An Analysis of the Impact of Faculty Academic Advising on Retention of Health Information Technology Students at Chippewa Valley Technical College

by

Ruth Ann Heraver

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Dr. Michael Galloy, Research Advisor

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The Graduate School
University of Wisconsin – Stout
Menomonie, WI

Author: **Heraver, Ruth Ann**

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this research was to determine the impact of faculty academic advising on retention of the Health Information Technology Program students at Chippewa Valley Technical College. Using data from the documentation of academic advising sessions completed by the HIT faculty in the fall 2007, spring 2008, fall 2008 and spring 2009 semesters, this study investigated four central objectives: (1) Determine if the present advising system affects retention in the HIT program at Chippewa Valley Technical College. (2) Determine how the number of advisement meetings affects the retention rate. (3) Determine the extent the retention rate is affected with more than one advisement session during the first semester of the program. (4) Determine the relationship of full or part time status of the student on the number of the advisement sessions. Considering the findings related to all four research objectives, it is concluded that many factors not addressed by academic advising affect retention. Academic advisement relates positively to retention.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Background to the Problem

There has been over 70 years of research related to student retention, most of it since 1975 when Vincent Tinto's Interactionalist theory of college student departure was published (Braxton, 2004). Tinto's theory stated that a combination of the student's entry characteristics, commitment to the institution, and commitment to graduation influence the decision to stay in college. Institutional commitment impacts academic and social integration at the college which influences student retention. There are many reasons why students leave college before graduation. Commuter students often have conflicts between their family, work, and college obligations (Tinto, 1987). Commuting students, like those at Chippewa Valley Technical College, don't have the support groups that may be available to a residential college student. Most community college students leave the campus after classes are over and return home where support for their continuing education may be minimal. Unlike a residential college student who would have to pack up and move, a community college student may simply stop coming to class (McArthur, 2005). Studies have shown that students who perceive their college institution is committed to their welfare and success have a better likelihood of persistence (Braxton, 2004).

The Association for Career and Technical Education (ACTE) is a non-for-profit education association dedicated to advancing education preparing adults of successful careers (The Association for Career and Technical Education, 2007). ACTE provides access to information and professional development for its members. ACTE published a position paper in March of 2007 stating that the nation is facing a deficit of skilled workers and the need for getting students to complete post-secondary education and training has never been

more necessary. ACTE encourages creating a system of post-secondary education that will enable graduates to obtain high-skill, high-wage, and high-demand jobs. In the position paper, ACTE recommended expanding advising and academic and life supports for students to improve student success. ACTE suggests making student support one of the institution's highest priorities, and provide funding and incentives to ensure student success. ACTE recommends providing students with academic, career, and financial aid guidance. ACTE reports the availability of good student support services affects retention in a positive way.

In a poll completed in October of 2006 by Noel-Levitz, 75% of the institutions reporting indicated advising is part of a retention plan (Noel-Levitz, 2006). Academic advising is perceived to have a positive impact on retention because it is usually structured with retention as a goal (Sharkin, 2004). Sharkin suggests academic support services should collaborate with counseling departments to improve retention. Academic advisors help the student plan for completion of their program, and address concerns about the curriculum or schedules. The advisor also reviews with the student academic services available at the college. An academic advisor may refer a student to the counseling department for any psychological issues that may impact the student's learning or success. Students who are at-risk academically may benefit from both academic and psychological counseling (Sharkin, 2004).

Richard Light stated in 2001 that a great college experience depends on human relationships and an advisor is in a unique position to provide encouragement to a student (Light, 2001). The literature shows that the faculty's concern for their students and their learning relates positively to persistence (Lenning, 1982). Lenning also states that the frequency and quality of out of class faculty-student interaction can contribute to student

persistence and retention. Out of class faculty-student interactions may include informal contact in a variety of settings, either on or off campus. Wade (1995) states that contact with faculty outside of the formal classroom setting positively influences students' intellectual development. A more recent study done in a community college setting in 2001 showed 67% of the students surveyed there felt the time they spent with their advisor was valuable (McArthur, 2005). The students in McArthur's study also agreed with the statement their faculty advisor cared about their academic progress. A good advisor shows interest in the student and takes time to evaluate problems (Wade, 1995). The advisor must be knowledgeable about the student's program and graduation requirements and be available to listen to the student. Wade states that it is important that the advisor is able to communicate to the student that they enjoy and are committed to advising students.

Faculty advisors are the main source of career advice once students have decided on their program. The relationship between the advisor and the student helps the student reach their career goals (Kiker, 2008). Research has shown academic advising may have a beneficial effect on retention. Advising that is well done will help the student make good academic choices and see the benefits of degree completion (Metzner, 1989).

Chippewa Valley Technical College is a two-year technical college located in the western Wisconsin city of Eau Claire. Chippewa Valley Technical College (CVTC) is one of 16 technical colleges in the Wisconsin Technical College System. The mission of CVTC is to provide the technical education that improves students' lives, meets the workforce needs of the region and strengthens the larger community (Chippewa Valley Technical College, 2007). Chippewa Valley Technical College (CVTC) offers many two-year Associate Degree Programs in specialty areas relating to the healthcare field. The Health Information

Technology Program prepares students for careers in the healthcare field of information management. The Health Information Technology students obtain skills in data collection, analysis, and reporting, as well as disease, treatments, information systems, and healthcare management and organizational skills. The Health Information Technology Program is accredited by the Commission on Accreditation for Health Informatics and Information Management Education (CAHIIM). CAHIIM accredits degree-granting programs that meet or exceed minimum standards set by the health information management professional organization, the American Health Information Management Association (AHIMA). CAHIIM serves colleges in a voluntary peer review process as a way to "continuously improve quality education and to meet healthcare workforce needs" (CAHIIM, 2005) CAHIIM establishes and maintains standards of quality so that faculty can evaluate the academic program. CAHIIM standards address the appropriateness and effectiveness of the curriculum and the program's plan for faculty development to ensure that the faculty are qualified to teach the curriculum they have been assigned to teach. CAHIIM accreditation allows Chippewa Valley Technical College's Health Information Technology Program graduates to sit for the Registered Health Information Technician examination. Graduates may become nationally certified Registered Health Information Technologists (RHIT) upon successful completion of the RHIT examination.

Most employers prefer to hire Registered Health Information Technicians (U.S. Department of Labor , 2008). To be eligible to take the registration examination for health information technicians, a person must graduate from a two year associate degree program accredited by CAHIIM. Technicians trained in non-CAHIIM accredited programs are not eligible to take the RHIT exam. Retaining students to graduation is important to meet the

demands of the nation's workforce. The Health Information Technology field is expected to grow by 18% through the year 2016 (U.S. Department of Labor , 2008). The projected employment figures from the U.S. Department of Labor show that 30,000 jobs will be added to the health information field by the year 2016. Job prospects for graduates are very good, especially for technicians with a strong coding background (U.S. Department of Labor , 2008). The American Association of Community Colleges (Degree Attainment, 2004) reported that nationally, only 48% of beginning community college students attained a degree. This national graduation rate is lower than that of Chippewa Valley Technical College, which reported an overall graduation rate of 60% in 2007 (Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System, 2008). The Health Information Technology Program reported a much higher graduation rate of 86% for the year 2007 and 83.3% for 2008 (Konik, 2009).

Chippewa Valley Technical College created an action project in 2005 with a goal of improving student retention (Palser, 2008). Three of CVTC's recent faculty in-services have focused on retention. Faculty in-services are professional development learning events scheduled before the start of each semester. The January 2006 in-service event included program retention planning sessions. At these sessions, the instructors from each department brainstormed ideas related to communication, advising, college procedures, or instructional techniques that could affect retention. The January 2007 in-service event also included a session on program retention planning. The faculty reviewed the 2006 plan and modified if needed. The HIT department listed several ideas related to advising. One of those ideas was to continue the faculty-student academic advising sessions. Faculty will meet individually with students and refer to the counseling department if needed. The HIT faculty will also reinforce to students the availability of assessment data on Blackboard (CVTC's online

learning platform). Another idea related to advising was to remind students of the availability of peer tutoring and academic services through the academic services lab at the Eau Claire campus. CVTC's goal was to reinforce the commitment to student success and involve the faculty in retention planning. By adding session to the mandatory faculty in-services at the start of each semester, this goal was accomplished.

The full-time Health Information Technology (HIT) Program faculty act as advisors to all the students enrolled in the Associate of Applied Science degree Health Information Technology Program. Once a student is officially enrolled in the program by the Admissions staff, that students name is submitted to the Health Information Technology Program Director. Soon after each new semester starts, the HIT instructors review the list of students that are new admissions to the program. Each of these students is assigned a faculty advisor. If a personal connection already exists between a faculty member and student, that relationship is maintained by assigning that faculty to the student. Such connections may exist if the student has taken a medical terminology or healthcare delivery systems course preprogram from an HIT instructor. Faculty advisors meet with the student each semester until the student graduates.

The first scheduled advising session answers any questions the student may have about the Health Information Technology Program in general, or any question relating to the HIT Program student handbook. The student handbook is given to the students before the first advising session and contains specific information about the requirements, policies, and procedures related to the program. The advisor also answers any questions about the services available at CVTC for students and addresses any concerns the student may have. The advisor and the student review the student's transcript and together create a plan for

completion of the program. The advisor initiates an advising checklist at the first advising session. This checklist was developed by the HIT faculty and consists of the program's course requirements. The courses are separated into three categories: general education, business education/information technology, and technical core program courses. The course numbers and credit hours are included on the checklist. There is an area on the form for the student and advisor to document either the semester a student plans to enroll in a course or the semester in which the course was completed for each of the required courses. The checklist is maintained from semester to semester and records which courses have been completed successfully by the student. The advisor also composes a session note detailing any discussion between the student and advisor. The session notes are documented on the reverse side of the checklist form. A copy of the checklist and the notes is placed in the HIT Program Director's office in the student files. The advisor maintains the original document and updates this checklist at each advising session.

The Health Information Technology Program instructors spend at least one hour each semester with each student in advisement. Although the graduation rate for HIT students was much higher than the college-wide average for CVTC, there was only anecdotal evidence from the instructors at Chippewa Valley Technical College to support the theory that academic advising improves retention as the literature has reported. No investigation had been done to determine if the present advising system affects retention in the HIT program at Chippewa Valley Technical College.

Statement of the Problem

The faculty of Chippewa Valley Technical College's Health Information Technology Program acts as academic advisors to the students in the Associate of Applied Science Health Information Technology Program. There is no evidence, other than anecdotal evidence, to support the idea that academic advising leads to higher student retention rates. No investigation had been done to determine if the present advising system affects retention in the HIT program at Chippewa Valley Technical College. This study will review the relationship between the present advising system and retention.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this research was to determine the impact of faculty academic advising on retention of the Health Information Technology Program students.

Research Objectives

This study will address the following research objectives:

1. Determine if the present advising system affects retention in the HIT program at Chippewa Valley Technical College.

2. Determine how the number of advisement meetings affects the retention rate.

3. Determine the extent the retention rate is affected with more than one advisement session during the first semester of the program.

4. Determine the relationship of full or part time status of the student on the number of the advisement sessions.

5. Analyze selected demographics relationship with advising.

Importance of the Study

This study is important for the following reasons:

1. There had been no research in the Health Information Technology Program to determine the impact of academic advising on student retention. The results of this study will indicate the impact of academic advising on the HIT retention rate. Adjustments may be made to the advising system depending on the results of this study.

2. This study attempts to discover why the HIT program has a better retention rate than the college as a whole. The HIT program is the only program at Chippewa Valley Technical College that utilizes a faculty advising system.

3. The results of this research may be used as additional information to solve campus-wide retention problems. The faculty advising system used by the HIT program may be used to improve the college's AQIP Action project on student retention.

Limitations of the Study

This study has the following limitations:

1. This study evaluated academic advising session documentation from four semesters: Fall 2007, Spring 2008, Fall 2008, and Spring 2009. These academic advising sessions were limited to those students enrolled in the Health Information Technology Program at that time. The student experiences were limited to those students enrolled in the four semesters included in the study.

2. Variables were not controlled. These variables could include, but are not limited to, student time constraints, student employment status, student age, and other demands placed on the student during the semester.

3. This study focused on the impact of academic advising on retention. While academic advising may be an important part of an institution's retention plan, there are many other factors which impact student departure and effect retention rates.

4. The results of the study may influence the Health Information Technology Program faculty and may or may not be applicable to other programs offered at Chippewa Valley Technical College or other technical colleges within the Wisconsin Technical College System.

Definition of Terms

Academic advising: A series of intentional interactions between student and advisor focusing on the student's aspirations and educational experiences, providing the student with information regarding academic progression and degree requirements (Reference.com, 2008)

Graduation rate: The number of students completing all the requirements of a program divided by the number enrolled, expressed as a percentage (Konik, 2009)

Retention: The length of time a student remains enrolled towards completion of a degree (Lotkowski, Robbins, & Noeth, 2004)

Retention rate: The number of students remaining enrolled semester to semester divided by the number of students who were enrolled in the first semester of the program, expressed as a percentage (Konik, 2009)

Methodology

The purpose of this research was to determine the impact of faculty academic advising on retention of the Health Information Technology students. The subjects of this study were those students enrolled in the HIT program in the four semesters included in this study. Demographic information was obtained from the HIT Program Director's student files. The data for this study was taken from the documentation of academic advising sessions completed by the HIT faculty from the Fall 2007, Spring 2008, Fall 2008, and Spring 2009 semesters. Data was collected and analyzed in relation to the number of advisement meetings during the first semester and subsequent semesters, the full or part time status of the student, and selected demographics in relation to advising.

Chapter II: Literature Review

Introduction

There has been over 70 years of research done related to student retention, most of it since 1975 when Vincent Tinto's Interactionalist theory of college student departure was published (Braxton, 2004). Most institutions have a retention plan, and academic advising is part of that plan (Noel-Levitz, 2006). The purpose of this research is to determine the impact of faculty academic advising on retention of the Health Information Technology Program students. There are multiple variables among students and institutions making it difficult to find studies that are applicable to both technical colleges and faculty academic advising. This literature review will describe historical research done related to student retention and theory. This literature review will then narrow to research more specific to academic advising and retention.

Tinto's framework

There are many reasons why students leave college before graduation. Tinto's theory stated that a combination of the student's entry characteristics, commitment to the institution, and commitment to graduation influence the decision to stay in college. Institutional commitment impacts social and academic integration at the college which influences student retention (Tinto, 1987). Many researchers have based their work on his theory of retention and departure. It is often assumed that Tinto's framework is inapplicable to commuter institutions due to the perceived lack of social integration. Research published in 2008 by the Community College Research Center found the majority of students in the study developed

attachments to the institution and were integrated both academically and socially with the college (Karp, Hughes, & O'Gara, 2008).

Commuter students

Commuting students often have conflicts between their family, work, and college obligations (Tinto, 1987). Commuting students don't have the support groups that may be available to a residential college student. Most community college students leave the campus after classes are over and return home where support for their continuing education may be minimal. The time commitment of attending college may negatively affect the commuter students' families and result in a decision to depart (Braxton, 2004). Unlike a residential college student who would have to pack up and move, a community college student may simply stop coming to class (McArthur, 2005). Student success at community colleges is low partly because community colleges have open admission policies and enroll more students who are academically, socially, and economically disadvantaged than other colleges (Karp, Hughes, & O'Gara, 2008). Community colleges have a more diverse student population in terms of age and enrollment status (full-time versus part-time) which affects retention (Metz, 2002). Because commuter students often have many obligations unrelated to their college attendance, support and encouragement for attending college becomes very important (Braxton, 2004).

Student support

Studies have shown that students who perceive their college institution is committed to their welfare and success have a better likelihood of persistence (Braxton, 2004). The Association for Career and Technical Education (ACTE) is a non-for-profit education

association dedicated to advancing education preparing adults of successful careers (The Association for Career and Technical Education, 2007). ACTE provides access to information and professional development for its members. ACTE published a position paper in March of 2007 stating that the nation is facing a deficit of skilled workers and the need for getting students to complete post-secondary education and training has never been more necessary. ACTE encourages creating a system of post-secondary education that will enable graduates to obtain high-skill, high-wage, and high-demand jobs. In the position paper, ACTE recommended expanding advising and academic and life supports for students to improve student success. ACTE suggests making student support one of the institution's highest priorities, and provide funding and incentives to ensure student success. ACTE recommends providing students with academic, career, and financial aid guidance. ACTE reports the availability of good student support services affects retention in a positive way.

Faculty's relationship to retention

The literature shows that the faculty's concern for their students and their learning relates positively to persistence (Lenning, 1982). Lenning also states that the frequency and quality of out of class faculty-student interaction can contribute to student persistence and retention. Out of class faculty-student interactions may include informal contact in a variety of settings, either on or off campus. Wade (1995) states that contact with faculty outside of the formal classroom setting positively influences students' intellectual development. The faculty's commitment to effective teaching and advising are essential to retaining students (Wade, 1995).

Faculty academic advisors

Richard Light stated in 2001 that a great college experience depends on human relationships and an advisor is in a unique position to provide encouragement to a student (Light, 2001). According to Light, the most important thing that an advisor can to is to encourage the student to join a campus organization or group that will give the student some personal and social support. Students who become integrated into the college community tend to persist and become successful. There is a connection between extracurricular activities and academic performance (Light, 2001).

Academic advising is perceived to have a positive impact on retention because it is usually structured with retention as a goal (Sharkin, 2004). Sharkin suggests academic support services should collaborate with counseling departments to improve retention. Academic advisors help the student plan for completion of their program, and address concerns about the curriculum or schedules. The advisor also reviews with the student academic services available at the college. An academic advisor may refer a student to the counseling department for any psychological issues that may impact the student's learning or success. Students who are at-risk academically may benefit from both academic and psychological counseling (Sharkin, 2004).

A study done in a community college setting in 2001 showed 67% of the students surveyed there felt the time they spent with their advisor was valuable (McArthur, 2005). McArthur's study was done to evaluate the assumption that increased interaction between the faculty and students by academic advising affects student persistence. A survey was done to determine the student perceptions of faculty advising. Most of the students (76%)in McArthur's study agreed with the statement their faculty advisor cared about their academic

progress. Faculty members' influence can be a significant factor in student persistence (McArthur, 2005).

A good advisor shows interest in the student and takes time to evaluate problems (Wade, 1995). An academic advisor must be committed to the student's success. The advisor must be knowledgeable about the student's program and graduation requirements and be available to listen to the student. Wade states that it is important that the advisor is able to communicate to the student that they enjoy and are committed to advising students.

Faculty advisors are the main source of career advice once students have decided on their program. The relationship between the advisor and the student helps the student reach their career goals (Kiker, 2008). Faculty advisors provide another support system for students and can connect them to resources. Research has shown academic advising may have a beneficial effect on retention. The advisor can help the student link their goals to the college's resources and create more integration with the institution. Advising may affect retention by influencing the students' perception that a college education is important for their future employment. Advising that is well done will help the student make good academic choices and see the benefits of degree completion (Metzner, 1989).

Retaining students to graduation is important to meet the demands of the nation's workforce. Most employers prefer to hire Registered Health Information Technicians (U.S. Department of Labor, 2008). To be eligible to take the registration examination for health information technicians, a person must graduate from a two year associate degree program accredited by CAHIIM. Technicians trained in non-CAHIIM accredited programs are not eligible to take the RHIT exam. The Health Information Technology field is expected to

grow by 18% through the year 2016 (U.S. Department of Labor , 2008). The projected employment figures from the U.S. Department of Labor show that 30,000 jobs will be added to the health information field by the year 2016. Job prospects for graduates are very good, especially for technicians with a strong coding background (U.S. Department of Labor , 2008). The American Association of Community Colleges (Degree Attainment, 2004) reported that nationally, only 48% of beginning community college students attained a degree. This national graduation rate is lower than that of Chippewa Valley Technical College, which reported an overall graduation rate of 60% in 2007 (Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System, 2008). The Health Information Technology Program reported a much higher graduation rate of 86% for the year 2007 and 83.3% for 2008 (Konik, 2009).

The full-time Health Information Technology (HIT) program faculty at Chippewa Valley Technical College (CVTC) acts as advisors to all the students enrolled in the Associate of Applied Science degree Health Information Technology program. Although the retention rate for HIT students is higher than the college wide average for CVTC, there was only anecdotal evidence from the instructors to support the theory that academic advising improves retention as the literature has reported.

Summary

There are many reasons why students leave college before graduation. Studies have shown that students who perceive their college institution is committed to their welfare and success have a better likelihood of persistence. Because commuter students often have many obligations unrelated to their college attendance, support and encouragement for attending college becomes very important (Braxton, 2004). The literature shows that faculty's concern

for their students and the faculty's commitment to advising are essential to retaining students. (Lenning, 1982; Wade, 1995; Kiker, 2008)

The purpose of this study was to determine the impact of faculty academic advising on retention of Health Information Technology program students at Chippewa Valley Technical College.

Chapter III: Methodology

Introduction

The purpose of this research was to determine the impact of faculty academic advising on retention of the Health Information Technology students. Data was collected and analyzed in relation to the number of advisement meetings during the first semester and subsequent semesters, the full or part time status of the student, and selected demographics in relation to advising.

This chapter describes the research design utilized in this study as well as the retrieval and analysis of the existing documentation of faculty academic advisement sessions. A complete description of the design, subjects, collection, data analysis, and limitations of research will be discussed.

Research Design

The research design for this study was correlational and descriptive in nature. The study reviewed the relationship between the present faculty academic advising system and student retention. The study collected data from documentation that was created during academic advising sessions between the faculty and Health Information Technology (HIT) students at Chippewa Valley Technical College (CVTC). Demographic information, contained in the student files maintained by the Program Director, was also used in this study.

Subject Selection and Description

The subjects of this study were students of CVTC's HIT program, enrolled in the following four semesters: Fall 2007, Spring 2008, Fall 2008, and Spring 2009. A

documentation tool for faculty academic advisement sessions was created in the fall of 2007. (Appendix A) The Program Director maintains student files and these were retrieved for this study. There was an average of eighteen students admitted each semester. This limited number allowed for the entire population to be included in this study, with no sampling required.

Instrumentation

A data collection tool was created to capture information from the student files maintained by the Program Director (Appendix B). These student files contain information routinely obtained during the course of the Health Information Technology Program. The criminal background check and academic advising checklist with progress notes were accessed for this study. These documents contain demographic information and details of the faculty academic advising meetings.

Data Collection

The student files maintained by the HIT Program Director were accessed for this study. A list of students enrolled in the HIT program was obtained from the Program Director. This list was separated into years and semesters, which facilitated the data collection process. The full or part time status of the student was also obtained from this list and recorded. A student was considered full time with a 12 credit load per semester. A student was considered part time with a load of less than 12 hours. Graduation status and number of semesters in the program was recorded on the file label. The graduation status was recorded on the data collection tool using the following code: Y for graduated; R for retained, still in the program; A for attrition, not graduated and not in the HIT program any longer.

The total number of semesters in the program and the number of advisement sessions in the first and subsequent semesters was recorded. The advising documentation forms completed by the faculty advisors were reviewed to determine the number of advising sessions per semester, per student. The birth date of the student was obtained from the criminal background check and the age was calculated according to the year of entry. The student's employment status of either fulltime (40 hours a week) or part time (less than 40 hours per week) was also collected if noted by the advisor. This information was recorded on the data collection tool created for this study.

Data Analysis

The data was analyzed using simple statistical formulas. The researcher calculated percentages and means using the data that was collected. The data was analyzed to address the research objectives. The percentage of all students with more than one advisement session in the first semester was calculated. The percentage of graduated or retained students with more than one academic advising session in the first semester was compared to those who were not retained. The mean of the total sessions for part time and for full time students was calculated to determine if the status of the student was related to the number of advisement sessions. The number of semesters in the program, age, and employment status was used descriptively to determine the relationship of these demographics with advising.

Limitations

This study has the following limitations:

1. This study evaluated academic advising session documentation from four semesters: Fall 2007, Spring 2008, Fall 2008, and Spring 2009. These academic advising sessions were

limited to those students enrolled in the Health Information Technology Program at that time. The student experiences were limited to those students enrolled in the four semesters included in the study.

2. Variables were not controlled. These variables could include, but are not limited to, student time constraints, student employment status, student age, and other demands placed on the student during the semester.

3. This study focused on the impact of academic advising on retention. While academic advising may be an important part of an institution's retention plan, there are many other factors which impact student departure and affect retention rates.

Chapter IV: Findings

Introduction

The purpose of this research was to determine the impact of faculty academic advising on retention of the Health Information Technology Program students. Data was collected and analyzed in relation to the number of advisement meetings during the first semester and subsequent semesters, the full or part time status of the student, and selected demographics in relation to advising.

Subject Selection and Description

The subjects of this study were students of CVTC's HIT program, enrolled in the fall 2007, Spring 2008, Fall 2008, and Spring 2009 semesters. There were 67 subjects in the study with ages ranging from 18 to 53 at the start of the program. 55 full time and 12 part time students were included.

Total number of advisement meetings

The total number of advisement meetings for graduates and retained students was compared to non-graduates to determine how the number of advisement meetings affects the retention rate. There were nine students (13%) who left the program before graduation in the semesters included in the study.

Table I

Comparison of Meetings: Graduates and Non-graduates

Total students	Total meetings	Mean number meetings	2 + meetings semester 1

Graduates	11	24	2.18	2 (18%)
Retained	47	74	1.6	3 (6.4%)
Non-Grads	9	9	1	0 (0%)
Totals	67	107	1.6	5 (7.5%)

The average number of meetings for graduates was higher than the non-graduates, as shown in table 1. The average number of meetings for retained students was also higher than the non-graduates.

Number of advisement meetings in the first semester

The number of academic advisement meetings during the first semester was obtained to determine the extent the retention rate is affected with more than one advisement meeting during the first semester. As shown in Table 1, none of the non-graduates had more than one advisement meeting in the first semester. Two of the graduates (18%) had more than one meeting during the first semester. Three of the retained students (6.4%) had more than one meeting during the first semester.

Full or part time status of student

The average number of advisement meetings was calculated separately for full and part time students to determine the relationship of the status to the number of advisement meetings.

Table 2

Comparison of full and part time

Student status	Total meetings	Mean	Range
Full time (n=55)	94	1.7	5
Part time (n=12)	13	1.1	1

The full time students' number of meetings ranged from 1 to 6, while the part time students had a smaller range of 1 to 2 for the total length of the program.

Demographics

The number of semesters in the program, age, and employment status was used descriptively to determine the relationship of these demographics with advising. It was noted that all the students who left the program before graduation did so after completing the first semester. The subjects in the study had ages ranging from 18 to 53 at the start of the program, with a mode of 20. The ages of the non-graduates ranged from 19 to 42, with a mode of 20. The employment status of many students was not documented by the advisor and was unknown to the researcher.

Chapter V: Summary, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Introduction

The purpose of this research was to determine the impact of faculty academic advising on retention of the Health Information Technology Program students. The faculty of Chippewa Valley Technical College's Health Information Technology Program acts as academic advisors to the students in the Associate of Applied Science Health Information Technology Program. There is no evidence, other than anecdotal evidence, to support the idea that academic advising leads to higher student retention rates. No investigation had been done to determine if the present advising system affects retention in the HIT program at Chippewa Valley Technical College.

This study addressed the following research objectives:

1. Determine if the present advising system affects retention in the HIT program at Chippewa Valley Technical College.

2. Determine how the number of advisement meetings affects the retention rate.

3. Determine the extent the retention rate is affected with more than one advisement meeting during the first semester of the program.

4. Determine the relationship of full or part time status of the student on the number of the advisement meetings.

5. Analyze selected demographics relationship with advising.

The subjects of this study were students of CVTC's HIT program, enrolled in the Fall 2007, Spring 2008, Fall 2008, and Spring 2009 semesters. Full time and part time students were included. There were 67 subjects in the study with ages ranging from 18 to 53 at the start of the program. Data was collected from existing documents created during the course of the program. The retention status of the student, the number of advisement meetings during the first semester and subsequent semesters, the full or part time status of the student, and selected demographics in relation to advising was collected. This data was then analyzed to address the research objectives.

Findings, Conclusions, and Recommendations

The first research objective was to determine if the present advising system affects retention in the HIT program at Chippewa Valley Technical College. Based on the data collected, it was noted that all the students who left the program before graduation did so after completing one semester. It is concluded that there are many factors not addressed by academic advising that affect retention. All of the students who persisted beyond the first semester graduated. This may have no relationship to advising during the course of the program. The students who left the program before graduation may have had reasons for departure that could have been avoided with pre-program advisement. These students may have chosen the HIT program without understanding the requirements. A recommendation related to the first research objective would be to initiate pre-program advising (prior to first semester).

The second research objective was to determine how the number of advisement meetings affects the retention rate. Based on the data collected, it was found that the average

number of meetings was higher for graduates than non-graduates. It can be concluded that students are missing opportunities for support by not connecting with their advisors. Out of class faculty-student interactions like academic advisement meetings relates positively to retention. Based on the conclusions, a recommendation related to the second research objective would be to recognize that every faculty member has a role in academic advising and should be supportive of students. Technical college's administration should acknowledge and support the faculty in academic advising.

The third research objective was to determine the extent the retention rate is affected with more than one advisement meeting during the first semester of the program. Based on the data collected, it was found that none of the non-graduates had more than one advisement meeting during the first semester. It can be concluded that students are missing opportunities for support by not connecting with their advisors. Out of class faculty-student interactions like academic advisement meetings relates positively to retention. Based on the conclusions, a recommendation to address the third research objective would be to require that students engage in an academic advisement meeting each quarter. A student would then be meeting twice each semester with their faculty advisor. As noted in the first research objective, all of the students who left the program did so after completing only one semester. Some of the non-graduates may have been discouraged from departing after their first semester if they had established a good relationship with their faculty advisor.

The fourth research objective was to determine the relationship of full or part time status of the student on the number of the advisement meetings. Based on the data collected, it was found that part time students had fewer advisement meetings than full time students. Again, it can be concluded that students are missing opportunities for support by not

connecting with their advisors. Part-time students may not be on campus and available to arrange meetings with their advisors. Based on the conclusions, requiring all program students to engage in academic advisement meetings each quarter is recommended.

The fifth research objective was to analyze selected demographics relationship with advising. The number of semesters in the program, age, and employment status was used descriptively to determine if there was any relationship between these demographics and advising. Based on the data collected, it was found that all the students who left the program did so after only one semester. The rest of the students in this study were either graduates, or in the second, third, or fourth semester. It can be concluded that students who persist past the first semester will graduate from the program. From this conclusion, it is recommended that all students attend advisement sessions prior to and during the first semester. There was no significant difference in the ages of graduates and retained students and the students who left the program before completion. The graduates and retained students had ages ranging from 18 to 53 at the start of the program, with a mode of 20. The non-graduates had ages ranging from 18 to 42, also with a mode of 20. Based on the data collected, it was concluded that the age of the student had no relationship to graduation status or advising. There was very limited data available on the employment status of the students and no conclusion could be drawn. It is recommended that advisors record employment status on the advising documentation form for future studies.

Summary

Students who do not attend advisement meetings may lack the support for attending college and this may have contributed to the student's departure. This echoes the idea that

Braxton (2004) expressed that support and encouragement for attending college is very important to the student especially in the community college setting. This study agrees with the literature that shows that faculty-student interaction contributes to student persistence and retention (Lenning, 1982). The faculty's concern for their students relates positively to persistence and good student support services affect retention in a positive way (ACTE, 2007). All of these ideas support Tinto's (1987) Interactionalist theory which states, in part, that a combination of academic and social integration and a student's commitment to the institution impacts retention.

Recommendations for Further Research

There are many issues which affect student retention. Recommendations for further research related to advising and retention would include a study of the advisors' perspectives on the usefulness of academic advising. A study that investigated the overall institution's recognition of the need for student support services and the impact on retention may help formulate a retention plan. A comparison of retention plans of institutions with good retention rates would also be useful.

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Appendix A

STUDENT ADVISING CHECKLIST
HEALTH INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY
Associate in Applied Science Degree

Name: _____ **Program Entry Date:** _____

I. General Education Requirements ..... 21/22 credits

Course #	Course Name	Credits	Semester Planned	Date Completed
801-195	Written Communications	3		
801-196	Oral/Interpersonal Communications	3		
804-106	Introduction to College Mathematics	3		
806-177	General Anatomy and Physiology **OR (806-189)**	4		
806-189	Basic Anatomy	3		
809-195	Economics **OR (809-197)**	3		
809-197	Contemporary American Society	3		
809-196	Introduction to Sociology	3		
809-198	Introduction to Psychology **OR (809-199)**	3		
809-199	Psychology of Human Relations	3		

II. Business Ed/Information Technology Requirements ..... 6 credits

Course #	Course Name	Credits	Semester Planned	Date Completed
103-102	Microsoft Office Suite	2		
150-101	PC, Networking & Security Basics	2		
106-144	Intermediate Spreadsheet and Database Applications	2		

III. Technical Core (530) Program Course Requirements ..... 38 credits

Course #	Course Name	Credits	Semester Planned	Date Completed
501-101	Medical Terminology	3		
530-172	Healthcare Delivery Systems	2		
530-176	Health Data Management	2		
530-181	Introduction to the Health Record	1		
530-178	Healthcare Legal and Ethical Issues	2		
530-182	Human Diseases for the Health Professions	3		
530-183	ICD-9-CM Coding	3		
530-177	Healthcare Statistics and Research	2		
530-184	Current Procedural Terminology (CPT) Coding	3		
530-185	Health Care Reimbursement	2		
530-190	Healthcare Information Systems	3		
530-196	Professional Practice Experience I	3		
530-193	Healthcare Quality Management	2		
530-194	HIM Organizational Resources	2		
530-195	Applied Coding	2		
530-196	Professional Practice Experience II	3		

Total Credit Requirements ..... 66 credits

FT or PT	Graduation status	Semesters in program	# sessions total	# sessions semester one	Age at start	Employ-ment