FRESHMAN ADVISORY PROGRAM: INFLUENCE ON STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT AS MEASURED BY STUDENT GRADE POINT AVERAGES

A Thesis Presented to the Faculty of California State University, Stanislaus

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts in Education

By Timothy Donovan
May 2014
CERTIFICATION OF APPROVAL

FRESHMAN ADVISORY PROGRAM: INFLUENCE ON STUDENT
ACHIEVEMENT AS MEASURED BY STUDENT
GRADE POINT AVERAGES

by
Timothy Donovan

Signed Certification of Approval Page is
on file with the University Library

________________________    ______________________
Dr. John Borba                  Date
Professor of School Administration

________________________    ______________________
Dr. Chet Jensen                  Date
Professor of Education
DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis to my family and friends for their understanding and support as I missed many gatherings due to attending classes and working on various assignments. To my beautiful wife Mary, I thank you for your strong and loving support throughout my educational endeavors.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank and acknowledge Dr. John Borba and Dr. Chet Jensen for their scholarly revisions and advice on the content of this thesis. I would also like to thank William Marroquin for assisting me in compiling the research data for this thesis.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dedication</td>
<td>iii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acknowledgements</td>
<td>iv</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>List of Tables</td>
<td>vii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abstract</td>
<td>viii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CHAPTER</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I. Background of Study</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Statement of the Problem</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Significance of the Study</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Question</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hypothesis</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limitation and Delimitations</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Definitions</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II. Review of Literature</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intervention Motivation</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advisory Model</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local Freshman Advisory</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stakeholders Perceptions</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III. Methodology</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sample Population</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Treatment Group</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control Group</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data Collection</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Statistical Analyses</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# LIST OF TABLES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TABLE</th>
<th>PAGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. GPA Scale</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. GPA of Advisory and Non-Advisory Students</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to determine if there was a significant difference in grade point averages between students who participated in a freshman advisory program and students who did not participate. The study was conducted at a large comprehensive high school in Central California, in which 1126 freshman students were enrolled during the 2011-12 and 2012-13 academic years. The study analyzed the freshman grade point averages comparing a random group (N=30) who attended a freshman advisory program and a random group of students (N=30) who did not attend a freshman advisory program. A $t$-test for independent means was used to determine if a significant difference existed between the two groups. The results suggested that students who participated in the freshman advisory program did not have an improved grade point average.
CHAPTER I
BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Introduction

The Federal Office of Education was established in 1867 to ensure states established effective school systems. The office now known as the United States Department of Education administers federal funding for schools and oversees enforcement of federal education laws. It ensures that education is accessible to all people. In the history of public education, there has been an array of reforms, programs and similar assurances to guarantee that every child has access to an education. A significant educational reform occurred after the Soviet Union successfully launched Sputnik. Congress authorized The National Defense Education Act of 1958, which provided federal aid to enhance the teaching of mathematics, science and modern foreign languages. The act also created the first federal student loans for higher education (Dufour, Dufour, Eaker & Karhanek, 2010).

California schools currently fall under two educational accountability systems. The Public Schools Accountably Act of 1999 and No Child Left Behind Act of 2001. Under the state system, districts, schools, and their significant subgroups must meet annual academic performance and growth targets measured by the Academic Performance Index (API). The index is based on California Standards Test scores in mathematics and English language arts at the elementary and middle school levels, as well as the California High School Exit Exam at the secondary level. Under the
federal system, districts, schools, and their significant subgroups must meet annual benchmarks as determined by Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) with the goal of 100% of the students proficient in English language arts and mathematics on state test by 2014 (CDE, 2013).

**Statement of the Problem**

In order to improve student academic success, federal and state governments have accountability systems in place. Nevertheless, schools are still failing at alarming rates. In 2012, over 50% of Title 1 schools in California were in program improvement (CDE, 2013). Based on these numbers, educators need to implement or improve programs to ensure that all students achieve at high levels. This study will examine the effectiveness of a freshman advisory program, in which all freshmen are required to meet four days per week during an advisory period. The results will be reviewed and analyzed in order to better serve students.

**Significance of the Study**

This study will test the effectiveness of a freshman advisory program. The goal of the advisory is to ensure that all freshmen are exposed to ideal study habits, social skills, as well as high expectations, and a school climate that is conducive to learning. A freshman advisory teacher oversees the class; however, student mentors are a key component of the program.

This quantitative study will examine the mean grade point average (GPA) of two random groups of freshmen at the end of their ninth grade school year. One group
participated in a freshman advisory program, while the other group did not participate.

**Research Question**

What is the impact of high school freshman advisory programs on academic achievement?

**Hypothesis**

There is no significant difference in the mean GPA between freshman high school students who participated in the freshmen advisory program and freshman high school students who did not participate.

**Limitation and Delimitations**

The following limitations and delimitations are presented to guide the reader in making generalizations that might otherwise apply to this research topic:

**Limitations.** This study was limited to a total of 1126 ninth grade students who attended a large comprehensive high school in one school district in the Central Valley of California. This study was also limited to the ninth grade students who were enrolled in freshman advisory program during the 2012-2013 academic year and those who were not enrolled in a freshman advisory program during the 2011-2012 academic year.

**Delimitations.** For purposes of this study, the experience of the teachers, teaching methodology and the ethnicity, secondary language development level, and socioeconomic status of students were not taken into consideration.
Definitions

Freshman Advisory Program. A full year, non-credit required course for all freshman students that is designed to ensure a successful beginning for high school freshmen. During the year, the advisory provides a means for monitoring the progress of freshmen and a forum for discussing issues relevant and important to students. A teacher and at least two student mentors facilitate each of the freshman advisory program classes.

Grade Point Average (GPA). A student’s academic progress and achievement in each class as shown on a report card. Progress and achievement are described in terms of letter grades. A=4 points (5 points for honors class); B=3 Points (4 points for honors class); C=2 points (3 points for honors class); D=1 point and F=0 points. A student’s GPA is calculated by adding the grade points then dividing the total number of grade points by the number of course credits.

Student Mentor. Upper classmates who have a 3.0 or higher GPA and volunteer to assist freshmen in becoming acclimated to high school, providing academic tutoring, leading activities, and facilitating discussions.

The Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). A program intended to provide education funding to states and school districts with the intent of providing additional assistance to high concentrations of low-income and disadvantaged students. Funds can only be used for professional development, instructional materials and education support services in English language art and
mathematics. In 2002, Congress amended ESEA and reauthorized it as the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act.

Summary

Chapter I presented an introduction to this study, which investigates the effects of freshman advisory program on student academic achievement. The purpose of this study was discussed; a research question and a hypothesis were established; limitations and delimitations were stated; and definitions relevant to this study were provided. Chapter II will present a review of the literature relevant to the topic of this study.
CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Introduction

Freshman advisory programs have been given many distinctive names and characteristics, such as freshman small learning communities, freshman center, freshman wing, freshman seminar, Xtreme, freshman advisory and high school transition program. All of these variations focus on freshmen to help ease their transition to high school. Chapter II will provide a discussion of intervention motivation, advisory model review, local freshman advisory model and stakeholder perceptions.

Intervention Motivation

Alliance (2006) reported on a statistical portrait of dropouts from high school in 2004 that projected over 325 billion dollars in lost wages, taxes, and productivity during their lifetimes. Similarly, high school dropouts are more likely to be unemployed, on public assistance or in prison.

Smith, Akos, Lim, and Wiley (2008) stated the dropout crisis is especially acute during the first year of high school. Ninth grade students exhibit higher rates of failure in courses, greater declines in test scores, and increasing levels of behavioral problems. In high schools with large low-income student populations, up to 40% drop out after ninth grade.
Cohen and Smerdon (2009) postulated that the middle to high school transition is a key point in the academic, social and emotional trajectory of incoming high school students. Students enter high school with varying levels of preparedness, emotional stability, and social adaptability. States, districts, and schools have initiated an array of middle to high school transition, dropout prevention and high school reentry programs.

Cohen and Smerdon (2009) emphasized the middle to high school transition is not a one-time event. Their research study suggested that the transition is a process that begins at some point during middle school and extends throughout ninth grade and possibly beyond. Therefore, schools need to address student problems during various stages of the transition. The middle to high school transition has varying effects on students depending on their level of academic preparation, emotional stability, family situations and demographics, as well as the transition program their schools provide to ease the change.

Wallace, Ye and Chhuon (2012) conducted a mixed methods, factor analytic study to explore the multidimensionality of the sense of belonging. The research was divided into two phases. In phase one, the researchers engaged in a qualitative study of adolescents’ interpretations of school-based relationships in order to refine existing conceptual definitions of sense of belonging.

During phase one, the researchers organized focus groups of adolescents, ages 14 to 20, in urban areas from California, Pennsylvania and Minnesota. Guided questions centered on the adolescents’ general experiences in high school. The
researcher used the focus group results to develop a quantitative survey for phase two of the study.

In 2011, the researchers conducted phase two of the study by administering a survey to 902 students at a Pennsylvania high school. The findings replicated Juvonen’s (2006) proposed model of school-based relationships that is associated with adolescent sense of belonging. The researcher concluded that certain school experiences can affect student outcomes in high school: generalized connection to teachers, connection to a specific teacher, participation in official school sanctioned activities and perception of fitting-in with peers.

Advisory Model

Ellerbrock and Kiefer (2010) conducted a qualitative case study analyzing freshman small learning communities at Westshore High School in the Southeastern United States. The small learning community was developed during the 2002-2003 school year to foster student achievement, school climate and culture.

Westshore’s freshman small learning community consisted of numerous initiatives, including interdisciplinary teacher-student teams, a ninth grade transition course and behavioral and academic incentives. School enrollment averaged 1800 students, including approximately 500 freshmen.

The study was conducted during the 2006-2007 school year and focused on understanding how freshman small learning communities help students transition into high school in developmentally appropriately ways. Sixty-seven participants were involved in the case study, including five site based administrators, four site based
small learning community coordinators, thirty-six teachers, one district level small learning community director and twenty-one freshman students.

Data collection was conducted by utilizing 45 minute interviews, classroom observations and one 60 minute student focus group interview. Data analysis utilized Hatch’s (2002) inductive approach through the process of looking for patterns. Their findings indicated three caring relationships existed within the freshman learning community: teacher-program, teacher-student and program-student. Specifically, there was a strong sense of cohesiveness, group identification, and pride that reportedly changed the student culture. Furthermore, the findings also showed that the freshman teachers, not the freshman small learning community were the central elements that created the community of care at Westshore High School.

McIntosh and White (2006) conducted a quantitative study to evaluate the freshman wing at Findlay High School, located in Findley, Ohio. The Freshman Wing began with the graduating class of 2004, due in part to the high percentage of freshman failing academic classes; during the 2000-2001 school year, 29% failed one or more classes.

The Freshman Wing has an approximate student population of 500, it includes common homeroom assignments and students having a common lunch period, locker area, teachers, principal and counselor. The class of 2003 represented the baseline year and did not participate in the Freshman Wing program. Freshman from 2004 to 2008 participated in the Freshman Wing program; therefore, the researchers compared freshman failure rates, attendance, and expulsions before and after program
implementation. The researchers indicated that from a qualitative standpoint, the Freshman Wing concept produced favorable results. The overall number of students failing decreased by 8.6% (41 students); expulsions decreased by 3.5% (16 students); nonetheless attendance remained relatively constant over the six-year period.

Austin (2006) conducted a mixed methods study, evaluating the Freshman Seminar at La Sierra High School in Riverside, California. The staff at La Sierra recognized numerous challenges that incoming high school students faced, such as, declining levels of academic efficacy, expectancy, confidence, positive behavior and motivation.

All incoming freshman students (N=856) enrolled in the new Freshman Seminar participated in the study. The program consisted of three six-week grading periods per semester, in which, students were randomly assigned to one of the three strands; one strand was devoted to meeting the requirements for health standards (control group), another strand to the Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID) program to enhance study skills. The final strand utilized StrengthsQuest, a curriculum that focused on individual strengths and talents, as well as leadership and career development.

Chi-square tests were conducted to examine the equality of subgroup demographics between the StrengthsQuest and control group. There were no significant differences. At the conclusion of the six-week course, students were given a survey designed to measure the key predictors of academic achievement. A forty-four question survey was designed to measure the degree to which students felt the
statements described them individually. An analysis of variance (ANOVA) test was used to compare the means between the control and treatment groups.

The researchers found that the intervention program may have a significant impact on the academic achievement and attitudes of freshmen. The data demonstrated significant increases in three categories self-perceptions, academic efficacy and extrinsic motivation ($p < .001$). Also there were significant increases in self-empowerment ($p < .01$) and expectancy ($p < .05$). Austin also noted there was an increase in daily attendance after the StrengthsQuest intervention.

Brant (2012) conducted a quantitative study to determine the effectiveness of the Xtreme program, which was developed by the University of Kansas, in improving the academic achievement of low-performing ninth grade students. The study was conducted during the 2009-10 school year at a rural high school in Central California.

The sample population included ninth graders ($N=61$) who scored lower than proficient on the English language arts portion of the 2008-09 California Standards Test (CST). The sample population was divided into two groups taught by the same instructor. The treatment group participated daily in a two period intervention program consisting of one hour of English language arts instruction and one hour of Xtreme supplemental instruction ($N=28$). The control group ($N=33$) was enrolled in one single period of English language arts.

The students were administered the 2009-10 CST in English language arts after eight months of instruction. Student test scores were analyzed using a $t$-test for independent means to determine if there was a significant difference in CST test
scores between the control and treatment groups. The analysis indicated that there was no significant difference in mean CST scores between the groups.

According to the American Educational Research Association, the main components of a successful freshman advisory program should include the following:

- Promote small, caring communities of learners
- Promote mutually respectful and meaningful relationships
- Promote individual attention to students
- Provide each student with an opportunity to “belong”
- Allow teachers to be actively involved in the affective development of students
- Emphasize the social and emotional development of every young adolescent
- Assist students with interpersonal communication skills development.

(Anfara, 2001, p. 6)

**Local Freshman Advisory**

A freshman advisory is an intervention with the expectations of improving student academic success, graduation rates and retention. The advisory also is designed to reduce student discipline issues and improve overall school climate.

Schools that are interested in such interventions begin by establishing a site planning team that researches different intervention programs. The team visits other high schools to observe successful intervention programs. The planning team may compose a list of different ideas and intervention programs and present the options to the entire staff. Staff members may develop an intervention program specific to the
needs of the local site. A major component of the intervention is a freshman advisory program. Faculty may determine if a freshman advisory period should be embedded into the school day and select upper class students to serve as mentors. The advisory classes may meet four times a week, holding two study hall days and two activity days.

Whittier High School District in California has a successful prevention and intervention program that is utilized throughout its district. Embedded within the program are three non-negotiables, collaboration, common assessments and directed intervention (Guide, 2013). The program is a systematic organization of academic and socio-emotional support that results in directed and required interventions for each struggling student. A key concept of the Whittier program is that of freshman support, in which freshman receive personalized attention and academic support.

One major concept borrowed from the Whittier High School District is student academic mentors, which is the main component to the freshman advisory program. All mentors should have at least a 3.0 GPA, with no Fs, maintain good citizenship and attendance rankings. Mentors attend training, which includes direct instruction in teaching the curricula of the advisory program, role-playing activities and focus group work on planning the weekly freshman advisory activities. The lessons presented by the mentors include: welcome to your new school, a presentation discussing school operations, rules, important school localities; character counts lessons, in which the lessons correlate with the current month’s citizenship pillar (trustworthiness, respect, responsibility, fairness, caring and citizenship); study
Another feature adopted from the Whittier District is freshman advisory teachers. The teacher supervises freshman during an advisory period, guides mentors in understanding curricula and maintains classroom management. The freshman advisory teacher schedules times, during advisory period, to meet with freshman students individually to discuss grades and assignment from their academic classes (DuFour et al., 2010).

The primary goals of the local freshman advisory are to ensure students succeed academically and socially in their first year of high school. These advisory sessions provide a place for direct academic support. Mentors organize small study groups by content area. Mentors frequently check daily planners, encourage freshmen to complete their homework, connect freshmen with school resources, and encourage them to join clubs and get involved at school. Mentors also lead icebreaker and team building activities to foster a sense of belonging in the classroom, among peers and school wide (Diele, 2013).

**Stakeholder Perceptions**

Smith, Akos, Lim and Wiley (2008) conducted a mixed methods, longitudinal study to assess how students, parents and school staff viewed the transition from middle school to high school. The study was conducted in a large public school district in the Midwest, in which students transitioned from two middle schools to a freshman center. One hundred seventy-two students completed the pre transition
survey at the conclusion of the eighth grade and one hundred nineteen completed the post transition survey during their freshman year. Ninety-four parents completed the survey and two freshman counselors, three freshman teachers and the principal from the freshman center were interviewed.

The Perceptions of Transition Survey were adapted from Akos and Galassi (2004). The survey measured student and parent perceptions about academic, social and organizational aspects of high school. The survey used a Likert response format with the academic subscale using 11 items, such as, freedom to choose some classes and not finding their way around school.

The pre transition survey responses were analyzed through mean scores and independent t-test. The researchers noted there was no significant difference between student and parent overall perceptions, with the highest rated response for both student and parents being “getting good grades.” In contrast, student and parent responses were significantly different on “freedom to choose classes and “getting too much homework.”

Results of the pre-post comparison of student perceptions of transition were significantly different ($t=2.71, p>.01$). Post transition students expressed less academic concerns or the lack of ability to navigate around campus. In addition, post students expressed a new concern over the difficulty of following new rules.

Data results from the interviews on school staff perceptions of transition included items such as students’ lack of understanding about earning credits, academic expectations, academic policies, as well as a general note that ninth grade
staff was not clear of what eighth grade staff was telling students and parents about high school expectations.

The authors of the study suggested appropriate interventions. Middle schools and high schools need to collaborate, identify and develop a consistent message about distinctive features of their academic, social, and organizational attributes and establish realistic expectations for freshman involvement in leadership opportunities, sports, and student government.

**Summary**

The review of literature in Chapter II examined the motivation for implementing freshman advisory programs to aid students in the transition from middle school to high school. The studies indicate that advisories show promise; however, many suggest that more needs to be done to identify struggling students ahead of time to limit or prevent a difficult transition. Research reveals there needs to be communication and consistency amongst districts and schools to ease the transition, as well as collaboration with all stakeholders.

Chapter III will present a discussion of the sample population, identification of the treatment and control groups, and explanation of instrumentation and statistical analyses.
CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The purpose of the current study is to determine if there is a significant difference in mean grade point average between students who participated in a freshman advisory program and students who did not participate. The methodology of this study will provide a discussion of the sample population, identification of the treatment and control groups and explanation of instrumentation and statistical analyses.

Sample Population

This quantitative study was conducted using data from one high school located in the Central Valley of California at the conclusion of the 2012-13 academic year. The average student enrollment during the study was 2200. The ethnic composition of the student body was 52% Hispanic, 20% Caucasian, 17% Asian, 6% African American and 5% other. The gender ratio was 51% male to 49% female. The proportion of the student body who received free lunch was 79% and those who received reduced price lunch were 9%.

The total population of freshmen for the study was 1126 students, 558 from 2011-12 academic year and 568 from the 2012-13 academic year. Student academic data for the sample population were transferred into Excel spreadsheets thus applying sequential number values to all student GPAs.
**Treatment Group**

The treatment group (N=30) was randomly selected, using a web-based research number randomizer, from a list (N=568) of ninth grade students who participated in a freshman advisory program during the entire 2012-13 academic year.

**Control Group**

The control group (N=30) was randomly selected, using a web-based research number randomizer, from a list (N=558) of ninth grade students who did not participate in freshman advisory program during the 2011-12 academic year.

**Data Collection**

Student overall GPAs were derived from second semester grades and collected through the use of the district’s web-based student information system, Aeries.net. There were no advanced placement grades included in the mean calculations. The grades were based on a criterion-referenced grading system using a fixed numeric scale equated to a letter grade. Table 1 depicts a standard criterion-referenced grading system (Education, 2013).

**Table 1**

**GPA Scale**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mark</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A(Excellent)</td>
<td>90-100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B(Good)</td>
<td>80-89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C(Fair)</td>
<td>70-79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D(Poor)</td>
<td>60-69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F(Failure)</td>
<td>-59</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The treatment group attended a 30 minute freshman advisory period four days a week, in which there were two study hall days (Monday, Friday) and two activity days (Tuesday, Thursday). During study hall, students were expected to have study material or coursework to complete and if assistance was needed, there were student mentors to assist. For the activity days, student mentors presented a variety of lessons: welcome to your new school, school operations, rules, important school localities; character count lessons, in which the lessons correlate with the current month’s citizenship pillar (trustworthiness, respect, responsibility, fairness, caring and citizenship); study strategies; class registration processes; counseling information; bullying; community and school pride.

**Statistical Analyses**

The Statistical Program for Social Sciences 20.0 (SPSS) was used to analyze the data. A t-test for independent samples was used to determine if there was a significant difference in the mean GPA between students who participated in a freshman advisory program and students who did not participate. The Alpha level was set at the .05 level of significance.

**Summary**

Chapter III presented and discussed the sample, instrumentation, and the statistical analyses to be used. Results of this study will be reported and explained in chapter IV.
CHAPTER IV
RESULTS OF THE STUDY

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to determine if there was a significant difference in the mean grade point average between students who participated in a freshman advisory program and students who did not participate. This chapter presents the results of the statistical analysis that was used to test the hypothesis established for this study.

Description of Sample

This quantitative study was conducted using data from one high school located in the Central Valley of California at the conclusion of the 2012-13 academic year. The average student enrollment during the study was 2200. The ethnic composition of the student body was 52% Hispanic, 20% Caucasian, 17% Asian, 6% African American and 5% other. The gender ratio was 51% male to 49% female.

The total population of freshmen for the study was 1126 students, 558 from 2011-12 academic year and 568 from the 2012-13 academic year. Student academic data for the sample population were transferred into Excel spreadsheets thus applying sequential number values to all student GPAs.

The treatment group (N=30) was randomly selected, using a web-based research number randomizer from a list (N=568) of ninth grade students, who participated in a freshman advisory program during the entire 2012-13 academic year.
The control group (N=30) was randomly selected, using the same web-based research number randomizer from a list (N=558) of ninth grade students who did not participate in a freshman advisory program during the 2011-12 academic year.

**Findings Related to Hypothesis**

H: There is no significant difference in the mean GPA between freshman high school students who participated in the freshman advisory program and freshman high school students who did not participate.

An independent $t$-test analysis was used to determine if a difference exists between the treatment and the control groups. For this analysis, significance was set at $p<.05$. Results indicated that there was no significant difference in the mean GPA between the treatment and control groups ($p=.546$) (see Table 2). Hence, the null hypothesis was accepted.

**Table 2**

Mean GPA of Advisory and Non-Advisory Students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>$n$</th>
<th>$M$</th>
<th>$SD$</th>
<th>$p$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Non-Advisory</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>2.8087</td>
<td>.81960</td>
<td>.546</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advisory</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>2.6603</td>
<td>1.05751</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The results suggest that the mean GPA of students in both groups were similar. There is no significant difference in the mean GPA between the advisory and the non-advisory group.
Summary

Chapter IV presented the results of the $t$-test that were used to accept or reject the null hypothesis of this study. The results suggested that students who participated in the freshman advisory program did not have an improved GPA. Chapter V will present a summary, conclusions, and recommendations for further research.
CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to determine if there was a significant difference in the mean grade point average between students who participated in a freshman advisory program and students who did not participate. A t-test for independence was utilized to determine whether there was a significant difference between students who participated in a freshman advisory program and those who did not participate. Both groups represented in this study consisted of students from one high school located in the Central Valley of California during two consecutive academic years, 2011-2012 and 2012-2013.

Chapter V summarizes this study, presents conclusions, and provides recommendations for further research.

Summary

In the history of public education, there has been an array of reforms, programs and similar assurances to guarantee that every child has access to an education. The purpose of this quantitative study was to examine the mean grade point averages of two random groups of freshmen at the end of their ninth grade school year. One group participated in a freshman advisory program, while the other group did not participate.
Student GPAs were derived from second semester grades and collected using the district’s web-based student information system. The total population of freshmen for the study was 1126 students, 558 from 2011-12 (control group) academic year and 568 from the 2012-13 (treatment group) academic year. Student academic data for the sample population was transferred into Excel spreadsheets thus applying sequential number values to all student GPAs. Two random groups of 30 students each were then selected using a web-based research number randomizer. The mean GPAs of the groups were compared for this study.

**GPA**

H: There is no significant difference in mean GPA between freshman high school students who participated in the freshman advisory program and freshman high school students who did not participate.

Students’ grade point averages, computed on a 4.0 scale, were used in this analysis. The results suggest there was no significant difference in mean grade point average between the groups.

**Conclusions**

This study is consistent with other studies that have been conducted on first year freshman advisory programs. Brant (2012) and Goodman (2009) conducted similar studies at high schools with comparable populations and found that the freshman advisory program did not contribute to a significant difference in student academic outcome.
The current study is not consistent with many of the research findings that suggest a freshman advisory program improves student academic achievement, attendance and expulsion rates. Ellerbrock and Kiefer (2010) and McIntosh and White (2006) both examined similar size high schools and found that student academic performance had significantly improved among students who attended a freshman advisory program.

The current study may not be consistent with other research because it was conducted during the first year of the advisory program. Research with significant findings involved schools that had established freshman advisory programs. There was no professional development on the advisory format for the current teaching staff, which may have contributed to the results of this study. In addition, the goals of the program may not have been clearly communicated to freshmen at the beginning of the year. These goals involve an emphasis on social and emotional development and provide a smooth academic transition for them into the high school environment, all of which may impact the student throughout school, not just for one academic year.

**Recommendations for Further Research**

Recommendations for continued studies in this area would include the following:

- Conduct research utilizing larger populations that would include regional, county, state and national comparisons.
• Conduct research to determine if there is a correlation between Freshman Advisory programs and school size.

• Conduct a longitudinal GPA study over a four-year period.

• Conduct research comparing graduation rates between students who participate in freshman advisory programs and those who do not.

• Conduct research to determine if differences exist between teacher collaboration models and freshman advisory programs.
REFERENCES


