

**AN ANALYSIS OF THE BARBER COSMETOLOGY
STUDENT RETENTION AT MATC**

by

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A Research Paper

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Abstract

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An Analysis of the Barber Cosmetology Student Retention at MATC
(Title)

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The Barber Cosmetology department at Milwaukee Area Technical College enrolls 68 to 70 students twice a year, January and August. Six months after the classes begin, 30 to 32 students have withdrawn from the program. Research on Barber Cosmetology retention was not available. This research relies on the retention research of post-secondary colleges.

Based on research results, student retention efforts are a critical component of enrollment management. Effective orientation is the initial process that makes the connection with the college, peers, faculty, and staff. Vincent Tinto (1987) found three attributes that affect retention in the first semester. Students involved in college activities have a greater interest in the college, and thus continue to completion. Researchers found

internal and external barriers that contribute to student withdrawal: family obligations, financial concerns, full-time employment, low grade-point averages, being a member of an ethnic group, and female gender. This research found that unreliable childcare was the most prevalent reason for withdrawal.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Introduction and Background

The BC (Barber Cosmetology) department at MATC (Milwaukee Area Technical College) enrolls students twice a year, January and August. Students are advised by each of the teachers during orientation what to expect from the program and what is expected of them. The dean and instructional chair discuss the commitments required for this intense 40 hour per week program.

Some withdrawals are anticipated; the barriers that cause the withdrawals have not been identified. Based on research results, student retention efforts are a critical part of the enrollment management program (Acosta, 1994). Sixty-eight to 70 students are enrolled in the BC program each registration period. Six months after enrollment, there are 30 to 32 students remaining. According to Grubb (1988), 46 percent of the students at the technical college level leave prior to completion. This has been constant for six years at MATC. The viability of technical programs is directly linked to student completion rates (Finch & Crunkilton, 1984).

Privately owned salons, as well as department chain store salons, hire MATC students after completion. The demands for Barber Cosmetologist are high, but the supply of professional stylists completing the program diminishes with each withdrawal. Student withdrawals are a high priority at MATC. Resolving "high priority" issues can contribute to students having a better opportunity for success, by completing the program

(Seymour, 1992). It should also be noted that voluntary withdrawal sometimes stems from factors within the college. It is important that students arrive with the qualifications necessary to pass the examination given by the Wisconsin Department of Regulation and Licensing.

The Wisconsin Department of Regulation and Licensing mandates an 1800-hour program before BC students take the examination. However, the licensing department does not determine how MATC schedules the 1800 hours. Last year, less than 50 percent of the students that enrolled completed this intense, 40-hour per week regime. Today, occupational, monetary, and other societal barriers may call for a change in the way the required hours are scheduled. An alternative schedule may eliminate most of the barriers that cause the retention problems (Tinto, 1986).

Retention at two-year colleges and community colleges is higher than at four-year colleges (Bean, 1985). Open enrollment policies in technical colleges contribute to a significant number of older, non-traditional students (Grubb, 1988) that will leave prior to graduation. Windham (1994) reiterates that finding. Her research called the non-traditional students that leave before completion "non-persisters." Technical colleges have developed initiatives to increase retention and improve services for students. These initiatives include counseling services, academic advising, and childcare (Acosta, 1994). MATC has these initiatives available for BC students, but the barriers that prevent completion are not yet identified.

Published rates of attrition primarily reflect full-time students in certificate of degree programs. Post-secondary students in technical colleges are generally not included in those rates (Bean, 1985). The magnitude of student attrition is of concern at

all levels of post-secondary education; withdrawals are higher at two-year colleges (Grubb, 1988).

Retention until completion in the BC program has "direct and indirect" measures that affect the success of the program and the college. It is a direct measure because it adds credits to the college. The indirect measure affects the students that complete the BC program, advancing to better opportunities, more job security, better working conditions, and higher job satisfaction (Darkenwald, 1981). This research is needed to identify barriers that prevent Barber Cosmetologists from completing the program.

Statement of the Problem

There is a low student retention rate in the Barber Cosmetology program at MATC (Milwaukee Area Technical College). Prior to registration, each student meets with the program director to determine if this is the desired career choice. An overview of the program is presented during the interview. An application for admission is completed and reviewed. The program requirements are a high school diploma or GED (General Education Development), and demonstration of proficiency in basic skills, for acceptance in the full-time 40-hour per week program. An apprentice program is also available. Apprentices attend class one day per week for four semesters, while gaining on-the-job training. Many questions have been asked about the quality of training the apprentices receive. However, this research examines student withdrawal from a program that has a qualified, trained staff.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to determine why over one-half of the students that begin the Barber Cosmetology program at MATC, leave before completion. Retention has been discussed within the department, but it has not been researched. The researcher has a commitment to improving the self-esteem, socio-economic status, and educational growth of all students. Identifying the barriers that prevent them from attaining their goals is one step toward that commitment. Students completing the program have excellent career opportunities in all areas of the Barber Cosmetology profession.

Research Objectives

1. Identify internal barriers that cause Barber Cosmetology students to withdraw from the program before completion.
2. Identify external barriers affecting student retention. Are there outside forces preventing students from reaching their goals?
3. Determine if there are demographic factors contributing to student withdrawals.
4. Establish causal connections between the research and BC student withdrawals.

Significance of the Study

1. This study attempts to discover why the low retention rates exist in the Barber Cosmetology program.
2. There has been limited research on the Barber Cosmetology retention problems.
3. Use findings as a reference tool for prospective Barber Cosmetology students.

4. Present the research to the MATC executive vice president, and the district minority recruitment and retention committee.
5. The vice president may use this research as additional information to solve campus-wide retention problems.

Limitations

Searching for other studies on student retention in the Barber Cosmetology profession revealed an insufficient amount of information to aid this study. Most of the available information came from studies related to high school dropouts, technical and four-year college retention problems. This study is also limited in scope to the full-time Barber Cosmetologists that leave the program before completion. Apprentices are mentioned, but are not included in this research. There was limited time to generate retention information from other BC schools. That information may justify or disprove this research.

Definition of Terms

1. Attrition: A reduction, chiefly as a result of resignation.
2. Non-persister: The definition comes from persist; not to go on stubbornly in spite of opposition.
3. Retention: The act of retaining.

Methodology

This research was designed to examine factors that contribute to withdrawal in the Barber Cosmetology program at Milwaukee Area Technical College. Retention research, as it relates to Barber Cosmetology, was not found. The review of literature from the UW-Stout Library Learning Center, the internet, internet links to educational sites, and the MATC retention handbook were the major sources of research on retention in post-secondary colleges.

Chapter 2

Review of Literature

Review of literature on retention in post-secondary colleges substantiates that research in the Barber Cosmetology (BC) field is limited. The review of over 100 sites provided enough retention research that parallels the Barber Cosmetology retention problems. There were no studies found on retention for BC students. The literature will be reviewed based on the following outline.

Outline

- I. Managing Enrollment in Post-Secondary Colleges
 - A. Orientation
 - B. Student's commitment
 - C. Campus environment
- II. First Semester Warning Signs
 - A. Intervention initiatives
 - B. Peer support
 - C. Barriers that effect learning
- III. College Retention Commitment
 - A. Strategies to maximize retention
 - B. Retention activities
 - C. Characteristics of students that withdraw

Managing Enrollment in Post-Secondary Colleges

Orientation

An orientation program seems reasonable to be required for all students before beginning classes. Tinto (1987) argued that higher education ignores the developmental task of helping students make appropriate decisions for career choices. Orientation is the initial process for retaining students, by making a connection for peers, faculty, and staff. Left alone, students feel isolated. Faculty and staff can help students form personal links to the college that encourage persistence (Porter, 1990). Barber Cosmetology orientation stresses the necessity of child care preparation, and the commitments required for the 40-hour per week program; however, the retention problem persists.

Student's Commitment

Promoting persistence throughout the college experience aids the student's commitment to complete the course requirements. Most students begin with a desire to finish, however, unexpected circumstances may require course flexibility to maintain the student's commitment. St. Louis Community College (St. Louis Community College Enrollment Management Plan, 1995) reported that some students are only committed to completing a portion of the required courses before leaving. Too often, Barber Cosmetology students leave after a few weeks. Is it possible that the commitment is similar to the St. Louis Community College findings? The BC profession requires a license to perform; for that reason, it is assumed that most students are committed to completion.

The Campus Environment

Students completing course requirements add a financial component to the college. Funding is usually based on the number of students graduating, making retention vital. From registration to counseling, the campus environment has a profound impact on student relationships with the college. Resources must be in place for the success of the student's campus experience. Administration, faculty, and staff affect the retention of students. Vincent Tinto (1987) found three attributes that impact student retention:

- College resources must be available to assist the needs of the beginning student.
- Every student that arrives on campus must feel valued, and a full member of the community.
- The college has a commitment to educate all of the students.

If the primary focus is for college retention, administrators must make sure an at-risk indicator is in place to recognize first semester warning signs of students needing assistance.

First Semester Warning Signs

The first semester is the most critical semester for students. An "early warning system" must be in place to identify students making the adjustments of their expectations and new college demands (Porter, 1989; Strommer, 1993; Upcraft & Gardner, 1989; Upcraft, Mullendor, Barefoot & Fiedler, 1993). Students that have academic, social, and economical problems should be directed to the resource area where help is available.

Intervention Initiatives

Students that are involved in college activities tend to maintain a greater interest in the college. The St. Louis Community College Enrollment Management Plan (1995) suggested that extracurricular activities of the college be advertised in the community papers. This helps the student connect to the college, and the community gets involved in student retention.

Students must also have access to a central center where needed assistance is available. Workshops can be a means of addressing societal issues that impact the student's ability to succeed, such as, single parenting, substance abuse, housing, financial aid, and violence prevention. The retention process does not stop after the first semester. There must be an ongoing review of the college's programs, policies, and practices to ensure that the college does not adversely impact retention.

Peer Support

Peer support impacts retention. The Miami - Dade Community College (1993) sorts students into groups based on test scores. Each group was provided academic support throughout their program. Peer support groups strengthen relationships, improve academics, and directly impact retention. Support groups help first-semester students overcome the barriers of college transition.

Barriers That Affect Learning

First-semester students face internal and external barriers in making the college transition. The Tinto (1993) study found that internal and external barriers contributed to a 67.7 percent attrition rate at two-year colleges, and 53.3 percent rate at four-year institutions. Some of the reasons cited were: student's studying part time, leaving old

friends behind, caring for children, employed while attending college, poor academic preparation, lack of clear goals, an eurocentric curriculum, lack of faculty involvement with students, and a campus climate perceived as racist or indifferent. Optimal learning would be difficult for students facing any of these barriers.

College Retention Commitment

Strategies to Maximize Retention

The ultimate purpose of retention is to help students accomplish their educational goals (Tinto 1987). Most research on retention includes a college component that has aligned programs to assist all students. The Hanover Retention Project Research Committee (Porter, 1989; Strommer, 1993; Upcraft & Gardner, 1989; Upcraft, Mullendor, Barefoot & Fiedler, 1993) indicated that the first six weeks in an institution are the most important. The committee found that during a short period of time, a student either does or does not establish an intense sense of affiliation with the institution. The committee suggested that institutions place a premium on retention programs such as:

- First year orientation
- Advising and teaching
- Early warning systems
- Strong steps to prevent failures
- Activities to promote early involvement in campus life

Retention Activities to Minimize Attrition

Quality campus environment has a profound impact on the retention of students, far greater than their performance in the classroom (St. Louis Community College

Enrollment Management Plan, 1995). Their research found that one of the first action items for the coordinator of student retention is to develop a process to heighten campus awareness to minimize attrition. Concerns about retention and attrition rates in higher education have increased over the years. Milwaukee Area Technical College has a five-year plan in place to improve the retention and attrition rates. Reserving time to listen to students is another activity to minimize attrition. One never knows when a bit of encouragement, and a bit of confidence is all the student needs to advance in his or her learning experience with contentment and peace of mind (Campbell, 1972).

“What we have done for ourselves alone dies with us. What we have done for others and the world remains and is immortal.” (Albert Pine, date unknown)

Characteristics of Students That Withdraw

Intervention contributes to contentment and peace of mind, says Moore (1995) and Windham (1994). Their study focused on intervening in the lives of students that are planning to withdraw. The research identified the characteristics as "persisters" and "non-persisters." Persisters are students that are retained, and non-persisters are the students that withdraw. The researchers found that full-time attendance at the college is the most prevalent characteristic of persisters. Interestingly, the most prevalent characteristic of non-persisters is part time attendance (Feldman, 1993).

The age of students that withdraw shows a conflict of information. Studies show persisters to be younger students, and non-persisters to be older. Feldman (1993) found that the risk of dropping out was associated with young students 20 – 24 years old. Conversely, other studies found similar attributes that contribute to student withdrawal:

full-time employment, low grade-point average, being a member of an ethnic minority, family obligations, financial concerns, and female gender (Bonham & Luckie 1993; Lewallen, 1993).

A free nation can rise no higher than the standard of excellence set in schools and colleges. Ignorance and illiteracy, unskilled workers and dropouts – these and other failures of our educational system breed failure in our social and economic system: delinquency, unemployment, chronic dependence, a waste of human resources, a loss of productive power and purchasing power and an increase in tax-supported benefits. (John F. Kennedy, 1961)

Closing Comments

The review of literature highlights the retention problems. Most researchers agree that solutions to resolve, or more accurately, to minimize college retention are many. First-semester students appear to be the targeted group of students most likely to leave before completion. Barber Cosmetology students can be included because the program requires a one-year commitment, yet the retention rate is high for the first semester.

The most significant solutions resound from Tinto (1987), and are echoed through most retention research: engage the student, faculty, staff, and campus environment in the retention process during the first semester. Continue refining the process for the student throughout the college experience.

Chapter 3

Research Methods

The methods and procedures used in this study on retention in the Barber Cosmetology program are explained in this chapter under the headings of (1) Research Design, (2) Population and Sample, (3) Instrumentation, and (4) Data Collection.

Research Design

This descriptive study was designed to determine what barriers or factors contribute to the attrition in the Barber Cosmetology program that force students to leave prior to completion. Research on similar groups of Barber Cosmetology students was not found. In the review of literature, there are an inexhaustible number of researchers that research retention problems. The research shows compatibility across disciplines that reveal retention situations similar to those in the Barber Cosmetology program.

The Clearinghouse on Adult, Career, and Vocational Education (ERIC) has a vast number of retention studies, journals, and abstracts on retention and attrition. Netscape, Goggle, and Excite search engines were resourceful sites. The UW-Stout Library Learning Center houses microfiche dissertations of Plan A and Plan B research on student retention in post-secondary colleges. They also have links to other college libraries. The search is endless on the retention subject. One name that was mentioned as a reference in many of the studies was Vincent Tinto, from as early as 1977, to as recently as 1993. He has written books on retention. Tinto (1987) was referenced in a Canadian study on retention.

The St. Louis Community College has a study, "Student Retention Plan" that found many possible solutions to retention problems similar to retention in the Barber Cosmetology program. This research includes a clear definition of retention, and the attributes of an effective retention program written by Vincent Tinto. This plan defines a retention solution that moves "beyond the traditional approach of only looking at graduation rates, but considers the attitude of the student that leaves the college on good terms, may return to complete their goals and objectives as a result of exit interviews."

The surveys for students and teachers were designed to generate answers about the college environment, academic requirements, and student's reasons for leaving before completing the program. Tinto's path analyses model (1975) found that individual integration into the academic and social systems of the college directly relates to continuation at the college. When there is knowledge that a student plans to leave, a face-to-face exit interview can provide additional information, and offer assistance that may cause the student to remain in the Barber Cosmetology program.

Population and Sample

This study collected feedback from Barber Cosmetology students and teachers. The surveys were drafted based on MATC graduate students' comments, statements used to interview college students concerning their reaction to courses, instructors, and classroom policies, and experience with the BC program. Twenty-two of the 32 students in the program since August 1998 completed the original survey. A few of the statements were changed for clarification. Ninety names, addresses, and phone numbers were

provides by the BC department. Ninety-five percent of the respondents live in the Milwaukee area, and five percent from the suburbs of Milwaukee. All students enrolled must be high school graduates or have an equivalent GED. Respondents receiving the survey were chosen at random from the list of names. The surveys were sent to 50 former students addressing reasons for leaving the program in the last two years. Responses from 20 respondents and 15 telephone interviews provided the data used in this research. The telephone follow-up interviews were conducted from former BC students that did not return the surveys. Teachers in the department and a specialist in the statistics department approved surveys.

The MATC Barber Cosmetology teachers were asked to respond to a different survey. Teachers were asked to comment on factors about teaching practices and concerns for the individual student. Nine of the eleven full-time teachers responded. The size of the population was approximately 82 students, and 11 teachers.

The demographic characteristics in the pilot group are consistent with the students that were mailed the survey. The State of Wisconsin requires enrollees to be 18 years old, with a high school diploma or equivalent GED completion. The pilot group range in ages from 18 to 52. Ninety percent of both groups live in Milwaukee. Ten percent live in the surrounding suburbs of Milwaukee. Eighty percent of all of the respondents work after school, have children, and homes to maintain. Five of the other 20 percent live with parents and were not working. Fifteen of the respondents work on weekends. All of the respondents were women. There were three men in the program that transferred to the apprentice program.

Instrumentation

The instruments were developed from a MATC 1998 student feedback system of 122 questions. From these questions, some statements were selected based on the objectives of the research. Other statements were devised from experience with students that left the program before completion. Research objectives were to examine barriers, external and internal, demographic factors, and to establish causal connections between the research and withdrawal.

Pilot Instrument

Students in the program were asked to respond to the statements based on experience with the BC program. Their responses prompted a change of wording for clarification of statements 4, 5, 8, 9, 12, 16, and 18. The remaining 18 statements were not changed, and were used on the survey sent to students that left.

Instrument for Students That Left

The instrument asked for responses based on experiences with the program. Stating that there were no right or wrong answers. Statements 4, 5, 8, 9, 10, 14, 16, and 18 were replaced or reworded for clarification. The revised statements asked for responses covering the research objectives in three categories: structure of the program, teacher/student interaction, and students' personal problems.

Instrument for Teachers

The teacher's survey statements were taken from the MATC 1998 feedback system for students. Questions were changed to statements to generate different responses. Teachers were asked about teaching practices and concern for the students. Nine of the responses were returned a week later, with positive comments about the instrument. One of the 11 full-time teachers was on vacation, the eleventh teacher was the researcher that received encouragement on the project.

Data Collection

The study used telephone interviews and surveys for gathering information from students that left the Barber Cosmetology program in the last two years. Revised surveys were sent with cover letters and a stamped, return envelope. Twenty respondents returned the surveys. Fifteen telephone interviews were made randomly in a two-week period to the non-respondents. These 35 of 50 respondents provided some of the data used in this research.

The teacher's survey was hand delivered with a cover letter. The researcher asked for data concerning teaching practices and student concerns; useful data to assist this research. The responses were given to the researcher within one week. An exit interview was also developed for the new students who enrolled in August 1999, but it has not been incorporated into the program.

Students were asked to respond to the classroom environment with students and teachers. The survey also included statements about the student's expectations, financial

preparedness, and family involvement. Students were asked if they planned to return to complete the MATC Barber Cosmetology program.

Information from the pilot study of students in the BC program was used to improve the reliability of the survey. Due to the scope of the Barber Cosmetology department, and the objectives of the study, data was limited to the Milwaukee Area Barber Cosmetology program.

Chapter 4

Results and Discussion

Two surveys were used to collect data for this study. A survey was hand delivered to a pilot group of respondents in the program, asking them to complete the survey for refining the statements before mailing to respondents that did not complete the program. The pilot group consisted of 22 respondents in the Barber Cosmetology (BC) program. After compiling the responses, some of the survey statements were changed for clarification.

The revised survey was sent with a cover letter to 50 respondents that left the program. In October 1999 a list of 90 names of respondents who left the program, with addresses and phone numbers, was provided by the department. From that list, 50 were chosen at random to receive the survey. There were 20 immediate responses, and 15 follow-up telephone interviews. The survey asked for responses from three areas of focus to garner answers for the research objectives, structure of the program, teacher/student interaction, and personal issues. Twenty-five statements were used on the mailed survey. To ensure completion of the telephone interviews, 15 of the 25 statements were selected to ask respondents over the telephone.

A second survey was hand delivered to BC teachers with a cover letter in August 1999. Seven of the 11 full-time teachers and two apprentice teachers returned their responses in two weeks. There were 18 statements on the survey that involved teaching practices and concern for the students. The Likert scale was used for responses.

Respondents were asked to respond by checking: Strongly Disagree (SD), Disagree (D), Undecided (U), Agree (A), or Strongly Agree (SA).

Table 1 shows the response rate of the surveys returned from students that left, and the Barber Cosmetology faculty.

Table 1

Response Rate by Category

Category	Number Sent	Number of Responses	Response Rate
Students	50	35	70%
Faculty	11	9	82%

Findings

Demographic Factors

The State of Wisconsin requires enrollees to be 18 years old, with a high school diploma or equivalent GED completion. Although ages were not collected as part of the survey, anecdotal evidence from faculty suggest that ages of respondents were from 18 to 52, most respondents were under 30. Ninety percent of the respondents live in Milwaukee. Ten percent live in the surrounding suburbs of Milwaukee. Eighty percent of the respondents are employed, have children, and homes to maintain. Five of the other 20 percent live with parents, but are not employed. Fifteen of the respondents work on weekends. All of the respondents were women. There were three men in the program who transferred to the apprentice program.

Table 2 reflects the demographics of the responses. Gender is not shown on the table, since 100% of the respondents were women.

Table 2

Demographics

Category	Minimum	Maximum	Response Rate
Children	1	6	71%
Age	18	52	-
Hours/Wk	20	40	74%
Weekend	12	20	22%
<u>Residency</u>			
Milwaukee	10	80	-
Suburb	2	8	-

One respondent with six children was a 22-year-old single mother, left with care of three siblings after her mother died, and two of her sister's children. This was the most serious internal barrier cited by the respondents.

Internal Barriers

Most of the internal barriers cited were the same for all of the respondents by phone and through the mail. Personal issues appear to be the most significant response for internal barriers. Respondents cited childcare issues as a number one reason for not continuing the program. The responsibilities of family, school, and work were

overwhelming. Respondents experienced financial problems, most of them work 20 hours after school; 26 respondents worked to support the family. Seven parents did not know where the respondents were. One respondent left to care for three siblings after her mother died, two of her sister's children, and one of her own. Twenty-two respondents were disappointed with the program, yet 25 stated that the program met career goals. These inconsistencies may be internal barriers from external sources. Twenty respondents replied that the courses were not hard to complete, twenty-nine respondents agreed that the courses were hard to complete. Twenty-six respondents had to leave, but plan to return to complete the program.

External Barriers

Structure of the Program

Nineteen respondents agree that MATC is a great school for Barber Cosmetology training. Nineteen respondents thought the process of learning new material was difficult, while thirteen did not. Eighteen respondents were not financially prepared to complete the program. Respondents during the phone interviews were not financially prepared to support the family, and supplement the cost of the program. In several of the interviews, respondents mentioned the cost of transportation, parking, and lunch that had not been factored into going to school. Twenty-five respondents were overwhelmed with family demands and assignments. Twenty-six respondents agreed that the program is too difficult to complete in one year. Seventeen expected to receive assistance from teachers with difficult assignments. Conversely, twenty stated that teachers were supportive of their viewpoints, and twenty-one agreed that teachers were patient and very supportive.

Teacher/Student Interaction

Several of the respondents in the phone interviews were not prepared for all the theory classes. Respondents stated that the orientation did not prepare them for what was expected theoretically. Respondents were of the opinion that if you had hair styling abilities, the program would be easy. Others wrote that there was prejudice between the students and teachers. In the survey response, 21 were in favor of teacher/student interaction. Fourteen agreed that written exams reinforced the learning process, and fourteen disagreed that the test did not cover what had been taught in class. Twenty-five respondents would recommend MATC to other interested people. The above respondents' views are shown in Table 3.

Table 3

Responses to Survey Questionnaire by Students Who Left MATC

	Responses (represents the number responding)				
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree
1. Students at MATC are friendly and helpful.	4	3	14	11	3
2. Some students exchanged phone numbers with me.	8	3	1	7	1
3. MATC is a great school for Barber Cosmetology training.	0	1	0	12	7
4. The students did not accept me; I felt isolated.	4	5	1	13	12
5. The teachers were not supportive of my viewpoints.	4	8	0	4	4
6. The teachers were patient and very supportive.	2	5	3	14	7
7. The course assignments were clearly explained.	3	2	2	7	6
8. My expectations from the program were disappointing.	5	3	5	12	8
9. I expected to receive assistance with difficult assignments.	1	1	0	8	9
10. The process of learning new material was difficult.	6	7	1	11	10
11. Learning was reinforced through the written exams.	3	2	0	12	2
12. The tests did not cover what had been taught in class.	8	6	4	4	1
13. My family was excited that I was in school.	0	3	0	15	2
14. No one helped me with chores at home.	5	4	0	7	4
15. I was financially prepared to complete the program.	4	11	2	11	7
16. I worked after school to support my family.	4	3	0	16	10
17. Some days I was overwhelmed with family and assignments.	5	2	3	15	10
18. I had to leave school because of childcare demands.	6	3	0	6	19
19. The program was too difficult to complete in one year.	5	2	2	12	14
20. The courses were hard for me to complete.	4	4	7	8	12
21. The program was interesting, but I had to leave.	3	3	0	14	15
22. I plan to return to complete the program soon.	4	4	1	17	9
23. The program does not meet my career goals.	8	9	1	10	7
24. I will choose another college to complete the courses.	8	6	4	1	0
25. I would recommend MATC to other interested people.	3	2	5	20	5

N = 35

Teachers' Responses

Seven of the eleven full-time teachers and two apprentice teachers completed the survey. Teachers were asked to respond to statements about teaching practices and concern for the students. Four respondents wrote comments that are included below.

Comments

1. All students have the right to learn! However, personal issues sometimes interfere with the learning process. It is a dilemma when those issues try to overtake the classroom's atmosphere of learning. I feel teachers need to have empathy while maintaining control in the room.

2. I believe all students can succeed, not necessarily in BC, but in life. Exit interviews are a great idea; however, I don't know anyone here that uses them. So I strongly agree that we should use them. I am not sure how to answer number 14. I think it would be a good idea to talk to a counselor, but I don't know if that is what happens.

3. I don't always know when students plan to leave. I persuade students to remain in the program, unless I see that they have no potential, or they really dislike the program or profession, or are also acutely not suited for it. Comments about number 17, it depends on what kind of baggage - if it's a terrible disposition, or an unwillingness to work, then yes - they should be drummed out.

4. I enjoyed reading the survey, and they all have a purpose.

"Coming together is a beginning;

Keeping together is progress;

Working together is success."

Teaching Practices

Respondents at MATC enjoy teaching Barber Cosmetology. Eight agree that teaching helps to support the family, two are undecided and one disagreed with the statement. Assignments are consistent with course requirements, and tests comprise the material covered in class. All of the respondents agree that students have different learning styles that require different teaching techniques. One respondent agreed there is intolerance for demanding students, one undecided, one did not reply, and six disagreed with the statement.

Concern for the Students

Student progress is a priority for eight of the respondents, and one was undecided. Eight respondents agreed that students are given every opportunity to succeed; one disagreed with the statement. Seven respondents stated that students are treated with respect, one was undecided and one respondent disagreed. All of the respondents practice empathy with students of all races. "I believe all students can succeed," was stated by six of the respondents, two were undecided, and one respondent strongly disagreed. Nine respondents suggested ways to improve achievements in the courses. Two respondents were undecided about persuading students to remain in the program, seven agreed with the statement. Eight respondents did not agree that students with excess baggage should leave the program, and one was undecided. Five respondents agreed that students are treated like adults, three disagreed, and one respondent was undecided about the statement.

Exit interviews and counselors have not been used in the past; however, the written comments reveal that both are good ideas to pursue. Table 4 reflects the teachers' responses to the survey.

Table 4

Responses of BC Teachers

Statements	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree
1. I enjoy teaching Barber Cosmetology courses.	0	0	0	1	8
2. Student progress is my first priority.	0	0	1	1	7
3. I teach to help support my family.	0	1	2	2	4
4. Students are given every opportunity to succeed.	0	1	0	3	5
5. Students are treated with respect.	0	1	1	2	5
6. Assignments are consistent with course requirements.	0	0	2	3	4
7. Tests comprise the material covered in class.	0	0	1	2	6
8. I practice empathy with students of all races.	0	0	0	2	7
9. I understand that different learning styles require a variety of teaching styles.	0	0	0	1	8
10. I practice different teaching techniques.	0	0	0	3	6
11. I believe that all students can succeed.	1	0	2	2	4
12. I suggest ways to improve achievements in the course.	0	0	0	3	6
13. Exit interviews are planned for students leaving the program.	1	2	3	1	1
14. Students planning to leave are requested to see a counselor before making a decision.	0	3	4	0	1
15. I persuade students to remain in the program.	0	0	2	3	4
16. I am intolerant with students that are demanding.	4	2	1	1	0
17. Students with excess baggage should leave the program.	1	7	1	0	0
18. Students are treated like adults.	1	2	1	1	4

Discussion

Causal Connection Between the Research and Student Withdrawal

Students that begin the program and leave before completion might have been encouraged to pursue the BC profession without having prior knowledge of the level of

academic abilities and physical stamina required. It is also significant to mention that the pilot respondents, and respondents that left, stated that financial preparations were not in place to assume program responsibilities.

Respondents with families have been known to begin the program with reliable childcare; however, a few weeks into the program, childcare for some respondents becomes a serious issue. One respondent stated that it cost \$130 per week for the son, and \$125 per week for the daughter. The father was recalled to work after classes began; he was scheduled to care for the children.

According to Vincent Tinto, once the college has enrolled the student, the success of that student is not totally relying on their own initiative, but there should be supportive social and educational programs in place to help students reach educational goals. Milwaukee Area Technical College has support groups in place to assist students to reach their goals. Some of the students have been referred to the student life department where help is available. Other students that do not make withdrawal decisions known, may not have the awareness of the assistance in place before making an informed decision to leave.

The respondents reported internal and external barriers that appear to have contributed to the retention in the MATC Barber Cosmetology program. The most frequent internal barriers were childcare, financial problems, and juggling hours for school and work. The most frequent external barriers cited: learners were not financially prepared, family demands, and the Barber Cosmetology program is too difficult to complete in one year.

Chapter 5

Summary, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Barber Cosmetology student retention is complex and solutions must be addressed by the student and the college. The student must make the necessary commitments to sacrifice time and effort to complete the program. Preparation for making the commitment is relevant to the responsibilities involved with family, financial status, educational abilities, and a strong desire to complete the program. Internal and external barriers present problems for the student. Childcare was the most prevalent because of single parenting. Financial preparation was an issue for the respondents that were not ready for the extra cost of being in school, and working part time. Family demands and difficult assignments were the external barriers mentioned most often. The student also experiences the difficult task of making the adjustment to college life.

Orientation is critical to retaining the student enrolled in the program. The college must emphasize what is expected. The Barber Cosmetology faculty give an overview of expectations during orientation, but fail to include a daily/weekly schedule of expectations. Most of the research emphasized how critical the first semester is to retention. Vincent Tinto, The St. Louis Community Retention Plan, The Hanover Retention Research Committee, and most of the other researchers stressed the necessity of the college having a retention plan that includes assistance with academics, financial problems, promote faculty and student interaction, and encourage campus involvement in extracurricular activities. Researchers of most post-secondary colleges agree that a successful retention plan continues throughout the stay at the college.

Restatement of the Problem

There is a low retention rate in the Barber Cosmetology program. Many of the students come into the program with skills for styling hair, but soon find that completing the program requires theory as well as skills. The State of Wisconsin requires 1800 hours of practice and theory before taking the State Board. Too often, students withdraw after a few weeks into the program.

Methods and Procedures

This research was designed to examine factors that contribute to Barber Cosmetology withdrawal before completing the program at Milwaukee Area Technical College. Searching for specific retention information revealed that no research is available on BC retention. Research was conducted at the UW Stout Library Learning Center, the internet and internet links. They were the major sources on retention in post-secondary colleges.

ERIC has a vast number of retention studies, journals, and abstracts on retention and attrition. Netscape, Goggle, and Excite search engines were resourceful sites. The UW-Stout Library Learning Center houses microfiche dissertations on student retention. The library also has links to other college libraries. It appears that the most research on retention was conducted by Vincent Tinto from 1977 to 1993. Tinto is quoted in 90 percent of the research on retention.

Two surveys were designed, one for BC students and one for teachers. The statements on each of the surveys were taken from a student feedback questionnaire for Milwaukee Area Technical College. The questions were reworded to form the statements

on the surveys. The student survey was mailed with a stamped, return envelope. Fifty surveys were mailed, and 20 returned. A follow-up of 15 telephone interviews provided further withdrawal information for the research. The 11 teachers' surveys were hand delivered, nine were returned in two weeks.

Conclusions

Research objectives of the study will be restated, and a conclusion made for each objective.

1. Identify internal barriers that may cause students to withdraw.

Students that have families know what their needs are before embarking on added responsibilities. Preparations must be made for competent childcare. Financial burdens can be controlled with scholarships and financial aid assistance.

2. Identify external barriers that lead to withdrawal.

Academic preparation is available for inept abilities. Students can take courses to prepare for enrolling in the BC program. Family demands may slow progress; the student can ask them to help manage the home for a few months. The BC program has no flexibility, an alternative schedule would be useful.

3. Determine if there are demographics factors contributing to student withdrawal.

Many of the studies mentioned ethnic background as a contributing retention factor. The majority of the students at MATC are ethnic, however, demographics are not thought to factor into withdrawal.

4. Establish causal connection between withdrawal and research.

Students at MATC are not unlike the students researched. The majority work part time, four of the students work full time. These students seem content with the program, but experience stress on a regular bases; often commenting about juggling school and work. Students that withdraw have responsibilities for family, children and adults, and many experience financial problems.

Life presents many unforeseen problems; however, once a decision is made to excel, problems can be managed.

After the student enrolls, the college has a commitment to retain them. Retention is possible because the college has the total student concerns in place when they arrive. MATC looks beyond the graduation rates of the college, to consider that even if the student withdraws for reasons beyond their control, they will return to complete the Barber Cosmetology courses.

Major Findings

Decisions to withdraw from the BC program stem from personal, social, and financial problems. Other findings indicate that making the transition to college adjustments and family demands create dilemmas for students; expecting, but not receiving the necessary support system in place at home and in college was another finding; as was being unprepared academically for the cognitive skills needed in theory to complete the BC program. The student that succeeds makes a commitment to complete the program in spite of the obstacles.

Recommendations

Recommendations Related to the Study

1. The Barber Cosmetology student and Milwaukee Area Technical College must take proactive measures to minimize retention.
 2. The Barber Cosmetology program can become more flexible to accommodate the needs of the students that enroll. Many of the students are single parents, working full and part-time jobs.
 3. If the program offered classes in the evening, and expanded the program over a longer period of time, retention could be improved.
 4. Teachers can spend more time assisting students that require more attention to succeed.
 5. Schedule days in the program for student time off, without extra assignments, for good attendance.
 6. Upgrade the program by eliminating or minimizing outdated courses. Have consideration for the total person.
 7. The associate dean can require everyone involved with the BC program take a look at the Tinto's, and St. Louis Community College's, research on retention.
 8. The findings of this study should be shared with other faculty, advisory committee, and MATC administration.
 9. A presentation should be considered for the Wisconsin Barber Cosmetology Association.
 10. The findings should also be shared with the student affairs department.
- Findings from this study can be used in other areas interested in retention.

Recommendations for Further Study

Research Barber Cosmetology retention in technical colleges to acquire specific information to compare with other retention research. This is a 60 billion dollar industry, worthy of interest for researching.

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Appendix A
Student Survey

Survey for Students Who Left MATC

	SD	D	U	A	SA
1. Students at MATC are friendly and helpful.	1	2	3	4	5
2. Some students exchanged phone numbers with me.	1	2	3	4	5
3. MATC is a great school for Barber Cosmetology training.	1	2	3	4	5
4. I was not accepted by the students, I felt isolated.	1	2	3	4	5
5. The teachers were not supportive of my viewpoints.	1	2	3	4	5
6. The teachers were patient and very supportive.	1	2	3	4	5
7. The course assignments were clearly explained.	1	2	3	4	5
8. My expectations from the program were disappointing.	1	2	3	4	5
9. I expected to receive assistance with difficult assignments.	1	2	3	4	5
10. The process of learning new material was difficult.	1	2	3	4	5
11. Learning was reinforced through the written exams.	1	2	3	4	5
12. The tests did not cover what had been taught in class.	1	2	3	4	5
13. My family was excited that I went back to school.	1	2	3	4	5
14. No one helped me with chores at home.	1	2	3	4	5
15. I was financially prepared to complete the program.	1	2	3	4	5
16. I worked after school to support my family.	1	2	3	4	5
17. Some days I was overwhelmed with family and assignments.	1	2	3	4	5
18. I had to leave school because of family demands.	1	2	3	4	5
19. The program was too difficult to complete in one year.	1	2	3	4	5
20. The courses were hard for me to complete.	1	2	3	4	5
21. The program was interesting, but I had to leave.	1	2	3	4	5
22. I plan to return to complete the program soon.	1	2	3	4	5
23. The program does not meet my career goals.	1	2	3	4	5
24. I will choose another college to complete the courses.	1	2	3	4	5
25. I would recommend MATC to other interested people.	1	2	3	4	5

I understand that by returning this questionnaire, I am giving my informed consent as a participating volunteer in this study. I understand the basic nature of the study and agree that any potential risks are exceedingly small. I also understand the potential benefits that might be realized from the successful completion of this study. I am aware that the information is being sought in a specific manner so that no identifiers are needed and so that confidentiality is guaranteed. I realize that I have the right to refuse to participate and that my right to withdraw from participation at any time during the study will be respected with no coercion or prejudice.

Note: Questions or concerns about participation in the research or subsequent complaints should be addressed first to the researcher or research advisor and second to Dr. Ted Knous, Chair, UW-Stout Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects in Research, 11 HH, UW-Stout, Menomonie, WI 54751, phone (715)-232-1126.

Annie Royal
Milwaukee Area Technical College
700 West State Street
Milwaukee, WI 53233

August 1999

Dear Student,

I am working on a Master's degree in Vocational Education from the University of Wisconsin-Stout in Menomonie, Wisconsin. Because I have a vested interest in student retention, I chose to research the student retention problem in the Barber Cosmetology program at MATC. I need your help to complete the research required for this project.

Please respond to the survey on or before September 15th. Write comments in the area provided if you desire. Your responses will assist me in completing the retention research. I have enclosed a stamped, addressed envelope for your response. Thank you for assisting me with this important research project.

Mrs. Royal

Appendix B
Teacher Survey

Survey for MATC Barber Cosmetology Teachers

Directions: Respond to the following statements based on your teaching experience with the MATC BC program. There are no right or wrong answers. Use the following scale to circle your responses.

- | | |
|----------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 1. SD = Strongly Disagree | 4. A = Agree |
| 2. D = Disagree | 5. SA = Strongly Agree |
| 3. U = Undecided | |

Circle your responses.

STATEMENTS	Responses				
	SD	D	U	A	SA
	1	2	3	4	5
1. I enjoy teaching Barber Cosmetology courses.	1	2	3	4	5
2. Student progress is my first priority.	1	2	3	4	5
3. I teach to help support my family.	1	2	3	4	5
4. Students are given every opportunity to succeed.	1	2	3	4	5
5. Students are treated with respect.	1	2	3	4	5
6. Assignments are consistent with course requirements.	1	2	3	4	5
7. Tests comprise the materials covered in class.	1	2	3	4	5
8. I practice empathy with students of all races.	1	2	3	4	5
9. I understand that different learning styles require a variety of teaching techniques.	1	2	3	4	5
10. I practice different teaching techniques.	1	2	3	4	5
11. I believe that all students can succeed.	1	2	3	4	5
12. I suggest ways to improve achievements in the courses.	1	2	3	4	5

- | | | | | | |
|---|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|
| 13. Exit interviews are planned for students that are leaving the program. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 14. Students that plan to leave are requested to talk to a counselor before making a decision. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 15. I persuade students to remain in the program. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 16. I am intolerant with students that are demanding. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 17. Students with excess baggage should leave the program. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 18. Students are treated like adults. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

Comments:

I understand that by returning this questionnaire, I am giving my informed consent as a participating volunteer in this study. I understand the basic nature of the study and agree that any potential risks are exceedingly small. I also understand the potential benefits that might be realized from the successful completion of this study. I am aware that the information is being sought in a specific manner so that no identifiers are needed and so that confidentiality is guaranteed. I realize that I have the right to refuse to participate and that my right to withdraw from participation at any time during the study will be respected with no coercion or prejudice.

Note: Questions or concerns about participation in the research or subsequent complaints should be addressed first to the researcher or research advisor and second to Dr. Ted Knous, Chair, UW-Stout Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects in Research, 11 HH, UW-Stout, Menomonie, WI 54751, phone (715)-232-1126.

Annie Royal
August 1999

Dear Barber Cosmetology Teacher,

I am requesting that you complete this survey to assist me with requirements to complete a Systems Analysis Course at UW-Stout. I am doing research to find out why students leave the Barber Cosmetology program before completion. As you know, retention is a serious problem.

Your responses will assist me in completing the retention research.

Please return your survey responses to me by the end of August.

Thank you for your assistance.

Annie Royal