

AN ANALYSIS OF THE MENTORING PROGRAM  
IN THE ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT PROGRAM  
AT CHIPPEWA VALLEY TECHNICAL COLLEGE

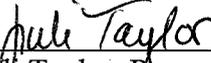
by

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### ABSTRACT

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An Analysis of the Mentoring Program on Student Retention in the Administrative Assistant Program at Chippewa Valley Technical College			
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The rate of student retention in the full-time Business Technology Administrative Assistant program at Chippewa Valley Technical College averages 40%, ranging from 57% in 1996-1997 to 34% in 2001-2002. In fall 2002, the Business Technology department instituted a mentoring program to increase retention.

The purpose of this study is to evaluate the effects of integrating the mentoring program in 2002 by the Business Technology Department. This study will determine if

the mentoring program improves student satisfaction (SIS Survey) and thus increases retention in the Administrative Assistant program.

Data was collected during the summer of 2004 from the Administrative Assistant students and the Business Technology instructors. Data was also collected from Chippewa Valley Technical College for completion of credits and retention information.

The instrument was designed to measure the perceptions of the participants in the mentoring program at Chippewa Valley Technical College. The participants included students and instructors. The instrument was a survey given to the students and instructors.

Fifty-seven percent of the students returned the survey and 83% of the instructors returned the survey. Seventy-nine percent of the students felt that the mentoring program is effective and 90% of the instructors felt that the mentoring program is effective.

Retention rates were analyzed and a 53% rate in retention was found after instituting the mentoring program. This was a relatively dramatic increase in retention since the inception of the mentoring program.

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## CHAPTER I

### Introduction

#### *Background Information*

Successful community colleges realize that student retention is a result of student success and satisfaction and is connected to student learning and the development of fundamental life competencies. In 1988, a secondary analysis of data annually provided to American College Testing (ACT) Program by all U.S. colleges and universities was conducted. These self-reported data reflect that of 767 two-year public institutions, there was a 46% dropout rate (Noel, Levitz, Salvin, & Associates 1985). A 1998 study also found the same drop-out rate of 46% (Reisberg, 1999). In 1999, ACT reported the same drop out rate of 46% for students enrolled in public two-year institutions (ACT). According to Tinto's model (1987, 1993), only 27% will complete the program in the two-year institutions in which they first enrolled. In fact, research has shown high attrition rates for first-year students (Tinto, 1993). Tinto found that approximately 75% of those students who do depart will leave during the first two years of college, the greatest proportion in the first year of enrollment. In addition, he posits that nearly 85% of the departures are voluntary and occur even though most students maintain adequate levels of academic performance. Therefore, first-year attrition continues to be a problem, even though much research has been conducted and many strategies have been implemented by administrators and faculty to combat it (McGrath & Braunstein, 1997).

Noel, Levitz, Saluri, and Associates (1985) believed that low retention was attributable to academic boredom, uncertainty about goals, transition difficulties, unrealistic expectations of college, and academic under-preparedness. Current research has indicated that the reasons for students leaving community colleges were life circumstances, emotional problems, poor

motivation, and financial problems (Malm, 1989-1999). Further, pre-enrollment variables as predictors of 1-year retention were associated with lower high school grade point average, 20-24 year age range, part-time attendance, and being a member of an ethnic minority other than Asian (Feldman 1993).

While there are varying conclusions about the factors contributing to retention, there is apparent unanimity regarding the role of the faculty. In their review of several research studies, Pantages and Creedon found that the quality of the relationship between students and their instructors was of critical importance in determining satisfaction with the institution (1978). As Beal and Noel reported, the retention factor considered most important by all types of institutions was "caring attitude of faculty and staff" (1980). While little can be done to influence background characteristics or environmental circumstances of community college students, the creation of institutional mechanisms to maximize student/faculty contact is likely to result in greater levels of integration and hence persistence (Halpin, 1990). Mentoring also may assist in decreasing the drop-out rate (Dondero, 1997).

Student retention will become one of the factors used to judge colleges and universities. Outcomes, assessment, student exit surveys, and retention and graduation rates will help to evaluate a school's effectiveness and may be factors the federal government used to determine eligibility for federal financial aid funding. (Recruitment & Retention, January 2004).

Post-secondary institutions have initiated mentoring programs in an effort to retain students. Mentoring is an educational process where the mentor serves as a role model, trusted counselor, or teacher who provides opportunities for professional development, growth, and support to less experienced individuals in career planning or employment settings. Individuals

receive information, encouragement, and advice as they plan their education and careers. In matching positive role models with younger students, not only is a friendship formed but a positive educational outcome as well (Fiscus, 2000).

Technical colleges such as Chippewa Valley Technical College (CVTC) have initiated mentoring programs in an effort to address the retention issue. Chippewa Valley Technical College (CVTC) is an open-door, nonresidential institution granting associate degrees, technical diplomas, and certificates. CVTC also provides customized training to business and industry. CVTC student enrollment exceeds more than 6,000 students per year. The eleven-county district served by CVTC includes 250,000 residents. Eau Claire, Wisconsin is 85 miles east of St. Paul, Minnesota. Since the mid-90s, CVTC has increased the flexibility of its offerings to full-time students, working adults, and anyone in need of technical education. Distance learning including Internet, instructional television networks (ITV), computer-assisted instruction, and other modes of instruction are an emphasis. Placement of graduates has averaged more than 95% since the mid-1990s (NationJob Network, 2004).

The mission of Chippewa Valley Technical College is to deliver superior, progressive technical education which improves the lives of students, meets the workforce needs of the region, and strengthens the larger community. The vision of Chippewa Valley Technical College is: We are a dynamic community focused on learning and dedicated to student success. This information can be viewed at Chippewa Valley Technical Colleges web site (<http://www.cvtc.edu/>)

The Administrative Assistant program was first offered in 1968 under the title Business Administration-Secretarial Science, when CVTC was called District One Technical College. In 1979, the college added a Stenography Vocational Diploma, and in 1981 the associate degree

program titled Word Processing was added when CVTC was called District One Technical Institute. The Secretarial Science degree program title was changed in 1984 to Administrative Assistant-Secretarial. This change reflected the movement to shift from the term "secretary." The Word Processing degree program title was also changed in 1984 to Administrative Assistant-Information Processing. The current program title, Administrative Assistant, was adopted in 1995 when the Administrative Assistant-Secretarial and Administrative Assistant-Information Processing degree programs merged into one-degree program. The degree program helps individuals develop the skills necessary to become a vital part of the fast-paced business office and rapidly changing technology. They learn to use software as a tool to help make decisions, prepare documents, coordinate projects, and maintain a smoothly functioning business environment. Working with other professionals individually and in teams is an integral part of this career (CVTC, 2003-2004).

Individuals in the Chippewa Valley who want to obtain an Administrative Assistant Associate degree are required to successfully complete 67 credits of coursework (CVTC Administrative Assistant Program Information, CVTC Internet site <http://www.cvtc.edu/Programs/DeptPages/BusTech/index.html>). The majority of Administrative Assistant core program courses are offered during the traditional school day, Monday-Friday, 8 a.m. - 5 p.m. No courses are offered on weekends. Many program core classes are offered at the

Chippewa Falls, Menomonie, River Falls, and Neillsville locations. Not all of the courses required for the Administrative Degree program are offered in these outreach campuses. An Administrative Assistant Program is also offered in an accelerated format entitled "Career Connect" which began in 2002.

The rate of student retention in the full-time Administrative Assistant program at Chippewa Valley Technical College averages 40%, ranging from 57% in 1996-1997 to 34% in 2001-2002 (CVTC 7-Year Program History Report. retrieved April, 2004 from Chippewa Valley Technical College <http://wise.cvtc.edu/dbapps/ProgramData/Data/7YearHistory/10-106-6History.pdf>).

The Business Technology Department at Chippewa Valley Technical College has a logo, “Business Technology—your future depends on it.” The department’s 12 instructors, plus one adjunct instructor, proclaim to students in the program, “Your success is our success.” In 2002, the Business Technology Department acknowledged the low retention rates and instituted a mentoring program within the department to increase retention. Each instructor was paired with an Administrative Assistant student. Letters were mailed to each student describing the program and given the name of their respective business technology advisor. As advisors, each made personal contacts with the students. During registration for the following semester, mentors made appointments with the students to ensure that they were successfully enrolled. This program has not yet been evaluated.

### *Statement of the Problem*

The Administrative Assistant Program at CVTC needs to evaluate its student mentoring program. No evaluation of the mentoring program has occurred since the program’s inception in 2002.

### *Purpose of the Study*

The purpose of this study is to evaluate the effects of integrating the mentoring program in 2002 by the Business Technology Department. This is important because such a program has never been initiated or evaluated at the CVTC. This study will determine if the mentoring program improves student satisfaction (SIS Survey) and thus increases retention in the Administrative Assistant program.

### *Research Questions*

The following questions will assist in determining the success of the mentoring program in the Business Education Department at CVTC:

1. What are the demographics of the student population participating in the mentoring program?
2. Are the instructors satisfying student needs for contact and support in the mentoring process?
3. Was there an increase in Administrative Assistant student retention after the implementation of the mentoring program?
4. What was the perception of the students after being involved with the mentoring program?
5. What was the perception of the instructors after being involved with the mentoring program?

6. Was there an improvement in the Student Satisfactory Survey (CVTC SIS form) after the implementation of the mentoring program?

### *Significance of the Study*

This study is significant to technical college programs because:

1. There has been no research at CVTC correlating mentoring with retention. This research will explore the effectiveness of the program from a faculty and student perspective.
2. A mentoring program could augment the college-wide goal of increasing retention.
3. A mentoring program could enhance students' and instructors' overall satisfaction with the college. The mentor-partner relationship is the core of building a connection of trust and acceptance of the program and college. Mentoring creates people with greater self-confidence and a willingness to embrace responsibility.
4. A mentoring program could increase employer satisfaction with Chippewa Valley Technical College graduates.

### *Limitations of the Study*

Factors surrounding this study within which the conclusions must be confined:

1. The sampling technique may be stratified. While there are many sampling techniques to use, stratified was selected to ensure a representative sample for all groups involved in the program during the time frame of the study.
2. The characteristics of the sample size are limited to the population enrolled from fall 2002 to fall 2004.
3. There is a lack of research relating mentoring to student retention.

### *Definition of Terms*

The following are terms used in this study which may be unfamiliar or misinterpreted by the reader; therefore, they are defined here.

1. Computer Assisted Instruction: Refers to drill-and-practice, tutorial, simulation, or interactive activities offered either by themselves or as supplements to traditional, teacher directed instruction (NW Regional Education Laboratory, 2004).
2. Distance Learning: Learning that takes place via electronic media linking instructors and students who are not together in a classroom (Merriam-Webster).
3. Retention: The act of retaining (Merriam-Webster, 2004).
4. Retention: Whether a full-time student graduates in a major selected when he/she first enrolls at the institution (Vincent Tinto, 1987).

## CHAPTER II

### Literature Review

This chapter will present a review of literature regarding mentoring college students and discuss what mentoring is and what the benefits are. In addition, a literature review of retention of college students will be presented.

#### *What is Mentoring?*

The word “mentor” is derived from the Greek word, “endure” and means trusted counselor, guide, tutor, or coach. Mentor comes to us from ancient Greek mythology. In the *Odyssey*, Mentor was the name of the person to whom Ulysses entrusted the care and training of his son, Telemachus. Mentoring follows the old adage (Confucius), “Give a man a fish and he will eat for a day. Teach a man to fish and he will eat for a lifetime.” This is informal mentoring, not direct instruction or training (Brounstein, 2000).

As a concept, mentoring is not new. Examples can be found as far back as the late 19<sup>th</sup> century when the Friendly Visiting campaign, supported by charitable societies, recruited hundreds of middle-class women to work with poor and immigrant communities. Big Brothers/Big Sisters of America, founded in 1904, is a well-known successor to the Friendly Visiting campaigns. BB/BS primarily connects middle-class adults with disadvantaged youth (U.S. Department of Justice, 1998). BB/BS is the oldest and largest youth mentoring organization in the United States. In 2002, the organization served more than 200,000 youth. Research and anecdotal evidence show specifically that BB/BS’s one-to-one mentoring helps youth overcome the many challenges they face. (Big Brothers/Big Sisters, 2004).

Today, the term mentor is used to describe a person who leads through guidance and has evolved to encompass a variety of other roles: advocate, buddy, and friend (Kwalick, 1994).

Although the exact nature and application of mentoring has varied over time, it is generally a one-to-one relationship between a pair of unrelated individuals, usually of different ages:

Peer and faculty mentoring programs have been found to be effective retention strategies. Many mentoring programs focus on providing social and academic support. For example, Valencia Community College found that when faculty mentoring was combined with student orientation courses, student retention rates increased by 10% more than when orientation courses alone were used (Brawer, 1996). The combined effect of the student success course and the mentor program influences student performance in a way that is good for the college. Students enrolled in the course and assigned to a mentor clearly pass more of their courses. They return at substantially higher rates, take substantially more credit hours and generate dramatically more FTE than similar groups of students not participating in the program. Allegheny Community College conducted freshman seminars to promote relationships among students and faculty (Student Retention at NVCC and Strategies for Improvement, 2001). Many higher education institutions use multiple strategies to increase student retention rates. Multiple strategies might include combining orientation programs, mentoring programs, promoting relationships among students and faculty, and faculty training (Student Retention at NVCC and Strategies for Improvement 2001). The use of planned mentoring programs by colleges and universities throughout the country to improve retention and graduation rates has increased. Mentoring seems to be an extremely important element of a successful retention program. The researcher (Moman) found that faculty mentoring could assist students in adjusting to the college's culture and prepare them for the prevailing culture of their chosen profession (Moman, 2002).

In March 1990, former U. S. Secretary of Labor Elizabeth Dole told business leaders that education programs that involve mentoring work better, provide more benefits, and change more lives because they provide one-on-one relationships (cited in Weinberger, 1992).

### *Retention*

Much research, time, and effort has been spent on the areas of student retention and success. The retention of students in higher education continues to concern college administrators and mental health professionals. One of the most prominent theorists on student retention is Vincent Tinto (Tinto, 1975, 1987, 1993). Tinto's theory of student retention was first published in 1975 and has been widely tested and accepted by the educational community. This model is one of the most widely cited in the literature as the basis for numerous attrition studies. The Tinto model states that individuals possess pre-entry college attributes including such things as family background, skills and abilities, and prior schooling (Tinto, 1975, 1987, 1993). In 1990, Halpin and Altinasi tested Tinto's model on two-year, non-residential, open door community colleges. The results were the same. (Student Retention at NVCC and Strategies for Improvement, 2001). Whether a student departs from an institution is largely a result of the extent to which the student becomes academically and socially connected with the institution. According the Bean's Student Attrition Model on research of two-year colleges, the one defining characteristic of the non-traditional student was their lack of social integration into the institution (Moman, 2002) Research has shown that students will persist at a college if there is a high level of congruence between the student's values, goals, and attitudes and those of the college. The largest percentage of non-returning students stated that the main reason was due to family or personal circumstances (Student Retention at NVCC and Strategies for Improvement, 2001).

More than 40% of all college entrants leave higher education without earning a degree (Gerdes & Mallinekrodt, 1994). The number of undergraduate students has declined and nationwide college administrators and faculty report that the recruitment and retention of this population has become more difficult. Approximately 75% of students will leave during the first two years of college. This presents a harsh financial reality for many institutions because they rely heavily on tuition revenue to support academic programs, manage physical plants, and deliver student services (Braunstein & McGrath, 1997).

Literature findings state that students at community colleges are four times more likely to leave school due to non-academic reasons than for academic reasons (Jones, 1986). It has been found that both academic and social involvement is important for students. In particular, involvement matters most during the first year of enrollment. Nearly 50% of all students who withdraw from college do so before the start of the second year (Brawer, 1999). The effects of weak student-with-faculty contact have been cited repeatedly as causes of student withdrawal from college. Pascarella and Terenzini cite the absence of sufficient interaction with other members of the college community as the single leading predictor of college attrition (Terenzini & Pascarella, 1977, 1991).

In a study on retention at Iona College in 1997, it was found that when students have good relationships with faculty, it facilitated academic and social integration, enhancing students' commitment to their studies and the college (Braunstein & McGrath, 1997).

Based upon a statistical examination of the Cooperative Institutional Research Program's data base, which included longitudinal information for more than 200,000 students at more than 300 institutions of all types, Astin concludes,

Student-faculty interaction has a stronger relationship to student satisfaction with the college experience than any other involvement variable, or indeed, any other student or institutional characteristic. Students who interact frequently with faculty are more satisfied with all aspects of their institutional experience, including student friendships, variety of courses, intellectual environment, and even administration of the institution. (Astin, 1987).

Judith Schindler, counselor at Chippewa Valley Technical College, stated that the number one reason students remain at the college is because one faculty member showed they cared (personal communication November 18, 2003). Informal contact with faculty, readily available high quality courses, and confidence building early experiences are important factors in retaining the most academically successful students (Gerdes & Mallinekrodt, 1994). An investigation by Walleri and Peglow-Hock (1988) indicated that successful students had close relationships with faculty (Kerka, 1989).

Successful integration of students in the college setting is a critical element in increasing retention rates. Mentoring provides the individualized attention students need in dealing with the everyday problems they encounter. Mentoring programs are also a successful strategy for connecting the student with college representatives, other students, and community members. A widely used mentoring model is AMIGOS™, the acronym for Arranged Mentor for Instructional Guidance and Organizational (or Other) Support. Under this model, a student and instructor are paired up and participate in activities either within or outside the institutional environment. AMIGOS™ is currently used by many organizations and educational institutions nationwide. Preliminary findings suggest that there is a positive association between participation in the mentoring program and retention rates. Mentoring programs that acknowledge the academic and

vocational aspects of the community college experience have proven effective in improving students' academic performance and retention rates (Stromei, 2000). The importance of a mentor for bonding with a student and that student's ability to bond with the school and community is unrefuted. Successful mentoring programs can have far-reaching benefits, both to the student and the community (Reglin,1990).

## CHAPTER III

### Methodology

#### *Introduction*

This chapter includes a description of the subjects from which the data was selected, the instrumentation used, the data collection procedures, and the methods used for analyzing the statistical data. The chapter will conclude with the limitations of the methods used for this study.

#### *Description of Methodology*

A confidential survey was used to collect data for use in the research part of this study. The information gathered from the study participants were factors relating to the mentoring program in the Business Technology Department at CVTC.

#### *Sample Selection*

For the purpose of this study, the population was defined as 110 female students enrolled in the Chippewa Valley Technical College, Business Technology Department, Administrative Assistant program, and 12 female instructors in the Business Technology Department who were assigned the mentorship role.

A cluster sample technique was chosen for the students. All members of the department were asked to participate in this study.

#### *Instrumentation*

Surveys were used as a method of gathering data. The students and instructors were mailed surveys. They were filled out on a voluntary basis and were kept strictly confidential. The survey instrument was reproduced on light goldenrod paper, double-sided on an 8 ½" by 11" sheet of paper, folded booklet style. The surveys were developed by the researcher after a

meeting with the Research and Statistical Consultant at UW-Stout. They were designed to evaluate the perceptions of the mentoring program by the students and instructors. The survey questions were simple yes/no, close-ended questions with ordered answer choices, a five-option Likert item ranging from “Poor” to “Superior,” and a comment section. . It was designed to be completed in five minutes or less.

Two experts in research design reviewed the instruments prior to its final draft for face validity. The survey instruments are located in Appendix A (student survey) and Appendix B (instructor survey).

Because the surveys were designed by the researcher specifically for this study, no measures of reliability have been conducted or established. Christine Ness, Research and Statistical Consultant, Budget, Planning and Analysis Department, UW-Stout, reviewed the survey for face validity. Subject matter experts reviewed the instrument for content validity (see Appendix A and B).

Table 1 Research Question Correlation to Survey Question

Research Question	Survey Question
1. What are the demographics of the student population participating in the mentoring program?	Student Survey Items 1, 2, 3, 4
2. Are the instructors satisfying student needs for contact and support in the mentoring process?	Student Survey Items 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11
3. Was there an increase in Administrative Assistant student retention after the implementation of the mentoring program?	Analysis of existent institutional data
4. What was the perception of the students after being involved with the mentoring program?	Student Survey Item 12
5. What was the perception of the instructors after being involved with the mentoring program?	Instructor Survey Items 5, 6, 7
6. Was there an improvement in the Student satisfaction Survey (CVTC SIS form) after the implementation of the mentoring program?	Analysis of existent institutional data

### *Data Collection Procedures*

The data for this study was collected in cooperation with the Chippewa Valley Technical College. A database of the Business Technology Department's Administrative Assistant students was created by the researcher. The database contained the students' name, address, telephone number, and the name of the instructor/mentor. A cover letter, personalized with the signature of the researcher, explaining the study and surveys were mailed through the United States Post Office to the 110 students and 12 to the instructors. The cover letters are located in Appendix C (student cover letter) and Appendix D (instructor cover letter). A self-addressed, stamped envelope was provided to the subjects to return the survey to the researcher. The cover letter, survey, and return envelopes were mailed on July 12. The subjects were allowed ten days to complete and return to the researcher. The deadline for response was July 21.

### *Data Analysis*

The data was analyzed using a computerized statistics package called SPSS version 11 "Frequencies" for the PC. Data was nominal and ordinal in nature, therefore all appropriate descriptive statistics were utilized.

### *Limitations*

There were some limitations with the methodology of the study.

1. Because this survey was designed by the researcher specifically for this study, no measures of reliability or validity have been conducted or established.
2. The instrument itself may be a limitation. The wording of questions could introduce bias.
3. The study is limited to one program at one technical college. The findings may not be generalized to the entire population; therefore, any results should be used cautiously.

4. There was not a 100% response rate; therefore, the findings may not accurately reflect the perceptions of the entire group.
5. The students may not have been completely honest when filling out the survey. The survey could have produced systematic bias.
6. The instructors may not have been completely honest when filling out the survey. The survey could have produced systematic bias.

## CHAPTER IV

## Results

The purpose of this study was to evaluate the effects of integrating the mentoring program in 2002 by the Business Technology Department. This chapter will describe the results of the survey and Student Satisfaction Inventory Comparisons from 1997 to 2003 (Appendix E). A brief analysis of retention will also be addressed.

Of the 110 surveys mailed to students, three were returned and not forwardable, 61 were returned completed, for a 57% response rate. Of the 12 surveys mailed to instructors, 10 were returned, for a 83% response rate. See Table 2. No followup mailings were conducted

Table 2 Survey Returns

Survey	Surveys Mailed	Surveys Returned	Response Rate
Student	110	61	57%
Instructor	12	10	83%

*Findings*

Students were first asked when they began their program. Most of the respondents, 21 or 34%, began their program in August 2003, followed by 19 or 31% who began their program in August 2002.

Table 3 Date Student Began Program

Program Start	Responses	Percentage
August 2000	0	0
January 2001	4	6%
August 2001	7	11%
January 2002	0	0
August 2002	19	31%
January 2003	2	3%
August 2003	21	34%
January 2004	3	4%
Other	5	8%

Next, student participants were asked how many credits they have completed in the program. Most of the students, 22 or 44%, have completed 45 or more credits.

Table 4 Number of Credits Completed

Number of Credits	Responses	Percentages
0 – 15	7	14%
16 - 30	9	18%
31 - 45	11	22%
45 +	22	44%

Next, student participants were asked their age. Most of the students, 27 or 43%, were between 41 and 50 years of age and 16% were between 21 and 25 years of age.

Table 5 Age of Students

Age of Student	Responses	Percentage
18 – 20	7	11%
21 – 25	10	16%
26 – 30	3	4%
31 – 35	5	8%
36 – 40	6	9%
41 – 45	17	27%
46 – 50	10	16%
51 – 55	3	4%

Next, student participants were asked if they were employed prior to attending CVTC. Most of the students, 51 or 83%, were employed prior to attending CVTC.

Table 6 Employed Prior to Attending CVTC

Employed	Responses	Percentages
Yes	51	83%
No	10	16%

Next, student and instructor participants were asked if they were familiar with the Business Technology Department's Mentoring Program. If participants answered no, they were

instructed to return the form at that time. All of the instructors who responded were familiar with the program, and 65% of the students were familiar with the program.

Table 7 Familiar with the Mentoring Program

Survey	Responses	Percentage
Instructor		
Yes	10	100%
No	0	
Student		
Yes	40	65%
No	21	34%

Next, student participants were asked if their advisor demonstrated interest or concern for them as an individual. A comment section was included. Ninety five percent of the students indicated that their advisor showed interest in them.

Table 8 Advisor Interest

Interest	Responses	Percentage
Yes	37	95%
No	2	5%

Next, students were given the opportunity for comments about their advisor's interest in them. Table 9 shows the written responses received from participants.

Table 9 Comments on Advisor Interest

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 Student Comments
 

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My advisor has been helpful in all aspects of the challenges a working student faces attending college classes.

I got a letter stating who my mentor was but that is as far as it went.

Very helpful.

(Name of instructor) helped me find classes when I needed help, talked to me about school and personal.

---

Next, student and instructor participants were asked if they had written contact with one another, either by email or letter. Seventy percent of the instructors and 92% of the students indicated they had written contact.

Table 10 Written Contact

Survey	Responses	Percentage
Instructor		
Yes	7	70%
No	3	30%
Student		
Yes	37	92%
No	3	8%

Next, student and instructor participants were asked if they had telephone contact with one another. Eighty percent of the instructors and 58% of the students had telephone contact.

Table 11 Telephone Contact

Survey	Responses	Percentage
Instructor		
Yes	8	80%
No	2	20%
Student		
Yes	23	58%
No	17	42%

Next, student and instructor participants were asked if they had met personally with one another. Eighty percent of the instructors and 73% of the students had telephone contact.

Table 12 Met Personally

Survey	Responses	Percentage
Instructor		
Yes	8	80%
No	2	20%
Student		
Yes	29	73%
No	11	27%

Next, student participants were asked if their advisor counseled them on issues clearly and effectively. A comment section was included. Most of the respondents, 31 or 78% indicated that their advisor counseled them effectively.

Table 13 Counseled Effectively

Counseled	Responses	Percentage
Yes	31	78%
No	9	22%

Next, students were given the opportunity for comments about their advisor's counsel.

Table 14 shows the written responses received from participants.

Table 14 Comments on Advisor Counseling

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Student Comments

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I couldn't have asked for a better advisor.

My advisor was great.

"Name of instructor" was always friendly and I could see she really wanted to help if I needed it.

---

Next, student participants were asked to rate the performance of their advisor. Half of the students rated their advisor as superior and 45% rated them as average or above average.

Table 15 Performance of Advisor

Performance	Responses	Percentage
Poor	2	5%
Below Average	0	0%
Average	9	22%
Above Average	9	23%
Superior	20	50%

Next, student and instructor participants were asked if they felt the mentoring program was effective. A comment section was included. Ninety percent of the instructors and 79% of the students felt the mentoring program is effective.

Table 16 Effectiveness of the Mentoring Program

Survey	Responses	Percentage
Instructor		
Yes	9	90%
No	1	10%
Student		
Yes	30	79%
No	2	5%
Unsure	6	16%

Next, students and instructors were given the opportunity for comments about the effectiveness of the mentoring program. Table 17 shows the written responses received from the student participants and Table 18 shows the written responses received from the instructor participants.

Table 17 Student Comments on Mentoring Program

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Student Comments

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It's nice to have someone available, besides the counselor, who has knowledge of the courses and other things available to the student.

If I wouldn't have asked certain questions, I wouldn't have known the program existed.

Learned a lot and feel more confident in my work.

Working students face different challenges than the traditional students. Having an advisor helps working students meet the challenges successfully.

I had already talked with other instructors about my progress and was in my last semester when assigned a mentor.

It's OK.

Like the idea that someone in the program can help me.

---

Table 18 Instructor Comments on Mentoring Program

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 Instructor Comments
 

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Students like feeling that someone has their best interests in mind. They like knowing they have a specific person to call with questions.

Students appreciate a contact person with whom to plan course sequence in order to graduate according to schedule

Lets the student know that somebody is interested in their education and success.

Students are impressed with the fact that someone cares about their academic interests.

By contact – you personalize the program with the student. Contact allows the student a connection & doors can be opened with encouragement and understanding.

Gives the student an opportunity to talk with someone with knowledge of the Bus Tech program.

Yes, only if (depending):Students “expect” to get help from us in dept. or Judy, Joyce, Lori, etc.

Counselors don’t have enough time to meet with our students. Dept. members are making direct contact with the students helping them with questions, and also this process is excellent for retention. The personal touch will keep our students in their programs and we should be able to see more students graduate.

They feel someone cares.

---

Next, student and instructor participants were asked how the mentoring program could be improved. A comment section was included. Table 19 shows the written responses received from the student participants and Table 20 shows the written responses received from the instructor participants.

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Table 19 Student Comments on Improving the Mentoring Program

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Student Comments

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If it's our teacher – she needs to speed up and less talking.

Meetings scheduled before signup for class in Fall, Spring, Summer.

More contact.

Pump it more and let the students know via email w/their student account (besides the monthly newsletter).

Keep getting people with the ability to continue working, with disability. Keep up the good work!

I feel all general study classes are not necessary for people who have a lot of family and work experience.

My mentor did not know administrative assistance degree was being phased out.

Just continue!

I think it is a great idea—especially when you are first starting out.

Wish I had the better teachers.

Teachers are great!

I think it is fine the way it is.

---

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Table 20 Instructor Comments on Improving the Mentoring Program

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Instructor Comments

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Keep it up and running. It's great!

Assign teachers to mentors earlier in the semester—week 1 if possible. Leave contact information with student; don't leave students with the impression that the teacher will contact them.

Make sure all students are contacted by their advisor.

Promotion of the program through counselors, deans, and non-program instructors.

More time to meet out of scheduled class!

Release time for the instructor to spend more time with student(s).

Deal with helping students in our classes with course content as well as "other" aspects of college work. The best mentor is the "instructor" a student feels they can "go to for extra help" and not feel (1) "put down" (2) and will never ask "another question of!" The mentor program means nothing if that instructor has a "bad rep" from classroom/course put downs and unfriendly instructor help!

Department members have to become more familiar with all the courses and this will happen over a period of time.

Time off to devote to Mentoring Program.

---

In addition, the instructors were asked to rate their opinion of student attitudes prior to the mentoring program. Sixty percent of the instructors rated the students as average for attitudes prior to the mentoring program and 30% rated the students as above average prior to the mentoring program.

Table 21 Instructors Opinion of Student Attitudes Prior to the Mentoring Program

Performance	Responses	Percentage
Poor	0	0%
Below Average	1	10%
Average	6	60%
Above Average	3	30%
Superior	0	0%

Further, the instructors were asked to rate their opinion of student attitudes after participating in the mentoring program. Seventy percent of the instructors rated the students as above average for attitudes after the mentoring program and 20% rated the students as superior after the mentoring program.

Table 22 Instructors Opinion of Student Attitudes After the Mentoring Program

Performance	Responses	Percentage
Poor	0	0%
Below Average	0	0%
Average	1	10%
Above Average	7	70%
Superior	2	20%

An analysis of the Chippewa Valley Technical College Student Satisfaction Inventory Comparison revealed that for those survey statements correlated with faculty satisfaction, students gave the highest rating in 2003, after the mentoring program was instituted.

Specifically, these questions are:

- (2) Faculty care about me as an individual.
- (25) Faculty are understanding of students' unique life circumstances.
- (54) Faculty are interested in my academic problems.
- (61) Faculty are usually available after class and during office hours.

An analysis of retention figures after instituting the mentoring program found that retention had increased to 53%, above the previous average of 40%.

In summary, data was collected from 61 student respondents and 10 instructor respondents involved in the Administrative Assistant program at Chippewa Valley Technical College. The results indicate that 79% of the student respondents and 90% of the instructor respondents feel that the mentoring program is effective.

## CHAPTER V

### Discussion

This chapter will discuss and summarize the results of this study. Recommendations related to this study will also be presented.

#### *Summary*

The purpose of this study was to evaluate the effects of integrating the mentoring program in the Business Technology Department in 2002 for the Administrative Assistant students. This study also attempted to see if the mentoring program improves student satisfaction (SIS Survey) and thus increases retention in the Administrative Assistant program.

In 2002, the Business Technology Department acknowledged low retention rates of approximately 40% for the Administrative Assistant program and instituted a mentoring program within the department to increase retention.

Data was collected during the summer of 2004 from the Administrative Assistant students and the Business Technology instructors. Data was also collected from Chippewa Valley Technical College for retention information.

The instrument was designed to measure the perceptions of the participants in the mentoring program at Chippewa Valley Technical College. The participants included students and instructors. The instrument was a survey given to the students and instructors. Fifty-seven percent of the students returned the survey and 83% of the instructors returned the survey.

#### *Conclusions*

There were six research questions addressed by this study. Each question will be restated and conclusions made for each.

Research Question Number One: What are the demographics of the student population participating in the mentoring program? Most of the respondents, 21 or 34%, began their program in August 2003, followed by 19 or 31% who began their program in August 2002. Most of the students, 22 or 44%, have completed 45 or more credits. Most of the students, 27 or 43%, were between 41 and 50 years of age and 16% were between 21 and 25 years of age.

Research Question Number Two: Are the instructors satisfying student needs for contact and support in the mentoring process? Ninety five percent of the students felt that their advisors demonstrated interest/concern for them as an individual. Ninety two percent of the students had written contact with their advisor. Fifty eight percent of the students had telephone contact with their advisor. Seventy three percent of the students met personally with their advisor. Seventy eight percent of the students felt that their advisor counseled them effectively. Fifty percent of the students rated the performance of their advisor as superior and 45% rated them as average to above average. Student comments indicated that they are satisfied with their instructors and that they are very helpful.

Research Question Number Three: Was there an increase in Administrative Assistant student retention after the implementation of the mentoring program? An analysis of retention figures after instituting the mentoring program found that retention had increased to 53%, above the previous average of 40%.

Many students face obstacles to be successful in college. Lack of peer, family, or college support are all factors that can adversely affect their ability to achieve. A majority of students do not return to college due to their life circumstances. They feel a lack of connection to the college or feeling “invisible” on campus. The results of this study’s increase in retention to 53% follow

the theories of student retention; improving faculty-student contact is a method to improve retention.

Research Question Number Four: What was the perception of the students after being involved with the mentoring program? Approximately 50% of the students rated their advisor as “Superior,” 22% rated their advisor as “Average,” and 23% rated their advisor as “Above Average.” Approximately 80% of the students are satisfied with the mentoring program. Student comments also reflect that they like the idea that someone in the program with specific knowledge is available for assistance.

Research Question Number Five: What was the perception of the instructors after being involved with the mentoring program? Instructors felt that student attitudes were 70% “Average” to “Below Average” and 30% “Above Average” prior to the mentoring program. Their opinion of student attitudes after the institution of the mentoring program increased to 10% “Average” and 90% “Above Average” to “Superior.” Approximately 90% of the instructors were satisfied with the mentoring program. Instructor comments indicated that students appreciate having a contact person and that someone is interested in their success.

Research Question Number Six: Was there an improvement in the Student Satisfactory Survey (CVTC SIS form) after implementation of the mentoring program? Results of the survey show that students gave the highest rating in 2003, after the mentoring program was instituted. Specifically, these questions addressed faculty caring, understanding, availability, and interest.

Seventy-nine percent of the students felt that the mentoring program is effective and 90% of the instructors felt that the mentoring program is effective. These findings tend to agree with the literature the author cited throughout this study.

Retention rates were analyzed and a 53% rate in retention was found after instituting the mentoring program. This was a relatively dramatic increase in retention since the inception of the mentoring program.

The research objectives were to determine student and instructor perceptions of the mentoring program and if student satisfaction had increased as a result of instituting the program. Sixty-six percent of the students and 100% of the instructors were familiar with the program. The 34% student lack of knowledge about the mentoring program indicates that overall promotion needs to be improved.

The research in the study shows that students had written and personal contact with their mentors and 78% responded that their advisors counseled them on issues clearly and effectively. A frequent comment was, "I couldn't have asked for a better advisor." Seventy-three percent of the students responded that their advisor was 'Above Average' to 'Superior.' When asked to comment on the effectiveness of the mentoring program, 79% of the students indicated that it was successful. A frequent comment of both the students and instructors was, "It's nice to have someone available." The research in this study further concludes that instructors consider student attitudes noticeably improved after the mentoring program.

The research in this study further concludes that student satisfaction distinctly improved since 1997. Specifically, in four areas regarding student/faculty correlation, student satisfaction significantly improved after the institution of the mentoring program.

The findings in this study conclude that the mentoring program for the Administrative Assistant students at Chippewa Valley Technical College is successful for both the students and the instructors. The research in this study presents encouraging confirmation that attentive and caring relationships between instructors and students are beneficial to both. This study correlates

with previous research by Noel, Beal, et al. which stated that the retention factor considered most important by all types of institutions was a “caring attitude of faculty and staff.”

Not all attrition is negative for technical colleges, due to open enrollment policies and large populations of adult students. Many students who leave may have transferred to another institution or achieved their academic goals.

### *Recommendations*

Based on the data collected from both this study and the research, it is apparent that mentoring programs do benefit students. In the opinion of this researcher, the mentoring program should continue. Respondents in this study reiterated, “Keep it up and running. It’s great!” Research also says that mentoring programs have been found to be effective retention strategies (Brawer, 1996). Mentoring programs influence student performance in a way that is good for the college (Student Retention at NVCC and Strategies for Improvement, 2001).

The results of this study present several suggestions for individuals affected by or working in this field to consider:

Instructors commented that the program be promoted through counselors, deans, and non-program instructors. Students commented that they thought the mentoring program was a great idea, especially for students just starting out. Faculty mentoring assists students in adjusting to the college’s culture and prepares them for the prevailing culture of their chosen profession (Moman, 2002).

The Administrative Assistant program has benefited from the mentoring program as indicated by the student and instructor comments to continue and that the teachers are great. Suggestions for improvements to the program included meetings before registration, additional

advertisement, student-initiated contact, release time allotted to instructors, and making sure all students are contacted.

It is further recommended that this study be replicated to determine its effectiveness. Much of the research contends that mentoring may not have an immediate effect; the relationships have an impact on students, it takes time to see the long-term effects.

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**APPENDIX A**  
**Chippewa Valley Technical College**  
**Business Technology Department**  
**Mentoring Program**  
**Student Survey**

I understand that my participation in this study is strictly confidential and voluntary and I may discontinue my participation at any time without prejudice.

I understand that the purpose of this study is to study the effects of the Business Technology Department's Mentoring Program at Chippewa Valley Technical College. Some of the benefits associated with this research are to improve the present program and increase employer satisfaction with Chippewa Valley Technical College graduates. The risks are minimal due to individual participants not being identified and the confidential nature of the survey. By filling out this survey, you are giving your informed consent as a participating volunteer in this research.

I further understand that any information about me that is collected during this study will be held in the strictest confidence and will not be part of my permanent record. I understand that in order for this research to be effective and valuable, certain personal identifiers need to be collected. I also understand that the strictest confidentiality will be maintained throughout this study and that only the researcher or her designee will have access to the confidential information. I understand that at the conclusion of this study, all records which identify individual participants will be destroyed. I am aware that I have not and am not waiving any legal or human rights by agreeing to this participation. **After completing the survey, please use the stamped, addressed envelope provided and mail by July 21, 2004.**

Questions or concerns about the research should be addressed to Sandra Hume, the researcher, 715/858-1806, Juli Taylor, the research advisor and graduate program director, 715/232-1443. Questions about rights of research subjects can be addressed to Sue Foxwell, human protections administrator, UW-Stout Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects in Research, 715/232-1126.

**Student Survey**

**1. When did you begin your program?**

<input type="checkbox"/> August 2000	<input type="checkbox"/> January 2002	<input type="checkbox"/> August 2003
<input type="checkbox"/> January 2001	<input type="checkbox"/> August 2002	<input type="checkbox"/> January 2004
<input type="checkbox"/> August 2001	<input type="checkbox"/> January 2003	<input type="checkbox"/> Other, please specify

**2. How many credits have you completed? \_\_\_\_\_.**

**3. What is your age?**

<input type="checkbox"/> 18 - 20	<input type="checkbox"/> 31 - 35	<input type="checkbox"/> 46 - 50
<input type="checkbox"/> 21 - 25	<input type="checkbox"/> 36 - 40	<input type="checkbox"/> 51 - 55
<input type="checkbox"/> 26 - 30	<input type="checkbox"/> 41 - 45	<input type="checkbox"/> 56 and Older

**4. Were you employed prior to attending CVTC?                      Yes                       No**

5. Are you familiar with the Business Technology Department's Mentoring Program? If "no" please return the form at this time. Yes  No

6. Did your advisor demonstrate interest/concern for you as an individual? Yes  No

Comments: \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

7. Did you have written contact with your advisor (e-mail or letter)? Yes  No

8. Did you have telephone contact with your advisor? Yes  No

9. Did you meet personally with your advisor? Yes  No

10. Did your advisor counsel you on issues clearly and effectively overall? Yes  No

Comments: \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

		Below		Above	
	Poor	Av	Av	Av	Superior
		1	2	3	4 5

11. How would you rate the performance of your advisor?

12. Do you feel the mentoring program is effective? Yes  No

Why or why not? \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

13. How can the mentoring program be improved?  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

*Thank you for participating in this survey!*

## APPENDIX B

### Chippewa Valley Technical College Business Technology Department Mentoring Program Instructor Survey

I understand that my participation in this study is strictly confidential and voluntary and I may discontinue my participation at any time without prejudice.

I understand that the purpose of this study is to study the effects of the Business Technology Department's Mentoring Program at Chippewa Valley Technical College. Some of the benefits associated with this research are to improve the present program and increase employer satisfaction with Chippewa Valley Technical College graduates. The risks are minimal due to individual participants not being identified and the confidential nature of the survey. By filling out this survey, you are giving your informed consent as a participating volunteer in this research.

I further understand that any information about me that is collected during this study will be held in the strictest confidence and will not be part of my permanent record. I understand that in order for this research to be effective and valuable, certain personal identifiers need to be collected. I also understand that the strictest confidentiality will be maintained throughout this study and that only the researcher or her designee will have access to the confidential information. I understand that at the conclusion of this study, all records which identify individual participants will be destroyed. I am aware that I have not and am not waiving any legal or human rights by agreeing to this participation. **After completing the survey, please use the stamped, addressed envelope provided and mail by July 21, 2004.**

Questions or concerns about the research should be addressed to Sandra Hume, the researcher, 715/858-1806, Juli Taylor, the Research Advisor and Graduate Program Director, 715/232-1443. Questions about rights of research subjects can be addressed to Sue Foxwell, Human Protections Administrator, UW-Stout Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects in Research, 715/232-1126.

### Instructor Survey

1. Are you familiar with the Business Technology Department's Mentoring Program? If "no" please return the form at this time.      Yes       No
2. Did you have written contact with your advisee(s) (letter or email)?      Yes       No
3. Did you have telephone contact with your advisee(s)?      Yes       No

4. Did you meet personally with your advisee(s)?

Yes

No

Poor	Below Av	Av	Above Ave	Superior
1	2	3	4	5

5. Please rate your opinion of student attitudes prior to the mentoring program.

6. Please rate your opinion of student attitudes after participating in the mentoring program.

7. Do you feel this program is effective?

Yes

No

Why or why not?

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8. How can this program be improved?

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*Thank you for participating in this survey!*

## APPENDIX C

July 3, 2004

Dear

In an effort to provide support to our students, you have the opportunity to include your comments, suggestions, and overall perceptions of the Business Technology mentoring program at Chippewa Valley Technical College. Please take a few minutes to complete the enclosed survey and return it to me in the enclosed self-addressed, stamped envelope by July 21, 2004.

Thank you for participating in this study. Your input will provide important information for our program. If you would like to view results of this study, please contact me.

Sincerely,

Sandy Hume, Graduate Student  
University of Wisconsin-Stout  
[humes@uwstout.edu](mailto:humes@uwstout.edu)  
Office: 858-1806  
Home: 835-1239

Enclosure

## APPENDIX D

935 North Moonlight Drive  
Altoona, WI 54720  
July 14, 2004

Dear Business Technology Instructor,

As you may know, I am completing my master's at UW-Stout. My research paper is entitled, "An Analysis of the Mentoring Program in the Administrative Assistant Program at Chippewa Valley Technical College."

In 2002, our department instituted a mentoring program to increase retention and provide support to our students. We would now like to evaluate the effects of integrating the mentoring program. Your answers are completely confidential and will be released only as summaries in which no individual's answers can be identified.

Please take a few minutes to complete the attached survey and return it to me by July 21, 2004; an envelope is provided. Thank you for helping with this important study. Your comments, suggestions, and overall perceptions will provide important information for our program. If you would like to view results of this study, please send an email to [shume@cvtc.edu](mailto:shume@cvtc.edu). Thanks so much!

Sincerely,

Sandy Hume, Instructor  
Chippewa Valley Technical College  
Graduate Student, UW-Stout  
[shume@cvtc.edu](mailto:shume@cvtc.edu)  
[humes@stout.edu](mailto:humes@stout.edu)  
Office: 858-1806  
Home: 835-1239

Attachments

## APPENDIX E

Student Satisfaction Inventory Comparisons from 1997 to 2003: Available at:

<http://wise.cvtc.edu/dbapps/programdata/query/ProgramData.idc?Prog=10-106-6>