselors as well. The respondents indicated in survey item eight, nine, and ten that their high school guidance counselors effectively provided academic resources, access to academic support resources and monitored academic progress, credit totals, and graduation requirements. The respondents indicated that their high school counselors was less than effective at providing opportunities to gain organizational skills, study, and test-taking skills. Teachers of all subject areas are also responsible for teaching organizational skills, study skills, and test taking skills (Wong & Wong, 2001). Most content area teachers work these skills into their curriculum; hence, respondents may have identified with their classroom teachers as being effective in providing instruction on organizational skills, study skills, and test-taking skills. If an educator needs added support outside of the classroom they may turn to the high school counselor and ask to assist with

providing additional lessons or student assistance; hence, 39.7% of the surveyed respondents did find their high school counselor to be effective in this area.

High school counselors are also responsible for introducing social learning education. The respondents indicated that high school counselors of first-generation college students were less than effective on all six of the items investigating social education. It is rare for a high school guidance counselor to lead classroom lessons on social learning at the secondary level; only 15% to 25% of a secondary school counselor's time is spent in the classroom addressing career exploration, future planning, and financial aid (ASCA, 2005). ASCA suggest that elementary school counselors may spend 35% to 45% of their time in classroom guidance while a middle school counselor may spend 25% to 35% of their time in the classroom.

Students at the secondary level are probably getting their social learning information from other areas of study. The Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction (2006) mandates that that all students in grades seven, eight, and nine, must complete at least one-half of a credit of health education which includes personal, family, community, and environmental health. Health teachers are often viewed as a staple providing education regarding social education including: substance abuse, peer pressure, healthy relationships, coping skills, problem-solving and decision making skills.

Many of the survey respondents may have rated their school district as effective in providing education; however, when specifically asked if the school counselor was effective at providing the information the results indicated that the school counselor was less than effective. In the high school setting, it is more likely for a secondary counselor to work with students regarding social education on an individual level; hence on all six of the survey items regarding social learning education at least 28.8% percent found their high school counselor to effective at

providing adequate social learning education. Gysbers & Henderson, (2000) clarify that it is not the school counselor job to individually fulfill and deliver each of the standards suggested by both the ASCA model and the WDGM. It is the school counselors job to ensure that all of the aspects within the model are being met somewhere in students educational curriculum. Ideally educators and counselors will work collaboratively to meet all educational standards.

Career exploration is also a part of both the developmental guidance models: ASCA and WDGM. The survey respondents indicated that school counselors of first-generation college students were less than effective at providing adequate career exploration opportunities, as well as, future planning assistance. It is not uncommon for first-generation college students to feel that they did not have adequate time to plan or prepare for college admission. Gibbons and Shoffner (2004) indicate that perspective first-generation college students are often late on making decision involving future plans. The students are often unaware of the time line that is suggested by the post-secondary system. First-generation college students often lack knowledge of basic information such as: major field of study, credit load, admissions process, entrance exams, housing rules and other college policies. First-generation college students are often overwhelmed by learning all of the concepts listed above. Upon arrival it is not uncommon for a first-generation student to feel more overwhelmed than a continuing generation students. First-generation college students often have to overcome or clarify many of their learn misconceptions about the system of high education. Oftentimes first-generation college students have very skewed expectations of "college life" (Prancer et al., 2004). Rodriguez (2003) indicates that it is not uncommon for a first-generation college student to be very confused about future educational goals, career plans, and specific about a field of study. Many first-generation college students strive to be admitted into a college; 33% of first-generation college students will not be ready to

focus on a specific field of study until their second or third semester of college; hence they arrive on campus as an undecided student. Since this survey was given during the first semester of the students' freshman year, it is likely that the results directly related to career exploration were skewed. As research indicates, several first-generation students are not prepared to focus on a specific field of study; hence, they probably feel that their high school counselor was did not provide adequate career exploration opportunities or future planning assistance.

College admissions processes are also viewed as part of the school counselor's role. The respondents indicated that their high school counselors were effective at proving information, forms, signatures need for college admissions. All of the students surveyed were enrolled at University of Wisconsin-Stout; hence, each of the students successfully completed the admissions process. Oftentimes in school districts, high school counselors are the only people allowed to provided signatures and student record information; thus, all of the students surveyed were forced to receive proper signatures and admission information. If this survey would have included students that are currently not enrolled in college, the numbers many be very different. There may be students currently not enrolled in post-secondary education as a result of a less than effective school counselor. Because all of the surveyed participants were currently enrolled in four-year institution, the results are more than likely significantly skewed.

The respondents did indicate that their high school counselors' were less than effective at providing information for their parents regarding college admissions processes. High school counselors oftentimes lack access to parents; hence, it is often difficult to disseminate information to parents in an effective manner. Parents of first-generation students may need to seek out the high school counselor more frequently requesting updates, times lines, and other desired information.

The results of this study also indicate that some of the high school counselors of the surveyed first-generation students appear to have extremely high caseloads. Gibbons and Shoffner (2004) indicated that today's high school counselors are continually performing various roles at a level that is less than effective because of their ever growing student caseloads.

The results of this study also illustrates that 57.6 % of the survey first-generation students found their family to be either supportive or extremely supportive. Fallon's (1997) research indicates that family support is the key component of college success for first-generation students. Family support is often present for first-generation students but it is usually submersed with fear. Oftentimes parents of first-generation students have very unrealistic views and expectations of post-secondary education; hence, students perceive this as ignorance and feel that their parents are unsupportive. Some parents also fear that attending college may create distance in their relationship (Cushman, 2005).

### *Limitations*

This study had several limitations to consider while interpreting the results. This study should not be generalized to all potential first-generation students. All of the subjects surveyed were accepted and currently enrolled in a four year university; hence, all of these first-generation students were able to navigate themselves into four year university. This survey is based solely on the student's perception of the school counselor's role. Many school counseling programs across the nation have been under recent revision; hence, the role of the school counselor may have shifted drastically in the past few years. Program revision may lead to confusion of duties performed by the school counselor. This survey was only conducted with University of Wisconsin- Stout freshman. Survey results may be drastically different in areas with different demographics.

### *Conclusion*

The UW-Stout first-generation students were not completely satisfied with the college preparation services provided by high school guidance counselors. The high school counselors of the first-generation college students were less than effective at providing students with opportunities to gain organizational skills, study skills, and test taking skills. The high school counselor's role was also perceived as less than effective in all areas of providing social learning resources including: and understanding of self and others, coping strategies, peer relationships, substance abuse education, awareness of multicultural/diversity, and problem-solving skills/decision making skills. The high school counselors of first-generation college students were also less than effective in providing career exploration opportunities and assistance with future planning. They were also less than effective at providing post-secondary information to the parents of the first-generation college students.

The UW-Stout first-generation students did find their high school counselor to be effective at providing academic resources including: encouragement of rigorous academics, academic monitoring, and providing academic support resources. School counselors also effectively provided information post-secondary entrance exams, arranged for recruiters to visit schools, provided information on post-secondary schools, assisted with applications, information on financial aid, provided signatures, and provided letters of recommendation.

### *Recommendations for School Counselor's of First-generation Students*

In order for school counselors to be 100 % effective in servicing first-generation college students, there are several things that high school counselors could implement or direct their attention toward. High school counselors working with potential first generation students could become aware of the fact that in most cases they will be serving as an the sole resource for this

potential student. The high school counselor could also note that oftentimes first generation students have many misconceptions about post-secondary education. Knowing this, it is important for all information to be explain in great detail, as well as, accurate in content.

High school counselors working with first-generation college students may want increase or include a parent information component to their college preparation program. Parents of first-generation college students may need some basic education on the post-secondary admissions process. By increasing parent education, students are more likely to experience additional family support. School counselors could provide parent education night, parent workshops or conferences regarding college selection processes, admissions processes, application procedures and financial aid issues.

To avoid limiting student's options upon graduation, school counselors working with potential first-generation students could address college admissions standards beginning in ninth grade. Students that would like to continue their education should to be aware of these standards to enhance their options of selection of post-secondary education. School counselors should avoid labeling any potential fist-generation college student on to a non-college bound academic course selection path. First-generation college students often decided that they are going to go to college late in their high school career; hence, the school counselor could aid the student in selecting college bound course work to enhance opportunities.

To increase career awareness, school counselors working with first-generation students could provide annual career exploration opportunities for these students. To increase effectiveness, school counselors could implement career exploration as part of their developmental guidance program. Ideally students will have the opportunity to study career exploration in all grades starting in kindergarten.

School counselors working with potential first-generation students may want to focus some of their attention on social learning preparation. Students coming to college are in need of education on drugs and drug abuse, peer pressure, time management, problem solving and decision making skills. These basic skills are not innate skills for most people. Often times in schools, educators assume that the student will learn these skills through association; it is seldom to educators teach lessons that address these specific issues at the secondary level.

#### *Recommendations for Future Research*

This study was only given to the freshman college students at the University of Wisconsin- Stout; in the future, a researcher should survey multiple campuses so the study could be adapted to broad population. With additional studies the results could be generalized to other areas.

This study was only included students that are currently enrolled in the post-secondary education system. In the future, a study could include all of the high school students. I'm sure that there are potential first-generation students that were unable to navigate themselves through the admissions process; as a result, they are not enrolled in college. I'm sure these students would generate a much different perspective that the students who successful navigated themselves through the enrollment process.

This study could also be enhancing by asking the parent perception of the high school guidance counselor. A parent survey would add another source to further understand both the frustration and satisfaction with their first-generation college student.

A survey could also be given to school counselors that would allow them to respond to the various roles as a high school counselor. By surveying school counselors, it would help the researcher identify how a school counselor views their role in college preparation.

The survey should be adjusted. Items number five and six should be adjusted in format. Students should fill in the blank providing a specific number of students in their graduating class as well as the number of school counselors working in their high school. With this adjustment actual counselor caseload could be determined more closely. Knowing the exact counselor caseload number is important because than it could than be cross-tabulated with the students satisfaction rate. Research indicates that counselors' ineffectiveness is often because of large caseloads. Future research could determine whether this apparent ineffectiveness is a result of a poorly designed developmental guidance programs or if it is a result of being overwhelmed by a large caseloads.

Future researchers could also do a comparative study to investigate the responses among those of the continuing generation students. It may be interesting to determine perception of their school counselors' level of effectiveness regarding college preparation in comparison to the first-generation college students.

## References

- American School Counseling Association (2005). *The ASCA National Model: A Framework for School Counseling Programs, Second Edition*. Alexandria VA: Author.
- American School Counseling Association (2005) Why Secondary School Counselors? *The Role of the Professional School Counselor*. Retrieved from the world wide web, (June, 26, 2005). <http://www.schoolcounselor.org/content>
- Chen, X. (2005). *First-generation students in post secondary education: a look at their college transcripts*. U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Educational Statistics. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office.
- Chubb, J., & Loveless, T. (2002) *Bridging the achievement gap*. Washington, D.C: Brookings Institution Press.
- Cushman, K. (2005). *First in the family you advice about college from first-generation students your high school years*. Providence, RI: Next Generation Press.
- Fallon, M. (1997, May). The school counselor's role in first generation student's college plans. *School Counselor*, 44(5), 384-385. Retrieved June 14, 2005 from:[http://web24.epnet.com/DeliveryPrintSave.asp?tb=1&\\_ug=sid+\)E89561F-7310-4F27-8B7](http://web24.epnet.com/DeliveryPrintSave.asp?tb=1&_ug=sid+)E89561F-7310-4F27-8B7)
- Gibbons, M. & Shoffner, M. (2004, October). Prospective first-generation college students: Meeting their needs through social cognitive career theory. *Professional School Counseling*, 8 (1) 91-98.
- Gysber, N. & Henderson, P. (2000). *Developing & managing your school guidance program* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed., text rev.). Alexandria, VA. American Counseling Association.

- Hinchner, K. & Tifft-Hinchner, A. (1996). *Counseling today's secondary students: practical strategies, techniques & materials for the school counselor*. Paramus, NJ: Prentice Hall, Inc.
- Howe, N. & Strauss, W. (2000). *Millennials rising: The next great generation*. New York, NY: Vintage Books, A Division of Random House, Inc.
- McCollum, S. (2005). The college chase. *Literary Cacalcade*, 57 (6) 20-22.
- McDonough, P. (2004). Counseling and college counseling in America's high schools. *National Association for College Admissions Counseling*. Los Angles, CA: NACDA.
- Naumann, W. (2003). Identifying variables that predict college success for first-generation college students. *The Journal of College Admission*, 1 (Fall), 1-9.
- Prancer, M., Pratt, M., Hunsberger, B., & Alisat, S. (2004, Summer). Bridging troubled waters: Helping students make the transition from high school to university. *Guidance & Counseling*, 19(4). 184-190. Retrieved June 26, 2005, [http://web18.epnet.com/citation.asp?tb=1&\\_ub=bo=B%5FJN+shn+1+db+f5hjh=bt=%22Guidance&Counseling](http://web18.epnet.com/citation.asp?tb=1&_ub=bo=B%5FJN+shn+1+db+f5hjh=bt=%22Guidance&Counseling).
- Rodriguez, S. (2003, September/October). What helps some first-generation students succeed?. *About Campus*, Sept./Oct., 17-22.
- Sax, L. (2003, July-August). Our incoming students: What are they like?. *About Campus* July-August, 15-20.
- Shellenbarger, S. (March 17, 2006) Helicopter parents now hover at the office. *Wall Street Journal On-line*. Retrieved March 20, 2006, <http://www.careerjournal.com/columnists/workfamily/20060317-workfamily.htm>

United States Census Bureau, (2000). *American FactFinder*. Retrieved May 5, 2006 from: <http://factfinder.census.gov/>

Van T. Bui, K. (2002, March). First-generation college students at a four-year university: Background characteristics, reasons for pursuing higher education, and first-year experiences. *College Student Journal*, 36 (1) 3-10.

Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction. (2005). *High school graduation standards*. Retrieved April 30, 2006. from: [www.dpi.state.wi.us](http://www.dpi.state.wi.us)

Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction. (2003). *Wisconsin developmental guidance model*. Retrieved March 5, 2006 from: [www.dpi.state.wi.us](http://www.dpi.state.wi.us)

Wong H. & Wong R. (2001) *The first days of school: How to be an effective teacher*. Mountain View, CA. Harry K. Wong Publications, INC.

## Appendix A



Stout Solutions • Research Services  
152 Voc Rehab Building

University of Wisconsin-Stout  
P.O. Box 790  
Menomonie, WI 54751-0790

715/232-1126  
715/232-1749 (fax)  
<http://www.uwstout.edu/ips/>

**Date:** October 13, 2005

**To:** Bethany Delong

**Cc:** Diane Klemme

**From:** Sue Foxwell, Research Administrator and Human Protections Administrator, UW-Stout Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects in Research (IRB)

**Subject:** Protection of Human Subjects

Your project, *“Transitioning from High School to College: First Generation College Students’ Perceptions of Secondary School Counselor’s Role in College Preparation”* has been approved by the IRB through the expedited review process. The measures you have taken to protect human subjects are adequate to protect everyone involved, including subjects and researchers.

Please copy and paste the following message to the top of your survey form before dissemination:

**This research has been approved by the UW-Stout IRB as required by the Code of Federal Regulations Title 45 Part 46.**

This project is approved through October 12, 2006. Modifications to this approved protocol need to be approved by the IRB. Research not completed by this date must be submitted again outlining changes, expansions, etc. Federal guidelines require annual review and approval by the IRB.

Thank you for your cooperation with the IRB and best wishes with your project.

**\*NOTE: This is the only notice you will receive – no paper copy will be sent.**

SF:dd

## Appendix B

E-Mail subject heading: I need 3 minutes of your time.

UW-Stout Freshman Students,

**How helpful was your high school guidance counselor at preparing you for college?**

**Please help me! Your opinion matters!** I am trying to collect information about your high school guidance counselor. My name is Bethany Delong; I am a graduate student in the Guidance and School Counseling Masters program here at UW-Stout. I am conducting a 3 minute electronic survey for my written thesis. The attached survey is regarding the effectiveness of your high school counselor's role in college preparation?

**Steps to participate in this research project:**

- 1. Click on the survey link below**
- 2. Answer the questions honestly**
- 3. Click submit**

**Link to Survey <http://www.uwstout.edu/survey/delongb.html>**

In filling out and submitting this survey, you give your consent in providing confidential information necessary for this study. Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. You have the right to withdraw from the study at any time. You may participate in all, some, or none of this survey. The risks of this survey are minimal. There are numerous benefits to this survey. This information can benefit students, faculty, staff, and administration at both the secondary and post-secondary level. All responses will be kept confidential.

If you have questions or concerns about this study please contact the following:

Bethany Delong, Researcher  
Phone (715) 232-1465  
E-Mail [delongb@uwstout.edu](mailto:delongb@uwstout.edu)

Diane Klemme, Research Advisor  
Phone (715) 232-2546  
E-mail [klemmed@uwstout.edu](mailto:klemmed@uwstout.edu)

Sue Foxwell, Research Administrator  
Phone (715) 232-2477  
E-mail [foxwells@uwstout.edu](mailto:foxwells@uwstout.edu)

Thank you for your time, interest, and participation.

Bethany Delong

## Appendix C

**Survey of College Students****Regarding the Effectiveness of High School Guidance Counselors**

This survey seeks to gather information regarding your perception of the high school guidance counselor's role in college preparation. The results of this survey will be used to help evaluate the strength of your guidance counselor's role in college preparation. Please answer the following questions to the best of your knowledge. Answers to this survey will be kept confidential

1. Gender
  - Male
  - Female
  
2. Which racial or ethnic group do you primarily identify with?
  - American Indian
  - Asian American
  - Southeast Asian/ Pacific Islander
  - Hispanic/Latino
  - White (not Hispanic/Latino)
  - African American
  - Other
  
3. Highest level of schooling your mother completed
  - Middle school/Jr. High
  - High School
  - Technical/Associate School (1-2 year degree)
  - College(4 year degree) or Beyond
  - Other/Unknown

4. Highest level of schooling your father completed
- Middle school/Jr. High
  - High School
  - Technical/Associate School (1-2 year degree)
  - College(4 year degree) or Beyond
  - Other/Unknown
5. How many students were in your high school graduating class?
- 0-50 Students
  - 51-100 Students
  - 101-150 Students
  - 151-200 Students
  - 201-250 Students
  - 251-300 Students
  - 301-350 Students
  - 351-400 or More Students
6. How many High School Guidance Counselors worked in your high school?
- Less than one
  - One
  - Two
  - Three
  - Four
  - Five or More
7. My family was \_\_\_\_\_ during the processes of college search, selection, application, and admission.
- Extremely supportive

- Supportive
  - Neutral
  - A little supportive
  - Unsupportive
8. My high school guidance counselor(s) was \_\_\_\_\_ at encouraging rigors academics to aid in college preparation.
- Extremely Helpful
  - Helpful
  - Neutral
  - A little helpful
  - Unhelpful (Did not provide this information)
9. My high school guidance counselor was \_\_\_\_\_ at monitoring academic progress, credit total, and graduation requirements.
- Extremely Helpful
  - Helpful
  - Neutral
  - A little helpful
  - Unhelpful (Did not provide this information)
10. My high school guidance counselor(s) was \_\_\_\_\_ at providing access to academic support resources.
- Extremely Helpful
  - Helpful
  - Neutral
  - A little helpful
  - Unhelpful (Did not provide this information)

11. My high school guidance counselor(s) was \_\_\_\_\_ at providing opportunities to gain organizational, study, and test-taking skills.
- Extremely Helpful
  - Helpful
  - Neutral
  - A little helpful
  - Unhelpful (Did not provide this information)
12. My high school guidance counselor(s) was \_\_\_\_\_ at assisting in future career planning.
- Extremely Helpful
  - Helpful
  - Neutral
  - A little helpful
  - Unhelpful (Did not provide this information)
13. My high school guidance counselor(s) was \_\_\_\_\_ at providing adequate career exploration opportunities.
- Extremely Helpful
  - Helpful
  - Neutral
  - A little helpful
  - Unhelpful (Did not provide this information)
14. My high school guidance counselor(s) was \_\_\_\_\_ at providing information on college entrance exams. (ACT and SAT)
- Extremely Helpful
  - Helpful
  - Neutral

- A little helpful
  - Unhelpful (Did not provide this information)
15. My high school guidance counselor(s) was \_\_\_\_\_ at arranging college and military recruiters to visit school.
- Extremely Helpful
  - Helpful
  - Neutral
  - A little helpful
  - Unhelpful (Did not provide this information)
16. My high school guidance counselor(s) was \_\_\_\_\_ at providing information on various colleges and/or technical schools.
- Extremely Helpful
  - Helpful
  - Neutral
  - A little helpful
  - Unhelpful (Did not provide this information)
17. My high school guidance counselor(s) was \_\_\_\_\_ at assisting with college applications.
- Extremely Helpful
  - Helpful
  - Neutral
  - A little helpful
  - Unhelpful (Did not provide this information)
18. My high school guidance counselor(s) was \_\_\_\_\_ at providing information on financial aid, grants, loans, and scholarships.

- Extremely Helpful
- Helpful
- Neutral
- A little helpful
- Unhelpful (Did not provide this information)

19. My high school guidance counselor(s) was \_\_\_\_\_ at providing signatures for college admissions applications

- Extremely Helpful
- Helpful
- Neutral
- A little helpful
- Unhelpful (Did not provide this information)

20. My high school guidance counselor(s) was \_\_\_\_\_ at providing letters of recommendation upon request.

- Extremely Helpful
- Helpful
- Neutral
- A little helpful
- Unhelpful (Did not provide this information)

21. My high school guidance counselor(s) was \_\_\_\_\_ at providing parents/guardians with opportunities to learn about college admissions process.

- Extremely Helpful
- Helpful
- Neutral
- A little helpful
- Unhelpful (Did not provide this information)

22. My high school guidance counselor(s) was \_\_\_\_\_ at providing social education opportunities to obtain an understanding self and others.

- Extremely Helpful
- Helpful
- Neutral
- A little helpful
- Unhelpful (Did not provide this information)

23. My high school guidance counselor(s) was \_\_\_\_\_ at providing information on coping strategies.

- Extremely Helpful
- Helpful
- Neutral
- A little helpful
- Unhelpful (Did not provide this information)

24. My high school guidance counselor(s) was \_\_\_\_\_ at providing information on peer relationships and effective social skills.

- Extremely Helpful
- Helpful
- Neutral
- A little helpful
- Unhelpful (Did not provide this information)

25. My high school guidance counselor(s) was \_\_\_\_\_ at providing substance abuse education.

- Extremely Helpful
- Helpful
- Neutral

- A little helpful
  - Unhelpful (Did not provide this information)
26. My high school guidance counselor(s) was \_\_\_\_\_ at providing multicultural/diversity awareness.
- Extremely Helpful
  - Helpful
  - Neutral
  - A little helpful
  - Unhelpful (Did not provide this information)
27. My high school guidance counselor(s) was \_\_\_\_\_ at providing information on communication skills, problem-solving, decision-making, conflict resolution, and study skills.
- Extremely Helpful
  - Help
  - Neutral
  - A little helpful
  - Unhelpful (Did not provide this information)