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**AN IDENTIFICATION OF PRIMARY EVALUANDS
AS PERCEIVED BY UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS AND
FACULTY IN A COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURE**

VOLUME I

A Dissertation

**Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
Louisiana State University
and Agricultural and Mechanical College
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy**

in

The School of Vocational Education

by

**Karen Renee Juneau
B.S., Texas A&M University, 1980
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ABSTRACT

This study determined appropriate evaluands for a College of Agriculture based on the perceptions of two shareholder groups of the college, the faculty and undergraduate students. Student opinions about their college experiences appeared related to the goals and influences that prompted them to attend college. These goals and influences determined what they expected from their college experience.

There were three parts to the study; a pilot study, an undergraduate student study and a faculty study. Undergraduate students were classified based on two break points, gender and nontraditional/traditional student status. There were four focus groups conducted for the study and fourteen student interviews. For the faculty study, twelve faculty interviews were conducted.

Student satisfaction with their college experience developed from two factors, goals and ontologies. Goals were of two types, less-defined goals and well-defined goals. Less-defined goals included societal reasons and general employment requirements. Well-defined goals included a need for personal growth, preparation for employment and a strong interest in the subject.

There were two ontologies that affected how students felt about their college experiences, "college as a game" and "college as a partnership". In both ontologies, an intermediate objective was to gain information that would help the student reach their particular goal. In "college as a partnership", primary information sources were personal interactions, advising, and student organizations. In "college as a game", primary information sources were, peers, graduate students and other social groups. The

common mechanism for obtaining information in both ontologies was through personal interactions with faculty, administrators and students. Regardless of age, student participants who were parents were more similar to other students with family obligations than they were to other individuals their own age and gender who were not parents.

Numerous faculty themes were identified. Some terms such as diversity, good teaching, thinking skills had multiple meanings for students and faculty. Certain themes were important for both students and faculty and were related to other themes in the study. The resulting eight primary evaulands were: influences on college attendance, goals, ontologies, personal interactions, diversity, good teaching, thinking skills and communication skills.

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

To many administrators, evaluation is a task not unlike the purchase of a new automobile. The choices are many, the cost is considerable, and the novelty of the new program is likely to wear off long before any real mileage has been accumulated. Evaluation is often a response to a management crisis and understandably it is received with all the enthusiasm usually reserved for a flat tire. Since the zeal for the task is minimal, it is easy to overlook the potential benefits of an effective evaluation program.

Benefits of Evaluation

Evaluation is a powerful recruitment tool. The popular press has criticized higher education for an insensitivity to student needs (Winston, 1994; Anderson, 1992), an unwillingness to redefine the knowledge base (Drucker, 1989), and a shortage of quality instruction (Huber, 1992; Bennett, 1994; Sykes 1988). Any university program that demonstrates an attentiveness to these issues will have a distinct advantage over less vigilant institutions, no small consideration in an era of demographically based reductions in enrollments. Evaluations can be used to identify elements within the organizational system that can be modified to address these issues.

Evaluation improves instruction. An evaluation of the undergraduate curriculum can highlight the need for curricular reform. Assessments have initiated curricular revisions in a variety of fields, including undergraduate mathematics (Reed, 1994) and vocational education (Barto ,1991). Beyond the revision of existing programs, evaluations are often used as an aid to develop new programs. This type of application

is known as formative evaluation and is a widely used purpose for evaluations (Scriven, 1980a, 1980b, 1991).

Evaluation is useful to identify possible areas for industry linkages and opportunities for technology transfer. Industry is an important client and resource for higher education. Industry has extensive resources often not available to education and can work with the universities to develop research programs that benefit both the private and public domains (Betz, 1987; Stross, 1993). University graduates expect to move into industry positions with relative ease and industry looks to higher education to provide suitable employees. Evaluation develops this relationship by identifying areas of common interest between industry and academia, particularly when used as a formative tool in program development for integrated industry/academic projects (Haffner and Maleyeff, 1995).

Higher education has a particular responsibility to prepare students for adult life. It is mandated by law, expected by industry and demanded by students and parents. Administrators have a responsibility to the public, students, industry and the higher education community to assess the progress of these programs. Program assessment should not be a wearisome ritual instead it is an opportunity to improve programs, to increase industry linkages, and to determine possible recruitment strengths.

Evaluation Focus: Quantitative and Qualitative

Even the most dedicated administration will fail to reach its goals if it does not have direction. The following conversation is instructive in recalling this point:

"Come, it's pleased so far," thought Alice, and she went on.

"Would you tell me, please, which way I ought to go from here?"

"That depends a good deal on where you want to get to," said the Cat.

"I don't much care where----" said Alice.

"Then it doesn't matter which way you go ,," said the Cat.

"----- so long as I get *somewhere*," Alice added as an explanation.

"Oh, you're sure to do that," said the Cat, "if only you walk long enough."

(Excerpted from Alice's Adventures in Wonderland by Lewis Carroll, 1865)

Evaluators often share Alice's dilemma. They enthusiastically examine everything in the hope of finding something that might be helpful to the program. Often like Alice they discover many wonderful things, but none of the information was quite what they had in mind when they began the journey. As the Cat subtly points out, the answers depend on the questions, therefore a reasonable beginning would be to ask; What are the questions that should be addressed?

Who answers this question is a point of difference between traditional and qualitative evaluation. Traditional evaluation programs followed the model first developed by Tyler in 1942 and later revised, (Tyler, 1983) which compared program performance against a set of standards to locate areas for improvement. Tyler's work

was further developed by Metfessal and Michael (1967), Provus (1975), and Steinmetz (1983), among others. Traditional evaluation models permit the individual or organization that commissions the study to set the standards against which the program will be evaluated.

Other researchers recognized problems with Tyler's approach. Methods were developed that emphasized the needs of the program consumer (Scriven, 1983), the management decision maker (Stufflebeam, 1983), and the teachers involved in the program (Koppelman, 1983). Although these models led to the recognition that many groups, programs, and individuals perceive risk due to the evaluation process, the substitution of one group's perspective for another group's perspective merely shifts authority from one group to another. The resulting assessments are limited by the omission of various group perceptions and their interrelationships with each other, a limited assessment of the program effects at best. It is difficult to convince individuals to accept changes that affect them in which they did not have a voice (Ayers, 1987; Greene, 1987; Guba and Lincoln, 1989; Patton, 1990). Often this results in poor acceptance of the findings and the evaluation becomes a limited assessment of a program rather than a tool for improvement.

This predication of program assessment over program improvement was identified by Cronbach as early as 1963 (Cronbach, 1983). Since identifying a problem is often easier than fixing a problem, such a bias is understandable. The cost of this particular bias is high; it reduces evaluation to a paper exercise performed for the benefit of authority figures with the unwritten understanding that this is a project that

has to be completed because it is a legal requirement. To meet the requirement with a minimal amount of personal risk becomes the goal of every department and individual involved. When evaluation is used solely as an assessment process, it often fosters fear in an organization (Ryan and Oestreich, 1991; Deming, 1986). Fear does not improve the organization and often adds new problems to the system that the evaluation was designed to improve.

A better method would be to include all stakeholders in determining the questions to be addressed. This method recognizes the concerns and problems of each group, including the administrators, and increases the likelihood of implementation by these groups. The methods are often qualitative, intended to reflect the realities of program operation that frequently fall through the data points of a traditional study. Information gathered is easily applied to program improvement, a better use of the evaluation process and resources. By avoiding the judging aspects of traditional evaluation, evaluation is less of a crisis situation for all involved parties. What is lost in neatness of analysis is offset by inclusiveness and pragmatism.

Guba and Lincoln (1989) encouraged inclusion of all groups who have something at risk in a program (stakeholders) in the setting of standards for the evaluation. The objective was for these groups to reach a consensus on program goals. This inclusive model gives voice to the concerns of all affected groups, creating an expanded resource of information about potential problems and solutions. Qualitative evaluation has been further developed by House (1993), Wolcott (1992), Patton (1990) and others. Miles and Huberman (1994) provide an extensive review of qualitative data

analysis. Since a qualitative study examines reality as perceived by the individuals as well as factors that can be measured, it provides an overview snapshot of a particular program. It is this quality that makes qualitative research particularly appropriate for evaluation work. Often individual beliefs influence an action more than the verifiable facts about a program. In such cases, the perceptions are possible factors in the effectiveness of the program.

Purpose of the Study

Traditional and qualitative methods of research each have their strong points. A thorough evaluation includes both approaches, qualitative methods to determine the questions and quantitative methods to answer some of those questions. This study proposed to identify evaluands using a qualitative approach for the College of Agriculture at Louisiana State University. It determined the concepts that are appropriate to examine in a future quantitative analysis. This study examined the first three steps in an eight step evaluation plan.

1. Determine the customers.
2. Prioritize the customers.
3. Involve the remaining customers with other stakeholders to determine the evaluands.

By using an inclusive approach to evaluation design, the resulting evaluands would form the base of an evaluation program that will be acceptable to all major stakeholders. It will give direction to the development of an effective evaluation program by identifying the concerns of the groups and individuals affected by these

programs. The results are likely to be accepted by all groups, decreasing the likelihood of a bookend effect when the project is completed.

Evaluation is an integral part of higher education. If the goals of such a program are carefully selected by the groups affected it can be a less painful process and an accepted source of research ideas and program improvements. With the current public, industrial, and legislative interest in higher education, this is a good time to develop such an attitude. The basic questions addressed by this study may be summarized as follows:

1. What characteristics define the concept "good" program for agricultural faculty?
2. What characteristics meet student expectations for their experiences with the undergraduate agricultural college programs?

CHAPTER 2

Review of the Literature

Historical and Legislative Background

Educational evaluation has been an important part of the educational system of the United States since the earliest days of public education. In the early part of the nineteenth century, Henry Barnard and Horace Mann worked to reform the school systems of New England (Travers, 1983). Barnard collected data on school conditions, exposing terrible sanitation problems, very poor attendance, inadequate facilities and poorly prepared and transient teachers. Barnard was one of the first administrators to formally examine the problems of the schools using data collection. As an outgrowth of this work, he founded the first national educational research journal, American Journal of Education in 1855 (Travers, 1983). Horace Mann, who was a contemporary of Barnard, contributed to the growth of educational evaluation in at least two important ways. As a Massachusetts State Senator, he introduced a bill titled An Act Relating to Common Schools in 1837 which required the collection of information concerning the effectiveness of the schools and the distribution of this information throughout the state. As Secretary to the Board of Education to the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, he executed numerous studies examining the efficiency of the state school system and published his findings in a series of annual reports (Travers, 1983).

This method of collecting data, examining the data, and reporting the results so that appropriate action can be taken is still characteristic of many evaluation systems. Both Barnard and Mann were interested in examining perceived problems in the

educational system. Their work addressed specific issues that needed reform. It was research intended to be applied, not research for the sake of research, and both men worked in governmental positions to carry out their reforms. The close relationship between educational reform and governmental mandate still plays a significant role in educational evaluation, a relationship that had its beginning in the early work of these two individuals.

The demand for formal evaluation did not immediately enter the legislative arena but the spirit of educational reform is evident in the public debate that influenced the formation of the land grant colleges. Although there was no special provision for the evaluation of land grant institutions in the Morrill Act of 1862, Bennett (1926) wrote that there was a great deal of concern that agriculture as taught by these institutions should present applications rather than theories. Bledstein (1978) wrote that it was the concerns of the middle class that pressured the universities toward the development of professional programs. Land grant colleges were given a threefold mission of research, education and distribution of information. It was expected that these colleges, because of their broad focus, would produce a more pragmatic graduate than the traditional liberal arts institution. Land grants colleges responded to this expectation by developing programs intended as preparation for professional employment, a direct response to the requirements of the legislation and expectations of the public. The land grant colleges were expected to produce graduates that would make an easy transition to the work force and this has been an unwritten criterion for their success.

Although there were other reforms on the state and local level, the first federal legislative mandate for educational program evaluation did not appear until 1965 as part of Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Educational Act. This act provided evaluation specialists to assist in local evaluation programs intended to improve programs and increase accountability (Razier and Rossi, 1981). It also required that standardized test data be collected yearly to assess the extent to which Title I programs had reached their objectives. (Madaus, Stufflebeam and Scriven, 1983)

The requirement for program evaluation was further refined in the Educational Amendments of 1974, (P.L. 93-380) which in Title I established the need for standards for evaluations. Because of this act, the Office of Education developed a set of local evaluation models for measuring student achievement in mathematics, reading and language arts. (Federal Register, October 12, 1979, 45 CFR 16.7 and 1161.50-57, cited by Reisner, 1981, p. 206). This evaluation requirement was extended to vocational education in the Educational Amendments of 1976 (P.L. 94-482) which required vocational programs to track the employment of program graduates and dropouts. It also established a national center for vocational education and authorized this center to develop methods for program development among other functions. Accountability standards for higher education programs were also introduced in this act in Title 5 (Section 112 (b) (1) (b) and Section 171 (A) (2), cited by Reisner, 1981).

Standards for accountability were a requirement of the Carl D. Perkins Vocational and Applied Technology Education Act Amendments of 1990 (The AVA Guide to the Carl D. Perkins Vocational and Applied Technology Education Act of

1990; 1990). Vocational programs were required to develop standards for both academic skills and work related skills including placement although the design of these systems was left up to the states (Hoachlander, 1991). Based on this legislative tradition, it is unlikely that any new legislation will be enacted that does not contain a requirement for program accountability.

Accreditation and Quality Rankings

Beyond the legislative requirement for accountability, many institutions chose to meet accreditation requirements. According to a historical review by Harclerod (1980) accreditation programs developed because the wide diversity of educational institutions in the United States required a minimal set of standards for professional licences and transfer credit. Regional and specialized program accreditation associations were founded between 1887 and 1924 and by 1949, all of the five regional accreditation boards, (North Central in 1910, Southern in 1919, Middle States in 1921, Northwest in 1921, and Western in 1949) had developed standards for colleges (Harclerod, 1980). State accrediting agencies used a multidimensional rating, and since the purpose was not to rank the schools but to examine them on minimal criteria, most accreditation efforts did not develop into a formal ranking system. The Southern Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools was the exception. In 1920 it used a two-level stratification, listing as second tier institutions colleges that did not quite meet the standards but were still considered acceptable for the education of secondary teachers (Webster, 1986). After 1950, accreditation boards grew rapidly as college and university administrators tried to avoid political regulation of educational programs (Harclerod, 1980).

According to Scriven (1980b), the accreditation evaluation model usually involves six steps. A set of standards is developed against which a self-study is performed to compare how successful the institution is in meeting these standards. The self-study is then examined by a team of external examiners who also visit the institution to determine the state of the facilities and programs. Based on this information, they prepare a report of recommendations that the institution may appeal to a panel before a final report is issued on the standing of the institution (Scriven, 1980b). Although this process appears very straightforward, Scriven comments on several problems with this system, including vague program standards, potential conflicts of interest, since the external examiners are likely to be examined at some future date by the same group they are examining; and the lack of consideration of student achievement as part of this process (Scriven, 1980a, 1980b). Fletcher (1990) echoed Scriven's concerns in a discussion of the Accreditation Board for Engineering and Technology (ABET) and laments the lack of emphasis on teaching quality and program development in the accreditation process. He feared that these activities may be unintentionally hindered by the accreditation process.

Public and governmental involvement in program assessment has a long history in higher education. Morison (1935) describes how the graduates of Harvard in 1642 were publicly tested as a requirement for graduation by state officials and other political representatives. From 1870 to 1890, the United States Bureau of Education listed general information about colleges and universities such as size of the library holdings, and enrollment (Webster, 1986). According to Webster (1986) this listing was

discontinued in favor of an extensive assessment of college and universities by Kendrick Charles Babcock that ranked the institutions based on quality into four major classifications. This effort ended with a storm of protest by the institutions not ranked favorably that was so intense that the report was never officially released. Because of this scandal, the Bureau of Education never again attempted to rank colleges and universities according to quality (Webster, 1986).

Although there have been many different methods used to assess colleges and universities, Webster (1986), in an extensive history of academic quality rankings, has noted some common characteristics. Modern academic ratings tend to use a single criterion to rank a university rather than multidimensional rankings, with the exception of the rankings produced by the National Academy of Sciences, and modern rankings tend to be arranged by field or discipline. Contemporary methods of assessing college and university quality include reputational rankings which are based on the opinions of experts in an academic discipline, rankings based on faculty awards, honors and prizes, and the number of faculty holding the Ph.D., rankings based on citations in citation indexes, and rankings based on institutional academic resources (Webster, 1986). According to Webster (1986) rankings based on student achievement include student achievement later in life and student scores on standardized tests such as the ACT and SAT. It is notable that academic quality rankings are seldom based on what actually affected the students during their time in college.

Presently, there is increasing interest in assessing the outcomes of an educational process as part of the accreditation process. The Southern Association of Colleges and

Schools has recommended that student outcomes form an integral part of an evaluation program and that these outcomes be used to improve existing programs (The Commission on Colleges of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, 1989a; 1989b). The focus of accreditation boards on specific issues often promotes related program changes. For example, the increasing emphasis on design issues by ABET and support by the National Science Foundation has encouraged the development of engineering curricula that integrate design elements throughout the curriculum rather than depending on a concentrated design experience in a capstone experience (Fletcher, 1990; Ernst, 1989). With the renewed interest in including student outcomes measures as a part of the accreditation process, an effective method of assessing these outcomes based on student experiences within the program could be useful in meeting the accreditation standards.

Evaluation Taxonomies

Legislative mandates and accreditation programs greatly influenced educational evaluation. Although the need for educational evaluation is well recognized, what to evaluate represents a broad inventory. Worthen and Sanders (1987) offered this listing:

Student development and performance

Educator qualifications and performance

Curriculum design and processes

School organizational structure

Textbooks and other curriculum material and products

Funded or unfunded projects

Any aspect of school operations (school transportation, food services)

School budgets, business and finance

Facilities, media and libraries, equipment

Educational polices

School-community relations

Parental involvement in schools

School climate

Ideas, plans and objectives

(Worthen and Sanders 1987, p. 8)

Each of these items may be used to evaluate one aspect of an educational program. By measuring any particular or desired combination of factors, the evaluation appraises a program based on the criteria determined by the evaluators. The usefulness of the evaluation is directly related to the usefulness of the criteria. For example, an educational program can be judged a strong program based on the quality of the facilities without ever considering the performance of the graduates as a measure for evaluation. It is possible to predetermine the outcome of the evaluation by a narrow selection of criteria.

Another evaluation method is to examine the interaction between certain items as a source of appropriate evaluation questions. Hammond (1973) developed a model based on a cube to illustrate the interdependence of certain factors as an aid to identifying areas for evaluation. The first face of Hammond's evaluation cube relates to instructional issues, such as organization, content, methods, facilities and cost. The

second face of the cube represents factors related to the institutions that are being evaluated, such as students, teachers, administrators, specialists, family and community members. The third face represents behavioral objectives including cognitive, affective and psychomotor objectives. By following along each axis for each area of interest, the range of the evaluation can be narrowed. Each possible combination is represented by a cube within the larger cube (Hammond, 1973). (Please refer to Figure 1.)

Hammond's cube would be used to develop questions for an evaluation. For example, in a study that examines the interactions among family, content and affective domain in the effectiveness of 4-H programs, the following questions could be generated by reflecting on the appropriate cell:

In a 4-H program, what are the perceptions of the parents of prospective members of activities offered in 4-H?

Does the type of project selected by former family members who joined 4-H influence the type of programs that appeal to new members?

Many questions could be generated by using the cube to narrow the scope of the evaluation after the objectives of the study have been established. Hammond believed that by examining every program for the interactions among the behavioral, instructional and institutional influences that the design of evaluation programs would be a more inclusive process. (Hammond, 1973).

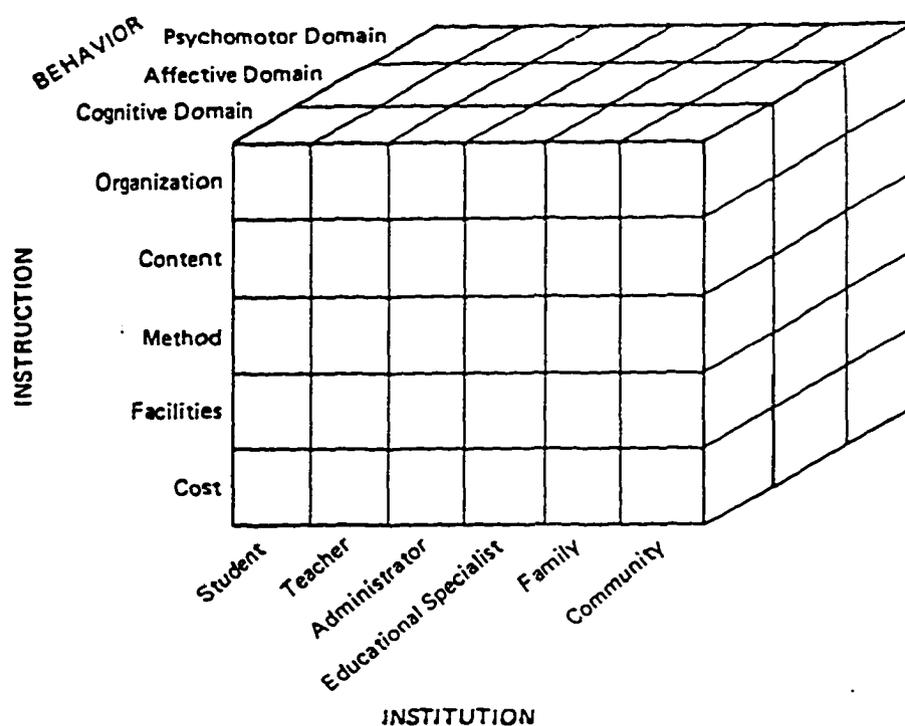


Figure 1. Hammond's Cube (Hammond, 1973, p. 158.)

A simple method of classification is to consider all evaluations to have one of two factors, either an evaluation of a process or an evaluation of a product. It is up to the evaluator to determine which outcome measure is the most appropriate for the questions of interest and to select an appropriate evaluation method.

Another method of describing evaluation types is to discriminate between models based on time of application and intended clients. According to Scriven (1980a: 1983), a formative evaluation is conducted while a program is under development and is for in-house use. A summative evaluation is performed after program completion and is often used by groups outside the examined program (Scriven, 1980a: 1983). Scriven

(1991) believes that his terms, formative and summative, have often been misinterpreted as two types of evaluation rather than two roles that evaluation can play. Formative evaluations are intended to improve a program; summative evaluations determine the value of a program. These roles are determined by the intended application for the research and are independent of the methods used in the evaluation (Scriven, 1991).

There are three major factors in any evaluation, the process, the product and the inputs. Each factor can be the focus of an individual evaluation.

According to Scriven (1991), the objective in a process evaluation is to use program elements as judgement criteria about the entire program. It is an introspective enterprise, looking within a program to identify criteria. The accreditation process is an example of this type of evaluation. By examining selected elements of a program it is assumed that a judgement can be made about the worth of the total program. A common example would be to examine the educational level of the faculty as a measure of teaching excellence, a method based on the assumption that there is a relationship between the quality of instruction and the educational level of the faculty.

In a product evaluation, outcomes of the process are the evaluation criteria. In this viewpoint, student performance after program completion could be used as one measure of program effectiveness. The criteria are based on the product produced by that process.

It is easier to understand this relationship if the evaluation is related to an industrial model. In most industrial processes, there is a product and a production method to create that product. The production methods can be examined for elements

such as efficiency and cost effectiveness. The objective is to improve the process. The product can be examined for elements such as quality and customer acceptance. The objective in this case is to identify areas in which to improve the product and to adjust the process accordingly. Although the interdependence of process and product is obvious, evaluation models emphasize one over the other to limit the scope of the evaluation.

A third factor of any evaluation is the inputs. Both the product and the process can be affected by the quality of the inputs so that production outcomes mistakenly attributed to the process were actually an effect of the inputs. This effect is particularly difficult to control in educational processes since there are so many possible sources of variation. One of the difficulties in educational evaluation is that programs and institutions often select the quality of students entering the program as part of the admission process. This makes it difficult to determine if student achievement after completing a program is due to the quality of the students or the effectiveness of the program. Webster (1986) has described methods of academic rankings that consider the qualities of the entering freshman as criteria for program assessment. This practice was based on the belief that excellent students would only be attracted to excellent programs. It is possible that programs that accept only excellent students only appear to have outstanding programs since the students they admit may be more likely to be successful no matter where they enroll. The limitations of assessment criterion and other types of single criterion methods may have encouraged educational administrators to examine other evaluation methods and to use numerous criteria.

Assessment Using Databases

Other assessment methods have used existing data from student records for program evaluation. Recently there is increased interest in using administrative records and transcripts as part of the assessment process. In a study examining the enrollment trends among secondary vocational students, Tuma (1994) used four existing national high school data sets as the source of his sample. Tuma notes that using transcripts had several advantages. They were a reliable data source created during the time period that the individuals were students and often included demographic and socioeconomic information. The sample could be structured to facilitate comparisons across data sets and the use of these sets was cost effective. Tuma cautions that although the transcripts are useful for examining enrollment trends, they are not useful for assessing compliance with federal funding regulations (Tuma, 1994). Levesque and Alt (1994) promoted the use of unemployment insurance data for follow-up studies. In addition to the advantages mentioned by Tuma, they write that in comparison to surveys, the data will include a greater percentage of subjects and are not as susceptible to selection bias. Stevens (1994) used existing administrative records from a longitudinal data base established by the Colorado Community College System, the Missouri Coordinating Board for Higher Education, the Florida Education and Training Placement Information Program, and the Washington State Board for Community and Technical Colleges to examine the use of placement rates as a criteria for program assessment. Stevens (1994) determined that student employment status and earnings levels need to be recorded prior to, during, and after program completion so that the placement figures could be adjusted

for these effects. Stevens remarked that it would be more functional to begin with the decisions that must be made and to locate data to support these decisions since educational outcomes are difficult to attribute to particular experiences.

The use of existing data bases is appealing because it is cost effective and allows for comparison across many different programs. These methods provide an accurate source of information that may be useful in assessing student placement trends. Since they are summative assessments, they do not provide any information about how to improve existing or future programs or how the individuals enrolled in these programs value their experiences. However useful existing data studies will be for program follow-up studies, it is unlikely that these types of evaluations will stand alone as comprehensive assessment techniques.

Evaluation by Objective

An early proponent of efficiency in organizations was Frederick Taylor, who wrote The Principles of Scientific Management in 1911. Taylor suggested a method of organizing factories that divided work between management and laborers and placed the uneducated laborers under the close supervision of management. According to Juran and Gyrna (1988) the objective was to eliminate the worker as a source of variation by establishing well-defined job tasks and to separate the planning function of management from the production function of the worker. This eventually led to the evaluation of worker performance by comparing that performance against management set standards, a methodology not unlike the comparison of an educational program to a set of objectives.

An early educational evaluation model that used standards as a basis for evaluation was developed by Tyler in 1942. Tyler (1983) believed in the importance of objectives and he proposed seven basic steps in an evaluation. The steps included the establishment of objectives for the educational program, the classification of these objectives, defining these objectives in behavioral terms, identifying areas that illustrate the achievement of the objectives, developing or selecting measurement methods, collecting performance data, and comparing the data with the behavioral objectives. The closer the data match the objectives, the more successful the program (Tyler, 1983). Tyler's work was very influential; programs based on his model are still in use.

The major disadvantage of Tyler's work is the lack of consideration of outside effects on student achievement. This type of evaluation is very like the one shot case study as described by Campbell and Stanley (1963). Although an evaluative study differs from a research study since it is a valuation of a program, the faults noted by Campbell and Stanley are still applicable. The effects attributed to the educational process could have existed before enrollment in the program or there could be outside influences that account for student achievement. This is one of many sources of uncertainty that cloud quantitative evaluations that follow Tyler's recommendations. A justification for this practice is that if the outcome measure is a descriptive measure without regard to the possible causes of that measure, then a data collection at the entry point of the program would be of little value. If a study examines the achievement level of students at the time of graduation, it is unimportant how much they achieved during the program. The achievement level at graduation is the only important question and

the reason for that success is outside of the investigation. This leads to an uncomfortable progression; if the effect of a program is unknown and can be attributed to many factors, then the main supporting argument for the program continuation becomes that the program is causing no harm and may be creating good. Using this progression, an equally valid conclusion would be that since the effects of the program may not be a major factor in success, there is no need to continue the program. For this reason, it is important that an evaluation include multiple measurement strategies.

The influence of Tyler's work is evident in the work of Metfessel and Michael (1967). They developed an eight-step evaluation model that added the first step of total school community involvement as facilitators of program evaluation. The remaining steps are quite similar to Tyler's steps: formulate cohesive goals and specific objectives, state these objectives in a communicable form as an aid to learning, select or develop program measurement instruments, observe using behavioral measures and tests, analyze and interpret data according to performance standards set by the objectives, and recommend changes of the goals and objectives.

The Discrepancy Model developed by Provus (1975) was designed to assess a program with the intent of program improvement. The model is based on the identification of discrepancies between the program performance and program standards, and the application of the information about the discrepancy to alter, eliminate or replace that aspect of the program. Programs were assessed in five stages, program definition, program installation, program process, program product, and cost benefit analysis. Provus applied his model to an assessment of the Trainers of Teachers

program that existed from 1968 to 1973, a national program for the improvement of teacher education for elementary teachers. Provus applied three of the five stages of his model to the assessment of this program. Program definition identified the goals of the program and provided a basis for comparison with later stages of assessment. Program installation measured if the program intentions had been actually carried out. Program product was assessed by a survey instrument developed from the program goals.

Program costs were omitted from program by design and program process evaluation was deferred to a later date due to the complexity of the analysis (Provus, 1975).

Unfortunately, Provus died prior to the completion of the evaluation. However, the Discrepancy Model was further developed by Steinmetz. Steinmetz (1983) described the Discrepancy Model as requiring three steps: establishing a standard, measuring performance, and comparing the performance to the standard. Steinmetz emphasizes the importance of client judgement as part of the evaluation process. In his view, standards do not have to be behavioral objectives. Any program objective is acceptable if it is desirable and important to the client (Steinmetz, 1983).

Stufflebeam (1983) developed an evaluation model that departed from the use of objectives as a standard for comparison. His model was developed to evaluate projects funded by the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 and has since been widely used by many institutions including the National Center for Vocational and Technical Education. The CIPP model was intended to assist administrators with decision making and with the improvement of programs. The CIPP Evaluation Model used four different types of evaluation to address management concerns; context, input,

process, and product concerns, the first letter of each type forming the acronym CIPP. Context evaluations assess whether program goals meet the intended purpose and identify areas for improvement. Input evaluations sort and select possible solutions to identified problems. Process evaluations judge the implementation of the program in progress to allow for periodic adjustments. Product evaluations judge the achievements of a program (Stufflebeam, 1983). The CIPP evaluation process was summarized by Stufflebeam in a flowchart. (Please refer to Figure 2.)

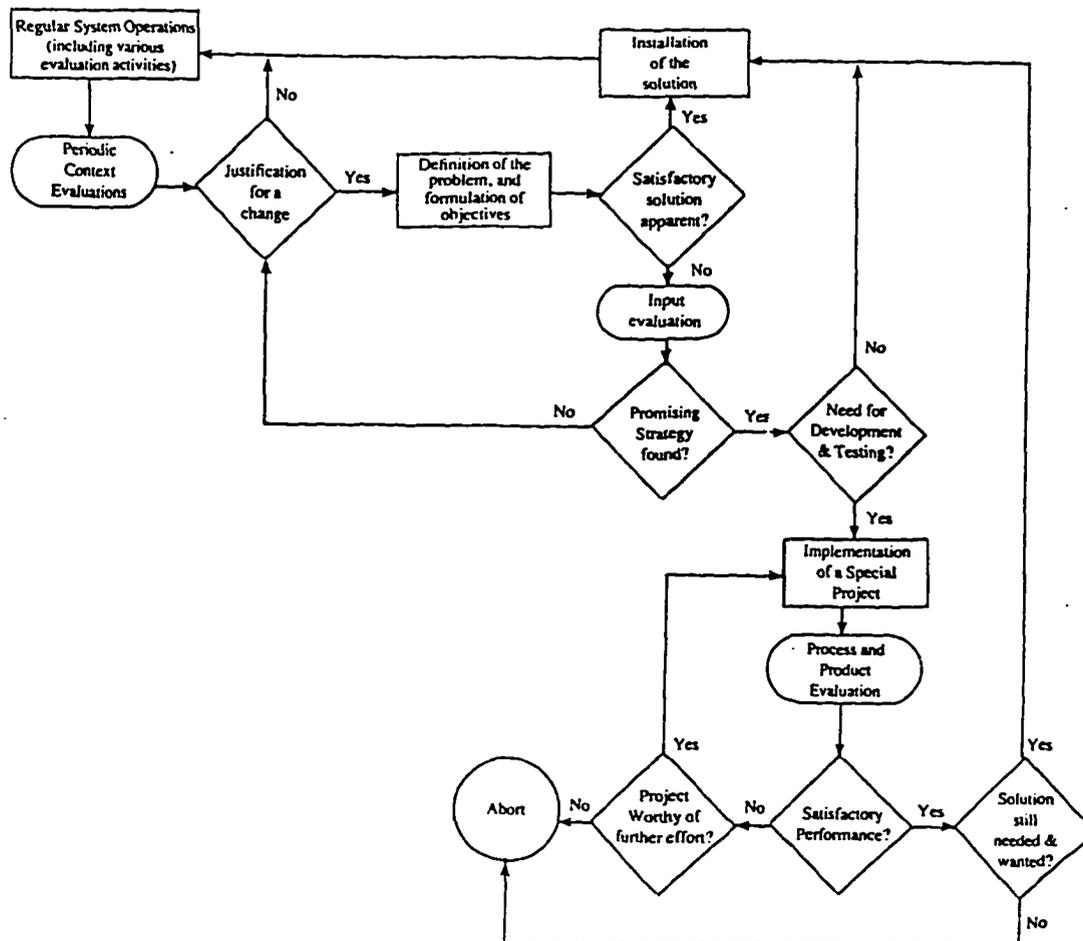


Figure 2. The CIPP Model (Stufflebeam, 1983, p. 126)

Summary of Traditional Evaluation Methods

All of the evaluation methods reviewed in this section share several common elements. Each model was based on criteria against which a program or process could be measured. In each method, the evaluator was outside of the program and the evaluands were determined by someone other than the program participants. The purpose of these methods was to evaluate a program for accreditation, funding, legislative mandate, or program improvements.

Qualitative Evaluation Paradigms

A very different approach to evaluation and research methodology developed due to the influence of scientific philosopher, Thomas Kuhn. Kuhn (1970) developed the concept of paradigms which he described as world views of specific groups in The Structure of Scientific Revolutions, first published in 1962. According to Kuhn (1970) paradigms have two characteristics. They are based on an achievement that was important enough to attract a significant number of followers away from competing theories, and they leave multiple problems unresolved for future study. Paradigms have a life cycle and when there are few solvable problems left in a paradigm and multiple problems appear that are unexplainable by the paradigm, a new paradigm will be adopted. Innovation happens at the point of the decline of the old paradigm and the adaptation of the new. One effect of a paradigm is that it limits the possible solutions to a problem to those possibilities that fit the paradigm (Kuhn, 1970). Kuhn believed that paradigms existed in many fields but his work examined the role of paradigms in science only. Other individuals have applied paradigms to include other fields of study,

including business (Barker, 1992; Delavigne and Robertson, 1994; Covey, 1991; Covey, 1989) and education (Eisner, 1991; Guba and Lincoln, 1989; 1994).

The recognition that evaluation did not need to be based on measurable criteria encouraged the development of many different approaches to evaluation. Many of these approaches are collections of methods that have been borrowed from other fields or were independently developed. Wolcott (1992) described qualitative inquiry as having two facets, ideas and inquiry procedures. He further divided ideas into three types: theory-driven ideas, concept-driven ideas, and reform ideas. Theory-driven ideas develop explanations for uniformities of social behavior. Concept-driven ideas are less committed to theories and rely on cultural interpretation to structure the research. The purpose is to interpret data to identify unifying concepts less structured than formal theory, such as tradition, themes, or paradigms. Reform ideas are intended to bring about change directed at improvement, such as critical theory research.

One of the most fully developed theories for qualitative evaluation was developed by Guba and Lincoln. Guba and Lincoln (1989) defined a theoretical foundation for naturalistic inquiry, a qualitative method of evaluation. In examining prior evaluation models, Guba and Lincoln (1989) noted three faults with traditional evaluation; a bias toward organizations or individuals who commission the evaluation, lack of inclusion of different value systems, and an extreme dependence on the scientific method.

According to Guba and Lincoln (1989) the bias toward organizations which commission a report is caused by the economic dependence of the evaluators on those

organizations or individuals. The commissioning groups or individuals, called managers by Guba and Lincoln, are always held harmless in an evaluation study since they are outside the process, and they hold an unfair advantage over other stakeholder groups (groups with something at risk in evaluation) since they set the objectives, approve the design, and control access to the generated information. (Guba and Lincoln, 1989)

The second criticism offered by Guba and Lincoln was based on the study of paradigms. Guba and Lincoln (1989) believed that two paradigms affect evaluation. One is a cultural expectation that society has a shared set of values and goals. Given the diversity of groups in the United States, Guba and Lincoln believed that this is unlikely. If societal diversity is ignored, then any improvements recommended by the evaluation are likely to be ignored.

Second, the scientific model itself limits possible approaches to evaluation. The dependence on the scientific method paradigm assumes the existence of an objective reality. Guba and Lincoln rejected this viewpoint of reality, believing that it led to a heavy dependence on quantitative measurement to the exclusion of qualitative measurement. Since the scientific method is the dominant societal paradigm in evaluation research, it is vested with authority as the one right method and this "rightness" precludes alternate ways of examining the evaluand (Guba and Lincoln, 1989).

To avoid these difficulties, the responsive constructivist evaluation model developed by Guba and Lincoln focused on developing a common view of what is to be

evaluated rather than a judgement of what is evaluated. The objective is to reach a consensus between all the major stakeholders affected by the evaluand (Guba and Lincoln, 1989). This emphasis on consensus is the dominant feature of the responsive constructivist evaluation model. Guba and Lincoln believed that realities are mental constructs specific to individuals or cultures and that the interactions between the researcher and the object of the researcher interact in such a way that they create a new reality (Guba and Lincoln, 1994). They have contrasted the basic beliefs of their position with other research theories in the table that is reproduced as Figure 3.

<i>Item</i>	<i>Positivism</i>	<i>Postpositivism</i>	<i>Critical Theory et al.</i>	<i>Constructivism</i>
<i>Ontology</i>	naive realism— "real" reality but apprehendable	critical realism— "real" reality but only imperfectly and probabilistically apprehendable	historical realism— virtual reality shaped by social, political, cultural, economic, ethnic, and gender values; crystallized over time	relativism—local and specific constructed realities
<i>Epistemology</i>	dualist/objectivist; findings true	modified dualist/ objectivist; critical tradition/community; findings probably true	transactional/ subjectivist; value- mediated findings	transactional/ subjectivist; created findings
<i>Methodology</i>	experimental/ manipulative; verification of hypotheses; chiefly quantitative methods	modified experi- mental/manipulative; critical multiplism; falsification of hypotheses; may include qualitative methods	dialogic/dialectical	hermeneutical/dialectical

Figure 3. Research Paradigms.(Guba and Lincoln, 1994, p. 109)

Another important writer on qualitative evaluation is Michael Quinn Patton. Patton (1990) was less concerned with the theoretical issues raised by Guba and Lincoln, and promoted the combining of qualitative and quantitative methods in the same study. Patton believed the needs of the user are most important and that the methods should depend on the expected uses of the research. Methods are the defining element in recognizing qualitative research; Patton wrote about three in detail; open-ended interviews, direct observations, and data gained from written documents. According to Patton (1990) qualitative evaluation is useful for explaining the findings of a quantitative evaluation and for descriptive studies.

Miles and Huberman (1994) offer a structured view of qualitative methods. Recognizing a need for quality in qualitative methods, they have attempted to collect and summarize various qualitative research methods for qualitative studies. They were concerned with the replication of findings and validity issues. Like Patton, Miles and Huberman were not as concerned with theories behind the research as much as with the usefulness of the results. They promoted qualitative research as a well suited tool for examining the reasoning behind events.

The Validity Issue

The validity issue is a flash point between qualitative and quantitative researchers perhaps because no other issue so clearly represents the ontology of the two paradigms. Quantitative researchers believe that reality is concrete and that it is possible for the researcher to discover this reality. Qualitative researchers believe that reality is created and fluid. Greene and McClintock (1991) note that quantitative

research theory has developed into postpositivism, expanding quasi-experimental methods by the use of multiple methods as a response to some of the criticisms of positivism developed by qualitative researchers. Qualitative researchers are interpretists and maintain that social phenomena can best be understood as social constructions of meaning that are inherently time and place bound. Bryman (1994), in a history of the Mead/Freeman controversy in anthropology, illustrates the implications that this position holds for qualitative research validity. In this paradigm, time becomes an important factor: it is unlikely a social culture will remain constant over time. Place is also an important factor since no two places are identical. Matters of conflict and culture may be subject to sudden change and may be influenced by the highlighting of different issues by the researcher over other factors (Bryman, 1994). The variations in these factors cannot be controlled and imply that qualitative studies can not be truly replicated. Although several researchers have called for an end to the "paradigm wars," (Gage, 1989; Miller, 1994) other researchers (Smith and Heshusius, 1986) do not believe that these issues can be resolved and that ignoring such differences transforms qualitative inquiry into a procedural variation of quantitative inquiry. The controversy is unlikely to be resolved and some writers believe that the controversy is beneficial since it has helped to generate new methods (Rizo, 1991).

An ideological problem related to the validity debate is described by Chandler (1992). Chandler wrote that research methods should not be reviewed based on the tenets of the theory of inquiry but on the value of the research to education. Should the findings meet the standards that were established for the methods in the fields in which

they originated or can these methods be changed? Chandler points out that theories from outside perspectives could come to dominate what is selected in terms of methods, theories, goals, and analytical procedures. By granting this authority to outside perspectives, educators are required to write about these theories in order to establish competence. Effectively, Chandler (1992) notes that educational research becomes defined by these imported theories. It should be possible to divorce some of these methods from the underlying theories since the purpose of the research would not be the same. Wolcott (1984) supported the use of ethnographic methods independent of the ethnography as long as it is recognized that the result would be a specific examination of particular issues rather than an in-depth profile of a culture. Since educational research is intended to be applied research, this limitation would not affect the usefulness of the results.

In an attempt to end the validity debate, Howe and Eisenhart proposed a general set of educational standards that would be appropriate for either qualitative or quantitative studies (Howe and Eisenhart, 1990; Eisenhart and Howe, 1992). Five general standards are suggested. The first standard states that data collection and analysis methods should be selected because they are the most appropriate tools to answer the research questions. The second standard states that the data collection and analysis methods should be competently applied in a technical sense. The third standard requires a literature review and an awareness on the part of the researcher of his distinct contributions to the work. The fourth standard is attention to value constraints, external constraints that describe the usefulness of the study, and internal constraints detailing

ethical issues. The last standard is the evidence of knowledge applications from other traditions and the ability to assess findings (Howe and Eisenhart, 1990; Eisenhart and Howe, 1992).

Role of the Researcher

A second point of conflict that is less controversial is the role of the researcher in a project. In quantitative research, the researcher is outside of the data. Eisner (1991) has compared quantitative research to the gleaning of flowers in a meadow with the researchers retiring to analysis once their baskets are filled with data. Following his analogy, to maintain complete objectivity the researcher would have to ignore any effects that personal experience or expectations may have played in selection of the research problem or the collection of the data. In the qualitative perspective, the influence of the researcher on the results of a study are considered to be interwoven with the findings. Coe (1994) describes a progression of distinct roles that the researcher assumes as a project unfolds. There are four stages: the naive (amusingly simple) ethnographer; the neophyte (beginning) ethnographer; the alumnus (serious learner) ethnographer and the practiced (adept) ethnographer. The naive ethnographer is interested in specific questions and tends to reduce the complexity of the planned experience while planning the study. The neophyte ethnographer role develops as the researcher finds that the questions do not have single answers or that there are competing answers which are dependent on social contingencies. The alumnus ethnographer is when the researcher is comfortable with the methodology but he has also gained a new awareness of the wider significance of the participant's lives and is

more self-conscious of his own feelings and position. This stage creates dilemmas relating to privilege of closeness and ethnical responsibilities. The practiced or adept ethnographer develops a critical self consciousness and a willingness to live with ambiguity. The researcher accepts that his feelings do color the social relationships that he engages in during his research and recognizes the power of a particular perspective on the phenomena. Coe (1994) believes that this may not be a linear process but an ongoing process that repeats during different stages of research.

Cotterill and Letherby (1994) also see the researcher as adopting roles that affect their relationship with the participants throughout a project. They describe the types of roles that a researcher can adopt within the society that he studies and that this is an unavoidable part of the research experience. Researchers become part of the study in four different roles; that of the expert, the friendly stranger or sympathetic listener, the kindred spirit which often develops when the researcher and participant share a common experience, and the friend or other preexisting relationships. Although a fifth role can develop, the counselor and the counseled role, Cotterill and Letherby (1994) caution that this is an inappropriate role for the researcher even if they possess counseling skills.

The influence of the researcher is not considered to be a negative element as long as the researcher describes how he may have influenced the outcome of the project (Jansen and Peshkin, 1992). The importance of reporting possible bias is highlighted by the Program Evaluations Standards of the Joint Committee on Standards for Educational Evaluation (1994) which recommend that any conflicts of interests be reported so that the results of the evaluation are not compromised. It is difficult to avoid conflicts of

interest and researcher subjectivity is present in every project. The current standards deal with these issues by requiring the full disclosure of such information by the researcher. This is appropriate in every study no matter which strategy of inquiry is selected for the problem.

Types of Qualitative Inquiry

Elliot Eisner (1991) offers a unique approach to evaluation based on the development of an "enlightened eye" or connoisseurship model. According to Eisner (1991) evaluation was greatly influenced by the work of E. L. Thorndike toward the development of a scientific method of evaluating education. He offers four reasons why this was not beneficial. First, since scientific methods of inquiry are searches for general laws, the unique characteristics of an exclusive case will often fall between the categorical gaps. Second, educational practices dedicated to reaching specific measurable goals encourage the use of scientifically tested teaching methods to reach those goals, often limiting the instructional alternatives for the teacher. Third, the significance given to objectivity discourages insight and causes the researcher to ignore his unconscious personal biases in his work. Fourth, objective tests over time heavily influence the content and methods used in curriculum. Eisner believed that this limits content to those skills that can be assessed with multiple choice tests. Eisner proposed that expert teams made of educational connoisseurs who have developed finely honed observation skills be used to evaluate programs and explore the subtleties of the object of study. These connoisseurs would use criticism to enlarge the perceptions of others in regard to what is being examined. Educational criticism includes description,

interpretation, and evaluation. Description enables others to understand what has happened in vicarious detail rather than as a detached listing of findings. Interpretation examines the meaning of an event and the effect of the event on the participants in the study. Evaluation is the selection of events by the connoisseur that are determined to be particularly important. Eisner also proposed a conceptual structure called *thematics* as an alternative to the use of random selection as a way to generalize. *Thematics* is the belief that a specific finding may illustrate an universal idea in such a way that the finding is generalizable in much the same way that great literature can illustrate universal concepts not specific to those in a particular story. In Eisner's view, the ability to learn from particular experience an universal experience and to recognize that universal in other experiences is a valid form of generalization (Eisner, 1991).

Glaser and Strauss (1967) advanced a method of qualitative research known as *grounded theory*. *Grounded theory* requires that the researchers recognize their own subjectivity and that hypotheses and concepts are worked out in relation to the data during the course of the research instead of *a priori*. Glaser and Strauss developed this method to encourage the generation of new theories in sociology since they believed that there was a tendency for research to concentrate on the confirmation of existing theories rather than the development of new ones. In this method, theory is generated from the data and explains the discovered relationships. After intensive review of the data, concepts and hypotheses are formed and then reexamined against the data.

Grounded theory is often used to examine how individuals interact and filter the world through symbols. Lorencz (1992) examined the concept of being ordinary and

what that concept meant to schizophrenics prior to being released from the hospital. The idea of ordinary had different meanings for schizophrenics than for their care givers since most of schizophrenics heard "voices" but they did not believe that this was an unusual event. The concept "ordinary" meant "in remission" to the care givers but it meant "like everyone else except I have a special gift" to the schizophrenics. The schizophrenics did not accept that voices they heard were part of a mental illness, which was an important criterion for their release.

Erickson (1990) expanded grounded theory by describing a method for data analysis. The data is first examined in depth and key assertions are developed; the data are then reexamined to discover evidence to support or discredit the key assertions. If there are too many disconfirming cases the key assertions are rejected and a new assertion is developed and examined against the data. The result of the study includes the assertions, short narrative vignettes, quotes from notes and interviews and other data representations such as tables or figures. The vignettes and quotes are particularly important elements to Erickson since it is these narrative elements that allow the reader to experience the situation from the perspective of the participants. Interpretive commentary would be included for both specific cases and for the general description of the entire study. The report should also include a theoretical discussion of methods and a history of inquiry strategies used in the study (Erickson, 1990). (Please refer to figure 4.)

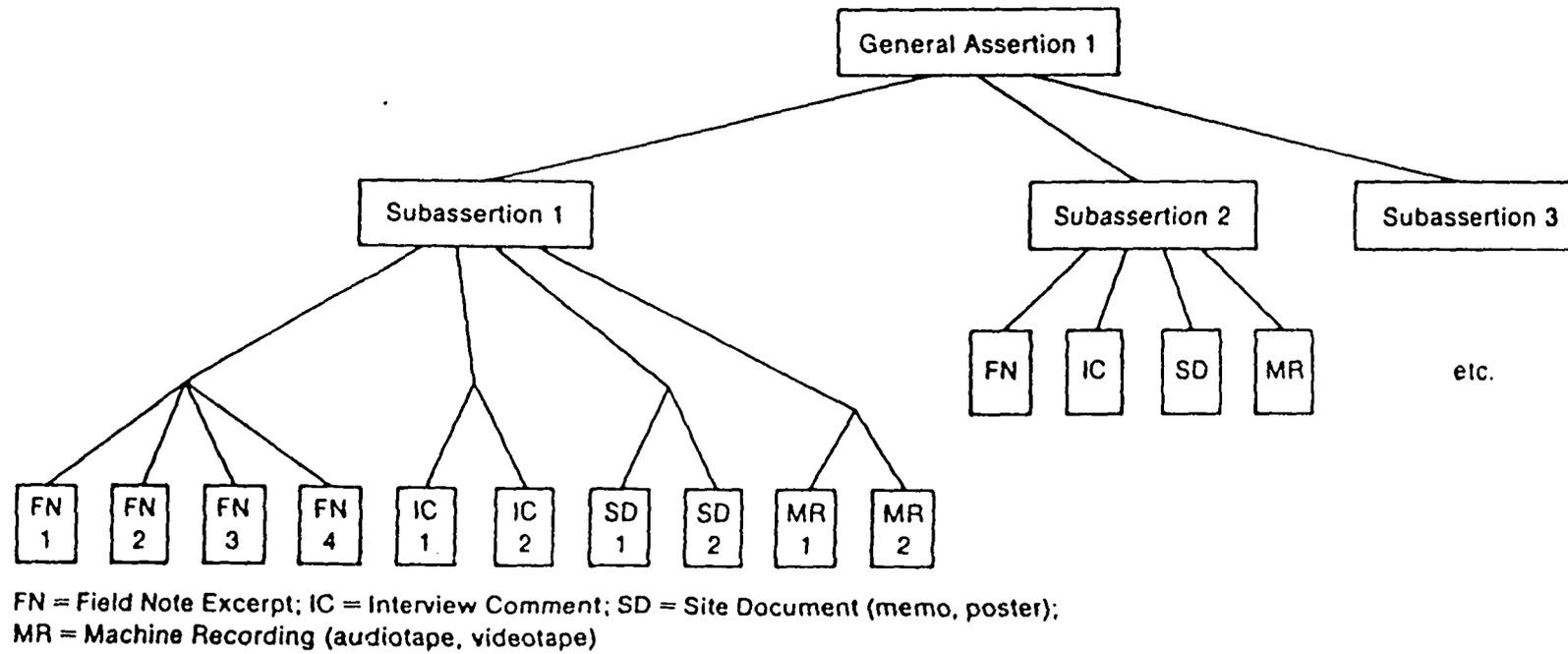


Figure 4. Erickson's Data Analysis -- Key linkages between data and assertions. (Erickson, 1990, p.160)

Erickson (1990) was also concerned with the assessment of data collection methods and lists five inadequacies that are common to qualitative research: inadequate amounts of evidence, inadequate variety in kinds of evidence (triangulation), faulty interpretation of the meaning of evidence, inadequate disconfirming evidence and inadequate discrepant case analysis. Erickson believed that most of these errors could be avoided by careful data collection methods (Erickson, 1990).

Critical theory offers another approach to qualitative research. Critical theorists promote qualitative research as a means for social change (Quantz, 1994; Carspecken and Apple, 1992). The researcher seeks to highlight a perceived injustice in order to bring about change. Two extensions of critical theory research are feminist research (Roman, 1992; Lather, 1992; Olesen, 1994) which examines inequities due to gender, and ethnic research (Stanfield II, 1994; Peshkin, 1988), which explores issues related to ethnic origins.

Ethnographic Ideals

Ethnography is an approach to evaluation that was borrowed from anthropology. Ethnography describes the events and groupings that define the shared beliefs, folklore and behaviors of a culture (LeCompe and Goetz, 1984). Fetterman (1984) draws a distinction between ethnography and ethnographic techniques. The elements of ethnography include: phenomenology, holism, nonjudgmental orientation and contextualization. These characteristics are in every ethnographic study although one perspective may dominate. Ethnographic techniques are the methods used to meet these ideals. Often studies are described by the methods used rather than the theoretical

perspective and the result of a study and the method used to produce that result are sometimes known by the same term. For example, Stake(1994) writes that the term "case study" is used for both the method of performing a case study and for the written results of the case study. This is true for most of the qualitative perspectives. Another difficulty in classifying qualitative research is that the inquiry or data collection methods are not linked to any particular theory. Most of the inquiry methods can be used in studies based on any of one of the qualitative perspectives.

Phenomenology examines an event or a phenomena in great detail from the viewpoint of an insider. In a phenomenological study, the researcher is intensively and personally involved in the study. An example of this type of study is the detailed description offered by Clarke (1992) on the effects that her daughter's asthma had on their relationship and the daughter's self esteem. Smith (1992) used the same method to describe how a child facing heart surgery saw the experience. This perspective lead to the recognition that a sense of control and place is important to small children and changes as small as allowing the child to wear his own pajamas were important to the child. In both examples, the researcher was closely involved with the event under study.

Holism is concerned with the larger system and the interrelationships of the whole cultural system. Noblit and Engle (1992)describe this ideal as the examination of "the totality of the relations, the significance to the participants and their meaning in the wider human discourse" (Noblit and Engle 1992, p. 43). To meet this ideal, all the variations in language, beliefs, social relations, and events and actions are examined including those of the researcher, and are placed into the cultural context. All

ethnographic studies attempt to relate the groups studied to the dominant culture. Spradley's (1970) profile of urban nomads and the conflicts between the values of the nomad culture and society, and how this conflict unintentionally reinforces the nomad culture is a good example of a holistic approach. The relationship of urban nomad culture to the dominant culture encourages a new perspective on the problem of urban nomads and suggests that repeated incarceration may not be an effective method of discouraging urban drunkenness.

Contextualization is the placement of data in its environment to provide a more accurate representation of the recorded events. In addition to the physical environments, the cultural environment should be described so that the data can be correctly interpreted. An example of the importance of understanding actions in cultural context is offered by Bohannon (1992) in an engaging account of sharing Shakespeare's Hamlet as part of the traditional storytelling of an African tribe. Bohannon reports that the tribesmen interpreted the story in relation to their own customs and values and the result was that the basic story was transformed into a different tale from the original. These cultural differences can sometimes reveal surprising insights. In an examination of the lack of classroom participation among Sioux children, it was discovered that to respond when called on by the teacher was culturally unacceptable for Sioux children. To answer a question in front of a class would be inconsiderate since the Sioux consider this type of competition to be demeaning to their fellow students (Dumont, 1972). By developing a cultural understanding of Sioux values, the researcher helped the teachers involved to understand a behavior that was quite baffling to them. Cultural differences

are often important in organizations that appear to be homogeneous. For example, Clark (1989) found that academics do not hold a common set of values and that even in cases where they appear to hold common values the common values listed may have different meanings in different contexts. This could create unintended errors in studies of academic life unless the participants are allowed to explain and expand their responses.

Ethnographic Techniques

Ethnographies are defined by LeCompte and Goetz (1984) as "analytic descriptions or reconstructions of intact sciences and groups which delineate the shared beliefs, practices, artifacts, folk knowledge, and behaviors of some group of people." According to LeCompte and Goetz (1984) there are two basic types of data collection methods for ethnographies; interactive methods which involve interaction between the researcher and the participant, and unobtrusive methods which involve little or no contact between the researcher and participants. Interactive methods include participant observation where a researcher takes part in the daily lives of the participants and records their interactions with field notes. The ethnographer identifies participants' concerns by listening and by becoming part of the group and collects descriptive information and linguistic patterns. Stories and myths of the group are collected to provide insight to the values of the participants. Noninteractive methods are observations where the participants are observed by the researcher without the researcher becoming a part of the group or when the researcher uses archival or physical information as data. LeCompte and Goetz (1984) list many types of noninteractive

methods, including stream of behavior chronicles, analysis of poxemics and kinesics, interaction analysis, archival, demographic and physical trace analysis. Stream of behavior chronicles are minute by minute accounts of what a participant says and does; poxemics and kinesics examine the social issues of space and body movement. Interaction analysis protocols are examinations of the interactions between participants and any resulting patterns in such interactions. Archival and demographic data collections examine written records to reveal characteristics of a group that may provide baseline data. Physical trace collection is the collection of physical traces such as the erosion of artifacts and tools used by the groups in order to determine what materials are used the most (LeCompte and Goetz, 1984). Every qualitative tradition depends on a variety of data collection methods. An attempt to summarize various approaches to qualitative research used in educational application is offered by Wolcott (1992). Wolcott uses the metaphor of a tree to illustrate the relationships between different methods. (Please refer to Figure 5.)

According to Wolcott (1992) there are three classifications for techniques for gathering data; observing or experiencing methods which are dependent on sensory data, interviewing or enquiring methods which allow the researcher to assume a more active role than that of observer, and archival research or examining research which depends on materials that were developed by others. The theoretical orientation of the researcher determines what branch of the qualitative research tree is home to a particular research project. Wolcott (1992) notes that the theoretical orientation of the researcher

and the research question under examination will determine what methods are appropriate to a particular research project.

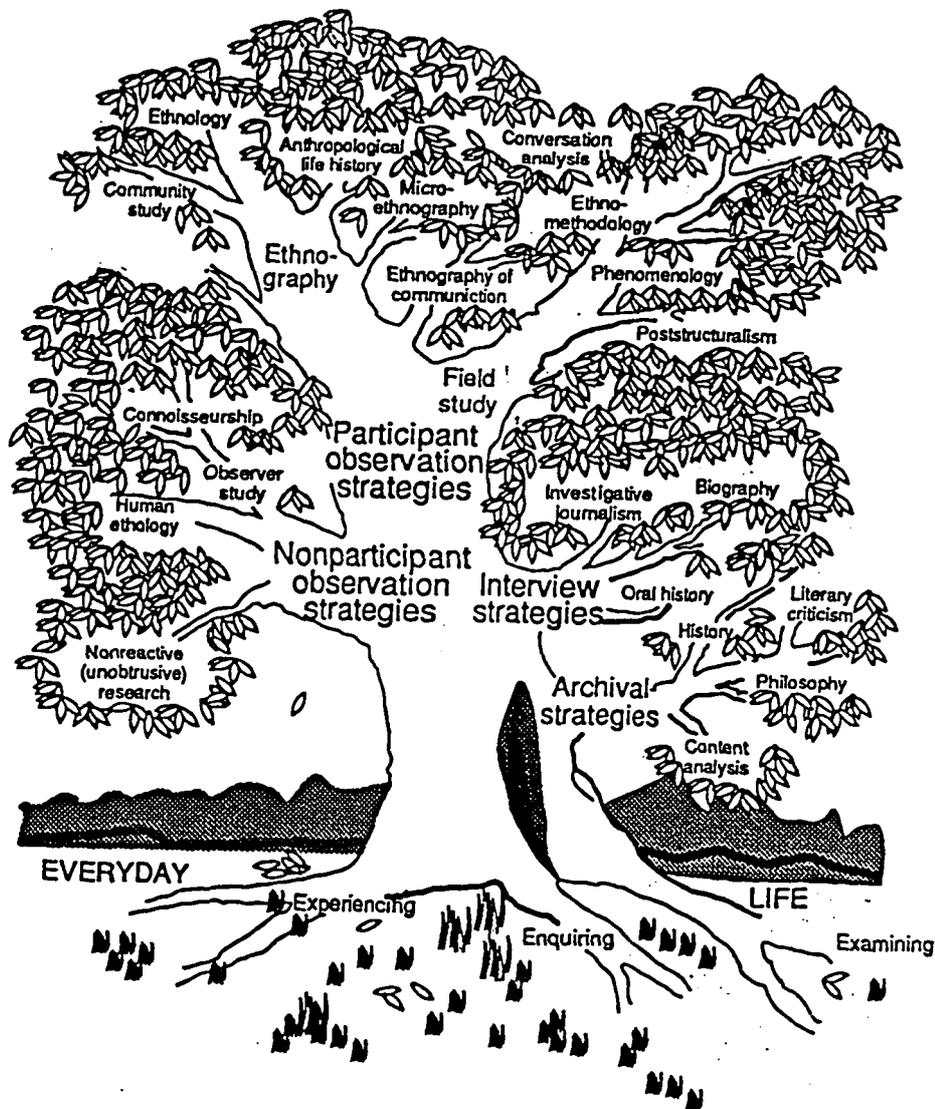


Figure 5. Qualitative Strategies in Educational Research (Wolcott 1992, p. 23).

Evaluation of Undergraduate Programs

In evaluating undergraduate programs, most universities use four different methods for undergraduate program assessment: chairman and dean reviews, faculty peer review, faculty self assessment, and student evaluations (Ory 1991). Student

assessments are the most widely used method but they are not well accepted by the faculty who view them as popularity contests. According to Ory, (1991) instructors with poor student ratings are rarely counseled as to how to improve their ratings so student ratings have not been a productive tool for program improvement.

At the University of Tennessee at Nashville, an evaluation project was planned that would assess the quality of faculty life using qualitative and quantitative methods (Marshall, Lincoln and Austin, 1991). Qualitative methods were chosen to empower the faculty and to gain credibility for the project and because they are often reported in natural language forms that are understandable to all members of a community. The faculty would participate in focus groups that would identify their concerns and the results of the focus groups would be used to develop a quantitative survey that would be completed by every member of the faculty. The quantitative survey would give every member of the faculty a voice and provide the political aura given by numerical results (Marshall, Lincoln and Austin, 1991).

It may be that faculty and students do not understand the complexity of their respective roles in the university culture. Although students are commonly described as consumers in the educational process (Rubach, 1994), Helms and Key (1994) in survey of upper division students at Wright State University, found that students described their role in terms that were more typical of employee roles than customer roles. The student role requires students to be actively engaged in the learning process rather than passive consumers of information. They must meet performance expectations, a demand commonly placed on employees but not expected of customers and their performance is

evaluated. Fear is a factor in the student experience and students would welcome involvement in the development of processes and procedures. Like customers, students are concerned that the education they receive is worth the cost they incur to obtain it. Helms and Key (1994) suggest that it may be helpful to assess students in a different paradigm based on these self perceptions. Chaffee, Tierney, Ewell and Krakower, (1988) in a qualitative examination of campus cultures, found that different types of colleges have different cultures and that institutions which had students and faculty that fit with the dominant culture were more effective. Kuh and Whitt (1988) wrote that the campus was actually a set of multiple subcultures based around the discipline, the academic profession of study, the institution and the national system of higher education. These cultures are overlapping and campus ceremonies are important unifying elements between these cultures. Astin (1993) in a quantitative longitudinal study updated from 1977, found that undergraduates who are enrolled full time, have strong peer associations and close interactions with the faculty tend to show the greatest likelihood of gains in skills and attitudes during their undergraduate program. According to Fetterman (1991a) working with the cultures and subcultures of an organization makes change within that organization an easier process. Based on these findings, student achievement in college may be influenced by personal factors that are peripheral to the classroom experience, yet the primary assessment methods of the university; namely faculty peer reviews, student surveys, and placement records, do not allow for this possibility. Love, Lyons, Mortensen and Yoder(1989) in a national study of agricultural colleges found that although graduating students and faculty agreed on

general competencies, the students were more uncertain of their abilities than their teachers were. It would be useful to know what these students believe they missed. The simplest way to discover this would be to ask them. This is the approach at the foundation of all qualitative methods.

Methodological Review

At the heart of every research endeavor is a question. The character of this question determines the appropriate design for the research. Quantitative designs are particularly well suited for questions of definitions and descriptions of events. Qualitative designs are useful when seeking the reasoning behind an event, to explain or explore unrealized patterns of thought. This can identify new methods of solving problems that were not apparent in the data. It is important to recognize that by bounding the problem within a question, narrow and often unrecognized assumptions have been made in problem definition.

Quantitative research designs have been in wide use for many years and developed from methods used in the hard sciences. The methodology has been examined and standardized approaches to research design have been established (Campbell and Stanley, 1963; Kerlinger, 1986). Qualitative methods have their philosophical genesis in the paradigm theories of Kuhn (1962). According to a meta-evaluation of qualitative evaluation methods using focus groups reported by Morgan (1993) a set of empirically grounded standards for focus group research has not been established because very little research has been done to clarify the methodology.

Qualitative methods are still in the formative stage, blending methods used in anthropology, education, and marketing research.

The Need for Better Assumptions

To illustrate the unintended effects of certain assumptions, the work of Saaty and Vargas (1991) in the development of predication models in decision theory may be helpful. It has been commonly believed in Western countries that the high birth rate in rural India is a limiting factor on economic development. Some of the economic factors have included the custom of dividing the family land among the children, the availability of contraceptives and the decline in infant mortality rate. Western economists believe that the ideal birth rate is about two children per family and have expected the birth rate to decline in response to governmental support for family planning and public education programs exposing the benefits of smaller families. Western reasoning summarizes that since a high birth rate increases family poverty, as the population becomes more aware of the benefits of birth control and contraceptives become widely available and the need for a large family to compensate for a high infant mortality rate diminishes, it is reasonable to expect that the birth rate would decline to an ideal size of about two children per family. In fact, family size in India is between 6 and 7 children per family (Saaty and Vargas, 1991).

One possible explanation is that causes and effects of high fertility rates are not understood by Indian society. Saaty and Vargas(1991) offer a different analysis by reexamining the basic assumptions about the economics of high birth rates. By examining the culture, they discovered that large families increase the social status of

parents, the birth of sons is an important religious event for the family, large families had the advantage of free labor when the children are young and provided support for the parent's old age, and infant mortality is still high in rural areas. Using these assumptions to reassess the birth rate, Saaty and Vargas (1991) predicted a family size of 6.5 children per family, very close to the actual figure of 6.4 children per family. Although this is a remarkable result, the authors cite other examples of predication models that were much less successful and even in this model there is no assurance that these assumptions will be accurate predictors of family size (Saaty and Vargas 1991). It is interesting that the high birth rate was only seen as a problem by the outsiders to the culture. Individuals native to rural Indian culture would be unlikely to change a behavior pattern that for their value and economic systems was not a problem.

In a second example, a qualitative study examined the family patterns of low income unmarried African-American women using focus groups, detailed interviews and participant observations (Jarrett, 1993). According to demographic data, there is an increase in single parent households among unmarried African-American groups. This study identified several factors that encourage these women to leave their parent's home including child care, conflict with the grandparents, the availability of AFDC income, overcrowding, eviction by the family and a desire to be seen as more responsible (Jarrett, 1993). Although the demographic information identified the problem, the qualitative study points to possible reasons for the effects. Just as in the Indian birth rate study, the results may not be representative of the group as a whole and it would be inappropriate to generalize the results of a study of this type. Nevertheless, the results

are useful because they become seedlings for more specific examination of these issues using both qualitative and quantitative paradigms.

In education, there are many possible reasons why one program may be perceived by the stakeholders as preferable to another. One parent when asked by the author why he chose a particular preschool program replied that the church organist always practiced during nap time and he liked the idea of his children being lulled to sleep to strains of Bach drifting to the nursery. It is very unlikely that the directors of the program would have considered this a factor in parental enrollment decisions. Qualitative methods are useful in identifying exactly this type of unexpected criteria.

Strategies of Inquiry

There are many different qualitative methods from which to choose. Tesch (1990) outlined the types of methods and organized them according to fields of study in which they originated; sociology, anthropology, psychology and education. Sociology and anthropology studies examine how individuals and cultures use language and symbols in their cultural contexts. Although the methods are not standardized, researchers often gather field data through direct observations by participating in the daily lives of the participants. Methods from anthropology include ethnography which profiles a culture through the observation of an outside observer (Vidich and Lyman, 1994) and cliometrics and historiography which examine historical records to discover patterns and interpret historical events to explain cultural perceptions (Tuchman, 1994). Psychology and management have made extensive use of the case study, a detailed examination of one individual or group, and hermeneutics which examines the social

meaning attached by an individual to an action (Tesch, 1990; Stake, 1994). Educational researchers have used methods from many fields and have added other approaches including focus groups from marketing research (Morgan 1988; Krueger 1994) and interviews (Seidman, 1991; Fontana and Frey, 1994; Louis and Turner, 1991). Tesch (1990) summarized qualitative research types in a diagram that is to be read as a continuum: “the characteristics of language----the discovery of regularities----the comprehension of the meaning of text/action----reflection.” (Tesch 1990 p. 59).

According to Tesch, studies dealing with characteristics of language are more structured and may make use of quantitative methods, while approaches that require reflection demand extensive musing over the data to develop insights based on intuition. Research is often based on the discovery of regularities and is concerned with the discovery of patterns and connections between each element. Evaluation studies are often intended to discover descriptive patterns that may be helpful in program design or revision. Methods appropriate to this type of research include interviewing, Delphi surveys, long interviews, multiple case studies and focus groups.

According to Morgan and Krueger (1993) focus groups are a particularly useful method to discover the degree of consensus about a topic. Focus groups have been used to evaluate programs in many areas including nutrition education (Hartman, McCarthy, Park, Schuster and Kushi, 1994) community college education (Parsons, 1994) issues programming (Baker and Verma, 1993) and tech-prep teacher preparation (Wentling, Roegee and Bragg, 1994). Focus groups allow decision makers to receive feedback

from less powerful groups, and is an effective method for discussion of values within and between groups.

Qualitative studies do not have demonstrable generalizability and are difficult to verify. Although at least one study in marketing research has compared the results of large scale focus groups and a national survey and found that the results only differed in one instance (Reynolds and Johnson, 1979), it would be inappropriate to consider the results of a focus group survey to be generalizable. There are no statistical tests to estimate the representativeness of the results and replication is typically done only to provide a different point of view. Often multiple methods of inquiry are used to correlate findings. The methods combined may be different qualitative methods or a mix of quantitative and qualitative methods (Wolff, Knodel and Sittitrai, 1993; Worthen and Sanders, 1991) and is often called triangulation (Patton, 1990; Morgan, 1988; Denzin, 1978). Although each different method has a slightly different purpose, there are two methods that are similar enough to be complementary. Focus groups have been described as a form of group interview (Frey and Fontana, 1993; Patton 1990); and although the individual interview gathers more detailed information, the methods are quite similar. Questions for open ended interviews and for focus groups follow similar design considerations (compare Patton, 1990 with Fontana and Frey, 1994). Due to group dynamics, focus groups may change the opinions of the participants due to influence of the group, an effect that would be avoided in interviews (Crabtree, Yanosik, Miller and O'Connor 1993). This effect might be an important

variation in the way that individuals reach value judgements about educational programs.

Populations

Evaluations promote program improvement only when the affected stakeholders hold a common vision of the purpose of the program. Although there are many different stakeholder groups affected by a given organization, each offering distinctive viewpoints, there are only a few groups that significantly impact the perceived success of a specific program. The first step in designing an evaluation program is to identify the major stakeholders.

According to Porter (1980) in an analysis of competitive strategy, it is important for an organization to assess its customers. Not all customer groups have equal influence on an organization and since every organization has limited resources, it is to the competitive advantage of the organization to focus efforts on the needs of the major customer groups. Although Porter was concerned with industrial competition, many of his ideas have applications for other types of organizations that deal with multiple customer groups. Porter offers guidelines to assess the power of the buyer some of which may be important considerations for higher education (Porter, 1980).

"It (the buyer) is concentrated or purchases large volumes relative to seller sales" (Porter, 1980, p. 24). When a large portion of an organization's success is dependent on a single buyer, that buyer has a great deal of influence over the success of that organization. In the case of a university, the faculty are in a unique position since they produce the main products of the institution through research and teaching. The faculty can be described as important "buyers" of the mission of an university. Without faculty

commitment there would be little research and few graduates. For an university, faculty are an important element of each institution's success.

"The products it purchases from the industry represents a significant fraction of the buyer's costs or purchases"(Porter, 1980, p. 25). Several customer groups have significant portions of university income share. Governmental grants provide a large source of income to many research based institutions. Students provide another source of income and often a cost effective labor source. Industry provides a portion of revenue in the funding of grants and academic/industry partnerships.

"The products purchased are standard or undifferentiated" (Porter, 1980, p. 25). If a product can be obtained from many sources without a penalty to the buyer, then there is nothing to prevent the buyer from using multiple sources. For an university the government is an unreliable "buyer" of researcher expertise since there are many institutions in competition for governmental research funds. If the program offered by one institution does not offer some advantage to the prospective students, then the students will enroll at another institution or they will enter the workforce and forgo the university experience. Faculty are also able to move from one institution to another so the university may not be a stable supplier of researcher expertise.

"Buyers pose a credible threat of backward integration" (Porter, 1980, p. 25). Increasingly companies are turning to corporate training to fill in the perceived gaps in higher education (Zemsky, Meyerson, Tierney and Berg,1983). Several companies offer accredited degrees through their corporate programs (Eurich, 1985). Companies have historically developed their own education programs when their needs were not being

met by existing institutions (Moore 1980; 1982). It is not inconceivable that vertical integration can at some point become a viable threat to the client base of the university.

"The industry's product is unimportant to the quality of the buyer's product or services" (Porter, 1980, p. 24). An organization that does not provide a product of value to a customer is soon out of business. Higher education is criticized for providing students with ineffective teachers and for an excessive quantity of marginal research (Smith, 1990; Miller, 1994). In some fields such as computer science, many innovations do not have their genesis in the university system but are industry developments. Although there is an interwoven relationship between industry and academic research, universities are often used to refine the innovations of industry (Stross, 1993). As the university loses its historic role as the depository of new and current ideas, and if the perception of the quality of graduates declines, then an individual university may lose market share compared to other institutions.

According to these criteria, stakeholder groups holding strong expectations for program effectiveness in the university environment are students, faculty, and industry groups. It would be appropriate to include representatives of any one of these groups in the development of criteria for program evaluation.

Sampling Methods

There are many different sampling methods used in qualitative data collection. Krueger (1994) lists five different methods including random sampling from an existing list, contacting existing groups for names of suitable participants, obtaining recommendations from past focus group participants, random telephone screening and

on site recruitment of individuals who use the product or service. Morgan (1988) supports the use of purposeful samples since such a small group can never be representative of the whole group. Miles and Huberman have summarized the most commonly used qualitative sampling methods and their listing provides a useful overview of these methods (Miles and Huberman 1994, pp. 27-34).

Several of these sampling methods as described by Miles and Huberman (1994) are similar in design. Maximum variation is a deliberate attempt to select outlier cases to justify the main findings of a study. Confirming or disconfirming case samples use variation in cases to provide an appraisal of the results of a larger study. Extreme deviant case samples examine deviant cases to discover a possible explanation for deviance. In each of these sampling methods if the premise or finding examined holds true for the deviant cases it is considered to support the premise or conclusion of the study.

Miles and Huberman (1994) also list other methods such as case studies to adjust a theory or form a basis for a theory. Stake (1994) notes that case studies are both a method and a result of the study. He lists three different types of case studies, intrinsic case studies, collective case studies and instrumental case studies. Intrinsic case studies examine a specific case in depth. Individual case studies may be combined to provide information about a general condition, a method called a collective case study. Instrumental case studies are selected to illustrate constructs of a model or theory in order to examine the effectiveness of the model or theory. Miles and Huberman (1994) list three types of case studies not listed by Stake; typical, politically important, and

intensity case studies. Typical case samples highlight the normal case and examine it in detail. Politically important case samples are often included because they are connected to an issue in an influential way. Intensity cases examine information rich sources who are not outlier or extreme cases. Each of these methods examines a particular case type in detail and the sample is selected because the case is of particular interest to the researcher either of itself or to support or repudiate a theory. Other sampling methods noted by Miles and Huberman (1994) include snowballing which builds a sample by recommendations from individuals who are known to be of interest to the study, convenience sampling which takes advantage of existing groups, and opportunistic samples which take advantage of unexpected events.

Three additional sampling methods are described by Miles and Huberman (1994). The first method, a random purposeful sample, is appropriate if the groups are not to be compared on any break point within the group. Although Miles and Huberman (1994) promote this as a method to improve credibility when working with large populations, the random element may be of limited benefit since qualitative studies cannot be generalized to the populations from which the sample was drawn and there is no treatment bias in a focus group study. The second method, a stratified purposeful sample, can be used if the groups are to be separated based on particular characteristics or break points. Gender and traditional/non-traditional student status are two characteristics which may affect the quality of data collection. The third method, a homogenous sample, is selected based on common traits within the group that are important to the study. A focus group should be chosen based on the similarities of the

individuals to each other and to the topic under examination. According to Albrecht, Johnson, and Walther (1993), communication in focus groups is affected by the composition of the group. A homogeneous group generates more unique responses. Focus groups are less effective when individuals in the group are involved in a hierarchial or power based relationship outside of the group (Knodel, 1993). For this reason, it would be inappropriate to mix the shareholder groups within the same focus group session.

CHAPTER 3

Methods

Based on the review of literature, the data collection methods that were found to be most appropriate for the determination of the common evaluands for the College of Agriculture were focused interviews and focus groups. Accordingly these were the methods selected for this study. A review of the literature describing these methods is included in Chapter 3.

Selection of Student Participants

Permission was obtained from the College of Agriculture to obtain a listing of currently enrolled students in the College along with certain points of information. The requested information included the following: student name, date of birth, date of transfer into the College of Agriculture, grade point average, ethnic origin, gender, local address, local phone number, and current year classification. The sampling method combined two recommended sampling methods described by Miles and Huberman (1994) and could be described as a homogenous stratified purposeful sample.

Students were chosen as possible participants based on several characteristics. All program areas that offered undergraduate degrees that were awarded through the College of Agriculture were included in the study, a total of nine program areas. Non-matriculating students were not included nor were students who had been enrolled in the College for less than two years. To limit the number of break points, only Caucasian students with grade point averages between 2.250 and 3.500 were included in the study. Except for the pilot study, all participants were classified as seniors. The pilot study

was drawn from junior and senior students since enrollment in some majors was not sufficient to limit both the pilot study and the principal study to senior rank students.

Prior to contacting possible student participants, a brief letter and an abstract describing the study was sent to the department heads of each participating department. This letter explained the purpose of the study and requested the names of potential faculty participants of the second part of the study.

There were five parts to the student portion of the study; a pilot study, a study of traditional female students, nontraditional female students, nontraditional male students and traditional male students. In this study, traditional students were narrowly defined as students less than 26 years of age; nontraditional students were narrowly defined as students 26 years of age and older. Groups were selected based on two break points, gender and traditional versus non-traditional student status. Break points are characteristics that may influence the outcome of a study. Gender is an important characteristic since mixed gender groups have been shown to have less open discussions (Sadker and Sadker, 1994; Scott, 1984). The characteristics of traditional versus non-traditional groups often cause traditional students to be intimidated in classroom discussions. It was reasonable to assume that a focus group discussion might be similarly affected. In those parts of the study where focus groups and interviews were used as data collection methods, the interviews were used as a member check for the focus group. A member check is when the findings of a qualitative method are confirmed by the members of the original population. For example, if a second group of traditional female students reach conclusions similar to the conclusions reached by the

first group of female traditional students the validity of the findings is strengthened. If the second group does not reach similar conclusions then the findings are more likely to be unique for each of the two groups.

According to Morgan (1988) the size of the groups should not exceed 12 individuals and is usually between 6 and 10 individuals. Krueger (1988) recommends a group of seven to ten individuals and opposes the use of any group larger than 12 individuals. Both Krueger and Morgan note that larger groups limit individual participation and that smaller groups do not generate as many ideas. Morgan (1995) recommends over-recruiting by two members for each focus group since it is common for individuals who have committed to participate not to show up on the day of the session. In keeping with these recommendations, it was hoped that six to eight individuals would participate. For this reason, ten individuals were initially recruited for each focus group. All the student participants were requested to sign an informed consent form. (Please refer to Appendix C)

Instrumentation

In all qualitative research, the researcher is recognized as a part of the study rather than an outside element (Posavac and Carey 1989). Morgan (1993) notes that the effect of roles assumed by a moderator, such as naive or expert have not been established and that the effect of different moderator styles is not currently known. The effects and degree of self disclosure as a means to encourage discussion and the effects of the role and consistency of the moderator to remain in the same style for all groups rather than adjusting styles based on group dynamics are other factors listed by Morgan

(1993) that need further research. Morgan and Krueger (1993) do not believe that focus groups require moderators with professional skills but the moderator should be able to work with both the research group and the participants in the project and should have experience working with groups rather than as a leader of groups. Using the researcher as the moderator can be effective since the researcher is most familiar with the goals of the research as long as the researcher is able to maintain an emotional distance from the focus group discussion. Albrecht, Johnson and Walther (1993) found that the moderators should be active listeners, rhetorically sensitive and able to respond neutrally to the discussion. They believe that reliability is enhanced when the same moderator is used for all groups. To develop the needed skills to serve as moderator for this study, the author attended a workshop directed by Dr. David Morgan at Portland State University. The workshop covered moderator skills as part of a workshop on focus group research methods. These skills were applied by the author who served as moderator and interviewer for every group and individual in this study except for the traditional male group. For this group, it was decided to use a male moderator and the researcher served as the assistant moderator.

To facilitate comparisons between the interviews and the focus groups the same role was adopted for the interviews. Interviews are more personal methods of data collection than focus groups discussion and it is possible that the role of the researcher will change as the relationship between the participants and the researcher develops. During the course of an interview series, participants often become quite comfortable with the interviewer and a familiarity may develop that can interfere with the reporting

of the information. Seidman (1991) recognizes this problem and recommends that the researcher maintain a certain degree of formal distance. Finch (1984) in an interview study of clergy wives and mothers, felt that the potential for exploitation of the participants caused by this effect was so great, that she wrote that " my interviewees need to know how to protect themselves against someone like me" (Finch, 1984, p. 80). Morgan and Krueger (1993) and Zeller (1993) report similar problems in focus groups where individuals often share more information than they normally would. Except for one interview, over familiarity was not an issue in the study.

The focus group discussions and interviews were based on a series of related questions suited to each population. The initial interview guide for the student participants is included in Appendix C; the initial interview guide for the faculty participants is included in Appendix D. Krueger (1994) describes five basic types of questions; opening questions, introductory questions, transition questions, key questions and ending questions. The opening questions allow individuals to identify common characteristics and serve as an introduction. Introductory questions introduce the topic and generate the discussion. Transitional questions move the discussion from general issues related to the topic to issues of specific interest to the study. The key questions are the questions that address the issues examined by the study. The session concludes with ending questions which allow the participant to rank or clarify their positions (Krueger, 1994). Each type of question was included in the design of the interview guides for the study.

Patton (1990) offered other considerations for the design of focus group questions. He noted that good questions should be truly open-ended rather than leading the respondents to a particular type of response. Open-ended questions are not easily converted into objective questions since the respondent can answer on his or her own terms. For example, an open ended question would ask a participant how they feel about a program rather than how satisfied they are with a program. This avoids the unintended effect of leading the respondent to list only those parts of a program with which he is satisfied. Dichotomous questions should be avoided; discussion dies with these questions because they are easily answered with a yes/no response.

Presuppositional questions are based on assumptions that respondents have something of value to share and often invite participation. Although this can be a false assumption, it is often an effective way to encourage detailed discussion. Contrast the two questions: "Is there any cheating in college testing programs?" and "What kinds of cheating occur in college testing programs?". The second question is more likely to generate a detailed response since it avoids a quick yes/no response. Other questions to be avoided according to Patton include "why?" questions because they imply that a reason is needed for an action. This may remind people of the more unpleasant childhood events: Why did you leave the door open? Why do you do everything your friends do? and often results in the participant retreating into silence. In developing the questions for this study, each was reviewed according to Patton's guidelines.

The general design for this study and the questions for the initial interview guide have been reviewed by Dr. David Morgan. Dr. Morgan is a nationally recognized

expert in qualitative research methods, particularly focus group and interview research. Fetterman (1991b) listed Dr. Morgan's book Focus Groups as Qualitative Research as a landmark resource for qualitative research. Dr. Morgan generously gave several hours of his time to review and discuss this study with the author. The initial design of the interview guide was revised according to his recommendations.

The Pilot Study

A mixed gender group of traditional students was selected to participate in the pilot focus group. Letters were sent to each individual describing the study and the importance of the study. A sample letter is included in Appendix E. After five days, each individual was contacted by phone to arrange a convenient time for the pilot group meeting. Individual schedules were collected and compared by phone and once a tentative date was established the participants were called to confirm the date and time. Of the ten individuals contacted, two refused to participate due to work schedules. Both of these individuals agreed to meet for individual interviews at a time that would fit their schedules. One individual declined to participate since he was no longer enrolled in the university.

The remaining individuals agreed to participate. This left only seven individuals, three females and four males, as possible participants, a matter of some concern since groups smaller than six are usually not successful in generating discussion. A second letter was mailed to confirm the date and location of the meeting and to emphasize the small size of the group and the importance of their participation. A campus map was included with the building location highlighted and two copies of the

consent form. The night prior to the meeting, each participant was called to remind them of the event and during this call they confirmed that they had received the second letter and that they planned to participate.

On the day of the focus group, only three individuals arrived. Although the importance of this fact was not recognized at the time, only female participants actually participated. This would become a general pattern throughout the study. Fortunately, the quality of the discussion was rich and animated and the discussion seemed to flow smoothly and the interview guide was effective. Since both the assistant moderator and the moderator for this group were women, a wide range of topics including gender issues were discussed, topics that might not have been discussed in a mixed gender group. This particular group, although small, was articulate and interacted well together. In retrospect, this group was particularly effective. Except for the recruitment problem, the effectiveness of this group augured well for the usefulness of focus groups in exploring the perceptions of undergraduate students.

Based on the pilot group, it was decided to increase the number of solicited individuals for each group from 10 to 12 with the expectation that a minimum of six individuals would actually attend the meeting. Since the participation at the pilot group had been lower than expected, four pilot interviews were selected, one from each group in the study. Letters were mailed to one individual from each group and interviews were scheduled with the two previously selected pilot groups participants with the expectation that, of these five individuals, three individuals would agree to participate in an interview. Both individuals who had been selected for the pilot groups were

interviewed, a traditional male, and a nontraditional male. Of the individuals recruited by letter for the interviews, one agreed to an interview but did not appear for that interview. He phoned the day of the interview and left a message that he needed to reschedule the interview. Repeated attempts to contact this individual by phone to reschedule were unsuccessful. One individual had a disconnected phone number but left the number of a friend where she could be reached. This individual declined to participate due to conflicts with her work schedule. The remaining two interviews, a nontraditional female student and a traditional female student, both agreed to be interviewed. This resulted in a total of four pilot interviews, one from each break point in the study.

In most cases, the pilot interviews went smoothly. One participant was notable in that he was exceptionally nervous. Although he had been informed that the interview would be taped at the time of the original phone call, his discomfort with the taping was so evident that the interview was not taped. This necessitated note taking during the interview by the interviewer which also appeared to make the participant nervous. In respect to the feelings of the participant the number of notes taken during the interview decreased as the interview progressed. Since the interview was a pilot interview only and the data collected would be not analyzed, the lack of accurate records of the data was judged a less important problem than the comfort of the participant. However, if this had not been a pilot interview, the resulting record would have been of little use. In order to put future participants more at ease, an additional opening question was added to the interview guide to be used if the participants seemed to be nervous. Student

participants were asked to describe what they wanted to be when they were children. Since nearly everyone can answer this question, it proved to be an effective ice breaker for shy or nervous participants. It also provided a natural lead in to a discussion of their current studies. Except for this minor change the interview guide was found to be effective.

Traditional Female Students

There were two focus groups held with traditional female students and two traditional female student interviews. Focus group 1 consisted of five participants, an assistant moderator and the moderator. Focus group 2 consisted of six participants, an assistant moderator and the moderator. The moderator and assistant moderator were the same two individuals for both groups and both were women. The moderator was the researcher of the study.

Participants included individuals who were majoring in what would be considered traditional occupational areas for women as well as women who were studying nontraditional occupational areas for women. Of those individuals who chose not participate there was no discernible characteristic that identified them as potential nonparticipants that could be discovered from their records. The most common reason given for nonparticipation was lack of time.

Nontraditional Female Students

For this study, nontraditional female students were defined as students who were older than 26 years of age. One focus group and two interviews were used to collect data. Twelve individuals were contacted. Five agreed to participate in a focus group,

two agreed to be interviewed. Of those individuals who agreed to participate every one kept that commitment.

These women represented a variety of majors in both traditional and nontraditional fields for women. The nonparticipating women in this group often chose not to participate due to time pressures and family responsibilities.

Nontraditional Male Students

Nontraditional males were the third student group that participated in this study. Although a focus group and personal interviews had been initially planned, this proved to be a poor format for this group for several reasons. These students had waited to declare their majors until after they had been enrolled for several years which limited the number of potential participants to a small group. In order to get a diverse group who were unlikely to know each other only one student was selected from each department. Of these potential participants, their work schedules and travel distances to campus created scheduling problems with arranging a time for the focus groups meeting. Several participants had heard of this study from fellow students and knew that this study involved some interviews as well as a focus group. They agreed to participate only on the condition that they were allowed to schedule an interview. Interviews were more appealing to this group because they were easily scheduled at each participant's convenience.

There were nine nontraditional male individuals contacted to participate in this study. This number avoided a duplication of major fields of study in this group. Of the individuals contacted to participate in this study, five agreed to participate in an

individual interview. Two individuals declined to participate due to heavy work schedules. Two individuals declined to participate because although they were earning agricultural degrees, they were also enrolled in a second degree program and had taken very few agriculture courses. Of those individuals who agreed to participate in the study, all five keep that commitment.

Traditional Male Students

The traditional male student segment of this study was plagued by recruitment problems. For an unknown reason, this segment of the undergraduate student body was reluctant to participate in the study. Initially, two focus groups were planned and two interviews. For the first focus group, twelve participants were selected and were mailed the same letter that had been used to recruit the other participants in this study. Of this group, eight individuals agreed to participate in a focus group. These individuals were mailed a reminder letter and called the night prior to the meeting to remind them of the focus group session. Of this group, only two individuals actually participated. An additional group of 14 individuals was selected as potential participants and the remaining ten individuals from the first group were contacted again prior to scheduling the second group. Six individuals agreed to a specific date and time. Once again, a reminder letter was sent with a campus map and reminder phone calls were made the night prior to the meeting. In this second attempt, not one individual arrived to participate in the meeting.

Those individuals who missed the group session offered a wide variety of reasons for not participating. These reasons included over sleeping, work schedules,

forgetting the time and forgetting the name of the building. Other reasons that individuals declined to participate included; too busy planning for a wedding, recently married, moving, involvement in an internship or field experience, transportation difficulties, too close to graduation and an unwillingness to participate in this study as well as a senior exit interview. In many cases, these individuals had to be contacted numerous times by phone during the recruitment process. After discovering that these individuals were unlikely to call back, phone calls were limited to six attempts per potential participants. An attempt was considered to be the leaving of a message on either an answering machine or with a roommate. If six attempts to contact an individual failed, that individual was considered to have refused to participate in the study. Not counting the pilot interviews, only four traditional males participated in this study, two who were interviewed together and two individuals who agreed to individual interviews.

This recruitment problem was not unique to this study. In a different study on this campus conducted by the College, traditional male students were a similar recruitment problem even though the focus sessions participation was requested by the Associate Dean. That study also had poor participation in this demographic group. The reason for this is unknown and no other examples were located in the literature.

The Faculty Study

Focus groups are most effective when individuals do not know each other well and there are no power relationships between the members of the group. Brown (1994) in a description of the difficulties of working on a research team, notes that members

tend to divide into subgroups due to different commitment levels and that this lack of cooperation often leads to communication difficulties and personal incompatibility. Since it is unlikely that the members of the College of Agriculture faculty do not know each other and it is not possible to identify relevant interpersonal relationships, focus groups were not the most appropriate method for the faculty portion of this study. Focused interviewing is a useful method that offered several advantages for this group. Individuals can revise their interview summaries prior to data analysis and delete any statements that they wish, an option which may make the participants more at ease. Faculty schedules are often difficult to coordinate and the interviews are easier to schedule and reschedule if needed. It is also less likely that the results of a particular interview will be identifiable in a finished report, whereas a focus group discussion is shared by all the participants. For these reasons, individual interviews were selected as the best method of inquiry for the faculty group.

The faculty participants were nominated by their department heads as possible participants in this study. Every department was requested to submit the names of two individuals meeting the following criteria:

1. They have taught undergraduate students in the College of Agriculture within the last four years.
2. They have taught at L.S.U. at least three years.
3. They are willing to be interviewed in a session lasting no more than one and one-half hours.

The faculty segment of the study was designed as a complement to the student segment of the study. Potential participant's names were requested from the department heads of a total of nine departments and schools within the College of Agriculture. These nine departments were selected because they offered independent undergraduate degree programs. Every department responded with one or two names of possible participants who met the criteria of the study. This resulted in a list of twelve individuals. Every one of these individuals was a participant in the study.

Each participant agreed to an one and one-half hour taped interview. After the transcripts were completed, an edited version of possible quotations from each individual interview was prepared for each participant. Each participant was given the tapes of their interview, two copies of the transcripts of their interview and the edited quotation list for their interview. They were asked to make any changes they wished in their interview. One copy was returned to the researcher, the rest of the material stayed in the possession of the interviewees. Two participants did not return edited transcripts. Both these individuals contacted the researcher by phone or in person and indicated that they did not wish to make any changes in their interview. The edited transcripts were then summarized by themes rather than by participant in order to protect the identity of the interviewees.

Analysis Methods

Data analysis methods for qualitative studies differ from quantitative methods since every study is considered to be unique. This has resulted in many approaches and designs based on the applications of the research. Miles and Huberman (1994) divide

the qualitative designs according to how tightly or how loosely these designs are structured. Tighter designs are easier to analyze since the design structure narrows the possibilities that may be uncovered in the data. Very loose designs have no structure at all; the structure of the study develops as the study progresses. A very loose design often takes many months to determine the appropriate questions for study, but in a very tight design the participant's voice may be lost. The study would then become a qualitative study in name only with questions that would be better answered by a quantitative approach. A moderate approach would predetermine some parts of the design and allow other possibilities to develop as part of the study. This study used an open-ended interview guide, a structure that allows the researcher to determine the major areas of interest while providing the participants with freedom of response within the defined topics.

The diversity in paradigms among qualitative researchers means that it is unlikely that a set of standards will be developed for this type of research. In a discussion of qualitative analysis, Patton describes this lack of rules.

"There are no formulas for determining significance. There are no ways of perfectly replicating the researcher's analytical thought processes. There are no straightforward tests for reliability and validity. In short, there are no absolute rules except to do the very best with your full intellect to fairly represent the data and communicate what the data reveal given the purpose of the study" (Patton, 1990 p. 372).

Patton (1990) discussed various general guidelines for improving the quality of the design, some of which include the testing of rival explanations, the close examination of negative cases, triangulation of methods, data sources and analysis, and the professional integrity of the researcher. The design of this study addresses all of these issues except for triangulation of analysis since a second qualitative researcher will not be used to review the analysis.

The data analysis began with notes of general impressions of each group or interview immediately after the conclusion of that interview or focus group session. The tapes were then transcribed by a professional transcriber. After the transcripts were prepared, the tapes were reviewed and checked against the transcripts for accuracy. This was a deceptively time-consuming process, a ninety minute interview tape and transcript could take as long as three hours to verify.

After the transcripts were corrected, the transcripts were reviewed until the the main constructs that resulted from each session were identified. A construct is a general theme that emerges from the review of the data. For example, suppose that in reviewing the interview with the first student participant several dominant themes emerge from the discussion: teaching effectiveness of faculty, social activities and job readiness. These constructs would then become the concepts about which the information will be sorted for that particular interview. The importance of each construct is determined by how often and in what context these ideas were discussed. This sorting of the data isolates the major points of the discussion and by comparing the context in which it occurs, it may suggest

possible relationships between entities. Constructs may be independent or they may be related to other constructs. In a discussion of ETHNO, a computer analysis program, Tesch (1990) described the three taxonomic frameworks: a kind of, a part of, and generally is. An “a kind of framework” is when an entity is a type of another. For example, a cake is a kind of bakery product but not all bakery goods are cakes. An “a part of” is when the entity is a part of another; paper is part of a book just as the cover is a part of the book. “Generally is” refers to the roles of individuals in certain situations, such as faculty generally being perceived by the students as teachers and by administration as researchers. An examination of the data using these taxonomic frameworks is a useful way to summarize some of the data.

Once the data have been summarized and the relationships between the entities established in each interview or group, tables were prepared to present a topical summary of the discussion of the groups so that the results of different interviews could be compared to other interviews or groups. An example summary table is given in Table 1.

Table 1

Example Summary Table

Questions from interview guide.	Interview 1	Interview 2
Question 1: from interview guide.	Summary	Summary
Question 2: from interview guide	Summary	Summary

Often the summary was not as clear-cut as this table suggests. Interviews and group discussion often wander between topics which can provide insights to the relationships of these entities. If the information related to question 1 was obtained during the discussion of question 2 that information would be included in the summary. After this table is complete, the results across all the interviews and focus groups were studied and summarized. This summary would become the main body of the findings of the study.

Software Limitations

There are many computer programs designed for qualitative analysis. Tesch (1990) reviews most of the commonly available programs and divides them into text retrievers, data base programs and graphic representations. Except for the graphic representation programs which develop diagrams to describe relationships, most of these programs sort and search transcripts for phrases specified by the user. Patton (1990) recommends the use of computer programs when the data is going to be used by many individuals or referred to over a long period of time. Since the coding scheme is very time consuming there is little benefit in coding data specific to one study. An additional concern is that many of these programs were written by individual researchers for their own personal projects and the text must be typed directly into these programs or imported as ASCII files. Often code markers that use special key combinations will not import correctly and will need to be edited in the analysis program.

Morgan (1993) notes that there is a mistaken impression that qualitative data analysis software is like SPSS for quantitative studies which actually performs the analysis. Qualitative programs sort and index the data much like file folders, self-stick notes, highlighters and scissors. In fact, all of the interpretation must still be done by the researcher.

Since this study was not intended to form a long-term data base and since most of the search features and cut and paste needed for a study of this type could be performed in a word processor, no specialized software was used. The author used a combination of traditional cut and paste and computer searches of transcripts to locate specific phrases. All interpretation was performed by the author.

Expected Results

By comparing the results of each series of interviews and focus groups the common elements noted by each group should be the elements of value to both groups. For the traditional female group and the nontraditional female group, the design of the study contrasted the type of results gathered through group interviews with information gathered in individual interviews. This information should be of interest to professional evaluators and other individuals interested in the assessment of undergraduate educational programs.

CHAPTER 4

Results

Results from the Undergraduate Study

In this study, students were divided based on age and gender. Traditional students were narrowly defined as students less than 26 years of age; nontraditional students were narrowly defined as students 26 years of age and older. The resulting four groups are described in separate sections and the combined results follow the discussion of the individual groups. Certain terms have been replaced or grouped so that the participants cannot be easily identified either as individuals or by department. All activities that provided “hands-on experience” in a campus laboratory have been grouped together. This term included classroom observations, skill development courses of all types such as garment construction or machining, as well as science laboratory courses. Field experiences included directed study experiences not held in a campus laboratory setting such as internships, student teaching, forestry camp and cooperative work experiences. Organizations discussed by these participants have been grouped as well. Nonacademic student organizations included fraternities, sororities, sports related organizations such as the band or the dance team and any other student organizations connected to the university but not affiliated with a particular department or the College of Agriculture as a whole. Academic student organizations included all departmental clubs, any club affiliated with the College as a whole and the Agricultural Student Council. Religious clubs sponsored by campus ministry organizations affiliated with the university were identified separately. All other organizations such as local

community clubs, martial art groups, church groups and Mardi Gras krewes were identified when such identification did not seem to compromise the identity of the participant; if this was not possible such organizations were included as non-campus related organizations. Data were collected by interview and by focus group. There were two interviews and two focus groups used with the traditional female group.

Traditional Female Students

Focus Group 1

The first traditional female focus group had five participants. Both the moderator and the assistant moderator were women. Although it was hoped that the participants would not know each other, two students knew each other prior to meeting in the group. The group consisted of students in majors that would be considered traditional female areas of study as well as students that were engaged in studies that were more typically considered to be male dominated fields.

Of the participants in Group 1, all individuals were comfortable in their present field of study with the exception of one individual. Brief summaries of each participant's comments are given in this section. Some participants were enrolled in very small departments; to preserve their anonymity their major fields of study and grade point averages were not included in these descriptions.

Participant 1.

Participant 1 selected L.S.U. because attending that university was a family tradition. She mentioned spending her childhood at campus athletic events. Because of this tradition and because her family was from Baton Rouge, she "really didn't consider

anyplace else.” For this individual the role of college athletics in the building of school spirit was a particularly important experience from her enrollment at L.S.U.

Participant 1 selected her major due to a genuine interest in the subject matter. She was first introduced to the subject through a club that she participated in while in high school. A secondary factor in her selection of L.S.U. as her college was that a program was offered in her area of interest. She was disappointed that there were few courses that were specific to her major. Her favorite classes were not in her major but in her minor field (a non-agricultural area). She described the professors in her minor to be very interested in teaching and available outside of class. She speculated that this impression may be colored by her enthusiasm for her minor field.

This individual was a member of, but not an active participant in, a departmental club in the College. She described it as a mixed experience with some meetings being helpful but most were just meetings, “We don’t really do anything fun . . .” She was active in student protests against higher tuition and was dismayed by what she perceived to be an apathy toward political issues held by the student body.

Two topics developed in the group that engaged Participant 1 enough that she spoke about them at length. She was concerned with financial issues, particularly the use of tuition monies and athletic ticket sales, and was frustrated by not knowing “where my money was going.” She felt powerless to affect such decisions and was frustrated because “You feel like there is nothing you can do about it.” The second topic that Participant 1 spoke at length about was her frustration in finding a major and employment. She believed that it was a function of the College to help her find an

appropriate major, “I feel like the whole time I’ve been here, the College of Agriculture hasn’t been very helpful with helping me find a job or figure out what I really want to be.” She found the placement office “not helpful at all” and believed that most of the placement center jobs were in accounting or engineering. Accordingly, she conducted her job search independently of the placement center. She felt pressure from her parents to locate employment and characterized the job search processes as a “depressing” experience.

Participant 2.

Participant 2 selected L.S.U. because her father was a sports fan who highly encouraged her to attend L.S.U. She had spent some time on campus as a child, had learned to ride a bicycle on the campus and appeared to have good childhood memories of the campus. She selected her major early and although she remained in the same general field, she adjusted her course of study after a brief field experience caused her to reexamine her original goals.

Participant 2 found college to be significantly different from high school and spoke at length on this topic. She had problems with time management and study skills in particular.

I thought that I could just study the night before like I did in high school. And then I realized that that just wasn't going to do it. After my sophomore year was when I started making better grades than what I was doing because I started really studying. I was actually reading the chapter to prepare. I didn't think you

had to do that. Before I thought you could just kind of skim it like I did in high school.

Participant 2 described some teachers in the general college as “grossly hard.” She believed that such teachers are “not really out to teach but to fail you or to make you really struggle.” In her major, she enjoyed the small classes and the opportunity to get to know everyone in the class. She enjoyed the diversity of course offerings in her field. A small department was perceived as an advantage since in a small department “you have the same teachers for a lot of the classes and they get to know you and it can help you out a lot” and she described the teachers in her major as “really helpful.”

Although this participant was a member in a departmental organization, she had attended only “a couple of meetings.” She described it in lackluster terms:

But it’s really -- I guess it’s okay. Everybody just kind of sticks to an agenda.

Nothing really -- I mean, it’s not too exciting. I’m just in it so I can put it on my resume, to be honest.

When asked what would be an exciting organization she mentioned sororities, although she added that this was “to put on the resume too.”

Two topics mentioned at length were field experiences and job placement concerns. She believed that field experiences were particularly helpful in preparing for a career and suggested that they could be expanded to include more hours in the field. Participant 2 found Career Day to be a positive event and that her advisors in her department were very helpful in helping her plan for employment. Although she was a graduating student, her job search was not yet successful and it was not a project that

appeared to be actively pursued, "I'm trying to get through school right now and I can't really think about it until I graduate. But that is making me kind of worried."

Despite her concern about job placement this participant still believed in the value of a college degree.

My parents were so proud I was going to college. I just never really thought about quitting, because I just know that I want to do this for myself. I know that college degree is going to make me just do what I want to do. You know? Like get the job that I want, make the kind of money that I want. I feel like I'm going to be successful, and that's just something that I've always wanted to do. It's very important to me.

Participant 3.

Participant 3 was the most timid of this group's participants. She was unusual because she was the only member of the group who had seriously considered quitting college on several different occasions. This topic dominated her comments. Participant 3 selected L.S.U. due to the influence of her parents and had selected her major because she "didn't really know what I wanted to do" and the laboratory work seemed like it might be interesting. The influence of her family was an important factor in her completing college.

I truthfully stayed in college because I knew it would break my father's heart if I quit. And now that I've been here five years, I'm not about to quit because I just have so little time left. If my father hadn't been there, like, "Oh, please finish

college. You're the only one in the family." I probably would have quit after my first couple of years.

She returned to this topic later in the discussion.

I really have seriously thought about quitting several times, but I guess just -- I would feel kind of like a loser, or quitter, if I didn't go ahead and finish. And I know I could. Not that I have much of a chance, but without a college education, I would have no chance of getting a job in what I want to do. And then with my family, it's just that everybody finished college. It's just kind of expected; that's what you do. You finish college.

Participant 3 found college to be a difficult experience compared to high school.

This was a surprise to the participant since she had graduated from a school that she described as a private college preparatory high school.

Well, I think the thing that's discouraged me most is a lot of the harder classes.

Like I found out -- I thought I was good at [specific subject] in high school. And then I get to college and I find out I'm not really very good at [specific subject].

And you know, there were times when I thought I wasn't going to be able to make it through the classes. But I just hung in there.

She also believed that some of the professors were less than encouraging.

I have had one or two professors that were very discouraging. I had one professor who actually told the class that if we're doing badly in his class, it's probably because we're just not smart enough to understand the material and we

should quit college and go to a vo-tech school. When you have professors like that, they tend to get you down, [and you start] thinking, "Can I really do this?"

Participant 3 did not see any relationship between the required prerequisite courses in her major and the specific courses in her field. She speculated that such courses were used for other reasons.

You know, it's almost like they deliberately have real hard classes to weed people out and discourage people. I would have more classes that seem more relevant to your major, rather than something that was just deliberately hard so that a 50 is an A.

Like Participant 1, Participant 3 was disappointed by a lack of courses in her specific major. She was also concerned that some of the specific course work may be too regional in focus and was worried that this could make it difficult to find positions outside of the southeastern region.

Positive memories were teachers that had time for students. Participant 3 was the only participant in the study who mentioned enjoying working with graduate students.

Some of the classes where they have graduate students, you could go to the graduate students and ask them questions. You didn't feel like you were intruding on them because they were doing research or something. It made the class better; you learned from it.

She also appreciated the facilities in her major and enjoyed the field experiences available to her.

When the group described what memories, they expected to hold with them from their college days, this individual could not think of anything to add to the discussion. “There’s really not one outstanding thing that I would say, ‘Oh, yeah, I remember that from college’.”

Participant 4.

Participant 4 selected L.S.U. because of a scholarship award. It was not her first choice for a university. Although she was from out of state, her family did have some ties to the university and this history coupled with a scholarship offer combined to help her choose L.S.U. This participant was the most negative member of the group. Despite efforts to select participants that were unknown to each other, this participant appeared to know Participant 3 slightly; Participant 3 had been in a related major and may have been a former classmate.

This participant found college to be a challenge. She felt that high school teachers reviewed the material more and that in college the goal becomes to teach as much material as possible in as short a time as possible. She described some of her courses as “flunk-out” courses.

Participant 4 was concerned about general education courses and believed that some teachers “don’t have very good people skills, and they don’t know how to teach well” and that some “can’t even speak English.” She also mentioned that a smaller college might have been a better choice for her. Like Participants 1 and 3, she mentioned a lack of courses specific in her major as a particular concern. She believed

that some of the approved electives were so dissimilar that they could not all be related to her field of study.

I mean those are two totally different classes and you can choose between the two. [A specific course], in my opinion, would probably be more beneficial toward the degree, but why have it a choice of [that specific course] or [another specific course]? Why not just have it [the first specific course] and don't even choose [the second specific course]? And some of the other classes we don't really need a lot. Why don't they put more classes into our major?

Other topics mentioned by this individual included a perception that the courses were too regionally focused and there was a lack of diversity in the course offerings. Although she described material in the courses as regionally focused, this individual seemed uncertain as to whether this was a disadvantage or an advantage since in her field this region offers many opportunities for field experiences. She also mentioned availability of research facilities as a valuable resource for "hands-on experience." Activities that she believed were positive offerings were field experiences and a departmental club, but she did not participate in either of these activities. She was also the only participant in the group to mention her dissatisfaction with the raising of the drinking age and she believed that despite this change this is still a "nice party state." Alcohol was mentioned at three different points in the discussion by this participant although the group discussion did not develop on this topic and there were no questions or probes on this subject.

Participant 4 enjoyed the sports related activities and was an active member in a nonacademic organization. Football and sports related activities greatly interested this participant and she mentioned sports related events several times during the focus group.

The [nonacademic organization] was fun. If I wouldn't have been in the [nonacademic organization], college would have been totally different.

She added to her comments.

. . .The [nonacademic organization] made it, gave you something to do while you were in college instead of just study. If you come just to study, I mean, God, that must be so boring.

She returned to this topic later.

It's nice when we win. Remember we had one game against Alabama where we beat like the thirty game winning streak. The [nonacademic organization] stayed - there weren't that many people for L.S.U. there but everybody stayed afterwards. It kind of made you feel good you were part of L.S.U. because you know we beat Alabama.

A second topic that concerned Participant 4 was employment after graduation.

She placed at least a portion of the responsibility for her job search on the faculty.

I think some of the teachers in the department could work a little harder, it would be nice if they worked a little harder to try to find us a job. I had one teacher who actually found me a job for the summer last year. He just called me up. He called me up. He said, "I've got a job for you with [specific company]."

But I found out that's not something I'd want to do, but it just seems like it might be nice if they worked a little harder. Because I know I'm not going to have a job afterwards. Right now, I don't think I'll be working in that field after all.

This participant at one point stated that she is not in a high demand field. This did not seem to moderate her employment expectations despite indications that the faculty in her department may have discussed a possibly more realistic portrait of the job market with her. Such attempts were described as the faculty being “negative.” She expected these individuals to be reluctant to help her find employment.

There are some professors in [my department], I think they're really cool. They really try to help out as much as they can. But there are others, I don't think that they're actually helping you out. Some of them are pretty darn negative when it comes to trying to communicate you're going to have a job when you get out.

And the way they're negative, you know they're not going to help you.

She added to her comments later in the discussion and expanded upon them.

He [a particular teacher] insults the students real bad. It's hard enough thinking about getting jobs, but he sits there and he'll tell you -- he told me that I'm going to just end up being a housewife. I heard he's getting worse. I haven't had him lately. He told us, out of all the years he's been teaching, only two people have ever gotten a job. And he isn't positive. I mean, he's very negative. He's very biased in a sense and he doesn't know how to help when you're trying to be positive about finishing college. It just does not help at all.

Although this participant was negative about finding employment, she still feels that there may be some value to earning a college degree.

I will have this degree and even though it doesn't mean anything when it comes to finding a job anymore, you can know you did it. You went there all four years, or five, whatever. You finished it. You actually got this piece of paper that says you learned something.

Participant 4 had considered quitting college. She decided to complete college when her parents removed themselves from her decision.

. . . And my dad said, "You can do what you want." It was a shock, but I said "I've only got one year left. I'll try to do it." Because I was going to quit last year. My dad, he's like, "Do whatever you want." And that was like, "Wow. It's my decision now." And so I said, "You know, I only have one year left. I'll go through it."

Participant 4 did not mention any future plans to pursue after graduation. She commented that she would not recommend her major to others. Although she touched on many topics, the dominant characteristics of her comments seem to illustrate a lack of focus in this individual. She identified positive aspects of her program but chose not to participate in these activities. She recognized the importance of finding employment but did not accept personal responsibility for the task. She appeared to find her greatest satisfaction in activities that were not related to her major field. The general impression was of an individual who had never decided on a specific goal but had drifted through the college experience.

Participant 5.

Participant 5 was the only member of this group who was the first member of her family to go to college. She came to L.S.U. uncertain of her major and explored a wide variety of different possibilities both within and without the College of Agriculture. She changed her field of study numerous times during her enrollment. Her family had some influence in the selection of her major since they encouraged her to discount fields in which she would not “make any money.” Although her parents encouraged her to attend college for the possible increase in future earnings, Participant 5 chose to attend L.S.U. only after she was selected for membership in a specific nonacademic organization. This was a personal dream for this participant and a major influence in her decision to attend college. She described being part of the [nonacademic organization] as having “family members.” All other aspects of the college experience appear to have been secondary to this activity.

I think that, far away from education, [it is] a whole life on its own. Just a whole experience. It was like we were not even with L.S.U. because it was so totally different. We were with L.S.U. but it had nothing to do with school. It was like a job. And I just really enjoyed it.

This participant regretted that there were not many social activities for students in her major. She was not aware of the student organizations available to her.

The only thing I would complain about is that [our major] doesn't have an organization, where we'd have like a crawfish boil, or a get-together on a Saturday. . . . Everybody else has something. But we have nothing. And for the

resume, they asked if you belong to any organization. And I'm like, do we even have an organization? You know? We don't. And I didn't even think of that until [recently] and I thought that would be nice.

Another issue that concerned this participant was the tenure process. She apparently believed that the purpose of tenure was to reward good teachers and was concerned that tenure actually was used to protect poor instructors.

Teachers are tenured and they're not really up there teaching, and they could care less what kind of grade you get. I went to a teacher and cried because I was failing. And he's like, "Well, there's nothing I can do for you." And, I'm like, "Excuse me?" So then I went and talked to the dean and they were like, "Well, he's tenured. Oh, well." And I'm like, "Huh?" It was very upsetting that this teacher wasn't even teaching and he could care less.

Good teachers were described as individuals who cared about the success of their students. This type of teacher was described as "so happy if most of the class got A's" and as "motivating." She enjoyed her major because the subject was interesting to her and she believed she could apply the information she learned after graduation in a variety of areas. This participant enjoyed travel opportunities within her department and intended to pursue an internship prior to graduation.

Like several other participants in the group, Participant 5 found the adjustment to college to be a difficult one. This surprised her since she had been an honor student in high school. She speculated that there it might be different for students from private schools.

But being in a public school, I guess you think if you're in an honors class, you're pretty smart. You know? But when I came to college it was like a wake-up call . . . And I got here and the teacher was so far over my head, I went to talk to him crying and he said, "Well, you should know how to read the chart and what it means, and what this means." And I'm just like, I don't know. And sometimes, they're not willing to help you. Because the people that go to the private schools are really getting taught -- I'm not saying that there's a discrepancy between public and private -- but I think -- that's just my opinion that if you come from a private school that you're probably better taught.

After another participant assured her that they did not find the transition to college easy even though they had attended a private school, she modified her comments.

Maybe no private or public school can really teach you how to [adjust] because it's like a whole different life. I barely remember high school. I barely remember studying. I made decent grades, but it was like I felt I knew it. I didn't have to drill it in my head. And when I came to college, it's like, "Oh, my God, I have to read this book." You know, you have to read 15 chapters for tomorrow. I think it's just so intense; so much.

Coping mechanisms were similar for Participants 4 and 5. Both individuals were reluctant to seek outside help when they had difficulty. They appeared to tough it out alone.

Interviewer: When you have difficulty, and it sounds like some of you hit some hard parts, how did you deal with those difficulties?

Participant 5: Cried a lot.

Participant 4: Prayed.

Participant 5: Prayed a lot. Yeah.

This contrasted with Participant 1 who chose to study with her peers and who sought faculty help during office hours. It appears that some individuals simply do not consider seeking help from others.

Three factors helped Participant 5 stay in college. The first was her enjoyment of her extracurricular activities. Second was the sense of personal pride that she anticipated upon graduation. The third factor was the support of her parents.

I want that diploma. Just knowing you can get that diploma in one year -- well, I know you [who are graduating this term] have got to feel awesome because I would just be like, "Oh, my God, twenty days." Counting down. Actually, I think I'm going to start counting down next week. But for just inner self. Just having that inner strength, knowing I can do it. It took me so long to find a major. My parents are like, "Are you sure you still want to go to college? I don't care if you major in basket-weaving. You can major in whatever you want." If they think I can do it, I know I can do it. It's just a long road but I think we're all going to do it.

Participant 5 was interested in the appearance of the campus. She enjoyed the trees and greenery because she believed it made "you feel at home". The main library was a disappointment because it was "dingy" and felt like a "dungeon". A second campus library was admired for its beautiful architecture.

This individual was also concerned with employment after graduation. Like Participant 4 hoped that the faculty would help her in this endeavor.

But they [the faculty] work with you in [my] area and try to get you a job . . .

They'll try and call all kind of places, "Do you have any jobs available?". They haven't done that for me yet but I know quite a few people, and I hope they do it for me if I get in a rut. But I think that is one beneficial thing in [my major].

Job expectations were a discouraging topic for this individual. She described a speaker that made a dramatic but temporary impression on her.

The speaker was just not very good at all. She was telling us if we thought we were going to make money and we wanted to have a family, we should change our major now, because we weren't going to have a life and all this kind of stuff.

She mentioned this experience again later in the discussion.

That speaker jolted me a couple of weekends ago. Everybody was looking around like should we even be here . . . And she's saying things like, "If you think you're ever going to take a nap, you better take your last nap today because, after this, you're going to be working, working, working." And everyone is just like going, "Oh, my God. What are we supposed to do? Okay, change the major." It kind of scared me. I was like is this what the outside world is really like? But then I had to think about it on a big corporate level. That's what she was. And I'm from a small town and I probably want to own my own small business. Not anything big with all these scary people. So, she did scare me for

a while, but then I came back to reality and thought about what I really want to do.

Participant 5 concluded from the experience that although it was an interesting experience, the information offered would not apply to her situation and could be discounted.

Extensive comments from Participant 5 concerned her student worker experience as a laboratory teaching assistant. This individual was not a student in any of the professional education programs offered by the university. She believed that her position was demanding, stressful and that the minimum wage was too low for the type of work involved. She was frustrated by her lack of skill in this position.

I found it very discouraging . . . And I'm turning in my grades tomorrow so I'm finished grading all my labs, practicals, and all that good stuff. But I know -- like [supervising faculty member] said, "Well, if you know what the Dean of the Agriculture College looks like and you see him coming around, then you just better watch out because he might fuss at you." I've never seen the man in my whole entire life. And it's like, "Well, I'd be glad to see the dean; maybe talk to the dean." So I would definitely recommend something go on down there, because it's a pretty crazy world down there.

She returned to this topic later in the discussion.

I get frustrated. I get so frustrated because I feel stupid. I can't just sit there and explain everything so beautifully and make it look like roses. It's takes me so long to actually get my point across. I think I work better one-on-one than

teaching a whole group. And it got very frustrating because I found myself going to each [student] telling them, "Okay, do it this way." And they went, "Oh, okay. I get it." And it was frustrating. They don't tell you how to teach. They just give you the manuals, and give you the keys, "Here, you're on your own." And if you mess up, oh, my God, it is your fault. It's not anybody else's fault. It's your fault. Because you weren't told this. Obviously, I wasn't told [how to do] this or I wouldn't have messed up.

Participant 5 stated that this was her first time as a teacher and would also be her last experience as a teacher. She described this experience repeatedly as "hectic" and "frustrating".

Points of General Agreement

Several minor topics developed during the discussion that were important to all participants. All participants agreed that the appearance of the campus was important to them. Student apathy about rising tuition was lamented by everyone in the group. It appeared that classrooms that were too hot or too cold was a common experience among students.

Summary of Focus Group 1

It was notable how helpless most of these individuals felt to determine the outcome of their educational programs. From their perspectives, the faculty hold or withhold success for reasons that may be unrelated to the performance of the student. The faculty was not recognized to have any role other than that of a service provider to the student. Course work was described as a hurdle to overcome in the gaining of the

degree even to the point that some courses existed only to “flunk-out” students. Poor classroom performance was considered to be due to poor high school preparation or an “unlucky” assignment of a teacher to a particular course. These individuals were genuinely surprised by the amount of outside work needed in college to maintain an acceptable grade point average.

Except for one individual, none of these students came to college with an idea of what they wanted to study. College was appealing for other reasons such as social atmosphere and extracurricular activities. In every case family expectations influenced the decision to go to college. Several individuals had not considered what they would do upon graduation, even though everyone in this group was within one year of completing their degree. Employment after graduation concerned these individuals, they found field experiences and career days helpful in defining their employment goals. They appeared to be depending upon the faculty to find them employment. Several individuals in this group did not believe that their education had prepared them for any specific employment.

There was a suspicion hinted at in this group that there were “others” who get better treatment. These others were not clearly identified by this group. None of these students were active in departmental or college related clubs. One student lamented the lack of a club in her field even though there are several organizations and social events that she could have participated in. It may be that student organizations were not well promoted to all student groups. From the tone of the discussion it appeared that such

organizations are not considered to be socially advantageous organizations. They were described as dull and methodical obligations.

The one participant who held a student worker position that was somewhat related to her course work found this to be a stressful experience. Although it gave her opportunities to develop new skills, she was uncertain of the expectations for her job assignment. She believed that she did not possess the skills needed for her assignment.

It was interesting that some students who had difficulty were reluctant to seek outside help. A possible explanation is that individuals who are not doing well in a course may be uncomfortable admitting this to others. Perhaps they fear that their instructor will be unable to explain the material in a different way than was used in the class. They may also feel uncomfortable with their more successful peers; it is potentially embarrassing to seek help from a more successful classmate. Whatever the reason, students who did not seek contacts with the faculty outside of class appeared to hold a less positive view of the faculty.

This group had extensive expectations of the faculty. Students did not understand that faculty have multiple roles and so they assessed the faculty performance based on the belief that the primary and only role of the faculty was to deal with student needs. Tenure was seen as a way to protect poor teachers; research activities of the faculty were seen as impediments to meeting with the faculty outside of class. Faculty were to be personable, readily available at all times, well organized, experienced academic advisors and efficient employment counselors. When faculty had tried to suggest that job opportunities in a specific field might be scarce or that it might require

an intensive level of personal commitment, students interpreted this information in unexpected ways. Students considered these events to be “discouraging” or “negative.” One student implied that faculty were gender biased in her field.

The appearance of the campus was a point of pride with these students. The campus had a comfortable home like atmosphere. It seemed to be important that the college look like their ideal of a university rather than an office park. The library was criticized on its architecture rather than its holdings.

Courses were often judged based on how applicable they were to the major field. Students seem to have trouble understanding how individual courses integrated into a related whole. Some students were concerned that the course work might be too regional in approach or subject matter.

Diversity was valued by most participants in this group. Diversity had two different meanings. Diversity in the discussion of courses refers to the variety of course work available for study. Diversity also meant the variety of the student population across ethnic and age groups. Both types of diversity were considered to be positive elements in the university.

Focus Group 2

Focus Group 2 consisted of six participants, a moderator and an assistant moderator. This group was different from Focus Group 1 in several ways. This group had a participant who had been active in departmental organizations. Two members of this group had experienced financial hardships in attending college. Their experiences sensitized the group to the problems of less financially secure students. One member of

this group had worked her way through school and had alternated enrollment with work experiences. Finally, there was a member of this group who had a disability that qualified her for some special services offered by the college.

Participant 1.

Participant 1 selected L.S.U. because many of her friends were attending L.S.U. This was the most introverted member of Group 2. She stated that she explored several majors and was very happy in her current major. She did not realize that her major existed when she first enrolled.

I went around so much before. I think I went to three different majors before I found what I'm in and, once I got there, I was so excited to be [there]. It was exactly what I was looking for. I just didn't know it was there.

Participant 1 believed that advising was important and was pleased with the advising that she had received in her department. A good advisor was described as someone who was experienced and knowledgeable about the courses and familiar with the individual student's course work. A good teacher was described as the one element that would make or break the quality of a class. A good instructor was someone who "wants his students to learn." and who is enthusiastic about the subject" he teaches. Like some of the participants in Focus Group 1, this participant expressed concern about the tenure system and believed that teaching expertise was related to tenure awards.

I don't see the point in tenure because you can make tenure and still be a horrible teacher. I don't see why that has so much impact.

She did not see any relationship between research and teaching.

I can't remember if I ever had a teacher that was doing research.

Participant 1 believed that college had changed her perspectives and valued her experiences for the personal growth that the college experience had developed in her.

Since I've been through college and I'm almost finished, I think my new

outlook [is from gaining] general knowledge, not even anything

specialized. Just the general outlook I have is a lot different . . . It

broadened my view, my outlook, and made me open to lots of things that

I was more closed to before.

This participant was less certain about how effective her courses had been as preparation for employment in her field. She believed that her work experiences had been more beneficial.

I've taken all these classes, I 'm about to graduate, and once I'm out, the

only thing I'm really going to have to depend on is what I've learned

working, rather than what I've learned here [in class].

This individual regretted not taking part in more of the activities that were offered to her on campus. She did not participate in any organizations because she believed that they would be too time consuming. Other topics mentioned by Participant 1 included the importance of keeping the computer facilities up to date, the need for more effective custodial staff and the general appearance of the campus, particularly the landscaping.

Participant 2.

Participant 2 selected L.S.U. because she had relatives who lived in the area that she could live with rent free. She described it as “easy and convenient” and admitted that she “didn't really put much effort ” into selecting a college. Her family had considerable influence in her decision to attend L.S.U. “It was where I was going to go to college and it always seemed I was going to be here.”

She selected her major after her father eliminated some possible majors because they were in fields that he did not believe were financially rewarding. Although she liked her major, she was not particularly enthusiastic about it.

The reason I chose [my current major] was for very superficial reasons.

Because I didn't like anything else. So, you're here, it's being paid for, so you might as well make the most of it, that kind of thing.

However, despite this lack of enthusiasm, Participant 2 believed that going to college was a good experience because it allowed her to mature.

I think it is a time for you to finish growing up, to mature a little bit more to really be ready and to prepare yourself for what's expected from you out in the world. When I think back to when I was 18, I had no clue what it's about out there. I'm lucky enough to have the opportunity to come to college and just get glimpses of it, and slowly ease myself into the world. I think of it as a finishing school.

She also appreciated the opportunity to travel with the students in the College and enjoyed field experiences. Diversity was valued by this participant, meaning the

diversity of course offerings and the diversity of backgrounds of the student body. She believed that an experienced advisor was essential to success in college and felt that she benefited from the help she received from her advisor.

Structure in the degree program was discussed by this group and this participant felt that many students do not know how to structure their electives to create an appropriate minor.

All our electives are related to a minor. Mine is pretty focused and it stays in line with what I'm taking. But I know a lot of my friends who aren't necessarily in this college, they take whatever electives are easy, just to build up their grade point average.

Structure as described by this participant may be related to quality of the advising. A good advisor might help structure a degree.

[There should be] more directed and in depth courses for particular colleges instead of real broad [programs]. Rather than some of the electives being just things that really you're never going to ever think about again, have it where your choices are more in depth, rather than there even being the opportunity for you to screw up on your choice.

For Participant 2, important qualities in a teacher were flexibility and organization. Flexibility was the willingness to adjust the class to fit unexpected events.

They're not going to just cram everything at the end because they didn't get finished with their syllabus. They're going to modify it to give us the

most information they can give us but not try to destroy us at the end of the process.

She offered an example later in the discussion.

If something happens, if we lose a day because of a hurricane or whatever, they don't pile it up three times as much at the end. They just adjust. They throw out the insignificant things and just teach us the main facts.

Organizational skills were mentioned by Participant 2 four different times as an important quality in a classroom. Organizational skills appear to be related to flexibility.

Some of the teachers, they're just so unorganized and they're not efficient at teaching the subject matter the first day you're supposed to cover it so it has to go onto the next day so, finally, you're like three days behind within the first week of class. And then they start to get panicked and it just reflects back onto the class, and it's just -- I mean, you just start dreading going to class.

For this participant, faculty research was related to organization and to grading issues.

I have one teacher, and he was in the process of doing lots of research as well as teaching our class, and I think the class just suffered a lot from it. He was more focused on that [research] than he was on the class and every time he came into class, it was completely unorganized. I went through that class and I didn't learn anything, and I got an A in it, and

there's no way, no way that I deserved that A, because I still don't understand what I learned. Well, I didn't learn anything obviously.

The disappointment of this participant in the course was not mitigated by the good grade that she received for her work.

Favorite classroom experiences involved teachers who used a variety of presentation methods and activities that offered hands on experiences. She preferred smaller classes because those classes offered more personal involvement between the teachers and the students.

Outside the classroom, Participant 2 found off campus employment to be an enriching experience.

I worked at several different places and at each place, you meet somebody, and then you go on to your next job and they happen to know that same person. And then you just -- you start to -- because I didn't grow up in Baton Rouge but I think I delved into society here more than going to school, with my working and meeting people through school.

Participant 2 was not a member of any campus organizations. She wished that there were more social events for students and that the events already offered were better promoted.

Participant 2 was also interested in more effective teacher evaluations and doubted that the present system had any effect. She proposed that administrators should participate in the classes, or actually speak with the students about individual courses rather than an end of the semester survey. Other subjects mentioned by Participant 2

were the attractiveness of the campus, parking issues, the appropriateness of a live mascot, and the need for the student body to become more involved in running the campus.

Participant 3.

Participant 3 chose between L.S.U. and another nearby college. L.S.U. was selected because it was closest to home. Although she enjoyed her courses, she did not enjoy being on campus. She described herself as a “home body” and this tendency toward introversion affected the activities that she chose to participate in on campus.

I had the opportunity [to join an organization]. It just didn't appeal to me at the time. I kind of wish I would have. The fact is that I'm just a home body. But I wish now that I would have joined in more of the groups but at that moment, I wasn't interested in them.

She avoided any extra time on campus.

. . . I hate being on campus. I come here, go to school, and I like to go home at night. I do my homework. I could never live on campus. Away from school you will not catch me, after school, summer school, this [meeting] is the only reason why I'm here [today].

For this individual, other interests were considered to be a better use of her time than campus related activities.

. . . I'm not saying that it's horrible to belong to it. I wish I would have. But I just had too many other things I was more interested in. I mean, it wasn't

anything about any particular group. It's just I didn't want to fit it into my time schedule.

Later in the discussion she was wistful about not having “been more involved” in this aspect of college life.

This participant enrolled with a specific career goal that she had selected in childhood and she had continued in that field of study. She found college to be different from high school because of the diversity of the students' backgrounds and ethnic groups and the diversity of experiences available to her. Like many of the participants, she found her study skills lacking when she came to college.

If I studied as much as I study now, I would have been a heck of a student.

I wasn't forced to study. I could study the night before a test in high school and do well.

Participant 3 appeared to be very focused in her goals. Events and courses were judged based on how efficient they were in getting her to her graduation date.

I know you're supposed to be a well-rounded student. You just want to get in and get what you want, and get out. But it's impossible.

Like participants in Focus Group 1, this participant felt that some of her courses did not fit with her perception of what should be in her major. Other problems were related to scheduling issues. An advisor was important because without some guidance this student felt that she would be “up the creek without a paddle.” Poor scheduling decisions were recognized as a threat to a timely graduation.

They [the courses] don't always fit. You have certain classes that are offered in the fall only or in the spring only, and [advisors] are the only ones that can make out a plan and say, "Make sure you take this time and don't drop it, because you won't be able to graduate because you're going to miss that class because it's only offered in the spring."

Later in the discussion she returned to this topic.

I would say look at the advisors . . . They are who we depend on. They get us through the classes that we need, help us schedule our classes.

Flexibility was an important quality in an instructor to this participant. For Participant 3, flexibility meant to use a variety of presentation methods and allowing time for classroom discussion. She viewed the university as a community and was intrigued by the possibility of colleges and departments working together to offer a variety of perspectives on a subject.

I would have the buildings close together so that they form a small community, and the colleges would interact with each other. I think it's really important because we need the help of others. You work together. I had this one course where [a different department] came in and they were like willing to help us [on a project]. And I think that was really important. And then faculty that is caring, cares about the students, what they do. A variety of people. I think with variety you see other people's perspectives. You're not just looking at what's through your eyes but what's through everyone else's. What did they see?

This participant stated that she really enjoyed being a student in the College and that the whole experience was valuable to her, including her mistakes.

You learn a lot. You learn from your mistakes, and I think that's what it's all about. You learn that you can do things certain ways and you can't do the other things the way you just did [the first problem]. It's all a process.

Participant 4.

Participant 4 was a unique participant in this study. She was older than most of the traditional female participants and had sporadically enrolled in college until she received financial aid. She described herself as “very poor” and considered herself fortunate to have had the opportunity to attend college. She described living in a dorm as the “best thing that ever happened” to her because it allowed her not to be concerned with household management issues.

I know the students don't understand but when you come at 18 years old, unless you've had to do it in your house, you don't know how to pay bills on time, you don't know how to keep your money together. Unless you've had to do it, and a lot of low income people have never had to do that before. And just living in the dorms and having to live with somebody you don't know is an [experience]. It could be awesome and it could be awful but either way, you learn a lot about yourself and about other people.

She selected L.S.U. because one relative had graduated from the university and other relatives had briefly attended without graduating. She stated that “it was always the goal in high school to be like my older brother and go to L.S.U. and graduate.”

Participant 4 selected her major after exploring several possibilities through the General College.

Participant 4 had very positive experiences with her advisor. She was enrolled in several service programs that helped her stay in college, services that she was unaware of until her advisor referred her to them.

I was very poor when I first started college. . . . I met a big buddy, a senior, who's been through it all, when I was a freshman, and we met once a week. And just having that person there to talk to and stuff was a really good experience -- helpful for me, even though I had a really bad first year. It was just knowing that I had to meet with this person once a week and that I could tell him anything I wanted to. It was just great.

Participant 4 believed that a good advisor needed to be experienced so that they were aware of the resources available for students on campus and could work effectively with scheduling issues.

Alone of all the traditional female focus group participants, Participant 4 was very active in student organizations. These activities were the highlights of this individual's college career. She spoke extensively on this topic and referred to it several times during the discussion.

I was not able to participate in clubs in high school, even though I really wanted to. And so, when I joined [my department] I just started going to the club. Well, it was so open that I was able to jump right in and do things.

Later she described how participating in an organization had modified her attitudes toward groups she considered to be elite groups.

I'm [an officer], and I never would have been able to do that if it hadn't been for the openness in the College of Agriculture . . . And I started out as just a representative for my club. And meeting [an administrator] and you know, he knows my face. [Other administrators] know my face. Just knowing those people has enriched my life and it changed my attitude toward the elite. It changed my attitude toward thinking that -- "Oh, all those people are always given what they've got." You know? That's the way I was brought up, that the people who were in the student councils and stuff like that are just the rich people who have ties and stuff like that. And it's not true. It's just not true. At least in the College of Agriculture it's not. And just the opportunities I've had, it's just been wonderful . . . I'm just so thankful.

She explained why organizations are worth the time commitment.

[Organizations] are time-consuming. But I think one of the benefits is long-lasting relationships where you get to know your advisor real well, or you come back on campus and somebody will know your face if you're gone for a year. You come back on campus and somebody will remember you. . . . And it just makes me think that if I get involved now, then maybe I can make a difference before I leave. And then when I get into the real world, I can still make a difference. A lot of students are leaving Louisiana because they don't think they can make a difference, because it's so messed up. But if we all leave, who's

going to change it? You know? So many people can't wait to leave Louisiana.

But if we all leave, who's going to change it?

She suggested that every entering freshman should be given a book that listed all the student organizations on campus and how to contact them. Participant 4 was so persuasive in her descriptions of the benefits of student organizations that other participants expressed regret that they had not been more involved.

Student apathy was mentioned by this participant in regards to student organizations. She was frustrated by students taking on an organizational commitment and then not fulfilling that commitment. She called this type of activity a “resume write-off” and was disappointed that not all students took their organizational responsibilities seriously.

For this participant, a good teacher allowed time for class discussion, was well organized, spoke clear English and was not a graduate student. Graduate students made poor instructors because “they are in school too” and “because they haven't had any teaching classes, they don't know what they're doing, and they're as scared as we are.” Good teachers also had course and lecture objectives that they shared with the students.

Research and teaching activities of the faculty appeared to be mutually exclusive to this participant.

I think one of the problems is that [the faculty] if they want more money, they have to research. I think some of them are just excellent teachers and they should just focus on teaching and get paid the same amount. Some of them are good at doing both, but some of them cannot research and teach at the same

time. They could do one or the other really well, but they're forced to do both.

The students are the ones who suffer in the meantime, not including all the extra work that's put on [the faculty].

She returned to this topic later in the discussion, stating that the faculty should not have to produce research if they were good teachers. Like other students in this group, she felt that tenure was an unfair process and believed that it allowed "favoritism and friendship [to] get in the way of teaching ability and quality."

Participant 4 was supportive of the College and spoke at length about how supportive the atmosphere was to her.

I appreciate the teachers. I appreciate the whole College of Agriculture atmosphere because I know the other colleges aren't like ours, where anybody's willing to help you, or they send you to somebody who can help you. They're willing to take the time to talk to you.

She offered two concerns about the undergraduate experience in the college. One was that the faculty needed more efficient support staff.

[They need] to look into the people who really run the college, and look into how much overloaded they are, and do something to help them; ease their loads so that they could be much happier so they could enjoy life more and still do a great job. I think a lot of the people who deal with the students are overloaded, that they need extra help. They need people to back them up.

The second concern related to the participant's belief that some students were treated differently than others. Participant 4 offered a plea for more attention to be given to the average student.

They need more attention to be given to the mediocre students and not giving everything to the supposedly high GPA students. You know, those who make 2.5's, you know, there's a reason why, whether it's a bad family background or whatever. We still deserve more scholarships. We still deserve help whether we're real rich or not, or can keep our G.P.A. up or not. One semester can kill your GPA. They need to look at other things besides GPA when they're handing out scholarships or student worker jobs.

She continued on this topic later in the discussion.

I saw it. I saw the scholarship recipients, who also get student worker jobs, they get student worker jobs in the department. They're like usually in the department that they are majoring in, so they get to be buddy-buddy with the dean, and they get to be buddy-buddy with the important people. And so, they already know their face. And so when something comes up, they get first recognition for it.

Despite these reservations, this participant had a very positive experience as a student in the College. This was true even though she did not believe that her degree had given her specific job skills.

I think it's a lie that they tell you in high school, that college is supposed to prepare you for a job. I think what college does is, it prepares you to grow up.

By the time you get out of college, you should be able to enter a work force as a competent professional, having seen the professionals who act in a professional way. College is just to see if you can get through it. I think that's what it is. It's a test. And that's what employers, I think, look for, just to see if you stuck it out, if you went through all the hardship you had to go through and still managed to finish and did what you had to do. I think that's what they look at more than what you actually learned because you basically have to learn on the job wherever you are.

The lack of specific job skill training was not seen by this participant as an impediment to employment. She later commented that one of the reasons she chose her specific field was that she believed that with that specific degree she would be more likely to find employment. It was seen as a stronger credential.

Other topics were mentioned by this participant briefly. Sports were considered to have too much of an influence in the university. She lamented the loss of the open admission policy. The student health center was much appreciated by this individual and she suggested expanding it to include dental and ophthalmology services for financially strapped students.

Participant 5.

Participant 5 selected L.S.U. primarily because it was affordable. She had applied to an out of state school but she decided to come to L.S.U. for financial reasons and because it was within weekend driving distance of her hometown and family. She switched majors several times and was very comfortable with her final major because

she found the subject interesting. After graduation, she intended to immediately pursue graduate work in a nonagricultural field because she expected the job opportunities to be limited in her present field.

I've always been happy with my major. I've enjoyed almost every class I've taken. I just have really liked the subject matter, even if I didn't like how it was presented, or the teacher, or the grade I got. I've always been glad that this was my major. The only thing that has concerned me is I've always wondered if it is preparing me for a job afterwards. I know a lot of people have graduated with this degree and have not found jobs, which is why I'm pursuing graduate school.

Undergraduate advising was of great importance to Participant 5 and it was the topic that dominated her comments. She believed it was important to select electives carefully or else "you end up with a degree that doesn't qualify you to do anything."

You really have to have a good advisor to help you pick your electives . . . It's so open to what you take, that it's so easy to graduate without a specific knowledge in any area. And I took it upon myself to focus on [in specific area] because that's what I wanted to do afterwards. So all of my electives are along those lines, but I know so many people who just go to their friends, "What's an easy elective to take?" And so they've got [a wide variety]. Those are all electives, and when you add them up, it doesn't mean anything.

She also gave a specific example of how a poor advisor can delay a graduation by recommending incorrect substitutions. Advisors were helpful in avoiding scheduling problems so that courses could be taken in the correct sequence. Participant 5 believed

that “there's no way to graduate on time without that advice from the very beginning.” and that some of the advice given to entering freshmen is not helpful.

Well, that little spring orientation thing that I went to, they told us, “It doesn't matter what you schedule your first semester.” They said, “It doesn't matter. Pick anything because it's not going to matter.” But if you're in a [certain curricula] where everything is a stepping stone -- my first semester was wasted because they didn't help me get into my [prerequisite courses]. They just told me they were full and I could take them the next semester. I didn't realize that these were prerequisites for everything else I had to take.

Participant 5 had mixed emotions about the effect of research on teaching. One faculty member who was a full time teaching appointment discussed his frustrations with his colleagues in his class. This participant appeared to feel that this was inappropriate. Other professors used their research to complement the class but they kept the research in balance with their teaching responsibilities.

One that was my favorite teacher of all, he was very active in his research but he taught his class very well. His research was very important and it backed up what he was teaching, but he never lost that priority. He was always available. Anything we turned in was given back to us the very next day. We turned in 15-page reports, where he had corrected spelling, and corrected comma splices, so you knew he read every sentence and you got a fair grade.

Graduate students were not considered to be good instructors by this participant primarily because they lacked experience in the subjects they were teaching. It was

important that a professor be “available to students for questions, for advice and for help.”

Participant 5 held a campus job related to her major. She believed that she developed a stronger skill base from this campus job than she had in her courses.

I found my on-campus job has taught me just as much, if not more, related to my field than my classes have. It's really, you know, gone hand in hand. But I've learned a lot from my campus job.

This participant did not participate in any departmentally related clubs but was active in two individual sports, one through a campus group and one through a community-based group. She believed both were valuable because they introduced “a sense of community around L.S.U. and Baton Rouge” that she would have missed if she had not joined these clubs. The linkage of the university community to the larger community was a particular value held by this participant.

[Ideally] colleges would be open to new ideas, promote research, and would provide working models for the rest of society. For example, recycling campaigns and innovative waste treatments. The campus should be unobtrusive to the environment around it. My college would produce responsible citizens, qualified to work in their fields.

For Participant 5, student government was a disappointment and she held strong opinions about its value.

I don't think they fairly represent students. Not at all. I mean, that's who the people are on student government, and you know, the people who are running it.

It's just like, ugh, and I don't like any of them. I don't vote. That's a waste of my time and so I just don't. It's a waste of my money for it to go for student government. They say they do things. They've done nothing.

Other topics mentioned briefly by this participant were the importance of not procrastinating and a comment in appreciation of the student health center.

Participant 6.

Participant 6 selected L.S.U. because it was the university in the state that was farthest from her family. She applied and left home the same day. Although she did not wholly succeed, she selected her major in an attempt to avoid specific subjects that she had disliked in high school. She described her decision as "I've always known what I didn't want to do." It appeared that her estrangement from her family made attending college a financial struggle for this individual.

For me, a good thing about being in college was being poor. I'm so poor. I have a friend who gets everything. Her parents pay for everything. Bought her a house and she's only 21 years old. And being poor, I appreciate everything so much more. I don't think I would have learned that not going to college.

It was important for this participant that the courses in her degree program clearly relate to the subject area of her major. She had little use for seemingly unrelated course work.

There's a lot of really ridiculous classes that I'm having to take that are agricultural electives. The whole agricultural elective portion of my degree is

just so off the wall. I don't know why it's there. I don't want to take them.

They're pointless for my degree.

Participant 6, like Participant 5, believed that advising was very important. She was disappointed in her experiences with her advisor and spoke at length on this topic several times during the discussion.

I have had several of them and the one that I've dealt with is just a complete idiot. I mean, he's a real nice guy, and he's fun to talk to, and he'll do anything for you, just go, "Hey, I need this class." "All right. I'll substitute it."

Unfortunately, according to this participant, classmates had failed to graduate on time due to inappropriate course substitutions. There were other advisors that she had been more comfortable with.

The guy before him was great. I loved him. I went and saw him several times. He answered any questions I had. And then he left and then this guy took over and it's just like, your appointment was useless. You know? Do it myself. Go see somebody else. I remember I went to get him to substitute a class for me. He sent me all over the world I mean, just everywhere. I just got tired of walking everywhere and he wouldn't do anything for me, so I went to the other advisor and she's like, "I don't know why he made you do this. It's so easy; pathetically easy." And she wrote up the slip and turned it in. I don't think he has too big a grasp of what's going on." . . . And he is a graduate student too, which I don't like.

She returned to this topic later in the discussion.

He doesn't seem to care as much. You know? I'd go to him and say, "Okay. You know nothing fits in my schedule." I need to get 15 hours and there isn't 15 hours in the schedule book. And he's like, "Oh, well, okay then. Take this, this, this and this." And it has nothing to do with what I want but that's my only choice cause I don't have anything else. I can go to another [advisor] and they're like, "Okay, well, we'll see," and "Go through the book. Find out what you want to take. Come back to me and we'll see what you can do." Whereas, he is just like, "Okay, here, take this." And I'm stuck "Okay." You know. "I don't want to take that." But that's what he tells me to take.

Like Participant 5, Participant 6 found that poor advice during her freshman year placed her off sequence for courses in her major because she did not take the required prerequisites early enough in her program.

Although Participant 6 was disappointed in her advisor, she enjoyed teachers who were enthusiastic in their subject areas and who related the topics to other subjects and applications.

[The teacher] is enthusiastic about it, and he related this to us. He would take it, he would give his lecture and then he would say, "Look you, guys, this happens every day and this is how it happens, and this happens, and this experience and this example." And he told wonderful stories and it wasn't all, "Copy everything I say, everything I do." He got up there and talked. I learned more from his class about life than I learned about factual material. I still learned the material but because he gave it to you in such a manner that you remembered it, just

because you were there. You didn't have to study for the test. You knew it. He related it to you so well, you were like, "Oh, yeah. Okay." You know. "This is what he said about it."

A good teacher was also described as someone "who wants his students to learn." and who recognizes that students are enrolled in other classes as well as his course. A poor teacher was one who used the same presentation methods every class and was overly dependent on an overhead projector. Participant 6 preferred a variety of presentation methods.

This participant confessed to having difficulty with time management. She recognized that this was a skill that a successful college student needed, but she did not know how to balance her studies with the rest of her life.

I'm in college and I guess I should be able to manage my time wisely. Not that I can, but, you know, I'm in college. I can't. It's like a double sword. I can't do it. I'm supposed to but you just can't. It's impossible.

For this participant the best thing about being in college was the diversity of the students that she encountered.

There are so many different cultures, so many different people, so many different types of people that it's fascinating how they can all gather in one central location and just go to class, and have a good time, and get together. I think the people are wonderful. Not necessarily individually but the fact that you're around so many different people.

She continued on this topic.

They give us an opportunity to meet so many different people. It's wonderful just to be able to have that chance.

Later she added to her comments.

You learn so much. I've learned so much just by being here, you know, about different people and how they work and how they function and things they do in their cultures.

She also enjoyed the diversity of courses available to her.

I've taken so many things, I never would have thought about, that I just completely, totally enjoyed. [Subjects] that I would say if I had to come back, I would probably come back and get a second degree in that just because it's just so damn interesting. It was like "Wow. I like that." I like the diversity of the classes. I hate being told to take those silly classes [agricultural electives] but for somebody else it might be good.

This participant did join one university related organization but later withdrew from it. She withdrew because it was very time consuming and too expensive for her limited budget. She was frustrated by members who did not honor their commitments and found it to be an emotionally draining and thankless experience. She concluded that student organizations were not a good choice for her although they might offer a sense of belonging for other students.

Other topics mentioned by participant included parking issues and campus recycling. Foreign instructors in General College courses were a concern when these individuals spoke garbled English. She appreciated the international perspective that

these individuals brought to the classroom but felt that if they communicated poorly then these perspectives would not be communicated to the students effectively.

Summary of Focus Group 2

The students in this group appeared to be more self-reliant than the students in Focus Group 1. They were less likely to blame their poor performance on outside influences. Like Focus Group 1, they found adjusting to college to be difficult. Problems discussed by both groups included time management and study skills with the second group adding household management issues. College was described by some members in this group as a test or hurdle in which the important goal was simply to finish. Like the first group, they did not believe that college had educated them for a specific profession. One student was surprised that she had learned more from her work experiences off campus during college than she had in the classroom. However, this perception of lack of specific job preparation was not seen as an impediment to employment.

Family, peer influences and location were the reasons that participants in Focus Group 2 came to L.S.U. Except for one individual, none of these participants arrived on campus with a clearly defined career goal. Accordingly, academic advising was highly valued by these individuals. Good academic advising was beneficial because it was seen as a way to avoid scheduling problems and to help select minor fields. Advising appeared to be related to the need for structure in a degree program. It was believed that students who had too many choices among electives often did not organize these electives around a specific field.

Like the participants in Focus Group 1, these students had high expectations for their instructors. Instructors were expected to be available, personable, flexible and organized. Flexible had several meanings for individuals in this group. One meaning referred to the willingness of faculty to adjust the syllabus to deal with unexpected events. In this context it appeared to be related to idea of organization. The second meaning referred to the willingness of the faculty to use a variety of material for presentation of course material particularly the allowance of time for discussion. "Personable" was a quality admired by both groups with the second defining this quality more than the first group. Students simply enjoyed having faculty and administrators call them by name and speak to them outside of class.

The tenure system was discussed by this group in nearly identical terms as it was described in the first group. Undergraduate students believed that tenure is primarily a system used to reward good teachers. Therefore they cannot understand how faculty can justify not being available to students in preference to research projects or how poor teachers can be tenured unless there is some type of administrative favoritism among college administrators. The few students who realized that research was a function of most faculty positions resented this because they believed that research obligations often cause faculty to treat their courses as a second class project. Research was seen as a negative influence because these students believed that faculty who are involved in large research projects will be less organized for class.

The two individuals who had financial difficulties attending college began a discussion about the financial hardships of attending a university that appeared to

influence the comments of the other participants. Although some participants had enjoyed travel opportunities with the college and enthusiastically described these experiences early in the discussion, they mentioned these experiences only briefly after the conversation on financial hardship. It may be that they were sensitive to the fact that they were able to enjoy an experience that others in the focus group were not able to afford. One individual believed that although student organizations might have many benefits, they created expenses that she could not afford.

In this group, the concept of elites or privileged groups reappeared in the discussion. Elite groups were students who were perceived to hold advantages through scholarships or participation in organizations in the college. It was generally believed that successful students were given more opportunities in the college. It was thought that these students were given better student worker assignments and it was believed that this was an advantage because it gave these individuals more opportunities to interact with the faculty on an informal basis. This group believed that good but not outstanding students like themselves were a forgotten group in the college. It was notable that the one student who had been active in college organizations was also the main proponent for the existence of elite groups within the college. Although she had been successful with student organizations and had defended her organization, she appeared to feel that there was favoritism in the interaction between the faculty and students in these organizations.

This individual differed from the other participants in several important ways. She better understood multiple roles of faculty members. She was more willing to

overlook inefficiencies in the university system. She was the first to describe herself as a student of the College of Agriculture rather than as a student of her department. She was the first student in the study who referred to the College as “our” college. It seemed that by participating in organizations, she gained a sense of self determination that was lacking in some of the other participants. She had a very positive opinion of the College in general and felt that her time at L.S.U. had been well spent even if she did not find employment after graduation.

Traditional Female Student Interviews

Two interviews were scheduled with this group. Interviews allow for a private discussion between the participant and the interviewer about a central topic. In both interviews the participants spoke at length on topics that they might have been reluctant to bring up in a group. Probes or follow-up questions that would be inappropriate or potentially embarrassing in a focus group can be used in an interview. For this reason, although the interviews followed the same basic guide as the focus groups, some topics were explored in more detail than they would have been in a group setting.

Interview 1

Interview 1 chose L.S.U. for several reasons. She was from the Baton Rouge area. Many of her high school classmates were attending L.S.U. She was offered a generous scholarship to attend this university. Interview 1 had considered going away to college but was uneasy about being so far away from her family.

Like several participants in this study, this individual found the transition from high school to college a difficult one. She had attended a private preparatory school and

had to relearn her writing skills in college. Interview 1 also had difficulty balancing her social life. She believed that it might be helpful to have more structure in the first year of college. Structure in this usage appeared to mean a more restrictive environment.

To be successful here, you have to set priorities. And yes it's known as a party school, which I think is kind of unfair. I think a few people give it a bad name. But Thursday nights, Friday nights, Saturday nights, you want to go out. You have to realize that if you have an exam Friday, you can't go out on Thursday night. I think that a little bit of structure, especially your first year, would help. It seems like all of a sudden you go from high school, where it was very structured for me, very sheltered, to here where it's free. It's having all restrictions lifted that for me was very difficult. You have to set your priorities, set your goals. Figure out what you want to accomplish for that year.

Initially this individual came to L.S.U. planning to enter an engineering discipline with the ultimate goal of becoming an astronaut. Two factors changed that goal. First she became ill and had a difficult first semester due to medical problems. Secondly she decided that although she enjoyed mathematics, she did not enjoy mathematics courses. At this point she reassessed her goals and selected a new major based on a course that had interested her in high school. She realized that to hold her interest the material in the course needed to be applied in some way.

But the math, I hated it. And a lot of it, I didn't see the point. If I couldn't use it right away, I didn't care.

This need for course material to be applied in some recognizable way was important to this individual interviewee. She referred to this topic again later in the interview.

It seems like they make you take more math than you really need. I had to take calculus for my minor and I haven't used it yet. It just seems that they're making you take it and I haven't seen it anywhere. If I'd used it, then, sure, I'd take it. But I'm not going to use it, especially nowadays with computers. You plug in the number and tell it what to do, and that's it. It's not like it used to be. My brother is in engineering. He used to have to figure out the things by hand, but you don't have to do it anymore. He doesn't do it anymore. He uses a computer. It almost defeats the purpose of spending all that time when you could be spending time learning how to use the computer more. You know, apply it to what you're doing. I think math is important but just not the emphasis that they were putting on it.

She described work that appeared to not have an application as “busy work.”

She gave us abstracts to do and they made no sense. It was a lot of busy work that I don't think is necessary. I have enough work to do for school. I don't need something to keep me busy.

Accordingly, the courses that Interview 1 enjoyed offered either group problem work or laboratory experiences. For this individual a good teacher was accessible, willing to locate resources for the students and flexible. The expectations for faculty who work with students were very high.

Most of the teachers that I've had have been pretty good. They stay after class if you need them. They'll come in on Saturday if you need them. They're really great. They give you their home phone number. And that amazed me the first time one of my professors gave me their home number. They gave the whole class their number.

This participant was disappointed in the library holdings in her field. This disadvantage was overcome by the willingness of the faculty in her department to share their resource materials with the students.

There's not a lot that you can look up. You have to go to certain magazines and the library doesn't carry them anymore . . . If our professors don't get it, we pretty much have to find a way to get it and it's not easy. I'd definitely have the library resources that you need.

Faculty were expected to be patient and were to use participatory examples in class.

He was just great. He would explain anything you didn't understand. He would go over it in detail and do examples for you. And that really helped, especially in that class.

She continued describing this instructor later.

He integrated [the examples] it into class time, which really helped, because I know I wasn't the only one that was totally lost. It really helped. And the way he explained it, he didn't explain it in complicated terms. He said, "Okay, let's work number one together." And we worked it together. You know, I'd work it, and the girl next to me would work it, and the guy behind me would work it.

We'd all work it. And he'd work it on the board. And he'd give us a chance to do it and then we'd work it together. So it really helped to figure out what we were doing. If we made a mistake, he was very patient. Even if we had a problem with our calculator, he'd say, "No, no. You press this button. Your calculator is different." It was a lot easier to do.

She later offered a different example of this type of activity.

One of my professors in my major took us over [to the library] and showed us exactly what to use which computers would help us out and how to use it. One of the librarians came and helped us. Showed us exactly what to do. Where to look in the computers that kind of thing. That was very helpful, and a lot of professors don't do that. They don't take time out from class to do that.

For Interview 1, it was important that an instructor be "flexible." For this individual, flexible was narrowly defined as flexible deadlines for assignments. She offered three very similar examples describing "flexible."

If you have a problem -- if you can't turn something in on time because you have five other things due that day, they're very understanding about that.

Nobody had it done. So she let us come in during finals week and turn them in and that really helped us out. She could appreciate the situation we were in.

You may be taking 18 hours. You may have five papers due that day. They would give you the option of doing it on a choice of three days or something.

Other important classroom characteristics were organization and atmosphere. She believed that in a well-organized class the expectations for the students were well defined and the material was presented in a logical progression. A comfortable class was one which was less stressful for the students and they could feel easy about participating.

Interview 1 was very interested in fairness. Fairness entered into two arenas, fairness related to testing methods and fairness of grading standards. Clear expectations were required for a test to be considered fair.

The problem is the subject matter was not distinctive enough. You couldn't tell the difference between one question and another question, because the answers were just too similar. They overlapped so much that you couldn't distinguish one from the other.

Interview 1 believed that the grading standards were not consistent between courses.

They're telling me this is right in one class, what I learned in high school is wrong. And then they tell me in my second class, "What you learned in your first class is totally wrong. Do this." Okay. What am I doing? I had a really big problem with that because then in other classes, you don't know how you're supposed to write. A lot of my classes, they started emphasizing about writing stuff, and I didn't know what to write, or how to write it to make them happy, because they kept changing their opinions. It was very difficult doing that; trying to figure out what the teacher wanted, because they didn't tell you. They just said, "This isn't right."

A different quality of fairness described by this individual was favoritism.

Interview 1 believed that instructors often selected class favorites and that these individuals received better treatment than other students.

They picked out their favorites. They really did. You could tell . . . When we'd get up to give presentations, you could tell from the way you were treated. In the way they said so-and-so's going to be speaking today. That kind of thing. And in the grades too, you could definitely see it in subjective things that they graded. They would grade harder. I had a girl who sat right next to me; we'd write almost the exact same thing on our paper. She would get ten points; I'd get five.

It was not very fair.

This concept of favoritism led to extensive comments about college athletics. This individual felt that it was inappropriate for athletes to receive extra help or special allowances because of their sports commitments.

Scheduling had been a problem for this individual. She described problems with scheduling at four different points in the interview. She stated that courses in her department were offered only once a year and they filled quickly. This was a particular problem when the class was a prerequisite for a later course. Twice she commented that this may be planned because "they want to keep you in school longer" or "they want you to stay in school a long time." Scheduling problems also limited the choices for approved electives.

[It was] very difficult. Very difficult. Getting the classes that I need; getting the classes that I wanted for my approved electives. They were scheduled at times

that required things were scheduled. They're only offered so many times. If you miss them, you miss them. That made it very difficult. I know a lot of people who wanted to take other classes, and we didn't get the chance.

This participant did not participate in college related clubs. She was active in nonacademic organizations and a local krewe. She simply was not interested in other campus organizations.

Interview 1 felt that the College needed to update and expand the computer facilities for students. She thought that her major was a forgotten corner of the College in this regard.

It was just very slow, very irritating, not being able to use what you needed to get it done. And after you graduate, you're not going to be using that. It defeated the purpose, not having the equipment that we needed. So, I'd definitely have the equipment and everything . . . There are only so many computers in the library, [it] isn't going to help us when other [departments] have [these resources]. I think we're an overlooked section of the College of Agriculture. We really are . . . We don't get the funding . . . We don't have the equipment that we need, the computers that we need, our faculty doesn't have the computers that they need. It's very difficult to teach when you don't have the equipment. It's very difficult to learn when you don't have anything to practice on.

Like many participants in this study, good advising was considered to be a real asset. This individual felt that there was a need for more advisors. She was impatient with waiting for appointments.

One. Uno Mas. One. That's it. It's not easy to get in to see them. I mean, that was a real problem. I mean, the only counselor that ever helped me was my J.D. counselor, that I picked . . . That's the only one that I ever got help from. If I would have gone to my assigned one, I never would have gotten anything done. It just seems like there's not enough advisors for anybody . . . She's so busy. You wait there two hours for an appointment for her. And a lot of times you just go in between classes. You don't have time to make an appointment. Something comes up and you have to go in and talk to her. It's very difficult getting in there.

Interview 1 was concerned about the image of the College. She seemed to be uncomfortable with idea that she was earning a degree from the College of Agriculture.

I didn't know if I wanted a degree from the College of Agriculture. I didn't know whether it was going to carry the same weight as a degree from [another college]. And [specific field], that's what our degree is going to say. What is [specific field]? Nobody knows what it is. It's so ambiguous that it doesn't tell you anything.

She thought the lack of recognition could be overcome by a more aggressive promotion of her major.

A lot of people don't know it's here because we're in the College of Agriculture. They don't know we're here. It's a career that's in demand. People always want it. People graduate from L.S.U. in this career but not enough of us. It's very versatile. You can go into almost anything. People just don't know that we're here.

Interview 1 was very satisfied with her degree program. She believed that she had found something that she enjoyed that she was good at and what she considered to be fun. It had also expanded her horizons.

I realize things now that four or five years ago I didn't realize . . . Why they do this; why they do that. And it's things that I had never thought about before. So now I know things but other people won't. So it's just kind of neat, knowing things that other people don't always think about.

After graduation, this individual hoped to find employment. Faculty were seen as an important resource in the job search. This may have been partly due to a perceived lack of opportunities listed in the campus career center.

I went to Career Planning. I went through the listings for Agriculture and all I could find was Piccadilly. Great. I'm qualified to work at Piccadilly. Five years of college for nothing.

The faculty helped to encourage this individual in the job search.

My professors are very encouraging. They constantly point out things that we can do with our major, since it is a very unusual major. They point out how it can be used in all different areas. They told us, "These are jobs that they have.

They're all kinds of different things you can do." And they introduced us to all those kinds of things. So you were never left to wonder, "My God, what can I do with this degree." They give you what's out there. They let you know. And there are new things every day. They find different ways for us to use it. That helped, knowing that I could actually use this degree, and not have to go to graduate school or something like that; that a Bachelors would be just enough.

Other topics of interest to this individual were campus appearance, peer support, the drinking age, diversity of course work offered in her major and parking. The campus was described as a very beautiful and pleasant place to be and this topic was discussed in some detail. The parking problem on campus was of great interest to Interview 1. She had devised an extensive solution to the parking problem. Related to this were concerns about the pedestrian safety and the possible restriction of vehicular traffic on campus.

Interview 2.

Interview 2 selected L.S.U. because she did not want to leave the state and she considered only two in-state universities to be worth attending, L.S.U. and Tulane. She had a close relationship with her parents and her father preferred Tulane. However the cost was prohibitive and when she was offered a scholarship from L.S.U., this became the deciding factor. Unfortunately she lost her scholarship during her first year due to a medical problem that caused her to miss too many classes. Her family was described as "very supportive" of her throughout her enrollment. She tried several majors before settling on her present field.

Interview 2 selected her final major due to several influences. A relative was active in a College related organization which Interview 2 joined even though she did not come from an agricultural background and was not an agricultural major at the time. Another influence was a course that she took in which the professor took an interest in her and suggested that she consider majoring in that field. The enthusiasm of this professor was a profound influence on the career decision of this participant. This professor was described at length in glowing terms in this interview. The participant was so impressed with this individual that she selected her major based on this one course.

Although this participant considered that she had been successful in her major, she was a little uncertain that she had made the best choice. She was afraid that she had disappointed her parents. She was also concerned about her future income.

I have had the underlining big doubt because all my life I've wanted to be a doctor, so that was always in the back of my mind. You know, "God, I let myself down. I let my parents down." I didn't have any pressure from them, but two of my uncles were doctors and I've talked with them about what schools I could go to. I always made really good grades in high school, and had good test scores, so that was always like, "Oh God, I missed it. I'm never going to have another opportunity to get into med. school or anything." But I did realize that I'm a good student but I do not have that commitment to study and study and study. Over several years I discovered that. But when I did, a lot of the doubts that I had were, "I don't know what I'm going to do? What am I going to do with

the rest of my life?" I've always thought of myself as having a really good career. I wanted to make money. I always thought of myself in some kind of upper level position. But after I was in [a specific major] I discovered that I'd only make maybe \$30,000 or something like that. That would be like the highest that I could ever aspire to. It just wasn't what I wanted.

She continued:

It's so funny, my freshman year after I lost my scholarship . . . and Daddy threatened to take away my car . . . at that point I was still like, I still wanted to go -- I still had it in the back of my mind, "I'm still going to make it." You know, I could still go. You know, if "I make a 4.0 for the rest of my semester, I'll make it." But, it's kind of funny though. I found my niche in the college because I've always been at the top. As far as grade-wise, I don't know about that, but everybody respects me, everybody knows what I've done, really appreciates me for who I am . . . It seems like I'm on the upper edge where I am. For this individual the best quality of the College of Agriculture was a sense of belonging. She believed that the faculty were genuinely interested in her.

My experience at least as far as the faculty, and a lot of time with the students [as well is] because every class is so much smaller that it's almost like a family. I found that the professors really care about you. They really get to know you well. After the first day if they don't know your name, they know it after the first day. They really care that you come to class, that you do your work. I remember a professor that is always like, "I will take it personally if you do not come to

class." They pulled me aside in front of the department head. It's just like, you need to start going. I hadn't been in two days. So I was, like, "Okay." I think that's the big thing, is that they really care about it. I don't mean it to do a comparison, but I will. Every class that I've had in the [different college] it's still a small class, like 40 or 50 people, which isn't that big, but they still don't get to know your name. I even talk in class. You don't get to know the kids, and I'm a very talkative person. I always at least meet my neighbors or whatever. But it's just completely different. It's a much colder environment. I would sense competitiveness a little bit more than in the College of Ag. But as far as my College of Ag classes, the professors are all really nice. They all really do care about you and that motivates you to learn more.

She felt that the faculty and the students mutually respected each other and that this respect enhanced student learning.

This participant was very active in student organizations in the college. She had become involved with them her first year and had remained active throughout her enrollment.

She considered these activities to be the high points of her college career and spoke extensively about her activities related to these organizations throughout the interview.

I could say from experience, I think being involved in extracurricular activities is one of the most beneficial experiences for me. I think that's so important. And to take on various leadership positions. Get to know as many people as you can kind of network and build a lot of friendships. And have fun too. I just would

tell [students] to have fun. Get involved in different clubs and meet people definitely to have fun.

Like other participants, Interview 2 did mention some frustrations with student organizations.

I have learned through being involved with different clubs that [the same] people do all the work. A lot of people take credit for [the work] that don't do anything. But all that has built my character; who I am. It helped mold me. But that kind of gets frustrating too, to have to deal with the inefficiency.

Besides student organizations in college, Interview 2 took advantage of other opportunities. She participated in travel opportunities offered through the university. She pursued field experiences. She was active in several nonacademic organizations.

Interview 2 was pleased with her interactions with the faculty. She believed that getting to know the faculty was an advantage. She found that the faculty in college cared about the individual student, were committed to making sure that material was mastered and provided a good environment for student/faculty interaction.

I really, really do enjoy the College of Agriculture in that I can walk in Ag. Admin. and everybody knows me. You know, it really is a family, a feeling of coming home, just to know that [several administrators], and all the faculty really care about me.

Interview 2 was disappointed when she had faculty who were less well prepared for class and who appeared unorganized. She also expected to be given some idea of what the objectives were for a lesson and some description of the type of tests to expect.

It was also disappointing to her when the notes and the exams had not changed in a long time. Such classes were described as “a joke” and “too easy.”

It's really funny because when it's a joke, it really gets to the student because you get an A and you don't do anything. I guess that's why, myself and some other students would think that it is a waste of our time. We didn't learn anything. I'm sure students love that kind of class but I don't learn anything. I didn't learn anything.

In the classroom, this individual particularly enjoyed activities that involved working with other students, such as group projects, class discussions and she also enjoyed presentations. Presentations were a favorite activity since she believed that they would be similar to the type of activities that she would pursue once she graduated.

I really enjoyed the group projects. It enables you to get to know the other students better, and you share in the work, and then when you have the final project together, you get kind of like, "Well, we really did a good job." I really liked doing the presentations too. I think that's my favorite thing, is the overheads and coming up with what each other says, and stuff like that. It kind of makes it like, "You're getting ready to go out in the real world and you'll have to be doing this kind of stuff," and it kind of gets you ready for a lot of things.

Social interactions with students provided low points as well as high points for this individual. A specific low point related to the different subcultures within the student population.

My sophomore and junior year, I did have a little bit of problem with some of the people in my classes as far as -- and a lot of it had to do with -- because I was involved in [a student organization] so I had a lot of interaction with students from country backgrounds. And the girls, I didn't have any problem with. But it was the guys. I had a lot of problems with a lot of the country boys, used to having girlfriends back at home or they are the ones that are doing the work and a lot of this was because I was in leadership positions with these people. And sometimes, I was telling them what to do and it really made me very indignant because every response, like I would get frustrated or whatever, and it was always -- their responses were, . . . "She's being a bitch." It was the typical stereotype against women, and I really didn't like that. But [a faculty member] helped me on that. [The faculty member helped me to understand] that they had a hard time dealing with me because they're not used to women like me. They're used to the women that do whatever they're told, or who aren't as forward, or as confident, so that they were doing all that in response to me.

These experiences caused this individual to reconsider her major. She chose to select a different major within the College to avoid this cultural group.

I did have some difficulties. Doubts that I had were, "Am I going to be able to work with these people?" But when I did switch [majors] and I realized that I'm not going to be dealing with these kind of people. I don't mean to stereotype or characterize them but I will be in corporate America, and I'll be dealing with

business people. The country people won't even be around. It'll be a completely different world and they'll value me for who I am, not on that.

Unlike some of the participants in the focus groups, this participant had spent some time considering potential job opportunities in her field. She was impressed with the interest that the faculty took in helping the students locate job opportunities.

From where I am right now, being so close to graduation, I would say the best part [of being a student here] was my getting into my major and being in that department. We're in class and they pass out job notices. There is no other college where they do that. Where your professor says, "See me after class if you want to sign up for an interview." They really help. They really want their students to get a job. I'm thinking about going to graduate school. They're really concerned about keeping you in this department or, you know. So, as far as career-wise, and where this will lead me later in life, getting into this department was the best thing.

Having a strong peer support network was important to this individual. She thought that a network of fellow students was helpful in ways that the faculty could not be. Examples were study groups, the sharing of notes and the location of old exams.

I think making as many friends as possible has helped me so much, because I talk to everybody. I know everybody in all my classes. There might be a couple of them, you know, I might miss, but the classes are so small that you get to know everybody and that helps. One of the greatest things that I have is getting together with my friend. He's one of my closest friends. We'd study, or getting

together with different groups and study. Another thing is getting old notes or old tests. That's a big, big help.

In certain classes she believed that having access to the information provided by these groups was critical to succeeding in the class.

I've heard that they do know we have the old tests. But it's almost like can we get the old test and that's all you need kind of thing . . . We go to class, we take notes and stuff, but a lot of the old tests are very similar.

She continued on this topic.

. . . It's almost like you get C's or worse, if you don't have an old test. If you have an old test, you get A's that kind of thing. So it's kind of like the whole class goes, "Who has it? Who has it?".

Diversity of the student body and interaction between the student body as a whole was a concern. Although Interview 2 loved the College of Agriculture, she wished that she had interacted with other colleges more.

What comes to mind is how each college here is so different. We have our own identity here and it's like we stick together but it's almost like each college is separate amongst each other.

She added to her comments.

. . . It's good that we love our College of Agriculture but it almost seems like I never even got to see [students in other colleges]. I don't really know how that would happen. But the more opportunity to meet different students, the better.

You learn so much more from meeting different people. And I don't know what that would look like. But I think it's good that we have our own little place too.

Another concern mentioned in some detail by this participant was personal safety. Interview 2 believed that this was a topic on the minds of other students as well.

I don't know if it's really affected me in any way, but just since I've come to L.S.U., it seems like the issue of safety has come up. Some of the students feel a little less safe about different instances happening on campus.

. . . Just mentioning that they didn't think it was as safe but it's almost like it's a city of it's own. With any city, you're going to have [problems] but it's almost a shame because it's like our little city, and there shouldn't be [any] . . . Since I came to L.S.U., they've done a lot, like adding lighting to the parking lot, and they added little phones . . . There are undercover cops that walk around all the time, at night; every night. They're on duty from like 11:00 to 3:00 in the morning . . . That's good to know.

Other topics mentioned by this participant included the beauty of the campus, the closeness of her sorority sisters and the school spirit. She mentioned the importance of time management skills. She was concerned with the inefficient office staff that she noticed around campus. She was very grateful to her family for the emotional support that they had given her.

Summary of the Interviews

Numerous topics that were discussed in the focus groups were revisited in the interviews. The need to stay close to family as a criterion for selecting a college was

mentioned by these two participants just as it had been mentioned by the majority of the focus group participants. Both interview participants were awarded scholarships and this was a factor in their selection of L.S.U. over other universities in the state. Both participants found balancing the social and academic parts of college life to be difficult. A more structured degree program was suggested in one interview for the same reason that it was suggested in the focus group. Both interview participants were concerned with finding employment after graduation.

Academic advising was highly valued. Faculty who were personable, flexible and organized received high praise. Flexible meant adjustable deadlines and the allowance of class time for discussion. Courses that were too easy were disappointing and faculty who offered such courses were perceived to be less committed to teaching. Fairness was an issue and it was related to fairness in grading and favoritism by the faculty.

It was important to be connected to a peer group since a peer group provided access to notes and old exams. It was believed that individuals without these resources would be at a great disadvantage to their peers. This implied that those students not active with a social group in their major would have difficulty obtaining these materials.

A different elite group emerged during one interview. This could be described as a cultural rift between students of rural and urban backgrounds particularly on gender issues. The perceived differences were great enough that the affected individual chose to change her major rather than work against the cultural expectations of the rural group.

Two new issues emerged that would resurface in later focus groups and interviews. Personal safety was discussed in some detail in one interview indicating that at least for one individual safety on campus was an important concern. The second issue was a concern that having a degree from the College of Agriculture may not be perceived by employers as prestigious as a degree awarded by some other College. This was mentioned by an individual who had not participated in college or departmentally related organizations.

One interview was with a person who had been very active in departmental organizations. Like the individual in Focus Group 2, participation in these organizations was a high point of this individual's college career. It provided a sense of personal value and accomplishment. This individual described herself as a student in the College of Agriculture and believed that the faculty and teachers respected each other. Student organizations were seen as particularly valuable for the out of class interaction they provided with faculty members.

Summary of the Traditional Female Student Results

A profile of the traditional female student that participated in this study in the College of Agriculture can be represented as a composite. Traditional female students who attended L.S.U. commonly enrolled because it was expected by their parents, their peers or society in general. L.S.U. was chosen as the university to attend for three reasons; it was a family tradition, its location in the state was desirable and it offered a competitive scholarship. Family was influential in both the decision to go to college and the selection of a major field of study and they often eliminated areas from the

student's consideration that they believed were not financially rewarding areas. Most students did not have clearly defined career goals when they enrolled their first year of college. Academic advising was highly valued by these individuals; they were dependent upon their advisors for the selection of course work.

Individuals who found a career goal expected the courses in their degree program to be directly related to that major field. These individuals seem to be interested in the quickest path to complete the degree. Individuals who delayed selecting a career goal often selected courses based on the recommendation of their peers. They often ended up with an eccentric mix of course work that did not form a cohesive minor. Both of these student types seem to believe that less freedom in course selection would be helpful. The career-driven students wished to avoid course work not directly related to their field of study. The less-focused students wanted to make sure they had taken as many of the basic required courses as possible in their first year so that they would not be missing prerequisite courses.

Students did not recognize that faculty had other commitments outside of the classroom. They expected their instructors to be personable, available outside of class, organized, flexible and fair. Personable instructors knew the names of their students and spoke to them outside of the classroom. Organized instructors were prepared for class and did not let their research encroach on class time. Flexible instructors adjusted deadlines for projects and adjusted their lectures to allow for unexpected events and class participation. Fairness was the use of a consistent grading scale across courses, testing material in an objective way and the avoidance of individual favoritism.

Diversity was valued by these participants and had two meanings. Diversity meant the variety of course work available to enroll in a given field. It also meant diversity of the student backgrounds or ethnic groups. Although ethnic diversity was considered a positive element in the student body, foreign teaching assistants were disliked because students were afraid that their spoken English would be difficult to understand.

For those students who participated in them, student organizations were a tremendously positive experience. They felt more comfortable in their majors and they enjoyed a closer relationship with faculty and students in their departments. Although other types of organizations were attractive to students, only departmental or college related organizations appeared to offer this benefit. Social organizations and nonacademic organizations created a separate world for their participants that was often divorced from and in competition with the academic programs of these students.

Four subcultures were identified by this group. One was an elite group that appeared to be very active in college organizations, made good grades and was very devoted to the College. The second group consisted of good to average students who chose not be involved in college activities and had little interaction with the faculty outside of class. This group appeared to be somewhat suspicious and believed that there were many elite groups or privileged groups in the university. The other two groups were students from rural background and students from city backgrounds. The differences between these two groups seemed to be related to gender stereotyping.

Students were proud of the appearance of the campus. It was important to them that it look like their idea of a university. It made them feel at home and students enjoyed sharing the campus with family and friends.

In general, these students were pleased with their experiences in the College of Agriculture. They believed that they had matured during their time at L.S.U. and that this was at least as valuable as any possible preparation for employment. Several individuals believed that the personal relationships that they had formed were important enriching experiences in their lives.

In order to briefly summarize the responses given by these participants, their responses can be summarized in a table by topics. Such a summary is offered in Table 2 (see Table 2) and is a simplified overview of the information gathered in the focus groups and interviews. Responses and discussions were classified by question without regard to when this information was offered in the discussions or interviews. Interview questions have been abbreviated in this table; the complete interview guide is provided in Appendix C.

As this summary illustrates, several topics were repeated across interviews and focus groups. Although a comparative listing of topics is helpful in identifying areas of common interest, such a summary disregards any possible relationships between concepts and eliminates detail. The summaries of these possible relationships are represented in the following charts and illustrations and provide a graphical representation of some of the ideas that were gathered from these participants.

Table 2

Summary of the Traditional Female Participants

Questions from interview guide	Focus Group 1	Focus Group 2	Interview 1	Interview 2
What attracted you to L.S.U?	- Family - Location -Scholarship -Nonacademic organizations	-Family -Location -Cost -Peers	-Family -Location -Scholarship	-Family -Location -Scholarship
What is your opinion of the programs you enrolled in at L.S.U.?	-Enjoyed it -Possibly too regional -Disappointed in lack of specific courses in major field -Poor teachers in general college courses	-Allowed time to mature -Hard to graduate quickly -Needs more structure in the degree program - Pleased with faculty in major - Major not well promoted -Good atmosphere -Good advisors	-Good teachers -Good relationship with faculty	-Like a "family" -Professors really care about individual students
Describe the ideal college. How is it different from the program at L.S.U.?	-Tenure would be only for good teachers -Not enough class diversity	-Tenure would be only for good teachers -Favoritism in teaching evaluations -No favoritism in classes -Not enough experienced advisors	-Test material was not well defined - Favoritism in classes	-Some classes were less organized and too easy

(table continues)

Questions from interview guide	Focus Group 1	Focus Group 2	Interview 1	Interview 2
What parts would you do differently?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Scheduling -More courses related to major field. -More field experiences -Diverse classes -Add "fun" organizations -Faculty would place students in jobs. -No "flunk out" courses -Revise tenure 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Scheduling -more courses related to major field. -Better advisors -No foreign graduate assistants -Eliminate or revised student government -Revise tenure -More structured minors -Research and teaching would be exclusive -Faculty would balance teaching and research -better computer equipment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Scheduling -More sections offered more often -Better computer equipment -More advisors -Promote the major 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -More interaction with other colleges -Better staff support for faculty
If you had some doubts, what influenced these doubts?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Faculty comments -Employment after graduation. -Elite groups with better preparation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Future income -Employment after graduation -Cost to obtain the degree 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Grades -Peers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Peers and gender issues
What are some of the doubts that you had?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Ability to succeed -Ability to locate a job after graduation -Courses may be too regional to locate employment outside of region -Gender issues 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Ability to succeed -Ability to find employment in major field. -Student worker positions provided more skills than courses did. -Lack of specific skill training 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Ability to succeed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -If future income would be adequate -Fear of disappointing family -Appropriateness of major

(table continues)

Questions from interview guide	Focus Group 1	Focus Group 2	Interview 1	Interview 2
What parts of the program worked well for you?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Nonacademic organizations -Laboratory classes -Field experiences -Travel opportunities -Student diversity -Diversity of course offerings -Personal interactions with faculty -Accessibility of graduate students -Good facilities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Academic organizations -Laboratory classes -Field experiences -Travel opportunities -Student diversity -Diversity of courses -Personal growth -Off campus employment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Group projects -Laboratory experiences -Personal growth 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Nonacademic organizations -Academic organizations -Field experiences -Laboratory classes -Presentations
What are some of the things that helped you finish when others did not?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Peers -Family -Personal goals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Peers -Student organizations -Personal goals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Peers -Family 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Peers -Faculty -Family
What do future students need to know about themselves?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Time management -Study skills 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Time management -Study skills -Household management skills 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Time management skills -Study skills 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Importance of meeting people -Time management skills
About the program?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Need for good advisors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Need for good advisors -Available organizations -Benefits of departmental organizations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Supportive faculty 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Benefit of student organizations -Need for peer study groups

(table continues)

Questions from interview guide	Focus Group 1	Focus Group 2	Interview 1	Interview 2
What would you like the college to know?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Poor student worker assignments -Benefits of field experiences -Discouraging faculty to avoid 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Importance of open admissions -Importance of the student health center. -Enjoyed being here -Need for additional or more effective staff. - "Helpful" atmosphere in the College -Need for good advisors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Lack of opportunities through campus career planning and placement -Professors who were very encouraging 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Student without access to old exams may be at a real disadvantage
Is there anything else you would like to mention?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Parking -Campus appearance -School spirit -School athletics -Drinking age -Student apathy about tuition -Classrooms that are too hot or too cold 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Parking -Campus appearance -More attention needed for average students rather than elite groups. -Need efficient custodial staff -Linkage between campus and the surrounding community -Need campus recycling 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Parking -Pedestrian safety -Campus appearance -Drinking age 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Need for more security on campus -Personal safety concerns

There were three common influences that encouraged these individuals to attend college; family influences, societal expectations and economic considerations (See Figure 6). All other influences could be considered to be subsets of these overall concepts. For the traditional women students interviewed, attendance at college was

also influenced by their goals for their future after graduation. Few of these women had strongly defined goals that they expected to achieve through their college experiences.

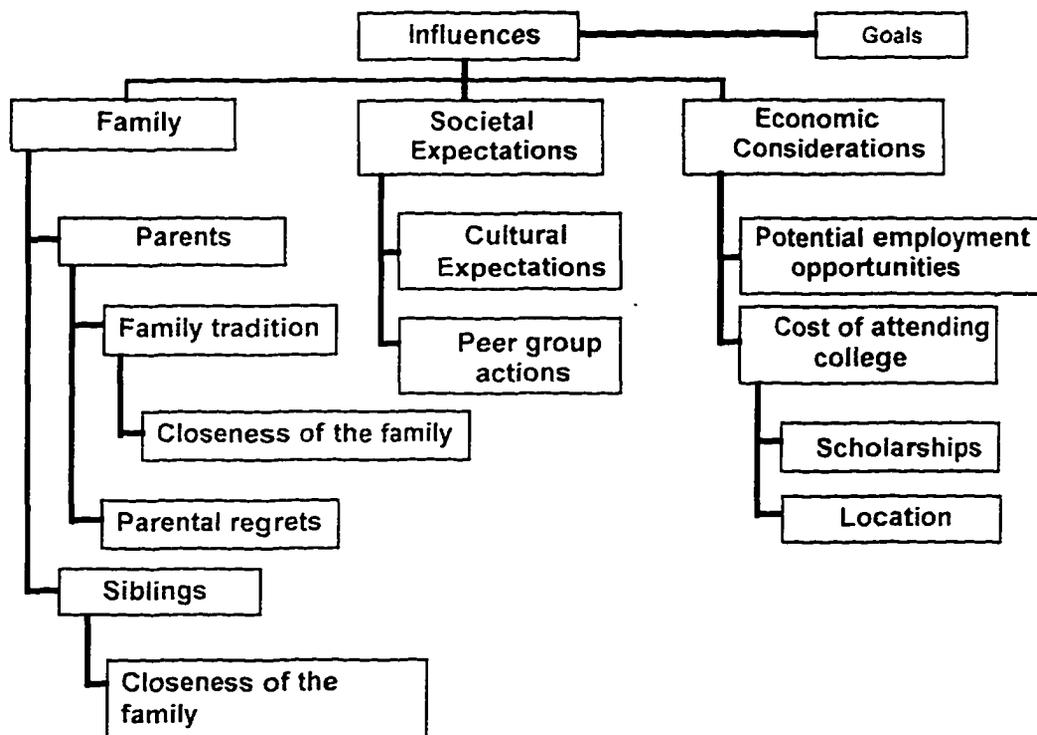


Figure 6. Influences on Traditional Female Students to Attend College

Goals appeared to interact with the factors that influence individuals to attend college. Goals were divided into two types, well defined goals or less defined goals. The majority of traditional women participants seemed to hold goals that were less

defined. This approach to college affected how they assessed their experiences (See Figure 7).

Less defined goals were classified into two types, goals related to social reasons and goals related to general employment requirements. There are many social reasons for attending college including peer influences, membership in nonacademic organizations and general social interactions. This type of goal could be summarized as “Going to college is the thing to do.” Goals based on general employment requirements seemed to be less diverse. These individuals attended college to earn a degree because they perceived that they needed that degree to gain or to hold onto employment or to meet a personal or family expectation. This type of goal could be characterized as “Any degree will do” and “I just want to get in and get out as quickly as possible.”

Individuals who attended college for social reasons valued loosely structured degree programs, diversity of experiences and personal relationships with the faculty. Their preferred classroom environment was flexible rather than content driven, offered time for discussion and group projects. These students enjoyed faculty stories even if these stories were not on the topic of the lecture.

Individuals who attended college for general employment reasons were interested in obtaining the needed information by the most efficient methods possible. They preferred highly structured degree programs to limit the possibility of selecting inappropriate electives. They preferred faculty interactions to be limited to assistance with specific problems and topics. The classroom environment was expected to include

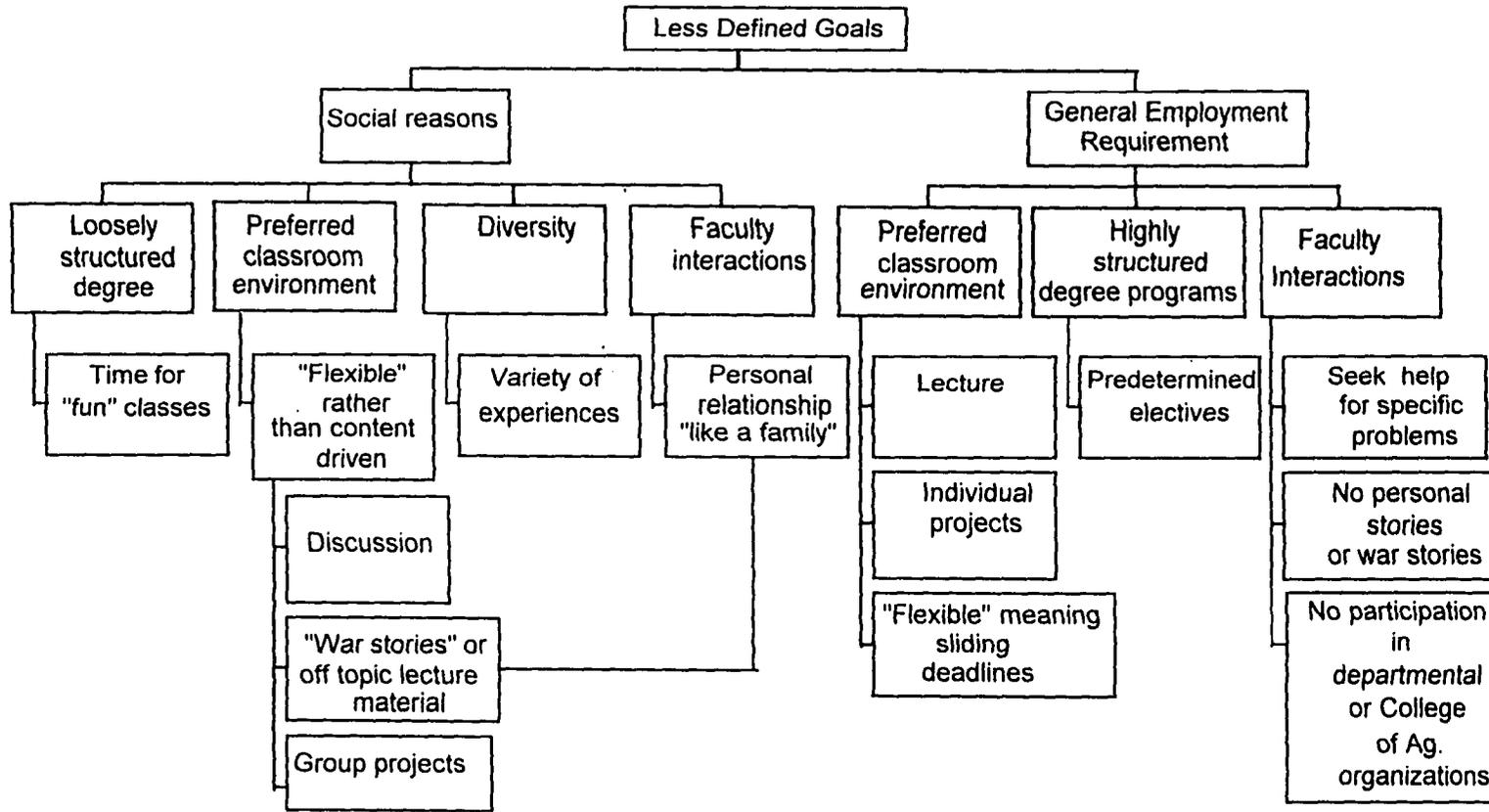


Figure 7. Relationships between Goals and Preferred Educational Formats

individual projects, lectures and included flexible deadlines so that work schedules or other course deadlines could be more easily accommodated.

Several concepts were defined by students during their discussions and narratives. One concept was the idea of a "good" teacher. Some traits of good teachers were repeatedly mentioned by these participants. These traits are summarized in Figure 8.

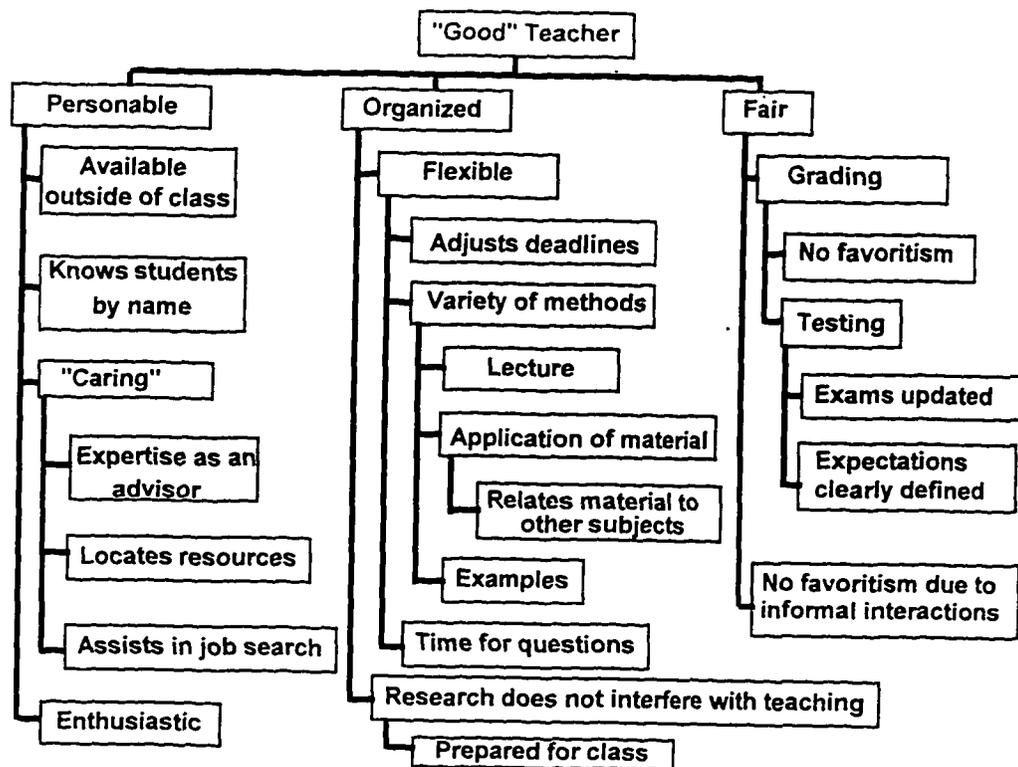


Figure 8. Qualities of a "Good Teacher"

Good teachers were described as personable, organized and fair. Personable teachers were available outside of class, knew their students by name, enthusiastic about the subjects they taught and appeared to care about their student as individuals. Evidence of caring included expertise as an advisor, the location of hard to find resource material for the students and some assistance in placement of the students when they graduate. Organized teachers were described as flexible and able to balance their research with their teaching. It was believed that faculty who were interested in research would be less likely to prepare for class. "Flexible" had three distinct meanings; the willingness to adjust deadlines, the use of a variety of instructional methods and the allowance of time in class for questions. "Fair" referred to grading issues and the perception of favoritism. Teachers who updated their exams from semester to semester minimized the effects of "test banks" that were not available to all students, thus creating a "fair" environment for exams. Favoritism was avoided by fair teachers both in grading and in the quality of out of class interactions and activities.

Nontraditional Female Students

For this study, nontraditional female students were defined as students who were older than 26 years of age. One focus group and two interviews were used to collect data. Twelve individuals were contacted. Five agreed to participate in a focus group, two agreed to be interviewed. Of those individuals who agreed to participate every one kept that commitment.

Focus Group 3

This focus group consisted of five participants, a moderator and assistant moderator. The discussion was very animated and the participants were respectful and attentive to the concerns of others. The group discussion developed almost exclusively through interaction between the participants and the topics outlined in the interview guide were discussed by the group during the natural progression of the group conversation.

This group was the most homogeneous of the focus groups in the study. Every participant in this group had attended college at an earlier point in her life and was now returning to earn a baccalaureate degree, although some individuals were enrolled to earn a second degree. Each had been gainfully employed prior to returning to college. Every participant except one was a parent. All were married at the time of the focus group.

The group consisted of three individuals in what would be considered traditional majors for women and two individuals who were enrolled in what would be considered nontraditional careers for women. In some cases, there were very few women of this age enrolled in these particular majors, therefore in order to protect the anonymity of the participants in this group, detailed individual summaries of each participant's comments would be inappropriate. The comments for this group are summarized with the dominant themes that emerged from the group discussion.

Feeling old in a young world.

Every participant in this group mentioned some uneasiness with being older than most the students in their classes. In one case, other students had inadvertently contributed to this by teasingly calling older women “Mom.” For other individuals, the way they were received by their department as a potential applicant had an influence on this uneasiness.

Participant 1 had returned to college with an interest in a nonagricultural field but found that her original choice was not a good one for older returning students. She selected her current field of study because her department made her feel welcome. This individual was uneasy being an older undergraduate student and mentioned this discomfort several times during the interview.

[A friend of mine] experienced almost the exact same experience. She wanted to come back and finish up her degree and they were like, “At your age? You know, even if you graduate, you have to do [a field experience]. Nobody’s going to take you.” They shot her down completely. She came to [this department] and got this warm welcome. Encouraging. It makes all the difference in the world. So, I’ve been very, very pleased with this environment in this [department].

She continued later.

. . . I understand there are rules and [they] couldn't be admitted, but the way she presented it, it was like, "You're crazy." It was a horrible experience. But this has been wonderful.

Several participants spoke about how conspicuous they felt in class. Participant 2 remembered how it felt to be a returning student.

I remember walking into one of my [general college] classes. I was probably the only one over 18 years old. I just didn't want to do anything to draw attention to myself. It was horrible. I ended up dropping and I took it off campus at night, and made an A in the class. . . . Now I know what a minority feels; what they must go through day after day after day.

Several participants thought that some of this concern may be internally generated by the individual. Participant 1 described her concerns.

. . . I think I brought [this concern] on myself, except for one instance. But I was the one that felt, "Oh, my God, everybody's looking at me saying, 'What is that old lady doing.'"

Participant 4 echoed this sentiment.

Those were the exact same words I used my first couple of semesters. "What is that old, fat woman doing here. What is she doing sitting in the classroom?"

Another participant thought that being older contributed to an impression that she was a less serious student: "It's hard being an older woman in [my field] and being taken seriously." Despite these concerns most participants felt that the traditional students in general had been "nice" to them.

Age was also seen as a positive factor in their college experience. Returning to college was described as an "exciting" experience. Participant 1 believed that "teachers liked having an older person in the class, because it started interaction." and she "felt

appreciated in a lot of ways.” Participant 1 thought that “everyone should come back to school after they are thirty” because it is a “different” experience at that age than it was for the same person in their twenties. Participant 5 thought that this difference was due to the experiences older students bring to the classroom.

But then you are going to have to remember where you've been, all those years of experience that [when compared] to a kid that graduated from high school and went straight to college, you are light years ahead of him. You have a zillion times more to offer and you know tons more. I think it's just the older we get, the more courses we take, the more we realize there's so much out there we want to know.

Returning to college as an older student was also seen as an advantage because the social pressures of college no longer applied to these individuals.

At some point, I decided to use [my age] to my advantage, and decided that because I did not have to win any popularity test, I was not going to be the homecoming queen, I could sit on the front row, I could be a nerd, I could ask whatever I like.

Family support.

For the traditional female participants in this study, family influences had been mentioned as an important influence in their choices of a major field and even in their decisions to attend college. For the nontraditional female student, family was also an important influence but it was a more complex influence. Traditional female students often appeared to acquiesce to the wishes of their families in the fulfillment of family or

societal expectations for their futures. Nontraditional female students interacted with their families in a different way. They were more likely to look to their families for emotional support, a role that peer groups often provided for the traditional female student. This family support comes from many sources within the family unit.

Participant 5 found her children to be helpful.

My girls have given me more support about going back and my oldest son; he was really excited. It was good to have them on my side. When I took Biology 1201, I made a D on the first test. I hadn't taken Biology since years ago in high school. And my daughter was taking Biology in the tenth grade at the time and she gave me all kinds of support. "Mom, you can get through this. I know you can. Don't drop this class. You can handle it." And you'd never think that the encouragement from a tenth grader would really mean much, but it did. And I ended up with the lowest B in the class. But it was a B.

When the family was less supportive, it seemed to add to the stress of the college experience and to create personal doubts about the decision to return to school.

Participant 2 offered these comments:

My husband. There's a part of him -- I mean, he's a wonderful person but he has just put me down from the beginning. It's like, "You can't [do this]. You can't even do [the work]." He can say something and I'll start thinking: "Well, he knows me." And unfortunately, yeah, he can do it. [create doubts].

Family can also influence a nontraditional student by providing an example of dreams achieved or lost. Participant 3, who was the youngest member of this group, named her father as an influence. She believed that he had regretted not earning a degree.

My dad is the reason why I want to finish because if there's anyone in the world that thinks I should be in college, it's my father. I'd never tell him this. You live a lot of things that you didn't do through your children.

The second influence mentioned by this participant was the future children that she hoped to have. She believed a degree would enhance her standing in the eyes of her children.

...I don't want my children to think less of me because, "Well, look at Daddy. He's the big breadwinner. And here's Mama over here ... " I want my children to respect me.

Participant 1 believed that family support was important to students no matter what their age.

I think one of the common threads that I've seen is a lot of family support. I know, for me, it's absolutely necessary because I still have two little children. But the kids that I see who are doing well have a lot of family support, not just financially because the families aren't always capable. They have a lot of family support. They come from families who want them to do well, who encourage them to do well, and have given them a lot of skills that they need.

A family provides emotional support but the return to school may also create financial stresses for the family. This was not explicitly stated but several participants agreed with this statement given by Participant 1.

I think that there's a lack of financial aid -- not aid, but scholarships for people in our age group coming in. It's tough to go back to school when you have a family and you have children and you have financial obligations, and the scholarships are for kids out of school with these high grade point averages. She wondered why older students were overlooked in this area and believed that this was a real advantage for the traditional student.

Comparison to younger students.

The discussion about family responsibilities and commitments developed into a discussion about the differences between traditional and nontraditional students as perceived by this group. Several times during the focus group, they used comparisons between these two groups to highlight other issues that were important to them. Participant 2 described how important personal responsibility is to the success of academic advising.

And I think that in some ways it is an advantage being older. I've wondered about that with the younger kids, because being older, you do take a lot of the responsibility on yourself, and if you don't get the advising, which I think is somewhat lacking in [my department] you go after it. If you go after it, it's there. But it's not offered.

Other participants added to these comments in a spirited discussion. Since the participants talked over each other at several points it was difficult to confidently attribute specific short comments to particular speakers. In such case different speakers were identified only as a participant.

Participant 1: Because I can remember being here out of high school and sometimes walking around, and I was kind of quiet and so I didn't make that effort to meet people in these huge classes and it seemed like there were people that knew everybody and I felt like, "I don't belong here" and maybe . . .

Participant 4: Maybe that's that one common thing that as we get older, if it's not handed to us we go, "Fine. I'm going to do it."

Participant 2: Right.

Participant 4: Kids of 19 do not have the social skills and they will get lost. We're not going to get lost. Nobody's going to push me to the back of the class, or any of us.

Participant: Right. Right.

Participant: But at 18 or 19, it was a whole different story.

Participant: We have so many life experiences that . . .

Participant: They need somebody else there.

Another advantage these participants believed they held was that they were already fully developed personalities.

I think a lot of kids have a less than successful high school experience. I think maybe that the top 5% really, really loves it, and the rest of them -- to me, one of

the neatest things about coming back to college, even at 30, was I was whoever I wanted to be.

Although these individuals were sympathetic to the concerns of younger students, they also found some qualities of the traditional students disappointing. Traditional students were described as “whiners,” “cocky” and “self-centered” with high expectations for support from the faculty and staff.

A lot of kids that come to college are not college material. Either they're not college material because they just don't have it or they're not ready to actually do the studying and do the work. In the years I've been back, I've heard more whining than I have from my own children. I don't know if it's just the sign of my aging that I think everybody is whining but I don't remember that from being here in the [years past].

The transition to college required a mental adjustment for the traditional student to succeed.

You know when you graduate from high school, you think you know it all? I found the biggest shock was to come to college and realize that I don't know anything.

The need to develop personal responsibility was mentioned repeatedly by this group. Although every participant mentioned this topic in some detail, Participant 5 stated this issue in the boldest terms.

Part of that is growing up. You've been led by the hand through those 12 years, 13 years of school, and been told, "Well, you've got to take this. You've got to

take that." And then, all of a sudden, you're here. . . .And they have to be told, "You're on your own now. Guess what? You've got to wipe your own nose now. Nobody's going to do it for you. If you need help, you've got to go seek it out." They just don't. I don't think anybody ever tells them, "Hey, this is what you have to do."

Participant 4 believed that traditional students have difficulty dealing with the sudden freedom that comes from living away from home.

One of the unpopular things from when I was in college the first time was that freshmen had to live in the dorms, unless you lived at home. And they had mandatory study hours. That's one of the things that the sororities do is the mandatory study hours. You need to have a transition from living at Mommy and Daddy's house.

Traditional students were described as needing to find a balance between their social and academic lives so that they could take responsibility for their own actions. Participant 3 regretted actions she had taken when she had been a traditional student years before. She reflected back on her days as a traditional student.

Don't get caught up in the whole glamour of the party side of things. That sounds ridiculous but I lost a scholarship being stupid. And it's fine to be drunk, and it's fine to act silly, and it's fine if you didn't do it then, then do it now. It's that whole live and life thing. But don't blow it. Use moderation.

Participant 5 believed that some of the social experiences gained in college were important to the development of an individual. Although she believed that a balance

was important between the social and academic roles in college life, she felt that the social aspect was necessary to create a complete adult.

In those years that you have in college, if you don't take on and try out a lot of different lifestyles, somewhere along the line as you grow older, there's a part of yourself that is going to start dying because you haven't tried it out. You ended up stuck in one little thing your whole life. And then you wake up when you are forty-something, 41, 42, and you say, "I'm so unhappy. I don't know why." I don't know what you call it. You know, mid-life crisis. It's teenage angst all over again. It just got delayed.

Several participants were in the unusual positions of having children who were enrolled in college at the same time they were. Participant 2 offered a parental perspective describing her daughter's experience.

I had a daughter. She went to [an accelerated college preparatory high school] and she graduated. She never really had to study. She got to L.S.U., her first semester, she didn't make the grades. For the first time in her life, she had to study. What you should tell them to be successful, is that you are going to have to do a certain amount of work. It's a lot of fun out there but if you put forth just a little effort, you'll be able to still have your fun and finish.

Traditional students were perceived as having some social advantages over nontraditional students. Most participants felt that student organizations offered an opportunity for traditional students to become more involved with the university which these nontraditional students felt they "could not do." Perhaps this feeling was related

to family and time commitments. It was also believed that traditional students have opportunities to earn scholarships that are not available for older undergraduate students. These participants felt that all students needed good time management skills and one participant suggested that every student be required to take a time management course when they enroll.

Gender and ethnic issues.

Gender issues were important for several participants in this group. Two individuals shared highly personal and specific stories. Since these stories were so specific that individuals might be identified from them, long passages from these stories have been omitted. These incidents were limited to faculty who doubted that women were suited to study in or work in particular fields. One participant was told by a faculty member that “a lot of older women came back saying that they were going to [study in his field] but they were really looking for a husband.” A second individual had returned to college after leaving over a gender related issue with a faculty member in her department. Although this issue was never resolved and she had encountered this same problem upon her return to college, she felt better able to deal with this issue now that she is older. Even when the participants had put the incidents behind them, such incidents lived close to the surface and appeared to cause much soul searching.

You know, what could I have done that was so bad? I mean, I did everything for this department. If they asked me, I was there . . . I did anything for anybody. It was like what did I do? You know? I could have really made you proud when I got out in the industry.

One participant believed that the atmosphere echoed the opinions of industries in her field and this had caused her to reconsider her major. A different participant agreed with her and felt that part of her disappointment could be because universities are held to higher standards. She commented on these expectations.

In the real world out there, there are people that are like that and they are going to exist and one of the things is that we tend to hold the university to a higher standard. And I think to some degree it should be, but we tend to think of it as this lofty place where individual personalities don't come into play, and then we run across somebody and we think, "Well, how the hell has this guy [made it]"-- the same way we think of how the CEO of some company made it to be CEO when he's a rotten human individual.

Another participant was disappointed in the gender stereotyping evidenced by her classmates. She speculated that fellow students were concerned that women may be hired first because of quotas and that this fear creates resentment. She described her male classmates.

They're really pissed about it and they'll let you know too. And I find that the attitude of most of the guys, is not very in keeping with the century and the year. I would have to say that the attitude of most of the guys is not even polite.

During the discussion on gender issues, two participants mentioned a concern with ethnic issues. They were surprised at the attitudes of fellow students on these issues. One individual spoke at length on this topic.

They're not very open-minded about anything. As far as I know, there are no black people at all in the undergraduate program. I was black and majoring in [field], I don't know if I could last because the attitude is very discriminatory.

In the conclusion of this discussion, the participants tried to fathom a reason for these types of behaviors. One jokingly suggested that perhaps there was something "to do with testosterone and testicles." Another participant thought that perhaps males behaved this way was unintentionally. They simply behaved this way because they were unaware that they were doing anything wrong.

I think part of it is that they're not raised to be nurturers, and I think that's just part of that whole bigger picture thing. It's not like, they're slobs and they don't want us here. I think they just don't know any better. I think that's part of it. I really and truly do.

She continued on this topic later.

It seems that all the experiences that we have had, those that are in very female-oriented areas have been very nurturing and positive experiences. Those that are in areas that are very male-dominated, have been less nurturing, as we will graciously put it.

One individual found it inspiring to have a faculty role model. It seemed to suggest the possibilities for her own future.

. . . She's wonderful. She is like a mentor. Here she is. She's got kids, a job and she's doing it. It makes me feel good.

Finally, a few passing comments were made in reference to aggressive speakers in “free speech alley” and how offensive comments were regularly shouted at individuals unfortunate enough to encounter these sidewalk preachers. These participants found this unpleasant and believed that this campus tradition of an informal forum has declined over time.

Diversity.

Diversity was important to the nontraditional students as well as the traditional students. Diversity included the variety of experiences and the mix of cultural experiences available to the students. Participant 4 defined what this term meant to her in a summary of the group discussion.

It's probably a real indicator of where I am right now but my thing is really about the A) the cultural diversity and B) the experience diversity. That Southern thing . . . I don't think [we need] all new professors . . . You got a lot of new ideas, a lot of this bull that's down there, and that's what happens when you throw out all the old guys and let all the new ones run it. On the other hand, where you have professors who now have to have walkers to get around in, you have no new ideas coming in, then you're stagnating. Some place there has got to be a good mixture of the experience that the older professors bring and yet the new blood and the ideas that the new ones bring in, and updating that curriculum to get that broad diversity. I think we have examples of it in several different departments here -- they're either all the old or all the new, and it's either chaos or total -- you have to jump start yourself to get something in class. I think it's

shifting. It's getting better. A lot of it's about money and as we get the money and L.S.U. becomes a player again in the university world, then new people will come in. It's starting to get a little bit better. That's my main thing, just the diversity of the experience that we get here.

Advising.

These participants highly valued good academic advising even though they believed that they were less needful of it than younger students. Participant 1 believed that good advising could keep students on campus.

I think that the advising on this campus is what keeps a lot of people [here].

This campus is so big. And these young kids coming from high school, you are on your own. They [faculty] don't care if you come to class. They don't know your name. They know don't know you --which I know is unavoidable in some of these big classes but I think if you had mandatory advising, and everybody was required to go speak with the counselor to register, then, maybe -- You get lost in the crowd here and if you're not assertive and you don't go out and do it on your own [you get lost].

She continued on this topic.

The advice and the support is there but you have to go after it. Don't expect your teacher to come to you and say [something]. You go to your teacher and say, "Look, I'm having problems." They will talk to you. But you have to go do it. That would be one thing that I would tell [future students].

It appeared that this participant felt that students needed to be more assertive in obtaining advising. Participant 2 concurred with this assessment.

And I think that in some ways, being older, and I've wondered about that too, with the younger kids, because being older, you do take a lot of the responsibility on yourself, and if you don't get the advising, which I think is somewhat lacking in this [department]. If you go after it, it's there. But it's not offered.

Another quality needed to be a successful student according to Participant 4 was persistence. Students felt they needed to work to get the information that they need.

I think if you're persistent, and I think that that's one of the things you learn, that you do find your place and you find what you need and you get what you need eventually.

Participant 3 wished that there had been more advisers in her department since she had not been comfortable working with the advisor that she was assigned to.

My big thing is probably the advising. I know in our department, you have one advisor. It just so happens I don't get along with him . . . He's going to really advise me? Where do I go?

Course offerings.

Advising is important because the courses were difficult to select. Participant 2 echoed the need for mandatory advising that was proposed by Participant 1.

I think that each teacher should take a look at the students that they are responsible for advising. It should be mandatory. Upon registration you should

have to go see an advisor. They tell you to go see an advisor but when you go, you don't get advised really because it's so haphazard . . . The curriculum doesn't offer that many courses specific to [my major] . . . And it surprises me because as far as I know, there's no other department on this campus that has an undergraduate program [related to this area].

She appeared to be frustrated that there were not more course offerings in her specific major.

. . . I mean I don't understand why they're not pursuing it because they could draw a lot of students into the College of Agriculture.

Some participants returned to college for other than vocational reasons. These individuals expected a less vocational perspective. Participant 5 found this disappointing.

I'm disappointed with [my department] because it's 100% industry oriented.

You cannot get an undergraduate degree in [my field] that is not industry related.

I was hoping to get an undergraduate degree in maybe [specific area], something like that, but it doesn't exist. They offer a class called [in this specific area] but in the three years I've been here, it's never been offered.

In majors with small enrollments, courses may be offered only once every two years. Participants understood the necessity of this but were disappointed when they were unable to take classes they were interested in due to scheduling problems. This problem was related to the need for good academic advising.

Lots of career counseling. More than one section of the class offered each semester. I realize in [my major] there are not a lot of students and so that's why they do that but some classes are only offered once every two years. You miss it. That would be nice, though I understand the reason.

Field experiences.

These individuals had some work experience outside of an academic setting. Perhaps because of these experiences they were very interested in field experiences. They believed that these types of experiences offered a true portrait of their future professions. Participant 1 was concerned that she was not going to enjoy her chosen profession. She thought that early field experiences would have helped her clarify her career goals.

I have thought of one suggestion . . . The only critical thing I could say about [my major] compared to [other majors]. I know in [other majors] they start placing students, practically in the freshman year, maybe sophomore year, into [field experiences] . . . We really don't get that opportunity in [until later] . . . I wish we had to go out 10 hours a week . . . Just anything so we could get a taste of what it really is like because that's why I don't know if I'm going to like it or not . . . Hands on experience to put on your resume; experience along with your education. Because [industry] wants both now.

Participant 4 believed that some departments had recognized the need for more hands on experience. She felt her own department was making some improvements in this area.

[My department] is making some of those changes right now, to let you get some hands on. So you wouldn't get to your senior year and know, "I hate people and I don't want to [do this]. Oh, my God, you're in bad shape now after five years."

We had some people do that.

Participant 3 believed that excellent facilities in the university give an unrealistic picture of the work place environment that awaits the graduate upon graduation.

I participated in [field experiences] and that's probably the best thing to give you a hands on- experience. I cannot stress that enough because it is not a textbook experience. I mean we would see stuff, everyone smiling, everything sparkling clean, and if I wouldn't have had the experience of growing up on a farm, when I went to that [field experience], I'd have been in some serious trouble.

Skill development.

A primary expectation that these women had for their college experience was that they would develop specific skills. They expected to develop research and oral communication skills. The research skills were defined by this group as the ability to use library and computer resources to locate information. This was mentioned as a particular expectation because this is a research university. They were surprised that many students seemed to finish their degree without much experience in the library.

Participant 2 commented.

[Students] talk about getting out of this university without ever having to darken the doors of the library. And that's sad.

Participant 5 agreed.

It is sad to think students do graduate and have never really had to do any research.

Participant 1 proposed a solution.

This may be a possible solution. Put more of an emphasis on developing research skills and written and oral presentations . . . I've been in classes where it's the professor is teaching that class because he has to and I realize that the professor has to publish and that that's the key thing, but maybe since that is their skill and since most of them are very skilled in research, and if they could bring that to their students and say, "We're going to teach you how to . . ." that would keep you up as to date as to what is going on in 1994, not 1972. And it will give you a skill that can go on your resume. That it's a skill of today.

You've got to know how to use the computer.

Participant 2 was concerned about specific skills needed for her future profession. She was comfortable with activities that were related to her prior work experience. She stated that she didn't "feel confident" in the specific skills related to her major. The courses were expected to be current with the subject area in the fields. Participants expected the university to be progressive.

One class I had this semester, I can tell you everything they don't do any more. We saw a film. 1972. . . I do believe that you need to change this . . . "Oh, well, they used to do this but we don't do this any more." I can tell you everything they don't do. Don't ask me what they do.

Three different participants were concerned that the university was “falling behind the times.” They believed that there were opportunities in certain fields that were overlooked by the university.

That's my biggest complaint is that college life should prepare you for the real world but I don't think it really does because the college doesn't keep up with what's going on in the real world. The curriculum isn't in keeping with the times . . . And so the student is spending four years with blinders on and society is evolving and changing the whole time, but the university is 20 or 30 years behind in their programs and when they come out of college, they're not ready for what's out there. They end up just finding a little niche where they feel comfortable, with the same old ideas and values that they were stagnating in for those four years. And it just more and more separates society into little pockets and little groups and we don't feel as a whole. . .

The educated student.

An educated individual in the opinion of these participants had studied a variety of subjects. They expected to broaden their horizons by studying subjects outside of their fields as well as courses in their major field.

Why can't I be a [specific] major and take some art classes and have it count?

Why can't you go and have fun with some classes and have it count? I'm not just going to be a [vocation] . . . Let me pursue the arts. Let me have more choice in what I choose to make myself a well-rounded person . . . I feel like now, I was

telling my husband the other night, here I've been doing this for so long and I think I'm reasonably intelligent but I know nothing. I know nothing.

Other participants were concerned that the university community was too isolated from the community as a whole. These individuals believed that a community service program would broaden the campus experience.

It's the diversity of your experience and I think that's wonderful. But I think they need to find more of a way to bring that into the real world. Instead of taking three hours of theater, I may have been better off taking three hours of social work, and having to serve time in some sort of community project. I think that's what our real world is about today.

Personal interactions with faculty.

Most of the participants in this group had many positive interactions with faculty members. Favorite faculty were described as “encouraging” and “caring.” One participant was very impressed with an individual who she believed had “absolutely demanded” her best work.

I did have another teacher that was great . . . He's a wonderful man. He's taught that course for a long time. He's big and he's burly and he's aggressive and he tells you exactly how it's going to be . . . It's a tough class. And I think at the end, there's about half of the original [enrollment]. He gave me a lot of encouragement and he told me, "You can do anything you want. You can be anything you want. Don't think that just because you're old and you're coming

back to school . . . " But it wasn't just me. He told everybody that. And it's really nice when somebody has faith in you. It counts for a lot.

Another participant in a different major had similar comments.

I've been very pleased and I received a lot of encouragement. I've had a lot of doubt . . . They've said, "You can do this, you know?" They've encouraged me.

Participant 2 described how close the relationship was with the faculty outside of campus activities.

At the end of last year, several students were getting married and the professors all went to the weddings. It's just more like a family . . .

Not all interactions were positive experiences. Poor teachers were described as "condescending" and "arrogant." This type of instructor gave the impression that the student had little determination over their achievements. Participant 2 described such an individual.

He is type that he wants to make you feel he's got you on the list. He is the reason you're getting the grade. He's the reason you're getting the scholarship.

Not because you're doing anything.

She went to some effort to avoid encountering this individual again.

The women in this group appreciated it when their opinions were respected. They felt that they had something to contribute to the class and disliked "closed minded" individuals.

Closed-minded [is] like, if you brought up a different point, they would say.

"I'm sorry. I can prove it on paper. I don't care. I'm not open to new ideas."

One participant was concerned about the appearance of the faculty and felt that if the faculty would dress more formally that it would add to their authority in the classroom. Other participants felt that the teacher could establish his authority by other means.

As a group, these participants were pleased with their experiences as undergraduates. They found the College to be interested and responsive to their concerns.

If it's a good experience or a bad [one], you eventually get what you need but the overall experiences have been very positive more so today in 1996 . . . But even through the bad part of it, I can say that my life was touched and I have had quite a few classes by 95% wonderful professors, and 5% that stunk, but that 5%, the very next semester, were not there because that's how responsive I have found [my department] and the College of Agriculture to be. If 17 students go in, and I'm talking [about] young kids, go in and say, "Excuse me, 17 of 20 of us are having a problem with this professor," and then the next semester, that professor was not back. That's responsive. . . .But I find that, overall, the university is more interested in their reputation and in becoming once again a sought after university, and in being able to attract the doctoral students that come from across the country and the world. That's a really good thing.

The participants were quick to recognize individuals who had been particularly helpful to them.

He is such a caring and compassionate man. I just think that we're really very lucky to have him. And that's not schmoozing. I graduate even if I fail his class. But I really do think it is very wonderful. It makes you feel good about this university . . . I think that we're still going to be a viable university when my grandchildren are, perhaps, coming here. And that makes me feel really good. The solidity of that.

Job opportunities.

The participants in this focus group considered the job opportunities available to them when they graduated in specific ways. They were concerned about potential salary ranges, the receptiveness of the various occupations to older women employees and the need to relocate to find work. Participant 3 reflected on her experiences.

The job placement isn't what they'd like to make you think. You hear the promises, "Oh, we can start you between 27 and 30." That's nothing to shake a stick at. Nowhere near here. This is definitely something they don't inform you, that you will have to be willing to relocate. Period. There's nothing in South Louisiana and they don't really stress that enough.

Participant 4 was very concerned with career opportunities and financial rewards.

Money and career opts. I look out there and think, I've done this for five years. I'm going to get out and make thirty stinking thousand dollars a year, and I want to [be ill]. And then other days I think: "No, this is going to be okay." But it is money.

Pride in achievement.

These women were proud of their achievement. They were proud of the university.

I've become a real L.S.U. convert. When I think about my children going to college, before my experience here, I would think anything but L.S.U. . . . But I now would be very pleased to have them come to L.S.U. Now I feel a lot of pride about [the university].

For these individuals the university experience was an opportunity to change into a better person.

You don't ever stop recreating yourself, and like they said in the movie about the cattle trail, your life is a do over. You know, whatever you've done in high school, yes, it influences, you're going to take it with you. But you can wipe that slate clean and if you were [not] a cheerleader, you can be one now if you want to. Whatever you want to do, you're starting a new chapter in your life, and you can do whatever you want to with it.

Loved focus group.

More than any other group in this study, this focus group enjoyed being part of this study. They were unique in that nearly every member commented about how much they enjoyed this experience. Two participants suggested that the college repeat this experience, asking the interviewer, "Could you do this again?" and "Can we have these sessions every semester?"

One individual appeared to view the focus group as evidence that the college was interested in undergraduate students.

I think this is a really awesome idea, and I [think] that they need to do this. And the fact that they are doing this is totally amazing and, I think, is very far-reaching.

Perhaps the focus group was appealing because these women had not met many individuals like themselves in college. Listening to the stories of others seemed to be a reassuring experience for them. Several participants exchanged phone numbers and planned to keep in touch after the focus group. This suggests that a College wide organization for nontraditional women might be successful if it were loosely organized and informal, such as “a coffee club” for women in agricultural majors.

Summary of Focus Group 3

Although several topics echoed the concerns of the traditional female students, three topics were introduced in earnest by this group. These three topics were related and included gender issues, age issues, and family support. Gender issues had been alluded to in passing by the several traditional female participants. Gender issues and age issues appeared to affect individuals in similar social system called a reinforcing loop which will be described in detail. All three topics appeared to be related to self perception.

During the discussion, the group identified three sources of reinforcement on age issues that they felt influenced their self perception. The first source factor was interaction with faculty. Three women in this group had initially intended to study

nonagricultural fields but were discouraged from attending those colleges due to their age. One participant had been discouraged by a faculty member who believed that it was unlikely a student of her age and gender could be a serious student. Participants described how several faculty had encouraged them. This encouragement had caused these individuals to consider courses of study that they would have overlooked. They were drawn to majors where they felt comfortable and described such departments as “welcoming,” “encouraging” and “like a family.”

The second source of self perception related to age issues was the opinions these participants held of their fellow students. Since several participants had children who were college age it was difficult for these individuals to accept traditional students as full peers. They found many of the behaviors of the traditional students not responsible. Younger students occasionally highlighted the age difference by nicknaming older women students “Mom.” This made some of the participants uneasy and appeared to create doubts about whether or not it was appropriate for them to be pursuing a college degree.

Perhaps because the age difference prevented these participants from forming close ties with their younger classmates, these women were dependent on their families for encouragement and support. Their family provided for them the same type of informal feedback and encouragement that the traditional students received from their peer group. When their families were less supportive of their returning to school, it was a difficult loss since for most nontraditional women the family was their only support

group. None of the women in this focus group had participated in any campus organizations since returning to college.

Like concerns related to age differences, gender concerns were influenced in a similar way except that the women did not appear to be as quick to internalize the idea that some fields might not be appropriate for them. Although there were some who expressed doubts about the appropriateness of an older student returning to school, the idea that women would not be considered to be serious students disturbed them. In every case, that this occurred in both the traditional and nontraditional female groups. the affected individual had changed majors or had left college for a time.

These relationships fit the pattern described as a reinforcing feedback by Senge (1990). According to Senge, a reinforcing feedback increases an effect by growing small actions into large consequences (See Figure 9).

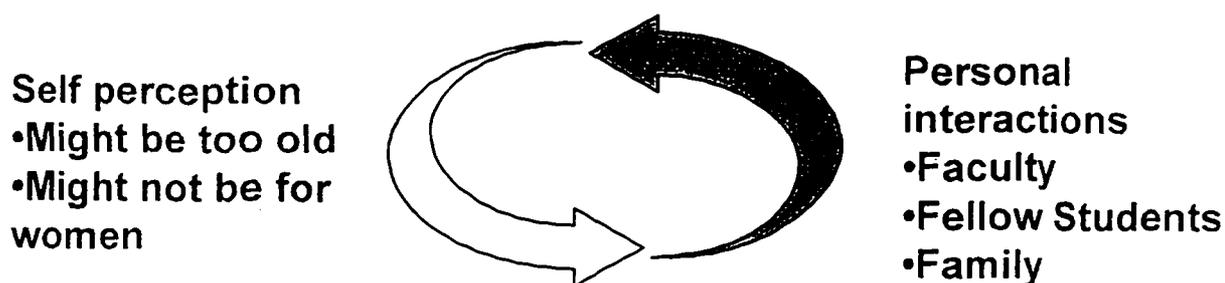


Figure 9. Reinforcing Loop for Gender and Age Issues for Female Undergraduates

To illustrate the gender and age reinforcing loop, it is helpful to follow a composite student through this system loop. Upon arriving on campus to inquire about admission, a faculty member explains to a student that although she is welcome to apply, there is little likelihood of her finding a position when she graduates since she is a little old to begin a degree. This idea begins to grow; perhaps it is inappropriate for older women to return to college. She perseveres and finds a more welcoming major. She notices during her first week of class that her “peers” are the same age as her own children. A traditional student stops her in a hallway and he asks “Mom” if he can copy her notes. This causes her to wonder if everyone in class is watching the “old lady in the back.” She becomes increasingly self-conscious. The student leaves for home to face an evening of family responsibilities. As she begins her assignments, her spouse makes a passing comment that if school becomes too stressful, she shouldn’t worry about it since she doesn’t really need the degree anyway. By this point, she is inclined to agree, college does not seem like such good idea after all.

If this cycle continues there will be a point where a single minor incident will cause this student to change majors or leave college. With each successive cycle, the perception that being an older woman student is inappropriate increases so that every careless remark is seen as evidence to reinforce this idea. The final point will appear to be a minor incident but it is resting on a foundation that took many cycles to build. In the focus groups, women described incidents and comments, some of which had happened years ago, that affected them deeply. These incidents have no doubt been

forgotten by other individuals involved long ago but they were vivid memories to these participants.

Other topics related to the discussion on age were advising and personal responsibility. Nontraditional women felt that they had a real advantage over traditional students since their maturity gave them more self assurance to seek advising. Advising was described as available but it had to be sought out by the student. One participant was very supportive of mandatory advising. Several participants felt that advising should be offered by more than one individual in a department.

Focus Group 3 was also relieved that they were no longer part of the college social system. They were disappointed in some of the traditional students and felt that younger students were not as personally responsible as they should be.

Diversity was important to this group and had several meanings. Diversity included diversity of experiences and diversity of cultural backgrounds of the student body. There was some concern that L.S.U. was not as culturally diverse in the undergraduate program as it should be. Three participants felt that the diversity of courses offered in their major field was too narrow and offered a less than current perspective on their disciplines.

Nontraditional Female Interviews

Interview 3.

Interview 3 had attended L.S.U. for the first time immediately out of high school. She had been uncertain about her major and had met her husband during the course of her enrollment. She had quit school and had worked to help her husband

finish school and had returned to college part-time to finish her degree. She worked full time and was the mother of a small child. She had apparently returned to school for financial reasons. She mentioned that she would prefer to stay home with her child but that this was not possible.

She chose L.S.U. for several reasons. It was close to home, affordable, and it was a large university. Family tradition also influenced her choice of a major field; many people in her family were in the same profession and she was drawn to that same profession. Her mother had a significant influence on her career choice.

I remember talking it over with my mom and that [first choice] was just not a career that I could stay in the area with really. It was one of those things where I was going to have to move off, go off to the big city kind of thing, and that's something that I used to always want to do. But at that time, I was being a little more practical and realized that I wasn't going to do that. So I think that had a part in that. Because I remember, I did discuss that with Mom.

Her husband's family had a tradition of attending L.S.U. and this also influenced her decision to attend this university. She wanted to be part of that tradition.

My husband's family, his parents and one of his grandparents, all have degrees from L.S.U. I just love the traditions. I love the football. I love the tailgating. We don't drink. We're not even the party tailgaters. But I just love the atmosphere of being out here, and excitement. Just all the history. It's an old college and it's so beautiful. I see the big trees, the old oaks and things. They're so huge that their limbs are dragging the ground. And I just think of how long

this school has been here. That's how long all of this has been going on, and still going. It's just neat to me. I just love the history.

This individual described herself as a religious individual and she found a campus ministry organization that was very helpful to her. This organization kept her from feeling lost on campus.

Another thing I loved here, was the different things they offer. For example, [specific religious student organization]. Whenever I was a full-time student, that's where I spent all of my free time. I could never get involved in a lot of the academic programs because I didn't have the time. I worked 30 hours a week or so all through college. I didn't have time. That [organization] was something that was there at any time. You know, day or night, I could pop in and be a part of whatever was going on. I met a whole lot of friends there. I met my husband there. Anytime somebody says "college," the first thing as far as social life that comes to my mind is [that organization].

She described what made this program beneficial to her.

First of all, there are always people there. There are pool tables, ping-pong tables, a big screen T.V. The students all hanging out there between classes. They have the vending machines. Once a week, they have free lunch. Once a week they have a dollar lunch. And at both of those they also have a speaker. Twice a week they have chapel and if you happen to be able to come to chapel, you can. They also have Bible study groups throughout the week and you just find one that fits into your school schedule and you can make sure to be there.

But even just popping in between classes and hanging out, it gives you something to do. I remember my friend, her sisters came here, and her sisters were very active in the [in this organization]. And she couldn't wait to get to L.S.U. so she could hang out [with this group]. And I was thinking, "What a nerd. I'm not going to hang out [there]." But then you get here and it's this huge campus, and there's a zillion people, and you've got two hours between classes, and you're sitting on a bench and you feel like you're the only person that doesn't know anybody. You know? And you feel so out of place. You have to find some group to hook into.

Although this participant did not mention it directly, the particular organization in which she was active offers programs for traditional and nontraditional students.

Interview 3 had many comments on the quality of the classroom experience she had at L.S.U. She had prior work experience in her field and tended to assess the educational program based on how applied the material would be to her future employment.

It's really been wonderful . . . In the [my department], for example, our [specific subject] class was [specific course]. And a lot of [nonagricultural majors] took it as an elective, as an easy A. They really had to struggle through it because I find the [department] requires us to do so many projects. They're such project-oriented people. And it's true, that's a better way of learning, than rote practice for a test. But it drives you crazy. It's so much more out of class time than just a test would be. That class was very helpful because, that is one I could use every

day. It taught us how to do [various activities], just the things that you need in life.

Paired with this need for the material to be applied was an impatience with introductory classes. Interview 3 seemed to wish that there was a way to bypass these courses altogether.

. . . In your freshman year, you're doing a lot of general things. You're learning a lot of generalizations in your freshman and sophomore year. And this [upper level classes] is whenever you're getting down to the nitty-gritty. If you miss something, you may have missed something big. You may have missed something you really can use at another time. I think that that's pretty important. It's almost like your freshman level courses, in your major or not -- like they're a waste of time. Everything you learn in those classes, in those freshman levels, are real general. Then, whenever you get in your junior and senior classes, you're going back and you're taking every little thing and learning it in detail, and in this little section and learning it in detail. Just almost like they [general courses] are not necessary in a way.

She continues on this topic later.

I would rather see them teach us more, over the long period of time, and have smaller classes in detail from the beginning. And we learn in the details, and continue doing that all the way through, instead of huge classes in the beginning, of a lot of generalizations, and then learning the nitty-gritty later.

Interview 3 believed that classes need to be structured to “make you think.” This would include discussions of the relationships behind certain procedures or ideas. Her favorite classes had this quality.

The classes that make you think. Where they're saying, "Okay, this happens, and this happens, and this happens. And it causes this to happen. Now, why?" And, "Okay, such and such happens. How do you handle it? If you do this, what's going to happen? If you do that, what's going to happen." It causes you to think -- it causes you to look back at things that have happened in your life.

Courses that were difficult, but not directly applicable to her career path, were not favorite experiences for this participant. Although she felt that introductory courses were too general, some courses seemed to need a focused prerequisite in this participant's opinion.

One thing I have trouble with is I know they want us to have a lot of broad knowledge. But I had to take a [specific class]. It was absolutely impossible. I mean, the only background we had for it was [an introductory related course]. And here we are taking [this] class and everything he said was brand new to us. Over our heads. It was awful. It was a disaster. We were the only students in the class that were not pre-med majors. And basically, that's the only D I've ever made in my life, and the teacher gave it to me. They have since changed the curriculum, because that year it just so happened the head of the department had to teach that class. And, of course, we were in his office constantly because we're so lost. And he is going, "This is stupid. This is ridiculous. You should

not be taking this class." So he said, "I'm going to talk to somebody in your department." And sure enough, the next year it was out of the catalogue.

Course content was important to Interview 3, perhaps because the application of material was highly valuable. Courses that clearly applied to her field of study were judged to be more valuable than other apparently less vocationally related courses.

So many of the classes, whether I enjoyed them or not, depended on the content.

So much of the time. For example, [specific subject]. Oh, gosh. That's just totally over my head and I never did grasp any of it. I just worked my way through it; barely got through it kind of thing. And like [a different specific subject], I absolutely loved. Where usually I love an interaction thing. Most of [those classes] were big lecture classes and I absolutely loved them, just because that was an interesting subject to me . . . I think [specific subject] relates more to your everyday life. You can sit down and you can think, "Oh, yeah, my friend is like that." Or, "Yeah, I do that sometimes." . . . You're talking about everyday situations. Whereas, in [specific subject], you're talking about a [narrow subject] . . . I don't know how it helps you in life.

For this participant the major difficulty in returning to the classroom was scheduling the courses. She was self-employed in a business that required an inflexible schedule. This meant that she was not always able to enroll in courses as they came up in the curriculum rotation.

Coming back to school has been very difficult. As a night school student, it has been very difficult. Just because the classes are not available . . . I don't have a class left that I could take at night.

She continued on this topic.

. . . Everything that I have left to take, everything, is only offered in the fall, or only in the spring . . . And it's hard. It works out wonderfully for the traditional student. Which is fine. They can do that; they can schedule things around things like that. The traditional student does nothing but school, or does very little else but school, and they can schedule around it. For example, I went to [a department] one day last week, to drop off a form to get into a class for next semester. I went at 4:32. The building was locked. Locked. All the lights were off. Closed down. At 4:32. How can I get a degree?.

...I understand that there's not a lot of students in this curriculum, and they can't offer a million things, but it's just so minimal. God forbid, you have to work after 4:30. They don't help at all with that. And I think it's just because I'm in such a small curriculum that it's really hard.

She returned to this topic much later in the interview.

I know it's just that I'm in a small curriculum and there aren't many of us, so they can't afford to hold class for 10 people all the time, but it really makes it hard. Like I said, I don't have anything left to take that I can choose what semester to take it in. It has to be fall or it has to be spring. That's all offered in the middle of the day.

For this participant the requirement that a student continuously enroll was considered too burdensome. She strongly felt that there were legitimate reasons for a student to sit out a semester and that allowances should be made in such cases.

I hate, absolutely hate the fact that if you sit out one semester, you have to turn to the new catalogue. I can understand a year. I can understand a year and a half maybe. But especially for a part-time student like myself, a night student. For example, last semester, I had a 9-week old baby, a new job, working 50-60 hours a week. Do you know what it would have meant to me to be able to sit out and not take a class last semester? I couldn't do that because I would have lost hours. I would have had totally wasted hours and would have had to retake because of one semester. I just think that's ridiculous. If you sit out one semester; you have to reapply to the university; you have to reapply to your college; you have to schedule, as an incoming freshman, which means that I can't get in any classes. My classes would all fill up like that.

She felt that this would be particularly appreciated by nontraditional students.

Not everybody is a full-time student. Some people are part-time students and sometimes school is second for them. It's very important, but it's second to something else. You know? To family, to job, to something. Sometimes they need to sit out a semester. You know, and that's a real hard one . . . And, of course, like I said, last semester would have been the opportune time for me to sit out a class. It was so hard for me to make it through last semester. Well, you know, there was nothing I could do, I absolutely can't do it.

She added to her comments.

I had a new job. Which ended up being the job from hell. Just, things are going to happen in people's lives. Sometimes, you even have a traditional student who sits out because they need to figure out what they're going to do with their lives, they have some family thing they have to take care of. You've got some religions where they want to go do some time working or whatever. We have so many friends of the family that are missionaries in other countries . . . You can't do that. And that could be a very educational experience.

This participant believed that since so many courses were offered once a year it would be helpful if all seniors not just graduating seniors had early registration. One suggestion she offered was that all seniors should be allowed to register early.

I think that all seniors, not just graduating seniors, but all seniors should be able to schedule classes before anyone else. I'm never going to be a graduating senior until my [field experience]. I've been a senior for three years, according to the amount of hours that I have. But I will never be a graduating senior [if I enroll in a field experience]. The class I took this semester, I couldn't get in on the phone lines and it filled up. All the senior level classes in my curriculum fill up like that. I had to go get permission from the teacher. The only reason she gave me permission is because this is the last class that I can take in the fall that's offered this semester. This is the only class in my curriculum that's offered in the fall, the fall for next semester. So it was either take that or take something that wasn't even in my curriculum. So she let me in. The senior level classes in

some curricula fill up real fast, and just because I'm not a graduating senior doesn't mean that I don't absolutely need to get into that class. . . . So, I think that all seniors, maybe graduating seniors have three days, and the seniors then have, you know, two or three days jump ahead of the regular student body. But I think it should just be seniors in general. Because usually people are seniors for at least three semesters . . . And just because you're not graduating this semester, doesn't mean that this isn't your last chance to take that class.

This individual was notable in that she had work experience in the same area in which she planned to work after graduation. She believed this gave her different employment expectations than she believed was held by her peers.

I'm older than everybody. In my classes, I have very different views from most people. School campuses are so very liberal and that's part of college. I know I did the same thing. You're young and you come to school, and they give you all these new ideas, good things to experience. You can be anybody and it's acceptable, and it's wonderful, and we love you anyway. But then, when they get out in the real world, it's not like that. In the business world, you can't be anybody and it's acceptable. If you get out there, you can't be anybody and it's acceptable. Because like it or not, you have to cater to [the needs of others]. It is very unrealistic. Campus life is very unrealistic. I was there. You know, I felt the same way about a lot of things. But after going out into the real world for a while, I think I'm more realistic.

She expanded these comments.

I think it's a lot of experience . . . In some cases, people get knocked into reality. In other cases, I think they don't. They don't get knocked into reality and it hurts them. It hurts their careers, because they're so determined to do what they know is right because they learned it at school, or they experienced it at school. And it's going to take them a while to figure out that "I've got to change this before I can succeed."

Near the end of the interview, she returned to this topic again.

That's where you get people like the people I used to have to hire whenever I was in [industry], who absolutely will not submit to any authority, including bosses; including anything in the life, including school, teachers, homework. They never learn. They might go to college. They won't ever learn the things that they need to learn because they're too busy trying to rebel against a teacher, or they're trying to outdo the teacher. They'll never keep a job for very long because they can't understand the hierarchy. This is your boss. You don't have a choice. This is your boss. Unless they're asking you to do something that is inappropriate, then you don't have a choice . . . And we're raising children who were never taught that and, therefore, they can't hold a job for very long; they can't stick with school. You know, they drop out, they don't finish their degree because they cannot submit to that authority. And I think that goes back to spiritual lives.

This participant reflected on mistakes she had made when she was a traditional student.

She appeared to believe that most of these tendencies improved with maturity.

I played a lot [then]. I was satisfied with a C, or a B. Now, I'd be devastated if I didn't get an A. And I think that comes with maturity too, you know. Then I didn't really care so much. Now, I would be upset with a B. I would not make a C. It is not going to happen. Last semester was whenever I was working, I was also taking a class. I had a new baby; I had a 9-week old baby. It was just so chaotic. The first exam, I made a D on it. I wrote a note to the teacher and I said, "I apologize. You will never see anything like this from me again." But I wish I would have taken it seriously from the beginning. You don't think about putting a G.P.A. on a resume. You just don't think of that whenever you're that young. What's a resume? If you have a good G.P.A., you put it on a resume. If not, you leave it out. But they know that if you left it out, it's because it's not that great. And it really needs to be above a 3.5 to put it on a resume.

Interview 3 was also impressed by how neat and orderly the laboratory and field experiences were. She was concerned that this was an unrealistic representation of industry.

The fact that they have a [laboratory] right here on campus. Great tool. Very unrealistic. You know? [Laboratories] do not exist like that. You don't have [so many] workers because you just can't afford it . . . It is so unrealistic. I've been out there too much. I know how unrealistic it is.

She wished that there were more opportunities for students to work as an assistant. She felt many field experiences limit the student to observing when they could take more active roles.

I would have a lot of class participation in the [laboratory]. We do so much observing it actually drives me crazy, but we do more observing, and not as much actually participating . . . So I sit there and I watch the same thing I've watched before. And there's nothing that I can do about it. I can't get in there and interact . . . I just feel like I waste so much time just sitting in a classroom.

Interview 3 described one course that allowed for a lot of personal interactions.

Personal interaction seemed to be important to her.

Now, I did take a class where we did this recently. You have so many hours a week, in a [field experience], and you work. They know when you're coming . . . And you work with that [person.] And I found that's so much more rewarding, and I learned a lot about doing the [work] and how long this is going to take, and your time blocks, and you get to interact [with others].

Interview 3 was also concerned with the teaching ability of the faculty. She felt that prominent faculty members or “names” often are not effective teachers and suggested that they should be required to enroll in some education courses.

I know this is a big kick at L.S.U. and it's all universities, they really shoot for the name. They look for those professors who have the big name. I understand that they're trying to get graduate students, and that's very important. But I think these professors, many times, need to be required to take education classes. In education classes you learn how to test fairly. You learn how to just do so many things. You learn how people learn; how to present material in the most effective way. For example, in [specific subject], I've always done well in

mathematics. It was never a problem for me. But in [specific subject], the first one, I made an A. No problem; zipped right through it. When I went to the second one, and it was [name], who is a big name in [specific subject], and that's why he was here. I went to his class and it was just awful. It was absolutely awful. The first exam, I made like a 23 on, or something ridiculous like that. And the average of the class was like 23. You know? I mean, in order for anybody to pass, he was going to do a huge curve. Now, don't tell me that 50% of the class are F students; are not capable of learning that material. There was something seriously wrong with that teaching, or that testing or something. I dropped him. Took it under another professor; set the curve . . . The same thing with so many of the classes. I see a lot [of this] in [a specific college]. The same thing, where the average grade in the class is a fifty-something. Don't tell me that these people are all that stupid.

Ineffective teachers were described as “arrogant.” They did not allow for discussion or questions in class. Interview 3 offered a description of the classroom of such a teacher.

It was a big lecture class. He was very arrogant. He spoke so matter-of-factly and kind of -- I don't know how to explain it. He never repeated himself; he never reiterated something that was very important. He just, this is how it is, and blah, blah, blah, and all of you should be just as intelligent as me and understand it. He never stopped to ask, "Does anyone have a question? Does everyone understand that?" Nothing like that. He just went right on through.

Other qualities that this individual disliked in her instructors were teachers who constantly went off the subject. She speculated that they were trying to impress others with their vast knowledge of the subject material. She offered an example from a different course.

He was so knowledgeable but he was constantly going off the subject. He told lots of interesting things that absolutely had nothing to do [the subject of the course] . . . He was too knowledgeable for his own good. He'd go off on [other subjects] . . . He would talk over your head sometimes, or talk about things and just assume that you knew. He would go out of his way to sound intelligent. We had to read his book. And in the book, he would go so out of his way to sound intelligent that you would almost have to get out a dictionary to understand what he had written. It was so ridiculous. If he would just speak plain English, and worry about you learning the stuff instead of sounding so wonderful . . . He went out of his way to walk around the subject. Just to sound intelligent. That's what it seemed like to me.

Good instructors were described as individuals who allowed for classroom interaction.

He asked for feedback from people. People would ask questions in class. He just seemed so much more understanding; so much more like it mattered that you understood the material.

This student found that there were faculty who were prominent researchers and good teachers. She seemed to greatly respect these individuals. She described the class of one such individual in great detail.

[Name] is the name. She's one of the people that was brought to the university because she's a big name in the field. But she's wonderful. First of all, you had to do lots of projects. You were actually doing it and you're going to retain that information because you're writing about it, or you're doing it, as opposed to memorizing text to write down on paper. Of course it is a small class. You've got 12, 15 people in it, and she's got a name. She was also very clear about what she wanted. If we had to do a paper, she would sometimes even give us an example paper. "This is the kind of thing I'm looking for." Of course, she didn't want you to give the same thing back to her, but you always knew what she was looking for. She gave you her goals. You knew what you were trying to do, instead of it being this vague thing out there.

She described this individual again later in the interview. It was impressive to this participant when colleagues in other regions of the country had heard of the work of the faculty here.

She's a big name in that field. Some of our classmates flew [out of state]. They went to a conference there. They went to one of the booths and somebody started asking them questions. They said they were from L.S.U. And they were, "Oh, so you get to work with [Name]." And you know, this was somebody in [a different region]. Someone from a whole other place that knew that name. "Oh, you know so-and-so. Golly. I've read so many of her things." It's just a big name. Of course, at the same time, you have a big name who's also a good teacher, and not just arrogant.

Good teachers were described as providing examples and as organized.

Interview 3 listed these qualities when she described her favorite class.

It was very, very well-planned. She was very well-planned. She was very prepared. So many of my teachers [in my department] are like that. They know how to teach. They're so very prepared. They have examples. They know they're on top of everything before they start it. They make sure that they're completely prepared for it, and they make sure that you know what they expect of you. It's just much more fair, and you learn so much more.

This participant appeared to enjoy a variety of experiences, particularly those activities that related the subject to applications for the material.

We had lots of discussion. One of her projects was that we had to choose [an industry product or application] and study it. We had to write a paper and give a presentation to the class on it, evaluating it, telling about what it did and what it didn't do, and what was good about it, and what was bad about it, and that kind of thing. We studied [areas] that you hear so much about. . . . That's the kind of thing that can be applied . . . Also you're interacting. You're doing a lot of group work.

Classes were also judged on how appropriate they were for the level that they were offered. Interview 3 felt that students should have to be more “accountable” as they progressed through their curriculum.

I've had classes where the teacher wanted you to call them if you weren't going to make it to class. That's ridiculous. But they take their classes that seriously.

The teachers do. And they expect their students to take their classes that seriously. And I would not have done well in that situation whenever I was a younger student . . . I think it's according to what level you're on. For example, I took a 1000 level class, just for the fun of it. This was not even in my curriculum . . . And the teacher, well, I loved her style of teaching. We didn't take tests. We handed in a paper every week. Now, it was a short paper. We had to hand it in every week. I just felt like it was much too much work for a 1000 level class. As you get to the different levels, different things are expected. I think that's how it should be. You have to learn to take things more seriously. As a freshman, you're in classes that don't matter to you.

Several factors were listed by Interview 3 as important contributors to a successful experience at L.S.U. This participant had a good relationship with her advisor and stated that she “wouldn't have survived L.S.U. without her.” She thought that it was important to “get to know your professors, you can really get to know your administrators.”

I didn't do that for a long time. I enjoyed being a face in a crowd for a while, after coming from a small town. I was really a leader at my high school, so I enjoyed the fact that I was a face in the crowd, and could be very anonymous. But, you know, that's something that was a mistake.

This participant seemed to be concerned with possible employment after graduation. She was hopeful that her degree would help her find a good position. She changed her major because she felt that in the first field that she had selected having a

degree would not provide her with any advantages. She recalled some examples from her work experiences.

I was working in [a specific industry] at the time, and I was in management for many years, and I know that a [specific] degree is not a necessity. And it's not even considered wonderful. Any degree will do. And many times, no degree. A lot of the companies really go by your experience and your work performance, because there's so much that you can learn on the job. And that was one thing -- just my experience there, knowing that it would not help me really in a career. I only know of one company [in that industry] that requires a [specific] degree. So that knocked that one out for me.

The library aroused strong emotions in this participant. She found it to be a confusing and time-consuming place.

I hate the library. I hate the library. I could not go in and find a journal article in less than two hours . . . First you have to go to this computer system and get this. Then you have to go to this computer and use what you got from that computer system to find what you need on this computer system, which I can never find. I can never find what I got from this one on LOLA. It's never there. So I have to go back and get more from that one. Finally, I have to go upstairs to the general desk and ask the lady there to help me, and she'll spend 20 or 30 minutes trying to get a call number for me. I'm sure there are people that know what they're doing but it just seems absolutely impossible to me.

She repeated her frustrations on this subject.

I cannot go in the library and spend less than an hour or two. Even if I'm just there to find one journal article. I can't do it. Maybe I'm just stupid. I'm not computer literate. I'll admit that. I can run some computer programs but I don't know. I just can't ever find it. Never. I always have to get help.

These comments seemed to imply that for Interview 3, the library was an unpleasant resource because she had difficulty retrieving works in the collection. She was one of the few student interviewees who mentioned this problem. Perhaps most students did not have this difficulty or it is possible that they did not use the library resources as often as this participant.

Several minor topics were mentioned in Interview 3. This participant was a supporter of collegiate athletics. She believed that "football brings so much money to the academic side of the university every year and that [this] is really helpful." Sports also was considered to be a draw to "attract students who wouldn't normally have the opportunity to go to college, or wouldn't be interested in it." Interview 3 thought that Louisiana had a rich cultural image; "Of course, the whole idea of the South, the tradition, the Cajuns. All of the tradition we have here in Louisiana is just so different from anywhere in the United States". She thought that this image could be used to promote the university. Like most participants in this study, she found campus parking to be a problem.

Interview 4.

The second interview with a nontraditional female student differed from the other interviews with nontraditional women in that this individual was a foreign

national. This history gave her a distinct perspective on her undergraduate experiences at L.S.U. This individual had always wanted to pursue her present field of study but had been prevented from doing so in her home country by governmental restraints. She worked in a different field and then decided that emigrating to the United States might allow her to pursue her original ambitions. Since she had relatives in the Baton Rouge area, L.S.U. seemed to be a good choice.

We were deciding where to go for high school. Our high schools are specialized. For example, there is an engineering high school. Sometimes people don't go to college after that. If they have engineering in high school, because it's already specialized, they can start engineering jobs. And there is one [school], and it's not specialized, it has everything. We have geography, history, we have languages, math, physics, everything. It's not specialized and this one prepares people for college. And since I wanted to be a [specific trade], I would have to do something like a trade school. My teacher told me that I was too smart for it. She didn't want me to do just the trade school and not try the high school.

. . . So after that, I applied for a college, and sometimes, when you are a teen, you don't really know what you want to do. I applied for [specific field]. I wasn't accepted because, at that time, it was still a communist country and it depended on your parents, if they were members or not, and all that. It didn't really depend much on how much people knew. So, I wasn't accepted. And then I started working, and I worked for six years.

I used to have relatives living here. And I came just to visit them. I spent a month with them here in Baton Rouge. My aunt always wanted me to come. She thought the possibilities weren't that good in my country. She wanted me to come here. I started thinking about that. First, when I came here, I thought I would just do the English program here, and learn some English, and go home. Then I decided to stay.

For this individual, her first major in the college had a culture that she was not comfortable with. This feeling of being misplaced promoted her to search for a new major field.

Well, first, I was in [an agricultural major]. I started with that because my first choice right after high school was agriculture, and I'm from a small town and everything is agriculture there. I was in [that major], almost a year I think. I just felt like I didn't fit in. I went to this meeting one day, and I think I was wearing a skirt. I came there and all those guys, they were cowboys with big hats, and I couldn't even understand what they were saying. I thought, "What am I doing here?" And it was in the spring and that summer, I guess I was bored and I was reading the L.S.U. catalogue. I saw they had [my present major] and I started reading the description of courses. I just decided. It was like, Wow, this is what I want to do. Then I went to check on it and I switched that fall.

Interview 4 was a very focused individual who was attending college as a preparation to employment in a field that had interested her since she was a child.

I'm looking forward to working. I'm really excited and I want to find a good job. and I don't really care about the money but I really want to do something that will be exciting every day for me.

She was pleased that she "had the chance to decide what I really want to do."

Her teachers and courses were described as "interesting" throughout the interview. She elaborated on what made a class interesting.

I like classes which are taught by interesting people. When your teacher gets your attention and you don't have to look at your watch; you don't have to wait for the rest of the class. Right now, I'm taking [specific course] and we have a really good teacher. She's very interesting. You can tell that she really likes her job, so it's one of my favorite classes. Even though I have to study a lot for that, it's a hard class, but it's one of my favorite classes.

A course could be considered "interesting" by this participant even if she did not care for the content of the course. She felt that an enthusiastic teacher could create interest. She described a good teacher as someone who explained things well in his own words.

I was taking [specific course] last semester, and I don't really like [specific course]. Still, the teacher was interesting too. I think he explained everything. I had taken [a specific course] before. and I had to drop it because I didn't really understand and I was trying to study from the book. Even trying to read the chapter was really difficult for me. And then when I took his class, the book was quite difficult to read but, still, he explained everything in a class, with his own

words, and I took notes. It was easy for me to study. Just the way he was teaching was interesting. He got our attention.

This participant mentioned printed material more than other participants in this study. Perhaps these materials were important to her because English was not her native language and she could study the information at her own pace. Whatever the reason, the quality of the textbook was important to this participant. She remembered one text that she found less helpful.

The book is written more like somebody's thesis. And it's really hard to read it. Like there is a sentence, and then it goes on, and then there is this sentence and it goes on and there is in parentheses someone's name, and then three words, and then again someone's name. And the chapters are long. It's really like someone's thesis. I don't like that class at all.

This emphasis on printed material may be reflected in this participant's use of the library. She was one of the few participants who mentioned enjoying the library as a browser.

I like the library . . . There are so many books there. If you are looking for something, it's amazing what you can find. It's a good source for research, and just interesting things.

Just as an enthusiastic teacher was able to revive a less than engrossing subject, a less than enthusiastic teacher can make a course more difficult. For this participant, one quality of less than enthusiastic teachers was that they did not provide feedback to their

students. "Feedback" for Interview 4 was defined as informal evaluative information given prior to the completion of a course or project.

I really like to have enthusiastic people. Sometimes you get these teachers who are not that excited about it. You don't get feedback from them. Then you get something back and everything's bad. You don't really know why because during the time [you were working], you didn't get any feedback; you didn't get any recommendation how to do things better. That's kind of frustrating. I would want to have people who are really excited about that, and would just encourage the students to do their best.

Feedback was important to Interview 4 because it helped to clarify what the teacher expected from the course. Feedback given only at the conclusion of an assignment only seemed to be frustrating to this individual. She described such a class as "depressing."

I had a day last week when everything was going wrong. I thought, "I'm never going to be good. I will never be good in my field." It was because we had to submit some work, and it was one of these teachers, she never really tells us what she wants. When we discuss something, she never tells us, "Okay. I think maybe you should redo this. This is wrong." She never tells us anything. But then she gives us our work back. And I got this one [with several general comments]. I got really frustrated. But then I thought about it later, and I know that other people in my class got very similar evaluations. And then we discussed it together and we talked about it. We said "She never tells us exactly

what she wants, or what she would like us to do, and then she just gives us this evaluation," Everybody gets depressed.

Interaction with her peers appeared to provide some emotional support for this student. She found her fellow students to be friendly and willing to help each other.

It's a very small program, but all of us are friends and we always discuss all these things. So it's really helpful when one starts feeling bad, that they are not going to make it, the other ones are very supportive.

Although an enthusiastic teacher was important to this participant, interaction with her peers was also highly valued. Interview 4 seemed to enjoy courses where the instructor and the students discussed each other's work.

We always had some homework. Then we bring it and then we discuss it in class. Everybody talks about it. [The teacher] she is always so encouraging; always has something good to say about it. It's really helpful because it makes me feel like. "Now I want to go home and I want to work on it some more." She really helps students with anything. She's always excited about everything. I want to have teachers like that.

Student or peer feedback seemed to complement the feedback offered by the instructor. In these classes the students and the teacher apparently worked in partnership to improve the performance of the class.

And even other people who are in my class, if they are excited when you do something and they say. "Oh, it is really good." I'm working on a project and my

friend looked at it yesterday, he said, "It looks so good." And it really helps when someone like that is there and they tell you that your work is good.

One quality of disappointing instructors that was described in detail by Interview 4 might be summarized as low expectations for student responsibility. Instructors who gave too much detail about assignments instilled the idea that students were not considered to be mature enough to work on their own. This was a characteristic that was disliked by this participant.

The teacher kind of treats us like third-graders. I go to that class with this attitude every day. "Okay, she's going to explain everything to us again like we are little kids."

. . . There are certain things that people at the college level already know, and sometimes she tells us things -- like, I don't think people should be treated like that, like they don't know anything. Once she told us, "Go to this building, and go there and walk in the office. And they have this bin. And everything is alphabetized. It starts with "A" and . . ." I think if she didn't talk so much it would be better. It gets aggravating.

By far laboratory courses were the most valued college experiences that this individual participated in. In response to a question about how she would design her ideal college, she would offer predominantly laboratory courses.

I would have a lot of lab hours. I would have the same hours we have here and I would change some of it. I would expand the lab hours, because I think it's very important for us to practice . . . I've had experience before but there were some

people who just started. It's really hard for someone like that to work on a project without experience before. I would expand that. I would eliminate some classes.

This individual thought that some classes could be better articulated with related courses. In her opinion this could free more time for laboratory work.

Sometimes, in some classes, we get information that is a repetition of something we had before. [I] would eliminate the stuff we've already learned before.

Because it just sometimes feels like wasting [time], and we would rather have lab hours and practice.

Practical experience was so highly valued by this student that she planned to pursue additional education from a technical college in her field after completing her degree. She had a friend who had already enrolled in such a program after her graduation.

[My friend] is doing this program at [specialized technical college], and it's like a year program. They have a lot that we have but it's a little bit more advanced with more projects and everything. They have really good teachers. So I'm planning to do that too.

After being asked about this program, she offered more details.

It's not a graduate school. It's just this one year program that's for people who already had a college degree. It's just they get really good experience there, and they explore some other things that we don't have here. They have also a two-year program, but I think it's for people who decide after they do three years of

college that they don't want to do it anymore. They go there. They do that two-year program. I think people end up with an associate degree.

She described a wide variety of skill-based courses that were offered by this other college and she compared this program to the programs at L.S.U.

We do some projects during the semester but the time flies and it's not as much as we would like to do, because we are time limited. I think it [the other institution] is very challenging because all the people who go there are really interested in that and they really want to go. And here, even though we have some people here who really want to do it, it's not that competitive.

She believed that there would be a different type of student in this extended program. She expected them to be more career oriented than the students she worked with at L.S.U.

Most of the people who go there, go there because they really want to be there, and they want to learn a lot, and they want to really do good. But here, it's probably like half and half. Half of the people, they just want to graduate in something. They don't really care about career. They just want to finish.

This individual thought that a lack of student responsibility weakened the program at L.S.U. This was the only area in which this participant mentioned that her age may give her a different perspective than that of a traditional student.

It might be also the students sometimes. Maybe because I'm older and I look at it differently. but sometimes I feel that this is such an interesting class. We were supposed to have something for today and some people didn't do it, and I don't

understand why because then we can not really move on. I think if we don't do this, we don't get anything accomplished.

It is difficult to know what program this individual is considering attending. The institution she named is a specialized college in her field, however this institution offers associate, baccalaureate, and masters degrees. In any case, the appeal of this program to this individual was that she believed she would study very specific and applied information in a laboratory setting. She thought that she needed this type of education as a preparation for employment.

It's for me to get more experience. Right now, I'm almost going to graduate and I don't feel that I can start working right now. Well, I guess I could, but I think I would feel better if I could do the one year program and then start working.

The need for open laboratory time was a real concern of this participant.

Laboratories needed to be open during the evening. Some students were able to work around this problem if they knew a graduate student or someone who would let them in the laboratory after hours. This participant was not comfortable with this arrangement.

We feel misplaced. And one of the reasons is probably that we always look at [students in other majors] and we see that they have their work and they can be in their labs all the time. We are very limited. What we do is kind of illegal because we're not supposed to be there. But it's just necessary for us to do it.

When asked to explain what she meant by "misplaced," Interview 4 explained that since she was not planning to be a farmer, the College of Agriculture did not seem like the appropriate place for her program to be housed.

I don't know if [my major] has anything to do with Agriculture. . . .It's kind of really, really misplaced being in Agriculture . . . Agriculture is not just farmers but, still, it feels misplaced.

Several topics were mentioned by this participant in passing, the appearance of the campus, the opportunity to meet people from other countries and time management issues. She felt that some of the computer facilities in her department were dated. Like several other participants she found that classrooms were often too hot in the summer and too cold in the winter.

Summary of Nontraditional Women Interviews

The two interviews were similar to each other in that both interviews were with individuals who were very interested in specific career paths, although Interview 1 was more career oriented than Interview 2. Both participants were not confident that their programs of study were preparing them for a specific career, one because her prior work experience caused her to believe that college was an idealized representation of her profession and the second because she expected more laboratory courses. One participant had close contacts with former students whose experiences influenced her opinions about her curriculum.

A few topics were introduced by these interviews that had not previously been mentioned. One participant felt that faculty who were nationally known in their profession were an important asset to the university but their teaching expertise should be as important to them as their research expertise. One interviewee enjoyed the library as a browser. Perhaps she found the library to be less frustrating than other participants

in this study because she was not seeking specific materials. This presupposition gains support by comparison with comments made by the first interviewee. She commented that she disliked the library because it was so difficult to locate resource materials in a brief time period. One participant found it difficult to deal with administrative offices on campus since they do not have any night hours and she enrolled almost exclusively at night. Registration was discussed in detail and it was suggested that students be allowed to sit out a semester in certain circumstances without having to reapply to the university. This same individual believed that all seniors should be allowed to register early, since in some cases graduating seniors use their last semester for field experiences.

Several topics that had been mentioned previously were repeated in these interviews. Personal interactions with the faculty influenced the opinions that these students held of their programs. Faculty who were personable, organized, and shared applications for the material they taught were well respected. A good advisor who was accessible was mentioned as a particularly important need if scheduling problems were to be avoided. Increased access to laboratories was also a perceived need. Students wanted open laboratories for practice time. If these laboratories were not open, students attempted to find some surreptitious way to gain access through contact with graduate students, faculty or by other means. Time management skills were mentioned by both participants as it had been mentioned by every participant in this study.

Summary of Nontraditional Student Results

Topics mentioned by these participants are summarized in Summary Table 3.

This table provides a thumbnail summary of the nontraditional interviews and the nontraditional female focus group.

Table 3

Nontraditional Female Participants

Questions from interview guide	Focus Group 3	Interview 3	Interview 4
What attracted you to L.S.U.?	Location	Location Family tradition Cost	Family Opportunity to choose major field
What is your opinion of the programs you enrolled in at L.S.U.?	-“Like a family” - Very supportive faculty in the College of Ag, less supportive in other areas. -Less supportive faculty and students in specific Ag majors in regard to age and gender issues -The university has improved over time	-Very laboratory oriented - Very supportive faculty in the College of Ag -Many classes were applicable to real life -Enjoyed being on campus, atmosphere and history	-Enthusiastic faculty -Major was not well promoted -Relief that exams were written rather than oral -Enjoyed all laboratory classes
Describe the ideal college. How is it different from the program at L.S.U.?	-Students deal with real world issues -Current content -Professional teachers -Advising is mandatory. -Choice of advisors. -Many field experiences beginning early in the program - Information retrieval skills -Oral presentations -Writing skills -Approachable professors -Time for enrichment electives. -application of material	-Religious -More field experiences that allow the students to actively participate -Opportunities for personal interaction with other students and faculty -Material can be applied in everyday life. -A feeling of history , a tradition about the school and being part of that tradition -Classes should make you think	-Many laboratory hours -Better articulated the content between classes -More emphasis on skill development and applied courses -All students would be interested in mastering the subject -More competitive classroom environment

(table continues)

Questions from interview guide	Focus Group 3	Interview 3	Interview 4
What parts would you do differently?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Less industry oriented -Be more relevant to other area of life -bring the real world to the school -Community involvement -More computer and library skills -More emphasis on communication skills -Offer a lot of career counseling -Better balance between old and new ideas -More cultural diversity -More diverse courses 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Eliminate some survey classes -Avoid assigning prominent researchers teaching responsibilities unless they are good teachers -Require all faculty to enroll in teaching courses prior to teaching a class -Adjust the level of personal responsibility required as students progress through their degree 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Select textbooks that were easy to read
If you had some doubts, what influenced these doubts?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Self generated -Family -Gender issues -Potential earnings in the field -Peers -Fellow students -Lack of scholarships for older students 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Degree may not be needed for employment -Courses that had no practical component -Work experience 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Poor cultural fit in specific major -Former students already in the work force. -Lack of feedback on work during an assignment
What are some of the doubts that you have?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Appropriateness for gender. -Appropriateness for age -Ability to succeed in college 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Might not want to pursue a specific career -College offered an unrealistic portrait of the work place -Some material was not applicable to everyday life. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Not enough skill proficiency to enter the work force directly -Ability to succeed in major
What parts of the program worked well for you?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Field experiences -Faculty encouragement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Religious student organization -Having nationally known faculty was appreciated 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Peer support -Student worker assignment -Enjoyed browsing the library -Deadlines make the course more realistic -Personable faculty

(table continues)

Questions from interview guide	Focus Group 3	Interview 3	Interview 4
What are some of the things that helped you finish when others did not?	-Family -Faculty -Need to redress a regret	-Flexible child care -Personable advisors	-Peer support -Prior interest and experience in the subject -Self-motivated -Certain of career choice
What do future students need to know about themselves?	-Time management skills -Study skills -Personal responsibility -Balance social and academic life	-Time management skills -Personal responsibility -Take school seriously from the very first course -Enjoy college -Have many different experiences	-Time management skills -Personal responsibility -Patience
About the program?	-Some course content was out of date -Need more than one advisor in a department -Advising must be sought, it is not freely offered. -Help is offered but seek it before a problem becomes too large	-School is not like the real world -Important to get to know your teachers -It is important to students that they feel important to the college -Need more advisors in the Dean's office -Advising is important to avoid scheduling problems -More sections need to be offered more often	-Scheduling is difficult -Access to the laboratory is important to succeed -Staff sometimes gives out incorrect information
What would you like the College to know?	-Proud of the College -Some opportunities for new program areas were not being pursued.	-Need more courses at night -Students should be allowed to sit out one semester and not have to reapply to the university. -For nontraditional students school is often second to family and/or work -All seniors should be allowed to register early not just graduating seniors	-Need more laboratory time just to practice. -Need better computers. -Need more skill specific classes -Uncomfortable with the image of agriculture

(table continues)

Questions from interview guide	Focus Group 3	Interview 3	Interview 4
Is there anything else you would like to mention?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Administrators of the College were wonderful -College was very interested in helping students succeed. -Would like to repeat a group like this on a regular basis -Women faculty were encouraging role models 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -It was very difficult to locate anything at the library in brief time. -Regional culture is valuable and should be used to promote the university -Parking 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Enjoyed meeting people from other countries -Bus system has improved, late hours are valued -Appearance of the campus -Classrooms were often too hot or too cold

As a group, the nontraditional female participants were comfortable with their return to college. Most found that the College had been very supportive of them and were pleased with their experiences. As a group they appeared to be more comfortable with who they were as individuals and they believed that this self awareness gave them confidence. For some participants, this was their first time to enroll in college and these individuals tended to be younger than the returning students and their responses were more similar to the responses of the traditional students than the responses of the older nontraditional student. Parenthood was a watershed event in the lives of these participants. Parents with younger children preferred experiences that allowed them to spend their time on campus efficiently. Parents with older children often found unexpected emotional support from their children. However, children who were in college appeared to remind the parents of how much older they were than the rest of their peers. Nontraditional students without children tended to mention social campus

activities more than nontraditional women with children. This may be because they were younger and these activities were more appealing to their age group, or it could be that student parents were not interested in such activities due to family obligations.

This group had returned to college for personal reasons or as preparation for employment. They expected college to make them into “educated” people and this included the ability to think and communicate well. They were more self-reliant than the traditional students and did not expect faculty to place them in jobs upon graduation. These individuals expected the faculty to be competent academic advisors. Unlike many of the traditional group participants, these individuals seemed to hold more defined goals.

There were three categories of well-defined goals; personal growth, employment opportunities, and strong interest in the subject material (see Figure 10). Individuals interested in personal growth were divided into two types. Some individuals returned to college to become an “educated person.” They valued the diversity of their experiences and the possibility of interaction with other cultures. Other individuals were interested in redressing a regret. They had parents or other relatives who had regretted not attending college and had enrolled as a kind of emotional surrogate. In one case, an individual had enrolled partly as a preventive measure; she did not want any of her children to think less of her for not having gone to college.

Participants with well-defined employment goals could be described as two types. They differed from the individuals with less-defined goals who were interested in earning a degree as a general employment requirement. Individuals with well-defined

employment goals were interested in preparing for a specific career path. For these participants, courses were valued that fostered skill development, explained applications for the material and/or prepared them for graduate professional schools. Their favorite experiences included laboratory courses, courses that involved projects of all types and field experiences.

Other participants were interested in earning a degree simply because they were interested in the subject they were studying for its own sake. These participants did not necessarily expect to gain employment in their majors and were often interested in unusual applications for their degrees. They valued all types of diversity, diversity of course offerings, diversity of student backgrounds, diversity of experiences such as a travel opportunities and the diversity of the faculty in cultural background and in areas of expertise. Some of these participants were considering returning someday to graduate school, but for these individuals, graduate school was appealing because they expected it to be an interesting experience rather than for any professional preparation it might involve.

Many of the topics that had been mentioned by the traditional women students were repeated by the nontraditional students but they also made several additions to this listing. Faculty who could teach well and were nationally known researchers were respected. Faculty with more structured classes were believed to be more effective. Nontraditional students expected faculty to be competent advisors and for class objectives to be well defined. Informal feedback was important to these students both from peers and from faculty and ideally was offered throughout a course or project.

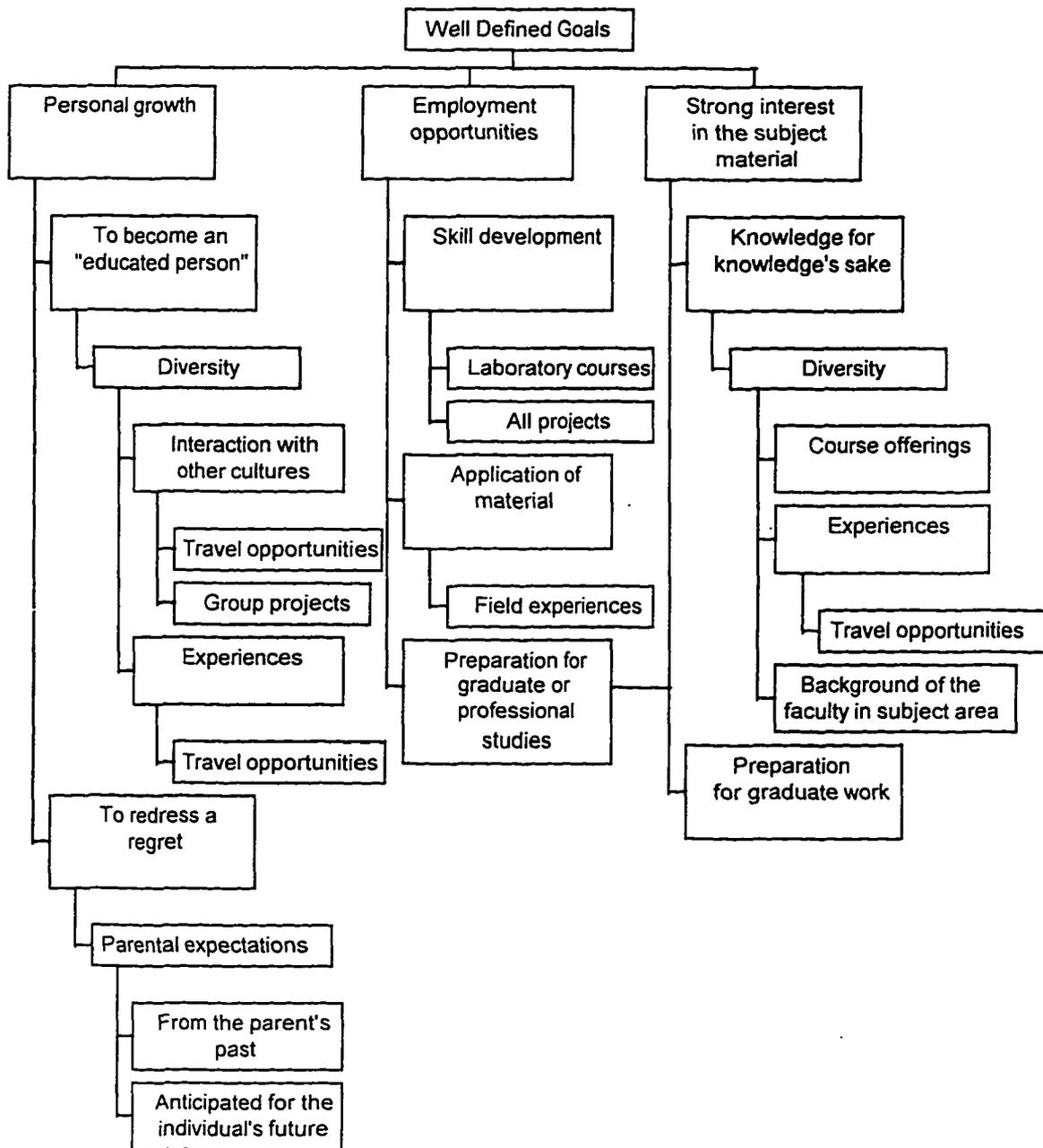


Figure 10. Relationships between Goals and Preferred Educational Formats

Finally, these women seemed to truly enjoy meeting other nontraditional women students like themselves, implying that an organization designed specifically for this demographic might be well received.

Nontraditional Male Students

Nontraditional males were the third student group that participated in this study. Although a focus group and personal interviews had been initially planned, this proved to be a poor format for this group for several reasons. These students had waited to declare their majors until after they had been enrolled for several years which limited the number of potential participants to a small group. In order to get a diverse group who were unlikely to know each other only one student was selected from each department. Of these potential participants, their work schedules and travel distances to campus created scheduling problems with arranging a time for the focus groups meeting. Several participants had heard of this study from fellow students and knew that this study involved some interviews as well as a focus group. They agreed to participate only on the condition that they were allowed to schedule an interview. Interviews were more appealing to this group because they were easily scheduled at each participant's convenience.

There were nine nontraditional male individuals contacted to participate in this study. This number avoided a duplication of major fields of study in this group. Of the individuals contacted to participate in this study, five agreed to participate in an individual interview. Two individuals declined to participate due to heavy work schedules. Two individuals declined to participate because although they were earning

agricultural degrees, they were also enrolled in a second degree program and had taken very few agriculture courses. Of those individuals who agreed to participate in the study, all five keep that commitment. The resulting interviews are summarized individually.

Interview 5.

Interview 5 worked in the Baton Rouge area and had returned to college because it was an important personal goal. His employer offered some assistance with tuition and he had some expectations that having a college degree could lead to better job opportunities. This individual was a highly motivated student who worked what could only be described as a brutal night work schedule in order to attend class during the day. On some days he had only two hours sleep prior to his first morning class. He was a full time employee.

Interview 5 selected L.S.U. because he believed it was the best college in the area. He had met some coworkers who had attended other schools and he believed that they were not as well spoken as they should have been for college graduates.

To me, L.S.U. is a more accredited school. There is no doubt about it. If I am going to put in this much work and effort, I want it to come from the most accredited school in the area and as far as I tell this would have to be it. . . . I hate to talk bad about a college but I see people graduating from a [different school] who can't speak good English. My English isn't great but I think my English is bad because of the environment I came from.

This participant was the first individual in his family to attend college. His father had discouraged him from attending school when he was a young man. His father believed a college degree was not necessary to earn a good income. This was a significant event in this participant's life and he described this decision in detail at two different points during his interview.

I could have come to college right out of high school. I could have played [athletics] on a scholarship but I chose not to because my Daddy was a major influence. He was a major influence. He did construction work and at the time I graduated Vietnam was just ending and construction was booming. So I could go to work as a [specific trade]. . . I could go to work doing that and make more money than most of the kids that were graduating college. So where was the incentive for me to go to college back then?

He reflected again later on this decision.

Well, I could have gone on a scholarship. Daddy was the one that said to me "Well, I'll go with you and we'll look at it". I've got great parents but I don't think that school is as important to them as it should be. Or any formal education. So he said "I'll go with you and we'll go up there and we'll see what it's all about but I'll tell you, you will make a lot more money doing this right out of high school". He kind of just planted that little seed and it just grew. So that's why I didn't go. If he had on the other hand said "You know you really need an education. Yea, you can make a little more money but you go get your

education now and the money will be there later, you can do that later.” There is a lot more to life than just money. I didn’t realize that back then.

Education was important to Interview 5. His parents had not completed high school and they did not understand his decision to return to school since he did not need a degree for his employment. They were not very supportive of his return to school.

My parents weren’t educated. . . .So they don’t understand why I’m doing this.

They wonder all the time. “What are you doing? Why are you doing this? You know you don’t need this. You got a good paying job ” To them you get a good paying job and what else could you want out of life? And I’m just not that way.

Family responsibilities created stress in other ways for this participant. He was a parent and was aware that his enrollment took time away from his family. He was a parent of two adolescent children and he wondered at times if the time away from his family was worth the cost.

Coming to school, I have missed a bunch with my kids and I’ve missed a lot. I just missed a lot with my kids. So when I get notices my son is doing something that I feel I should be there doing with him, you have to wonder is this worth it? . . . I have to wonder is this worth it. You know, you’re missing a lot of their best years. And obviously I feel like it is because I’m still here. I haven’t quit yet. . . but sometimes it gets hard and you wonder is it worth all the effort I’m putting out. But I think then you go home get a good night’s rest and wake up the next day and then you can’t wait to get to class and learn whatever it is you want from the assignment.

Perhaps because there was not a family tradition of attending college, Interview 5 began his college career with very few preconceived expectations about what the experience would be like.

I really had no idea what I was walking into. I didn't, you know. I know what I wanted. I really didn't think about what I was expecting. I really didn't expect anything. I wasn't sure. I'd had no college experience before this.

Although his primary reason for attending college was to redress a regret, he also hoped that his degree would make him a better educated person. He believed that his education would lead to a better job and perhaps an opportunity to own his own business someday.

I want to be better educated. It is beneficial, to you, to a person working for a large corporation to have a college degree. There is a lot more openings, or a lot more options available to them. So that's what I wanted. I would like to work for myself rather than for a large corporation so in order to do that and to maintain the lifestyle that I have become accustomed to I feel like a college education is a must.

Interview 5 was pleased because he felt that his experiences were making him into a better person. He reflected on what college had meant to him as an individual. He was proud of his academic accomplishments.

[The best part is] where I am now. When I came to L.S.U., a simple math problem would blow me out of the water. It would just eat my lunch. I didn't know how to work it. I didn't know how to work a simple math problem. Not

that I'm a mathematical whiz or anything but now I can. Some of the problems that I use, that in the past would take me hours and hours and hours of trying to solve now I can solve them pretty quickly. I like it, not that I am any smarter or anything than I was when I came to school here, but it is because I'm just a little more knowledge and I like being more knowledgeable. To me that is the best part. When I look back to where I was before I started and look at myself now, I am more proud of myself now than I was then. I think that's the most important thing a person can do. Is to be proud of themselves, of what they have accomplished.

This participant was proud of the campus. Perhaps because he was the first member of his family to attend college just being a part to the campus life was a positive experience for him.

I like the campus. I enjoy seeing the kids. You almost get a second shot at going back and being young again. I enjoy seeing the kids doing some of the same things I did a hundred years ago. I like that and I like the campus. I like when I walk out on the campus. I enjoy the feeling that I get.

For Interview 5 being an older student had some advantages. He believed that having returned to school when he was older allowed him to have more defined goals than he would have had if he had come to college right out of high school.

I know what I want. When I was younger I didn't know. Did you know? When you were 18 what you wanted? . . . You didn't realize what real life was about. I've been there, I know what real life is about. Not that I know everything but I

know a lot more now than I did at 18. . . . Yes, it would have been fun but I feel like I came out ahead by not going to school at the time when I first had the opportunity. Now, while it is a little harder, I think , now is a better time. Not only do I know what I want, I'm more determined to get it. I realized that now after being out in the cold, cruel world that nobody is going to give you anything. If you want something, you have got to go after it, you have got to decide what you want and then do whatever it takes, not whatever it takes but you got to do what you can do to achieve the goal.

He returned to this topic much later in the interview.

They need to know what they want and I don't think that at eighteen years old you know what you want. I just don't think it's going to happen. I'm sure there are exceptions to the rule, but for the most part I think that you need to get out and see what life is about and then make up your mind. I don't think that you can come out of high school and know what exactly what you want to do.

He believed that determination was an important quality needed by students to succeed.

It is easy to say you want something but it takes a certain type of individual to go out and accomplish what they say they want. You have all kinds of people that jump up and say "Well, I want to do this". But yet when they run into the first barrier or they see that this isn't really easy to do then it's easy to quit. I'm not a quitter. I can't, it's just not in me to give up, throw in the towel. Me and my Daddy get into some of the worst arguments. He'll say "So what then, don't do that". "But Daddy it's not in me to quit. I just can't do it, I can't give up." So, I

think determination is the main factor and it takes just a certain type of person.

You got to want it bad. If you want it enough, you'll do it.

Another advantage of being an older student for this participant was that he was not required to finish his degree in order to find employment. He felt that this gave him a different perspective on his college experience than that which was held by his younger peers.

There is a difference between me and most of those kids out there. I can quit today and getting my degree probably won't help me monetarily or be beneficial to me because I have a well paying job. I don't want to get cocky or anything but I don't need to make money. I can't make more money by going to college but yet I still want it. I want it bad enough to where I'm going to get it. It 's not if I am going to graduate, it's when I'm going to graduate. And most of the kids here are here because of what they think they can make when they graduate. It'll net them a high paying job. I just don't have those visions anymore. While I do want a better job, I'd like to quit shifting and get on a normal 8 to 5 schedule somewhere, I don't have to do it. I can live with what I'm doing now.

Traditional students were believed by Interview 5 to hold a somewhat vocational perspective of the college experience. His own value system caused him to believe that individuals who view college from solely a vocational perspective miss some of the benefits of the university experience.

I think they would need to get out and live a little bit. To understand where your interests are. What do you enjoy doing? What do you want to do? Where do

you want to be when you turn 70 years old? What do you want to be? I want to look back when I turn 70 or 80, or however old I can get. I want to look back and say "You know, I'm as good as I can be ". I'm as good as I can make me. So that's where I want to be and I don't think you know that at eighteen years old.

Another difference that this participant recognized between traditional and nontraditional students was the attitude that younger students brought with them to class. He found younger students to be less serious about their courses than he would like. In particular, he disliked students talking during the lecture.

I don't like a class that is too informal. I don't like a lot of cutting up in class. I like a teacher that's not afraid to say "Please hush while I am talking." or something like that. I don't like a lot of distractions going on. I'm here to learn, I'm not here to play, I'm here because I want to know what I want to learn. I like a teacher that will have a handle on the class.

He continued on this topic.

I have had a couple of classes where there is a little more talking than I would like. I understand that there are things that you need to say when you are in class. Sometimes you have to ask " What did they just say?". I understand that. I don't have a problem with that but I do have a problem with them talking about the class they just got out of while I 'm trying to listen to the instructor.

This participant believed that traditional students had some advantages over nontraditional students because they were more aware of the opportunities available to them on campus. He compared his experience to that of a friend's daughter.

When you asked about how I would design a college, I wouldn't want the kids to work so they could participate [in activities]. A friend of mine has a daughter who comes here and it's just so neat; she's just aware of everything that goes on campus. She lives in a dorm. I think that's just the way a kid should go to school. They kind of get away from Mom and Daddy. You are not really on your own but you feel like you are.

He explained that he was not a connected to campus life as a younger student would be.

I go home between classes and I take a nap because I had to go work at night. So I don't have time to spend on campus. Like my friend's daughter does. It's a lot easier. Most of the people here are her age group, she is coming up with a bunch of kids. I think that's beneficial too whereas a nontraditional student doesn't have that. I mean you're as old as the instructor, in some cases you're older than the instructor.

He hoped that his own children would appreciate the diversity of experiences available to them in college when they went to school. It was important to this participant that his children attend college for general as well as applied knowledge areas.

Don't take a course just because it's an easy A. Take something that is going to be beneficial to you, that you can use. Or something that interests you.

Something that will make you a more well rounded person. I took an Introduction to Fine Arts and I said to myself “What in the world am I doing taking this for?” But it was a great class. You learn different artists and you see some of the paintings. I had seen the paintings before--- Who was Van Gogh? I had heard the name Van Gogh but what did he do? So it just exposes you to a little bit of that, makes life a little nicer.

This feeling of being a better educated person carried through to the courses that this individual took in his major field. He felt comfortable in agriculture and believed that his courses gave him a new viewpoint on problems in his field. He described what he liked about agriculture.

I really like the agricultural courses. I like agriculture. It’s me. The courses I think are great. I have had some really good instructors. I have learned a lot. A lot that I didn’t know about. I had no idea before. . . . Now I have a little better insight [to problems in my field]. I like the courses. I just personally enjoy going, learning about the things I learn. . . . I learned so much that will help me as far as my own cows, keeping them going, and keeping my business going.

Teachers that were admired by Interview 5 were described as knowledgeable and prepared. Interview 5 highly valued the expertise of his instructors and a “good attitude”. The term “good attitude” was never clearly defined in the interview.

A good teacher first of all, has got to be knowledgeable. If you are not knowledgeable, that disqualifies him right there. But I think almost as important as knowledge is attitude. The attitude that the teacher has about the students

learning and even the way he or she presents the material. I like a teacher with a good attitude that comes prepared to class which so far I haven't really had any problems with teachers that didn't come to class prepared. Every teacher I had especially in the College of Agriculture, have been prepared for class. I've had good instructors.

Interview 5 stated that he "disliked large lecture classes". This participant found laboratory classes to be of particular value. In his opinion seeing and doing an activity was a more useful experience than a lecture class.

I like a lab that you go and you have hands-on experience in the field that you're in. If I'm taking [a specific subject] for instance, let's go, even though I do the same thing, let's go out there and do it to where I can see the proper way to do it and, and learn how to do it correctly so that I can take that back with me and so I can use that in my own little business. I don't like a lab that you don't go out and get hands-on experience. I like hands-on.

He qualified his comments by excluding laboratory classes that were simply extensions of the lecture.

A lab that is just an extension of the lecture I don't like that. I like you to show me how to do it, don't tell me how to do it, just go out and show me. I learn better that way.

This participant was very interested in the subjects that he was studying. He was earning his degree in an area that was of great personal interest to him. This was

reflected by his comments in which he wished all students had more hours in a day to explore their fields in more detail.

I would add more hours to the day to where they could study more. I've had classes to where I just want to get more into them, get more out of them and I just ran out of time. You know, I just don't have the time to do all the things I want to do in each class. I'd give them more time to really dig into the material that has been presented.

Interview 5 lamented that courses were designed to introduce people to the material. He found that this was an effective way for a course to be organized but he knew that he was missing the depth of these subjects.

You run out of time. The class is, in my opinion, designed to introduce you to the material. However, what I find is they outline the chapters. I mean you don't have time to read or go through the book word for word in class. If you really want to make the grade or do well in the class, you have to go to the lectures and then you have to on your own time, go into the book and just go back over it. I mean I have to read chapters sometimes 3 or 4 times to get everything I want out of 'em. Well, maybe not 3 or 4 but a lot of times I read them twice to get everything out that I need out of it or to get what I feel I need out of it.

Interview 5 believed that most teachers used their textbooks to outline the content of the course. In such a system, he believed that it was important that the instructors know their subjects well.

I don't see where you have enough hours in the semester to go through the book word for word and just teach every sentence in the book. What I find most of the teachers do is they outline the chapters. They go through and they pull the parts out they feel are important. And I, as a student, have to trust their judgement because they've been there. Most of the instructors I have hold doctorates so I have to trust them on what they feel is important. I have to trust that it is indeed important. I find a lot of them do go through the books and extract what they feel is important and give that back to me or at least put a heavy emphasis on it.

Like many other participants in this study, Interview 5 described scheduling as "awful hectic" and he wished that more sections of a class could be offered more often. This comments lead to an unusual addendum. This individual was a tall person and he found that in the older buildings many of the desks were built for short and smaller teenage physiques. This was often physically uncomfortable for this individual. He also disliked classrooms that were too small for their enrollments.

I haven't really run into this problem in the College of AG but as far as [specific college] is concerned there are a lot of classes that are just [close]. I don't like a class where you're just bumping shoulders with the people next to you. My [specific] class is like that. It's not as bad now because a lot of the kids have dropped but early in the semester it was just you were kind of like sardines in there.

The only criticism this individual had about his experience at L.S.U. involved a grading system that he believed was unfair. Although the incident was too specific to describe in detail, it was a system that allowed students to retest an exam with the understanding that the second grade would replace the first even if the grade were lower. Interview 5 believed that this arrangement punished students who made the extra effort to prepare for a retest since they could lower their grade by retesting as well as improve it. He had strong opinions on this topic and spoke on this subject at length.

I'm not looking for a grade. I don't want anything given to me. If I don't earn it, I don't want it, but on the flip side of the coin, I don't want it taken from me either. If I feel like I've earned it, don't take it away from me. Give me what I think I've earned. Be fair with me that's all that I am asking for, is to be fair with me. And some grading scales are a little more fair than others.

Interview 5 is a good example of how the texture of a statement is often lost in the transition to the printed word. Statements made by this individual such as "I like when I walk out on the campus. I enjoy the feeling that I get." and "When I look back to where I was before I started and look at myself now, I am more proud of myself now than I was then." read as though these were greeting card sentiments. These experiences were important to this participant in a way that belies the simplicity of his statements. College represented for him a way to improve his life in very positive way and the inflections in his spoken comments reveal just how much he had personally invested to be a part of the university community. To be a member of a college community held great emotional coin for this participant. It was unlikely that he would find much to

dislike about his university experiences since the very act of being enrolled was the achievement of a significant private goal for this participant.

Interview 6.

Interview 6 had a very unusual personal history. He had many disparate experiences in his life and had made some poor lifestyle choices. After many years and events, he took responsibility for his life. At that point he worked through several personal issues and decided to return to college. This individual had dropped out of college years ago and initially had intended to attend a trade school.

Went to college one year. I withdrew out of every class I ever took. I used to just go and sleep in the local library and then come home pretending I had been to school. And after a year, I dropped out and moved. . . [After several years he had returned home and reassessed his life] Shortly thereafter, I looked into going to trade school here in town, and the lady there looked at my ACT and SAT scores, and talked with me and said, "Why don't you go to the university?" So, I said, "I don't know if I can afford it." She said, "Don't worry about that. Just go." So I came over here and they said, "Sure. You're plenty smart. Come on." Along the way I got married. I don't have any kids yet but I got married and my life has really shaped up.

The reason for his return to college was that he hoped that the experience would make him a better person. He also expected that earning a degree would improve his future earnings and help him provide for his family. He chose a subject area that interested him with the intention of making his life work in that field.

I wanted to better myself. I don't think education is ever a waste. I felt lucky that I was at the right place at the right time and had the opportunity to pursue a degree. I came here because eventually I wanted to raise a family, and provide for them. I wanted to learn more about something that I was somewhat interested in to begin with. I believe that if you find a job that you love, you'll never work another day the rest of your life. I felt that best route for me to take, the best opportunity for me to find that job that I would love was through [my present curriculum].

This participant had expected an idealized environment but found the university a very human place. This discovery seemed to a little disappointing to him.

I think this is true of all universities that it's not as altruistic and as ivory tower as I thought it was going to be.

He described his expectations.

At the beginning, I thought it was going to be all about education geared toward a degree. And what I found was that the education I've gained, and what I've learned at the college, I learned the book-smart stuff but I've also learned that it's more political and bureaucratic than I thought it was going to be.

He found that the personalities of the faculty and students affected each other in unanticipated ways. This association was characterized as a type of game.

Gamesmanship involved other skills besides subject mastery.

It's personalities. It is true in any endeavor, that the personalities clash. It's not necessarily my personality. I've always been kind of, just want to conform, just

lay low. Speak at the appropriate times. Don't make waves. I don't think there's anything wrong with what I've learned. It's not good or bad, it's just not what I thought it was going to be. You know, I learned the book-smarts, and I also learned some other things. I learned other things too. And, shoot, as far as I can tell, it's a more rounded education. I see a lot of people get really bent out of shape, "It should be this way. It should be this way. It should be this way." And you know, a lot of it is -- I hate to use this term, it sounds like playing a game -- you've got to figure out what the professor wants. That's the game. And if you can deliver what the professor wants your grade will reflect it. And that's not always, actually, learning or the book-smart part of it.

To be successful in navigating the college culture, according to this participant, it was helpful for a student to understand the perspective of his professors. Interview 6 had contemplated the university culture and he offered his impression of the university world. According to this view, there were four groups of instructors that affected undergraduate life, tenured faculty, faculty who had not yet reached tenure, new faculty and graduate teaching assistants.

I guess to get back to the question about delivering what the professor wants as opposed to the academic standards that should probably be followed, I found that they're just human. Just like everybody else. They have egos and pride, and all those things that mess you up along the way. Those are the factors that I don't know if I could say or give you a specific instance of, well, this professor wanted this or this professor wanted that. It has more to do with attitude. The

biggest thing I learned as far as here is something I think I sort of discovered about the staff. It seems as though the tenured professors are cool. They're all laid back. They've got nothing to prove. If they're still here, I think it's because they want to be. They enjoy teaching. They have something to deliver and something drives them, some inner drive.

Then there are the assistant professors who seem to be frustrated and they just don't really care. They're more concerned about publishing papers. Well, not even that. I think they're just kind of frustrated. Maybe they've published enough papers and they just still aren't tenured or whatever. And then there's the other class of professors just coming in and they're gung ho and they snatch up as many graduate students as they can, publish as many papers as they can, and they burn themselves and everybody else around them out.

Then there are T.A.s [graduate teaching assistants], who have no business, no business in the classroom, to tell you the truth. Maybe for their own experience and their benefit, but I think it's to the detriment of the students taking the courses. I had a writing course my freshman year that just -- the guy was experimenting with his class. You know? He used pop culture as his medium for us to learn how to write argumentative papers.

Interview 6 speculated that perhaps the college environment was different from what he had expected because college standards had slipped over time. He thought that many of college courses he had taken had been too easy.

This isn't just over in the [my department] either. I had to take all the general education requirements first, and I found that actually what you're expected to produce is far below what I think we should have to produce after going through college. You hear that a college degree now is worth what a high school degree used to be worth. I think that's probably because the standards have dropped.

He stated that there were professors who demanded high quality work from their students. These professors were not well thought of by most undergraduates. Interview 6 was also surprised at how poor his classmates were in arithmetic and writing skills. This was an issue that was important to this individual; he referred to communications skills throughout his interview.

There are several stand-out professors that make you stand and deliver what, especially at the senior level, college students should be delivering. I found most of the students raise a big stink about it. "It's not fair." You know? I can't believe how many people can't write, how many people can't add. It just amazes me.

He returned to this topic later in the interview.

I can't believe how many students have gotten this far and don't know subject, verb, agreement, and how to just construct a logically ordered paper. I think it's just a lack of reading.

Interview 6 believed that sliding standards were the result of teachers who tolerated lazy students. A good teacher to this participant was one who had strict

standards and held his students to those standards. He characterized a good classroom environment as “military” in style.

I think the students' lack of willingness to exercise their brains has dragged down the standards of the various colleges within the university. It's sort of, "Well, the students aren't going to do much. You know they can only do this -- reach this level, so let's lower the standard a little bit." That's straight across the board for everybody. The best teachers I ever had in all my education were the ones that sort of ran the class in the military style. Commanded respect. They respected you but they expected respect. . . .I've got a professor who I just finished a class with, that I didn't do so hot in the class but I probably learned more from all the mistakes I made in his class, and all the pressure I was put under in his class than just about any other class I've ever taken. I learned more. I got the worst grade in his class out of all of my grades, but I learned more. Highly structured classes appealed to this student. In highly structured classes the professors' expectations were clear and the rules were enforced.

A professor that I've had, if you show up to his class five minutes late, just don't even bother going in. And that's a half a letter grade off your bottom grade if you miss a class unexcused. So everybody shows up. He just lays it out up front. He says, "This is the way I run my class. You can like it or not, but this is the way I run it." I tell you what, everybody goes to his class. The people that didn't, flunk. You know, he states it clearly, "This is exactly how everything's going to be," and if you don't follow along, you suffer. And it's no secret; there's

nothing hidden. But I tell you what, any one of the students that are in that class, that just came out of that class, he probably taught them more about all types of things other than what the class was. Something about how to deal with people, and you know, all types of things. I don't think most of them realized it. They just glue a grade to their work or something. It was one of the richest courses I ever took. It was hard. Hard. It was a real rich, well-rounded course. Highly structured.

Interview 6 thought that the reason such instructors were not appealing to some students was that some students believed that such professors were persecuting them. He implied that traditional students lacked the maturity to see the reasoning behind strictly enforced standards.

A lot of the students seem to think, "Well, he knew what I meant." I was like, "Well, that doesn't matter." You know? You can't go up to your boss in the work world and say, "Well, I thought you knew what I meant." It's got to be clearly stated on a piece of paper in black and white. "So I got the units of measure off. You knew that was ridiculous but, you know, I'm sorry." It just cost him millions of dollars. That's something that one particular professor really instilled in people. They don't see that. They don't put it together. "He's just being a jerk. He's out to get me." "Well, you're not that important to him." He's got better things to do than to try and get students. It's so silly.

A great teacher was described as someone who wanted to share his knowledge.

Interview 6 thought that without this characteristic it would be hard for a faculty

member to remain a good teacher. This quality was important because it caused these persons to be more interested in the teaching portion of their careers. This characteristic would give the faculty a personal reason to stay in the classroom.

[A great teacher has] a desire to pass on knowledge, I think, and experience. It's kind of vain or I don't know if it's vain but I think we all want to leave a mark on the world. And certain people can clearly define, or help students define their goals, and show them how to achieve them. I think there needs to be a burning desire inside them though. . . . I think if they can make it through to the end, they become tenured and full-blown professors and all that, I think that's what a lot of them are shooting for. Just like in any other profession, I think a lot of them get sidetracked and distracted and their focus is lost, and they become less well-defined.

This individual believed that he had many good teachers but there was a specific teacher that stood out his memory. He described this individual in great detail.

The class I just went through I really enjoyed. It's the class I've kind of been referring to a lot. He runs it kind of military-like. I didn't do so hot as far as my grade's concerned. I didn't do so well, but that doesn't bother me that much. Especially at this point in the game, I can't see how anybody could be that concerned about their grade point when they've only got a few hours left. Your grade point is either there or not. But it was well-structured, he commanded respect, he respected us. I don't think a lot of the students saw that but I did. . . . But this class -- like I said, well-structured, great teacher, opportunities for [field

experience]. I enjoy [field experiences] And we had [travel opportunities] It was a great time. I really enjoyed it. I probably learned more in his class . He even honed my writing skills. I used to write with a lot of fluff. . . If there is anything I learned, it's that you can describe something in a simple sentence. Put a period. And then write another sentence. I learned more than [a specific subject] in his class. I thoroughly enjoyed it. Got a bad grade but thoroughly enjoyed it.

Poor classes included courses that were taught by technically competent teachers who were poor at communicating their topics. Other unappreciated experiences were instructors who lectured for very long periods of time. Long lectures were ineffective to this student because there was a limit to how long a lecture could hold his attention.

I think she's very intelligent. She just has a problem. My dad is very intelligent. He's a [scientist]. But he has problems helping me understand simple [science]. It's just second nature to him. How do you describe the color blue, that kind of thing. And for her, I believe it was sort of the same thing. I also think she was real busy with projects and publishing papers, and I don't know if she's tenured; she may be. But going to symposiums and blah, blah, blah. And the class was two hours of lecture followed by two hours of lab. I learned something from this class but it just wasn't what I thought it was going to be. The lecture was two hours straight through at least. Sometimes two and a half hours. Ran over into some lab time. No break. And it is in a small, stuffy classroom. Anybody understands the mind can absorb only what the rear end can take. You cannot sit

in a class 2½ hours. I don't know how she could expect anything she was saying in the last 45 minutes of class to even sink in.

In addition to these problems, this course had difficulty with computer media.

The course also suffered from an apparent lack of clearly defined objectives.

They had a new computer system set up over in the design building and it was just a mess. I didn't learn anything. I have a computer at home and I'm fairly well-versed in computerese. I can navigate my way through most programs. It was just a mess. It was a highly technical software program, on very powerful computers that were networked, and the network didn't work. It was basically, "Punch this key. Punch this key. Punch this key." And you know what it was? She just didn't have any way to focus the class. She just jumped right in at the beginning with a list of details. We didn't see how it all fit together at all. It was just a mess.

He believed that the instructor attempted to compensate for the difficulties in laboratory by adjusting the grading scale. He implied that some of these difficulties may have been because the instructor was involved in activities unrelated to the course.

...She graded real easy. I think it's because she knew she was busy doing other stuff. If I was actually laying down cash for every class, I would have been real disappointed.

Other experiences that this participant disliked were classes that involved working with partners. As a timid individual, it was hard for him to refuse to work with someone even if he had worked with them unsuccessfully in the past. He regarded this

as a character flaw and he had never developed the social skills to deal with the problem of partners who did not do their share of the work. Therefore he preferred courses that did not require these types of work arrangements.

This individual was pleased with the faculty in his department. Although he was concerned that many students had poor communication skills, he believed that the faculty were aware of this problem.

I think [my] department's been put together real well. I'm impressed with what they've done with what they had. . . . Over the course of my academic career here, I've seen that they've really strived to do the best they possibly can with what they have to work with. I know that a complaint or an issue that seems to be raised annually is that the students that come out of the program can't write. They can't express themselves verbally. [The faculty] they work on it. I tell you, they work on it. They 're giving these students that have been supposedly prepared to go into the curriculum. I think the way that they've got the program set up, you get some field experiences, and laboratory experiences.

It seemed that he was more disappointed in his peers than his instructors. This participant felt that "weed out" classes served a useful purpose. Such classes would give students an early exposure to their major subjects and would allow them to change their program of study early if they thought they were not suited for their initial choice.

I can see if they had a weed out class. I'm sure you've heard that term. To stop people from going to a curriculum right in the beginning, "See, this is what it's like." There is a class where that professor leads you through [many experiences]

for no real reason other than to just to weed you out. I think they do a good job there. I think it's well-rounded. It is set up to be a sort of a general introduction.

For this student, one weakness in his program was the lack of a summation experience at the end of his curriculum. He wished that there was some type of experience that would help him find a direction among the many possibilities in his field.

Most people think, "How broad can this field be?" But it is. There's a lot of aspects to it. Everything you can think that is involved is presented along the way. And I think they could help at the end, maybe open things up a little more. I followed the curriculum almost to a "T", and still find at the end that I'm [uncertain]. I'm headed off to graduate school and I'm not sure exactly what I want to do. I'm going to work on a thesis program and I've gone in a complete circle. I don't know what I want to do anymore. Not specifically.

He returned to this idea of a summation course later in the interview and described how such a course might work.

[We could] have somewhat of a wrap-up at the end. The general things you need to remember. There are some basic things that we learn at the very beginning that, all of a sudden, it'll pop up in a course near the end. Of course you're supposed to know it. And you're like, you don't want to say anything. You don't want to ask a question because it's such a basic thing that, you're like, "I know I'm supposed to know that. I just can't . . ." I would recommend that they have some kind of conclusion. Maybe not even a graded course.

Somewhat of a, "This is what we've expected you to learn and we're just going to review it. And whether you know it or not -- you don't have to show up -- you can come every day -- you can do whatever." You know? "But at the end, we're going to give you this little test." Maybe that could be graded. It could all be a review of everything you've learned in all of your classes but just right at the end. It would be real helpful. I don't think I'm that different than any of the other students as far as being able to absorb information. I know there are other students that probably are in the same boat I'm in where they're thinking, "Gosh, what is that formula?" You know, that formula we're supposed to have committed to memory in the first semester. . . . Just have a wrap-up type thing.

He returned to this idea again later in the interview.

I think you would have to have, maybe a whole semester, just dedicated to pulling all this information together. I'm thinking in sort of worldly terms, not academic terms, not ivory tower terms, but "What am I going to do with this information." I've asked this of students over there. If somebody just threw you out in the work world and said, "Okay, I've got this [problem], what do I do?" What if somebody just said, "[Solve this problem], what would you do? I've asked students that. I think maybe in all the different curriculums, I think they should have to take some general education classes. Then take an exam to get into the curriculum that you want.

The history that this individual brought with him to college gave him the ability to view others student from a detached viewpoint. This was an experience that he felt was particular to the older returning student.

I'm kind of anachronistic. I'm about 10 years older than the rest of the students, so I feel like -- I don't feel like I have an edge on them but I just feel like -- well, I learned some other things along the way and then I came back to school. It's funny to sit and watch, kind of from the outside, watch them going through it. "Oh, man, you've got some stuff to learn." Then there are other things [in which] they have the edge on me.

He had come to terms with what it meant to be an older student. Returning to school as an adult helped him to concentrate on his classes. This was one reason why Interview 6 believed that he would finish his degree.

I believe the reason I'm going to finish is because, perhaps, when you put it in terms of why others don't, perhaps I got rid of a bunch of distractions before I got here, or learned the lessons that I needed to learn to make it possible for me to get through school. I obviously tried once and didn't do it. It's never too late for education. Education is never wasted. I feel somewhat set apart occasionally, but age plays less and less a part, and the older I get, the less important it is to me. There are still instances when I feel kind of like I don't fit in. I don't fit in socially around campus, but that may have something to do with the fact that I don't drink, I don't go out and pursue the social things that happen here on campus.

Another characteristic that this participant valued was the ability to keep events in perspective. He thought that some lessons can only be learned the hard way and that perhaps this was not necessarily bad. Hard experiences taught his individual the value of structure.

They need to know not to take themselves too seriously. It's funny because I think you need to learn some lessons in life. I think that's why we're put here, to learn lessons and to become better souls. The best way to do that is to learn the hard way. Go through experiences and experience failure, and problems, and learn how to come out the other side. Here I am saying, "Well, I've been through a lot of that crap." And here I am saying, "Well, structure is the best way to deal with it." I really don't think you could have a structured environment in school, where people would learn hard knocks and tough situations. But don't be afraid to make mistakes. . . . Know that you are a human being and you are going to make mistakes. And it's okay. Don't get hung up on it. Learn from it and move on. There's no big deals in life. Don't take it so serious.

Structure was important because it was difficult for this participant to accept that most eighteen year old students were mature enough for the college experience. He remembered his own experiences.

I think any college, most colleges and universities provide a growing up experience. I kind of saw it from a different angle than I think most do. I was definitely not ready, and I don't see how anybody could be ready right out of high school. I went to a decent high school and I think I was well-prepared for

college. I was well-prepared academically but definitely not [in other ways]. There were a lot of lessons that needed to be learned along the way before I could place my education in it's right perspective and see where it fit into my life. It is important. It's very important.

Like Interview 5, Interview 6 was concerned about the time that school took away from his family. His wife was supporting him while he finished his degree and he was concerned that perhaps he was not contributing enough to his family..

I felt as though I wasn't providing at home, because I was just in school. My wife was under stress with all the bills. It's funny because for the last few years, my wife has been the one who's been sort of floundering, "What am I doing? I don't know what direction I'm headed in." And she finally got a job she loves, and she's just as happy as a clam. She's content, and the job is stimulating for her, and all of a sudden she's off in a direction she's making decent money, she's happy. And there I am, all sort of -- the table's completely turned and all of a sudden I'm thinking, "Oh, my God, what am I doing?. Floating along in school. I'm not generating any income." I'm more of a tax on our relationship. I'm taking more than I'm bringing and not just money-wise.

The only other source of stress described by this participant was a result of his field experiences. Although he thought these were good learning experiences, he was startled by some of the behaviors he witnessed during some of these experiences. He described his reactions in some detail.

You got in there and it was just so sophomoric, just all the pranks. I can look back now and think, "Yeah, it was kind of funny." But the general feeling, I don't know. I saw a character come out in some of the students and in some of the professors. It's the first impressions about certain people who are often just the opposite. Good and bad. And that was the same for professors. . . . I really didn't enjoy it at all. I saw a lot of ugly stuff too. I mean, a lot of it was just joking and stuff, but I saw some [things that were] really just vicious.

He continued on this topic.

[It was] a dog pack mentality. Finding the weakest creature in the bunch. And it wasn't me. I'm just saying . . . just seeing different cultural traits come out. Disrespect for wildlife, disrespect for other human beings. I understand it. As I understand things, I know it basically comes out of insecurity. I mean that dog pack. Let's pick on somebody. If we can focus on them, pick on them. If you can focus on them and pick on them, then you won't be picked on. I sat back and watched this. And some people get real, real hurt; just saw a lot of -- I guess I just am amazed at how some people are brought up. I've been a lot of places and . . . some people may look at my experience and say I've been through some trying times and the school of hard knocks or whatever, and seen some things that I wouldn't wish upon anybody. Been through some things I wouldn't wish upon anybody. But they were all of my own making, and I can't believe -- I have a hard time being around people that hurt other people. And I experienced that at [some field experiences]. But I guess it's something I needed to see, and learn.

and experience. It wasn't pleasant; it distracted from the actual learning process -- the academics of the learning process but -- I don't know.

He thought that perhaps more structured experiences with a heavy work load would prevent some of these types of experiences. In this individual's opinion that would be a definite improvement in the program.

Other topics that were mentioned by this participant included the grading scale, the need for some free elective courses and the Greek system. This participant felt that all courses should be required to use the same grading scale. He believed that some courses had grading scales that were too rigorous and they did not accurately measure the expertise of the students who finished the class. Free electives were needed to allow students to enroll in some general interest course that were not related to their major or minor fields. The Greek system was strongly disliked by this individual; he seemed to consider it a dividing influence among the general student body although it might have some benefits for the individual members.

Interview 7.

Interview 7 had originally enrolled in college as a traditional student. After he tried several different majors, he left school and entered the work force. He held employment in an occupation related to some of the major fields that had interested him as a student. After a number of years working, he believed that he had a better idea of what he wanted to study and this prompted his return to college. He was also encouraged by his mother to return to school.

I had always wanted to make sure I got an education. And what finally ignited the match, I guess you'd say, was my Mom saying she'd pay my first semester if I went back. That was just enough of a kick-start to get me in. And here I am.

Although he was always interested in the same general subject matter, he did not discover his specific major until after he had enrolled. He was very interested in his major field.

I went searching for what I would like and I talked to some people and went to [my field] from there. Changing from [a previous major] was just finding [my present department]. I found it fascinating and just incredible, so there wasn't much stopping me from there. I had to get into that field, which I did.

Like most of the participants in this study, he selected L.S.U. primarily because it was close to home. After enrolling in some courses, he was influenced by his teachers to consider a specific field of agriculture within his basic area of interest, and he selected his major based on the influence of these faculty members. He enjoyed his major because the courses provided him with many opportunities to be actively involved in the learning process.

I think [the] curriculum is real good. We're more of a hands-on type course. We have a lot more labs; a lot more experience in what we do. . . . We have [field experiences where] you are up there actually doing the stuff.

This participant highly valued the application of the material to real world problems. In his opinion the closer the classroom experience was to the actual industry experience the better the class. Faculty with industry experiences were highly respected

and preferred by this individual over faculty who were more theoretical. He described his ideal curriculum.

It would be a very old-fashioned type of curriculum. A lot of the classes nowadays are going towards computers. . . Unless you really know the [problems], that's not going to help you because the computer doesn't take into effect some variables. I could see the use for it but if you don't know the hands-on , if you don't go out there and look at [reality] and be able to tell some stuff that way, then you're sort of blowing in the breeze. So it'd be something that would have a lot of the old feeling. Get some of the older-type teachers who have been out in the [industry] and know what they're talking about. When they talk about [a subject], it's not something they pulled up on their computer screen. It's something they've [seen or done].

According to this participant, students finish a good course with more information than the expected content of the course. In a good course, the material was related to other areas in the larger knowledge base. The standards were clearly defined and demanding.

Pretty much the way Dr. [name] teaches. He is the best. Very straight; very demanding. Doesn't put up with a whole lot but you learn more. For a [specific] class that I had -- you go in and you learn the [specific information], but you come out with more than that. You come out with a little bit of history; you come out with a little bit of people knowledge, how to respond to people, some of the ethics you're going to be dealing with. He's really broad. You learn

whether you want to or not. He just sort of sneaks it in the stories he tells. You may not even know you're learning but you really are. You come out with a lot more than you think you would.

Enthusiasm for the subject material being taught was an important characteristic of a good instructor according to Interview 7. He described his favorite teacher as being so involved with his subject that the faculty member's interest in the subject was an integral part of his personality.

Both in the lecture and in the lab, he'll tell stories and teach. That's his way of being. I've [seen him at off campus]. And even then, he'll sit there and tell me, [and tell stories related to his subject]". . . And so it doesn't stop with him. That's what he does.

Telling of stories was seen by this participant as evidence that the instructor was interested in his students and was interested in teaching. He did not believe that all faculty were interested in teaching students.

He's interested in the students learning. He won't just pass somebody, because they haven't learned. But he definitely wants to teach students. It's not like he's doing this for money -- the teaching. It's for his own principles and all. Which may be what makes him such a good teacher in my eyes. They have other teachers around here who are here for the research or something. Teaching students is sort of like a necessary evil, or something to that [to them].

Interview 7 believed that there were separate cultures on campus. He divided the student body into liberal and conservative types. Unlike many of the participants in this

study, he preferred not to interact with other students who were not members of his own culture. For this reason, he avoided certain areas of campus

The library, actually I tend to avoid going on that part of the campus as much as possible. . . . It's not the library itself. It's just -- I guess you'd call me an old foggy or something. I'm really set in my ways now. That side of campus is just a little too much for me. It's a lot different over here.

He elaborated on his description of the campus. It made him uncomfortable to see young people dressing in styles he considered inappropriate since he was a parent of young children. He thought that this did not bode well for his children's future.

I don't know where I fit. I'm not a baby boomer and I'm not one of the Generation X. And it's just a little wild. Some of the styles. I have two daughters. I don't like to see a lot of the styles of clothes nowadays because it sort of gives me shivers of what's going to happen when I get older. It's just an uncomfortable feeling over there.

The east side of campus was more comfortable to this participant. He believed that the students on the east side of campus were interested in more serious field of studies. He was not a supporter of the liberal arts.

You have more of a conservative type of atmosphere around here, and you don't see the punk-rocker hairdos and not too many guys walking around with earrings. You have a few of them. I really sound like an old grump or something but it's just different here. It's pretty much, from Life Sciences building, this direction, the people are a little bit more concerned about their

appearance, and more concerned about science-type of atmosphere, rather than the liberal arts on the other side. Just sort of how it's set up. And the library tends to be on the other side over there. That's why if I can get around it -- I have a sort of extensive type of library of my own. If I can't get it there, I'll go to the [department] library. If I can't get it there, then I'll sort of go over there.

This participant was an unusual student because he was the only nontraditional student that commented that student organizations were important to him. He enjoyed the opportunity to meet others who were interested in the same subjects that interested him. He participated in organizations partly because he believed that his participation would be beneficial to his future career.

Organizations are important. I'm a member in a couple of organizations. I don't always agree with some of the organizations they have, but I don't want to come across sounding bigoted but they're not my cup of tea so to speak. The [specific major] is a little too liberal for my taste but it's important for them to have an organization to get into. The [organizational name] is one of the organizations I belong to and it's something that could definitely help me down the line, saying I was a member of this organization.

This participant enjoyed the friendships that he made in these organizations. He hoped that these contacts would help him later in his career.

Camaraderie is the first thing. Very simple. You're in there with this group of people. You get to know them; they get to know you. They may be influential down the line, or visa-versa. I may be able to help them down the line. [It] is not

just an organization on campus. It's nationwide. And it's also more like a student chapter of the [national organization]. And they have a lot of professional [members] who we get to mingle with, get to know, maybe go looking for jobs with one day.

Being an older member in these organizations, and an older student in his classes, required an adjustment for this individual. Initially he felt older than his classmates but as he became more familiar with individual students in his major, this discomfort faded with time.

I've been with these people. They're in my class for about three or four years now, so I'm familiar with them. And they're familiar with me. When I first came back, I was 27, 28, 29. I felt old then. Going around with a bunch of little 18-year olds.

When he selected his major and became a student of the College of Agriculture, age became less of an issue for this individual. This may have been partly due to his participation in student organizations. This activity may have helped him see his fellow students as individuals.

He also appreciated his instructors in his department because he thought that they treated their students with "respect". Treating students with respect meant that students were recognized to be individuals.

And when I came over here to [the agricultural side of campus], it sort of changed a little bit. And one of the reasons, which I really noticed this semester, was the teachers. The instructors have a lot more respect for students. They

treat them more as individual human beings, rather than just somebody that's going to be here for half a semester or something. I had three courses this semester. What I call little pissant courses. I didn't take but four of them. . . . And you can tell that the teachers there really had no respect, had absolutely no respect for the students whatsoever. It's just a shock. Since I've been over here in my field for a couple of years now, and dealing with the same professors who knew me personally, and treated me with a lot of respect, to go over there and get this guy who had absolutely no respect for students.

He returned to this topic much later in the interview and revised his comments. He thought that his definition of respect might be related to the instructors' attitudes about teaching.

I know some of these classes have 30, 40, 100 people in the classroom and that's just going to be impossible. But not impossible to do because some do it. They had a [specific] teacher . . . It's been a long time since I had him. A good ole boy. Just wore blue jeans and had a real relaxed style up in the front. And he had a classroom , a big, old, huge classroom full of people. And I felt like -- I mean, it's hard to say why, but I felt like I got some respect out of him, even though he didn't ever come up to you personally. He seemed like he was interested in teaching. Maybe that's what it is. Then on the other side, you get [other teachers] who had so many people come to his class it's like, "Oh, well, here I am again. I'm going to teach this class again". Maybe it's interest. Maybe it's not so much respect as it is just interest in teaching. Maybe that's what it is

in [my department]. The teachers have more interest in you learning the information than in just processing you through.

He later repeated his dislike of the liberal arts and related this dislike to his perception that liberal arts instructors lacked respect for their students

Get rid of the humanities. No, actually get some teachers to show a little more respect for students. Even if they are freshmen and 18-year olds. It's time to start treating them like adults now. And, okay, show them that the world's not exactly perfect and not everybody's going to be falling all over them but at least show them respect as human beings.

Poor teachers lacked this ability to recognize individual differences in their students. Other evidence of a teacher's respect for students as individuals included flexible deadlines and a sharing of information with the student. He described at length a particular instructor who he believed showed no respect for his students.

I have some stories about that guy. One of my professors here in [my major department] wanted me to go [on a field experience]. It was a learning experience. And I approached my [specific subject] teacher a week in advance. I explained the situation to him and he said, "Well, there is [a graded laboratory that day], it's up to you whether you want to do it or not. It's part of your grade and I don't give makeups." So I said okay. I'd make up my mind. I'd go talk to my professor, He allowed me to do my [field experience] on another day. And I went to this class. The following week I had a job interview. I went and talked to the teacher again. Now, there were no [graded laboratories] planned this day.

And I said, "I've got an interview planned. Would you like me to come to half the class and leave early or would you rather me just miss the whole thing?" I figured that was a respectful thing to do. And he again said, "Well, it's up to you whether you want to miss any of my class but if you do, I'd suggest you make at least half of it." So I said, "That's fine. I'll do that." So I sat in his class for half the class and I left. And then he decides to tell the class that we weren't meeting the next class period and that when we do meet again, we'll have a quiz. So, okay. Maybe he -- it sort of got my goat at the time. So, I figured well, maybe that was just one time. So, one day my daughter was sick so I had to miss a class. And of course, again, when I missed the class, he told the class that we won't meet for the next two periods. And it just seemed like every time I had to miss a class, something happened. I guess I showed him though. I made an A in the class anyway without his help.

An interesting element of this story is how the student viewed his relationship with this particular instructor. He was unhappy when he had to miss an activity in his major field that was scheduled during the official class time for a different course in which he was enrolled. He seems to have considered this course of secondary importance and was unhappy with the instructor whose course he wanted to miss for not being more accommodating. In the next two events, he regarded the failure of the teacher to inform him of some information that was given to the students who were there for this class as a plot by the teacher to punish him for leaving class early or for not attending. For this student, the teacher/student relationship became a competitive

relationship. Just how competitive was illustrated by his last two statements in this story, " I guess I showed him though. I made an A in the class anyway without his help". The teacher became a barrier to his success; he believed he succeeded in spite of the efforts of his instructor.

This concept of respect as defined by this individual was related to the idea of fairness. He felt that fairness was a more important quality for an instructor than being flexible. Flexible for this participant referred to flexible deadlines. Fairness seemed related to the availability of information.

Flexible is not as important as just respect. If this guy would have showed me a little respect, it would have been one thing. Like I said, I missed [a field experience]. I've still got to make that up. And that would have been fine if he would have played fair by me and at least said, "Okay, listen. You missed half the class here but we're not going to meet the next time and I want you to prepare for a quiz for the time coming." I called him on it and he said, "Oh, you've got to watch me. I do that kind of stuff."

Difficult times for this participant were often a result of his work schedule. He had worked full time at night and attended school during the day during part of his time as a student. Like Interview 6, he found this a tiresome schedule to maintain particularly since he had a family.

I had some, well I don't know if they were doubts. More like worn out. Kind of discouraged a little bit. I was carrying heavy loads at school and a heavy load at

work, and a wife and a daughter and, eventually, two daughters. And it just wore me down.

One reason that this participant stayed in school was that it was a personal goal for him to complete college. He enjoyed his employment and had hopes for advancement but had not returned to college for any specific vocational reasons.

It would have to be personal [reasons]. I could have worked as [specific position] for the rest of my life and probably would have been more or less happy. Maybe a little bit of career because I wanted to move upwards and become in a manager position. I never wanted to be a paper-pusher but maybe up a little bit higher than I was. But, mainly, just personal reasons. And I would eventually hope to go back again and get my masters.

The best part about being an undergraduate student at L.S.U. for this student was the personal interactions he had with the faculty and with his fellow students.

Getting to know some people. I've met some good friends, both with the faculty and with students. The learning. I didn't know the first thing about [my subject]. A lot of people here, their fathers are in [this field] and that's why they're in [this field]. Their father may have worked in [the industry] and they want to get a little farther than him. Me, I didn't know the first thing about [it]. Like I said, I didn't even know if I'd enjoy [the subject]. . . I had to learn everything about it. And that has been wonderful. That has been the greatest part right there. . . . And that's exciting.

He enjoyed feeling more knowledgeable because it gave him a feeling of accomplishment. His membership in an honor fraternity was seen by this individual as concrete evidence of his accomplishments.

I came in. I built myself up. I got a good grade point average even though I was working and everything else. I'm in a honor fraternity. I've gotten some scholarships. I'm pretty happy about that. It is a sense of accomplishment.

This participant appreciated classes that enhanced his feelings of accomplishment. He believed that a course needed to be difficult enough that achieving a good grade represented a significant individual achievement.

You get more of a sense of fulfillment, or achievement, from actually having worked for it. This semester, it's a [specific] class. And until yesterday, I was sure I was going to make a C, and maybe even worse. It's very difficult to make any kind of good grade in his class, because he is very strict; very demanding. His notes, I will read a couple of times. And I almost made 100 on the final yesterday. So I ended up with a B in the class. I'm happy about that. That is a big sense of achievement. The other classes, okay you got an A in that and that's just fine. It's just not the same.

Perhaps because he did not feel as if he had earned his grades in some courses, this student avoided easy courses. Such courses seemed to rob him of a sense of achievement.

I'm not thrilled with easy A's. I try to avoid them as much as possible. I had this class this semester, and I kind of figured it was an easy A. But it's not the kind

of class I feel I've enjoyed or even needed. They have it as a humanities class to try to teach you how to interact with humans or something, but I spent many years working at . . . a very public job. . . . I figured that was a better humanities class than [this] class was. I suffered through it.

Difficult experiences seemed to be valued by this participant because succeeding at difficult tasks heighten his sense of accomplishment. He described a particularly difficult semester.

I had a big old heavy curriculum at that time. I don't remember exactly what courses I had but it was just overwhelming. And I was trying to put everything in [a specific course] and everything else was failing on me. So I finally dropped [specific class] and worked hard and built it all back up, which I consider isn't one of my best G.P.A. semester, but I figure is probably my most fulfilling semester, because I was able to pull myself out of a hole.

In general this individual found college easier than he expected it to be. He thought this was because he had a good memory. Except for an occasional course, he never felt that he had to study hard to succeed.

I never really did that bad. I tend to have a gift, I guess you'd call it, where I don't have to put as much into my studies. I go to class and write down my notes. I listen to the teacher. Like for a test, I go and look at notes and I'm ready to take a test and pass it with an A. Other people sit there and they've been studying for three and four days before the test, and they're worn out, and they make a C on the test. And they're happy about that. I never had to do that. It

sounds kind of funny. Sometimes, that kind of bothered me a little bit. I kind of wished that they would be able to have that also. So, tenacity is one thing but it's like I've never really been pushed. I've never had to make the decision, "Oh, my gosh, buckle down. The closest I've come is [a class with a specific instructor].

Interview 7 believed that confidence was the most important personal characteristic needed by a student to succeed in college. Like many of the nontraditional students who participated in this study, he was disappointed in the behaviors of some of the traditional students. He described several qualities that he felt were factors in student success.

Someone who's driven to succeed. Who has a little bit of honor and professionalism. A little integrity. A will to succeed. I think that is what really frustrated me when I came back. I was in a [introductory] class. I would write down all my notes. And there were just some of them, they would put their notebook down and not even open it. Sit there the whole time and sit and talk to their friends. They were the faces that didn't even finish out the semester. They dropped it, I guess. It's like you have to explain to them how idiotic [this was]. . . I was the same way . When you just come out of high school; you just moved out away from your parents, everything was new. Of course, I don't think I ever sat there with my notebook closed, but I did sort of skip a class or two here or there. I just wish I could tell people, "Listen, you're going to regret it down the line. Just do it and get it done. And maybe you won't be 32 when you graduate."

Interview 7 was pleased with his experiences at L.S.U. He listed three reasons why he considered L.S.U. to be an excellent school; good field experiences, good laboratories and an excellent faculty. He described what made his program an excellent program.

We have an intermingling right now. We do have older type professors. . . And we have the new type, the computer jockeys I call them. It is real good right now because you need to learn a little bit of what everything is headed to. I'm not so wild about [some topics] but it's good to know something about it. It's also good to know about the old-fashioned stuff. Go out there; and [experience it]. Okay, well you need to do that kind of stuff. So we do have a good intermingling. The students tend to get [close] especially during [field experiences and laboratories]. You merge. . . you become a group. You may not agree with everybody; you may not like everybody, but you're part of that group. I think that was real important.

Interview 7 strongly preferred instructors who had some industry experience.

Pull people from out of the field if you can. People that are retiring from [industry] That's one thing, we don't even have a [specific subject] class here. We have one where the teacher is sort of -- he's intermingling [some of this subject with another class] but you don't really learn. You don't go out and say, "Okay, well, we're going to go out here. We're going to put a perspective on this." Most of what I learned about this [specific subject] I asked about when I was working as an intern. We need more teachers of the old type. Because

we're getting more of the people that are coming right in as young people just out of college. They've just got their Ph.D. and they want to do some work here and learn all this because they've been on the computers. One guy, he's a real good teacher for what he's teaching, but I don't know if he's ever been in [industry] at all. You need to have some sort of mixture. If maybe not in him, but in the curriculum. Dr. [Name] gives us some of it; Dr. [Name] gives us some of it. And some of the teachers try. Dr. [Name], who's one of the new computer jockey types, and he'll teach something and then go out and try to show you. I don't know if he knows it so well. He'll make some ludicrous statements sometimes. . . . So you just sort of -- you have to have a combination. If I was just in his class, I'd probably look around and [some of his statements are not correct] but there's some things that he would say that I wouldn't have known any better, because students don't know. They don't have that experience . . .

Technical competence was very important for this participant. He believed that industry experience was a requirement for faculty to be technically competent.

Research can enhance technical competence but only if it does not interfere with teaching responsibilities.

Do they know what they're talking about? They have to have that, which is one thing I like about a [specific professor]. . . . He is also a research professor. You know, he does research. And he has some research going on right now. Of course, it doesn't interfere with teaching. Like I said, he's interested in teaching

the students. It's not the necessary evil. But he knows what he's talking about. He's been out in [industry]. He knows what he's talking about. Other professors who haven't been out there, don't know what they're talking about. They say, "Yeah, I looked on the computer here and it said this. . . ." Well, it doesn't look like this because this happened. . . . Some things a computer just can't take into effect. . . . things you have to look at. It's depends on what the researcher knows, and what the industry guy knows. The industry guy may know a whole heck of a lot. You know? He may not have all the papers written or anything like that but -- it all depends on the person.

He believed that it was difficult for universities to hire persons with industry experience. He implied that only those individuals without industry experience were attracted to university research.

Of course, most of the people that are coming out who have the experience are pretty much getting jobs in the industries and so L.S.U. just pretty much gets those that are just interested in research.

Other topics mentioned by this individual were the cost of books and tuition, the need for more parking and the need to balance academic and social activities in college. Although he did not participate in the social activities of college, he was concerned about his younger classmates and felt that it was important for traditional students to maintain a balance between their academic and social lives at the university.

Interview 8.

Interview 8 was an atypical student of the College of Agriculture. Although he was classified as a senior, he did not consider himself to be an agricultural student. He was earning a second degree in an unrelated field and was using a scholarship awarded to him for agricultural studies to help finance this second degree. His identity as a student was more closely tied to this second degree. When asked how he would identify himself, he answered “I'd have to say [non agricultural major]. I have more hours in it, but I'm not counting out the agriculture”. This unusual arrangement was not unique, two potential participants declined to participate in this study because they were enrolled in the college using a similar strategy. In addition, this researcher has taught students in another college who were also enrolled in a second degree program in agriculture for this reason. Perhaps because he was not as emotionally engaged in College of Agriculture activities, this participant confined many of his comments to courses and instructors he encountered in the general college.

Interview 8 had first attended college during the sixties. The atmosphere on campus at that time encouraged him to reconsider the value of a college degree. He reconsidered his options and left prior to completing that degree because for the type of employment he was interested in, he did not believe a degree was necessary. He had returned to college because a change in his personal circumstances necessitated a career change. After completing his degrees, he hoped to attend graduate school. He had returned to school for a very specific reason.

To try to get a degree. You are really not recognized in your field without a degree or even an advanced degree.

This individual had no family except for his parents. College appeared to provide him with social contacts as well as intellectual interest. Despite his stated need for a career change, he did not appear interested in rapidly completing his college education. He hoped to attend graduate school in two distinctly different areas.

L.S.U. was selected because it was a family tradition, it was close to home and in state school. He selected his agricultural major based on media reports about his field.

I just heard a lot about it and -- I can't say why. It just interested me and I thought it would be good here. I didn't have a [rural background] or anything. Maybe if I had it would have worked out better. . . . [Heard about the degree from] just the newspapers and the media.

He described his agricultural courses as "excellent". He thought that his teachers were enthusiastic to the point that they were "devoted to the material". He also appreciated teachers who were good at communicating difficult ideas.

The ability to communicate the ideas to the students. [There was] an excellent teacher. I had a lot of trouble with [specific subject]. . . . And I had a lot of fear about it. And this one teacher broke through all that. . . . She just said, "Do what I say to do and you'll make an A." It was a lot of work and I did it.

He enjoyed teachers who pushed him to do his best work. Like Interviews 5 and 7, it was important that his instructors be knowledgeable about the area that they taught.

He felt that he had many good instructors at L.S.U. and he described a few of these instructors.

It's been many, but I think of one of them that saw potential in me that I didn't know I had. And then wouldn't take anything less than complete effort. The other one was very knowledgeable in the subject and also got you to expand your knowledge by doing different things, rather than doing familiar things in the course. Another one that really inspired me, it was the amount of knowledge that this person had. And then the manner in which they were able to communicate it to about 250 people in an auditorium-type setting, using overhead projections and whatever else.

For Interview 8, a good instructor lead by example and by sharing their experiences.

It's not pushing you but making you want to do. It wasn't just what they were saying, it was what they had done in their life, and what they were doing presently. And then, what they brought to it. And it was kind of a shared thing about what was expected, so we could get on with the learning process about it. It was very good.

Interview 8 felt that faculty who were doing research and taught a class related to that research enriched the classroom experience. He felt that faculty should share their research with undergraduates and well as graduate students

. . . You could have the opportunity for the research people to teach, not just the graduate students but the undergraduate students also. Sometimes you get a professor that's in research and he comes back and teaches in that field and you

get so much more, it looks like to me. It builds on a foundation. But in an ideal situations it would all be full professors teaching. Not graduate assistants. . . .

It [enhances the class] especially when they talk about it. What they are doing.

You actually get to see, hands on, what kind of problems they are trying to solve.

He noticed that the faculty in his department were represented in the journals that he subscribed to in his field. This was impressive to him and he saw it as evidence of the expertise of the faculty.

The faculty has experience and expertise in different areas. I noticed in some publications that I subscribe to that the people with some expertise in those areas, those people are here.

The application of the material to specific problems interested this student. He preferred courses that offered practical experiences. He stated that his courses had given him many opportunities to participate in these kinds of experiences. These were his favorite type of courses.

Hands-on learning experiences. . . . In my other field it would be working with a company that would need your work. Hands-on. Do it as a class or as an individual project.

He also thought it would be helpful to have more interaction among colleges and departments. He believed that this would expose students to the variety of approaches that different disciplines use to solve similar problems.

I think [we need] some system that would interconnect all the colleges where you could actually see other students work; if they wanted to show you what

they do. It would help to see what other people do. Possibly have one course set up with the same problems to see how different people solve them.

Practical experience was very important to this participant to the point that he did not consider an individual without practical experience to be educated. He defined an educated person in near Pestalozzian terms.

Shows interest. Well rounded. Educated not only book-wise but hands on.

Educate only the head and you are only half- educated, you know.

This participant believed that the classroom environment should vary depending on the content of the course. Science courses needed a rigorous environment while other courses should have an informal classroom environment.

Well, you're looking at two extremes. In the science curriculums, I think it has to be real structured. And I think the smaller, the better. And then the [liberal arts] classes, now it's just the complete opposite. It needs to be more informal. . .

I just think it applies to which field you are in.

Classes improved for this student as he moved through the curriculum.

According to his view, his student peers became more serious so more class time could be spent on work rather than classroom management.

Once you get to that point, pretty much everybody there is there for that [work]. And they want to do the work. You get everything out of the way as far as what was required of the class, and time wasn't spent on discipline, or time wasn't spent on correcting, calling people down, or, you know, being late, or being

absent. All that was just put out the way the beginning of the class, and then you'd just go on and do your work.

This participant felt that the major difference between traditional and nontraditional students was that the nontraditional students were more serious about their education. He believed that older students were “not as disruptive” and that they were “on time”.

Traditional students did have some advantages over nontraditional students. Household management was mentioned by Interview 8 as something that he felt took up a surprising amount of time. He thought that traditional students had an advantage over nontraditional students in this area because they were often still living at home with their parents.

I'm single, but it's just a whole other world. When I was coming before, I lived with my folks most of the time. And then I moved out. I think, after about two or three years, I lived with some other people. Just commute time eats your time up. You know, putting out the garbage, washing the clothes, cooking. I mean, just everything. It just takes a lot more time.

Like many of the nontraditional students interviewed in this study, Interview 8 had not actively participated in student organizations. He had attempted to use the student recreational facilities but found the parking to be such a significant problem that he decided to join an off campus health club instead.

I try to participate in the student rec center. And, it's funny. We'd voted on it back in the 60's, to take money from our tuition to build it, and there's no lockers available. You have like a year waiting list. Never did use the facility. Paid for

it one time, and then could never go and get a locker. Just wanted to swim laps. Maybe, you know, shoot some hoops or something, have a facility shower and go home. You know, something like that. I don't know if land available for where it was at but it looked like to me it was pretty much for the use if the fraternities and sororities. For the other people, the parking was a problem. . . . I'm going to join another health facility.

This lead to a description of parking difficulties on campus, a topic that was mentioned by nearly ever participant in this study. Interview 8, like several other participants, had devised an elaborate plan to deal with the parking problems, including elevated parking facilities, and elevated walkways that would allow pedestrians to cross safely while allowing the traffic to continue moving.

Interview 8 was also very concerned personal safety issues on campus. He spoke more often and in more detail about this subject than any other subject in his interview. He proposed that there should be some type of restricted access to campus. He also believed that some facilities for basic car emergencies such as air and water stations should be added near the student parking lots.

Secured access with your I.D. or you could have guards there. I know they have put out emergency boxes but I'd like to see a facility for water, for, you know, like if you have trouble with your car. An air station or something like that. He continued on this topic.

Security is an issue. I know they have a lighting committee that goes around and puts up more lights but I was thinking if you have these elevated parkways, you

could secure it. That way, you almost give away the ground level to traffic. I know when I was coming to school back previously, I think some people got killed here by cars. Actually got run over crossing the road.

He described areas of the campus that were particularly worrisome to him.

They could build a multilevel parking for access to the library late at night. A lot of people are scared to park in Hart lot, which is Kirby Smith, because they come through the Enchanted Forest. I don't know if you've been through there at night but it's -- there used to be an old pool back there, a little reflecting pond. It's something that people could feel more secure.

He continued on this topic. He was particularly uncomfortable at night.

[There] was an attempted rape here last semester, right by where we work. One of the guy's working actually heard the lady scream. He went over there and ran the guy off. A lot more buildings are secured at night I notice now. They're not all open. I think people ought to wear I.D. badges really. You know, some kind of encoded way you can get access to buildings.

He felt that campus safety had declined since the first time he enrolled and attributed this decline to the changes in the area just north of the campus.

The whole social climate has changed from [previously]. North of campus was just an ideal place to live. Fourplexes with a swimming pool was just what you were looking for, down on Aster Street, or Wyoming, or you know, back in the apartment complexes, a lot of people built them over there and we'd just walk to school. And now, it's just -- when I saw the razor wire on top of the marriage

students' apartments -- that gate was closed off, locked off, and had razor wire. It's just a whole different social climate. And then the poor boy that got carjacked in Hart lot, and shot and killed. I think about that stuff. I think about, you know, the lots open at 4:30. I think about going to get in the car before dark, getting it near the buildings, stuff like that. So, a lot of the people express concern as well. The campus is wide open. Anybody can come around and walk around. And it is a concern.

These comments illustrate the importance of campus safety for this individual.

He continued his comments on this topic throughout his interview.

Another issue that engaged this individual was campus maintenance. He was disappointed the deterioration of campus structures.

And the conditions, when I first came back here in '90, I couldn't believe it. I couldn't believe they would let buildings leak, and roofs leak. I had a class in Lockett Hall. Ceiling tiles had fallen in the middle of the classroom and water would leak, and they didn't have a bathroom above us. It was just crazy.

Ideally he hoped that the campus would someday evolved into a combined day care, elementary, secondary and postsecondary campus. Such a campus would be ideal for nontraditional students, in the opinion of this individual, and would fully utilize the facilities. Another issue mentioned by this participant included scheduling issues, particularly scheduling classes at a time of day that he prefer to take them. He preferred classes that started later in the day because it made it easier for him to commute to

campus. He also wished that the university would become more involved in community projects such as the food bank.

Interview 9.

Interview 9 was an international student who came to L.S.U. because the terrain of Louisiana reminded him of his home country. He was uncertain of his major and seemed to have attended college because he was afraid of disappointing his father. The general impression he presented was of an individual who came to college because of family expectations. He seemed to view college as a kind of finishing school. He had held a service job that he had enjoyed but he realized that it would not be a suitable lifelong career.

Well, my father went to college, and I guess you just get it from your parents. My grandfather went to college, my father went to college. You just go to college. I worked as a waiter. It was real nice because I used to go to weddings with a catering company. One time I worked at a bank, at the building they have there. I used to wear black tie and I had to wear white gloves that day. So I liked it and everything but I said I better go to college because I don't want to be here all my life. . . . I just liked it. As a part-time job it was excellent, but, you know, just as a reinforcement. . . . I think college is important. I think it depends on your background. Some people may expect more of themselves than other people, so that I think plays a role.

This participant had relatives in his native country who own property and who could offer him an agricultural position upon graduation. He selected a major that

meshed well with the business interests of his family but allowed him some independence in the family business.

Even though we have a ranch, I have brothers and sisters, and as I started studying [a specific field], I said, "Man, I'm not going to go to work for them." On the ranch we divide everything; so it also belongs to my brothers and sisters. I had read in this magazine about [a specific agricultural field] and I always liked [it]. My family told me to get in that. . . . I was failing [my first major]. So maybe if you change, things change.

Interview 9 reflected that he had never really thought much about college as an experience. He commented, "I just go to class. I never thought about college". He believed that it was important to finish college once an individual had begun working on a degree.

Why I think I wanted to finish up, I was committed from the beginning. To me it was no big deal coming to college. That's what I wanted. I had no problem. I know it's important to me. I enjoy it. . . . You know, my parents are expecting to finish. But it is pretty much for myself. It's very important. I was committed to college. I never doubted it was important to me.

Although he had initially selected L.S.U., he transferred to a different college only to later return to L.S.U. He discovered he had a medical disorder and was put on medication. Academic difficulties influenced by this disorder prompted these moves, but he stated that the primary reason for returning to L.S.U. was that he found the climate at the second university too cold.

In the wintertime, I get real depressed and sleepy. . . . That did not happen here too much. I had all kinds of problems in January. It got really bad and so I came back to Louisiana. . . . Because it's colder there. To me it makes a difference. It's colder there and dark. The winters are long. . .

Like Interview 4, the only other international student interviewed in this study, Interview 9 was interested in the quality of reading material required by a course.

Unlike Interview 4, he preferred his departmental library to the main library.

They have a reading room. They have some publications there but I think they could have more. I guess there is some more stuff at the [main] library. But I wish they had more in the reading room. . . . More variety of the material, for there's a lot material published from USDA that they could have there maybe.

For this individual, a good teacher was a good communicator of ideas. A class did not have to be easy to be a good class.

To me, a good teacher to me can be hard, but as long as he can explain [things] well, they have a good class in that sense. You know what to expect from the class. He's doing a really good job teaching. And even if the exams are hard; and there is a lot of homework, I don't mind. But if you got a teacher that [cannot] explain, the class is going nowhere, it's just not.

He repeated his comments.

I like the class when it's more advanced and I guess the teachers expect more [from students rather] than just [going] over [heads] of the class. The teacher does not explain as well. I have a class, now, like I said, it's hard... but if a

teacher's really good. We have to do a lot of homework and exams we have to study a lot. He's doing a good job and explains. . . So I don't have a problem with that class. It's hard if you have a teacher that does not communicate well his material.

Interview 9 had expected more applied information in the introductory courses to his major field. He was disappointed that he had to take liberal arts courses in his curriculum.

[In other countries] in the first year, you just go ahead to [to your major field]. They don't make you take history and English and literature and music appreciation, that kind of stuff.

He believed that liberal arts courses were no longer needed in the curriculum.

One guy said in class the other day that they used to have this curriculum, liberal arts, like 50 years, 100 years ago, but a lot of people came from the countryside and they had to expand their knowledge but not this people [today]. There's a lot of sources [for information].

Despite his opinion that liberal art courses were not very useful, Interview 9 enjoyed these courses. In his major field, his favorite courses were the theoretical courses. He apparently enjoyed these courses because they were subjects that could be mastered through independent study.

I like all my theory classes. . . .I pretty much like all the [courses in my major]. I find them really interesting. But as far as subjects, I always like history, geography. I took a statistics class last fall. I like it. Most students say don't

like it but for some reason, this I like. It was interesting. Especially now I started taking math. . . . I guess that stimulates me because now I can do better. I know if I sit there and start studying, I'm going to get a result.

Early classes related to his major field were valuable to this participant because these courses often provided a foundation for the courses that followed in the degree program.

. . . A class like [specific course] is important, because you're going to use it a lot. Those kind of classes you feel are going to serve you as a base in the knowledge. I think in every class you should give a lot because it's years of class -- I mean semesters. When you get to your third, fourth year, fifth year, you are going to have a good base. So makes it easier and it's more pleasant because you already know what those classes [offered].

One information source for general knowledge that this participant found to be helpful was television. He believed that educational television helped create successful students.

Successful students. . . I think -- some students, they are students in a person as a whole. For example, I like to watch the news. I like to watch a lot of instructional programs on T.V. I watch PBS. I don't have cable right now but when I had cable last semester, you know, I didn't spend my time watching Roseanne. The only program I watch is reruns of Jerry Seinfeld. I'm watching the news, something like that, the local news. But I might watch David Brinkley. I watch a lot of Nightline. . . . I really try to read a lot of magazines. like Business and just in general. And anything on T.V., I watch if there's a

special, you catch my attention. Biography, they have those shows about biographies on people and politics and world events. I think that success develops outside the classroom and, also, I guess in class, with materials.

This individual did not enroll in college with any specific expectations. He believed that one advantage of being a nontraditional student was that he was socially experienced prior to beginning his studies.

I didn't know what to expect, you know. But I always liked it here. As far as activities, I play soccer and I go out. You know, just get friends and play teams. I've never been in groups or anything, but I have plenty of stuff to do here. . . . I've had social activities before. So to me, it's not like I just got to college and I got to a new dimension. You can go drink and you can go out. I've been going out for a long time so it's not like it's a big deal to me.

Interview 9 enjoyed the campus because he found the students to be friendly. They were easy for him to work with.

I think the people here are nice. There's real friendly people. I like the campus. . . . The people are real friendly. And the College of Agriculture, I like it there. . . . For example, when I was in [specific major] I had my classes there. I see the teachers every day. And also, there's not many people there in the school. And a lot of the work we are doing, we can exchange information. We can be in contact with other students.

He enjoyed classroom activities that provided interaction with his fellow students. Interactions with his peers were important because students were a good source of feedback and the discussions were helpful.

I usually like class where they have homework. I like homework. I have papers to write. I like to work in groups. I like classes where they have groups. I really like that because you got more feedback. That's the reason. Class with groups, I like that. Time goes -- things just flow and you have to get together after class and discuss something about the class and you get feedback. So when I have a class that requires work with a group of students, I think it is interesting. You have to be more committed because you all depend on each other.

Social interactions outside of class were confusing to this participant. In his native country, it was customary for individuals who were interested in developing a friendship to invite an acquaintance to their homes. Since he had not been invited to visit the homes of his classmates, he assumed that they were biased against persons from his country.

The whole thing is, I've been here at L.S.U., and I have never been anywhere in Louisiana. . . . The students here don't invite you to go -- "Let's go see this place." And so I think that's the best thing that happens with [other] foreign students. I don't know [what happens] if a student comes from out of state. I met a lot of people but they don't say, "Let's go hunt. Let's go do something" at the American schools here.

He felt isolated as an international student. He decided that Americans did not like international students.

They are really nice, the guys here. But the same thing happened [at a different university]. I meet all the guys. But it's all Americans, they're not too interested about foreigners. I'm from [specific country] and most people don't know where it is, so they think I'm from [a different country]. I think because they don't know, they just have this attitude that it's not cool, so they just leave you standing there. But it's not like, I had a friend from Italy, and he said, "[Other] people who come to college, they don't care. They don't know where you're from. They're not curious." That's one thing that happens. So as far as going to see farms, the ranches and all, you want to visit, they don't do that. That's one thing that goes on.

This student speculated that one reason Americans did not welcome international students was that American culture was based on group memberships. It would be difficult for an international student to join such groups.

Here in the U.S., it is [group oriented], that's how it works here pretty much. . . . I have been to many places. It's just how things work here in the U.S. Here it is different from Europe, from France, from anywhere. It is different. . . It's not just because I came here from [home to here]. . . You don't have people who mingle easily. You make a friend just like that in other countries. People here are a little bit more stand back, and it's really group-oriented here. That's why, I guess, they have fraternities and sororities here. It is important for that reason.

This participant had attended one meeting of student organization in an attempt to connect with a social group. He was not successful in reaching this goal through that organization.

They have the [departmental] club. I've been there once but pretty much, nobody goes there. I don't know why. . . . I don't expect much because I just got here. [Maybe] if I had been in the college since my freshman year. It does not upset me because I know how things work in the U.S. I know you have to belong to a group. You have to be in a fraternity, or you have to -- and that's how things work here. That's why they are there. And if you don't have a group here, you stick out. But it's just the way it is and if people don't know where [your country] is or where you're from, or things like that, that doesn't bother me either because I know that's how the people are here. That's how the system works. . . . I don't get upset or anything like that.

It was unfortunate that this individual interpreted the American tendency to reserve their homes as private retreats was misinterpreted by this individual as unwillingness to socialize with international students. It seems unlikely that an international student would independently realize that Americans do not customarily invite anyone into their homes unless it is a planned social occasion. This bit of information might have helped this participant adjust to American culture if he had been made aware of it when he had arrived to begin his education.

Perhaps because he believed that campus life was isolated from American culture, Interview 9 hoped to participate in a field experience or a job related to his field. He was not successful in finding such opportunities.

I wished they had more contacts with local business. Something like [field experiences]. They tell me go get a [position] for those who want one. But I mean, for somebody who maybe lives here it's easy but I'm not going to go knock on somebody's door and ask for a [field experience]. I think they [the faculty] should work more, for business in the region and so you can have a little more insight in what's going on over there. At least I'm not aware that this school has ties with industry.

According to Interview 9, interactions with other students were a necessity if an undergraduate was to be successful academically. Fellow students provided access to important information such as old exams. These were needed to do well in a course. Students without old exams were at a disadvantage according to this participant. This individual had also needed to improve his study habits in order to remain in school.

I'd tell them to get the old exams Because everybody else has them. That's one thing I found out. I didn't know that. I was in class and I said, "Man, everybody else has all those old exams and I don't have them." So I was working twice as hard because I failed some things. After that, I tried to study more, to make sure I got the grades. I would read the book just to make sure because I couldn't afford to [do poorly]. I don't want to get a D on an exam, or in a class, just because I just started studying the day before. So I think that was important. So

I started reading the book. But anyway, the old exams, they help. Everybody has them. I think you should study and get those exams.

He continued on this topic.

I just didn't know. . . But then I was in class and some girl showed me an exam. So I say, "What's that?" And she said, "Oh" and she gave it to me to take home. After that, I knew so I just asked.

He found fraternity members a good source of old exams.

The students from past years, they have some. Some of the fraternities, I think they have a bag of exams.

Old exams were good study aids because they helped him narrow his preparation for an exam. He found that many old exams were very similar to current exams. He proposed that professors should make old exams available to all of the students enrolled in a course.

They can be similar. It depends on the exam but, pretty much, from that material, you know what to study. I mean it's not just the question itself but just, like you're going to read the whole book and you don't know what to focus on, because you must spend time on something and that's not even going to be on the test. But if I couldn't get a test, I would tell the professor, "Give me an old test because . . .everybody else has them. But I don't have them." But I would. I wouldn't have a problem asking. I mean, they all make a new test. And sometimes the material, if it's problems and stuff like that, I mean you cannot make up a new problem. I mean you can change it. It's up to the professor.

Personally, I think all professors should get the exam back, you know. I think so. Because even though I got the exam, I still study because I don't want to [learn] just for to have the exam -- I study the night before and go over it. Because I want to do good and I want to learn the material because I believe if you learn it here, then over there it's going to pay off. And I just like what I'm studying. I really enjoy it. I never had a problem. I have always been curious and liked to learn. Before I was studying, I wasn't getting anywhere and I was failing. But it was not because I didn't care, you know. It was for other things. But, generally, I always liked it. I like to read the books if I have time because I really like that.

Other topics mentioned by this participant included the agricultural business climate in his home country and the appearance of the campus. Parking problems on campus were also mentioned briefly by this individual.

Summary of Nontraditional Male Students

The nontraditional male students in this study were a very diverse group. Two of these individuals, Interviews 5 and 6, had returned to college primarily because they believed that it was a way to improve themselves. Although there were some vocational considerations, both of these individuals were interested in learning for the sake of learning and they were interested in the experience of college. Interview 7 was interested in interacting with others like himself and in employment opportunities. He expected his courses to be very application oriented. Interview 8 and 9 were attending college for less defined reasons; Interview 8 because he had a variety of interests and he

seemed to simply enjoy being a college student and Interview 9 to meet the expectations of his parents.

Two of the nontraditional male interviewees 8 and 9 were single, the rest of the nontraditional male participants were married. Two of the married participants were parents. The participants who were parents in this group both mentioned that missing time with their family had been a source of emotional stress for them while they were enrolled. Single participant responses seemed more similar to the traditional student group than the married nontraditional students. One participant who was not a parent but married also mentioned some emotional concern related to his return to college.

For some participants, classroom discipline was mentioned as a distracting element in their experiences. Although some nontraditional women participants had expressed disappointment in the maturity of their traditional student peers, the nontraditional male participants commented on specific types of behaviors that they found disrespectful to faculty during a class session. They specifically disliked students who talked through lecture and who teased fellow students during laboratory and field experiences. It may be that the preference of this group for tightly structured classes was related to classroom management issues.

This group preferred that technical or scientific subjects be presented in a highly structured format. Expectations should be clearly defined and grading scales should be standardized. Grading scales or systems that were unusual were considered to be unfair.

Liberal arts courses were one topic on which there was no consensus in this group. Individual opinion varied from courses “that make life just a little nicer” to “Get

rid of the humanities". This difference in opinion appeared to be related to the personal goals held by these individuals. Those individuals who considered college a personal goal to "make a better me" appreciated liberal arts courses. Individuals who were interested in the direct application of material to a vocation tended to see these courses as hurdles to graduation.

Like the traditional women participants, some of these individuals saw college as a game with graduation as the goal. In this game the faculty could be a barrier to this goal. Although the traditional women group described some parts of this ontology, the nontraditional male interviewee, used the term "game" to describe some parts of the college experience. Interview 7 described a specific relationship with a faculty member in competitive terms. This concept of college as a game occurred in the traditional male student interviews and is described in detail the final of summary of the student results. The general topics discussed in the nontraditional male interviews are summarized in Table 4.

Table 4

Nontraditional Male Participants

Questions from the Interview guide	Interview 5	Interview 6	Interview 7	Interview 8	Interview 9
What attracted you to L.S.U.?	-Location -Best college in the area -Preferred agricultural culture to urban culture (major)	-Recommendation of an admissions advisor at a trade school -Location	-Location -Personal reasons -Parental influence	-Location -Media reports about specific field -Family tradition -Preparation for graduate school	-Climate most like home -Parental influence to go to any college

(table continues)

Questions from the Interview guide	Interview 5	Interview 6	Interview 7	Interview 8	Interview 9
What is your opinion of the programs that you enrolled in at L.S.U.?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Gave him an insight into how to solve problems -Enjoyed learning for the sake of learning -Knowledgeable faculty -Preferred hands-on experiences -Very applicable to future plans and interests 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -More political than expected -Not as altruistic and ivory tower as expected -College is a "game" -Standards were lower than expected -Students have poor written and oral communication skills -Learned more than the basics in the best classes. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Enjoyed hands-on experiences -Enjoyed field experiences -Enjoyed lots of laboratory experiences. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Agriculture is excellent -Teachers are devoted to the material -Faculty were good at communicating ideas -Faculty is knowledgeable -Material is related to life. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Good teachers -Clear expectations -Not enough contact with local industry -Nice campus -Need more parking -Need more books in departmental libraries. -Teachers are very available.
Describe the ideal college. How is it different from the program at L.S.U.?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Enjoyed L.S.U. -Enjoyed laboratory and field experiences -Prefer small classes -Need better classroom discipline -Liked the campus -Wish there was more time to explore the material in depth 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Provide a growing-up experience -Set academic standards -Field experiences -Laboratory experiences -All teachers should command respect from their students -Information is related to real world applications -Need a summary experience at the end of the curriculum. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Lots of "hands on" -All faculty have industry experience -Demanding faculty -Information is not limited to specific subject area -Good combination of lecture and laboratory classes -Faculty who teach for the love of teaching -Students would recognize the value of student organizations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Different class structures based on material--informal for liberal arts classes and formal for science classes -Faculty recognize potential in students 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -No liberal arts classes -Good social life

(table continues)

Questions from the Interview guide	Interview 5	Interview 6	Interview 7	Interview 8	Interview 9
What would you do differently?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Students would not have to work so they could be more active in campus organizations -Disliked large lecture classes -Some classes needed more discipline -Reform some grading scales 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -All professors who teach would be full professors who had met their research requirements -Clearly defined class standards - "Military" style teachers -Provide career guidance within the major field -More supervision of some field activities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Generally pleased, would change very little -More conservative atmosphere -Have a larger departmental library -Eliminate liberal arts courses -Avoid teachers who have no respect for students 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -More crosswalks -Air and water stations on campus for cars -Personal safety on campus would be improved -Better classroom discipline -Better parking -More opportunities to enroll in courses outside of major field -Improved bicycle access -Repair buildings -Student community outreach projects -Reduce the number of libraries -Multilevel campus -daycare 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -More links with industry -Faculty would help students locate off campus work related to major field -Faculty would place students in off campus field experiences
If you had some doubts, what influences these doubts?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Family responsibilities -Lack of emotional support from family members -Poor grading scale 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Family responsibilities -Poor instructor -Dog pack mentality 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Family responsibilities -Poor academic performance in a course 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Facility maintenance -Campus safety 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Need for independence from family business -How hard it is to own a business in field?

(table continues)

Questions from the Interview guide	Interview 5	Interview 6	Interview 7	Interview 8	Interview 9
What are some of the doubts that you have?	-Is it worth the cost in family time?	-Is it fair to my spouse -Hard to watch people hurt other people	-Can I succeed -Am I in the right field -Just worn out	-Household management issues	-Can I do the work
What parts of the program worked well for you?	-Made him a "better" and a more "knowledgeable" person.	-The opportunity to pursue a degree -To better myself -Believed he found something he loved	-Professors were good -Hands on -Excited about teaching new things -Getting to know people	-Teachers interested in the subject	-Location -Climate -Theory classes -Liberal art electives
What are some of the things that helped you finish when others did not?	-Fulfillment of a personal goal -Not "a quitter" personality	-Got rid of distractions before he got there	-Tenacity -Found college easy -Never been really pushed -A sense of achievement	-Wanted to go to college -A good time to be in college culturally	-Want to finish -Parents expect him to finish
What do future students need to know about themselves?	-Persistence is needed -Need to know what they want (may be related to age) -Exploration is important	-Do not take yourself too seriously -Learn to survive failure -Do not be afraid to make mistakes	-Confidence -need a drive to succeed -Honor -Professionalism -Make own judgement about teachers rather than listening to peers	-Household management -Personal responsibility and respect for the property of others -Good work ethic	-Get the old text -Learn from other sources such as public T.V -Read the book

(table continues)

Questions from the Interview guide	Interview 5	Interview 6	Interview 7	Interview 8	Interview 9
About the program?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Many opportunities to learn on the campus -Should select courses based on interest or usefulness not expected grade 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Need to follow the curriculum as close as you can 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Excellent faculty -Good mix of older and younger faculty -Good field experience -Good laboratories -Students become a group 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Good field experiences -Faculty should teach in the area they research -everyone on campus should work to maintain the campus -Need a degree to be recognized in your field 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Getting the old exams is very important -Contacts are needed to get these exams
What would you like the college to know?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Enjoyed being a part of the campus 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Need a summary course -it would be nice if all courses were on the same grading scale 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Need more teachers with industry experience -Some Subject were only covered through field experiences 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Educate only the head and you are only half educated 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Never invited to other students homes -Never get to see the real Louisiana -Felt isolated as foreign student
Is there anything else you would like to mention?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -No 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Department has done a really good job -More structure would be good 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Eliminate the humanities or get the faculty to respect the students as adults -Get to know your students -Teachers should enjoy teaching 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Would like to see a course where individuals from different fields solve the same problems in different ways 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Not related to the program

Traditional Male Students

Traditional male students were difficult to recruit as participants. Although they would agree to participate in a focus group on the actual date of the meeting they would fail to arrive. Repeated attempts to encourage participation from this group failed. Despite contacting over two dozen individuals, only four agreed to participate in this study.

Focus Group 4

This was a failed attempt to hold a focus group for nontraditional males. There were two participants, a moderator and an assistant moderator. This was the only group not moderated by the researcher; since this was an all male group, a male moderator was used. The researcher served as assistant moderator for this group.

Since only two individuals arrived to participate in the meeting, this could not be considered a focus group. Although some authors (Holstein and Gubrium 1995; Rubin and Rubin 1995) consider a group of two to be a special type of interview, such cases are considered less than ideal. Rubin and Rubin noted that unplanned interviews involving more than one person at a time make the interview less predictable. They write that such an arrangement works best when the two interviewees converse with each other. Holstein and Gubrium (1995) described the successful use of interview techniques with pairs of participants but in this case the participants were married couples or other pairs who had a prior relationship. When dual interviewees are designed into a study, Holstein and Gubrium call this multivocality. In the case of Focus Group 4, since the dual interview was not a planned pairing but an unfortunate

result of inadequate recruitment, this interview was more like Rubin and Rubin's description of an unplanned interview. Such an arrangement provides less depth than an individual interview and less dynamic interaction than a focus group. Accordingly, the result can be expected to provide less information. The responses of each participant are summarized separately.

Paired Interview 1 (Focus Group 4)

Participant 1.

Participant 1 came to L.S.U. to study for a specific profession. After he had some work experience, he decided against this profession because the hours were too long. He selected an agricultural field because it was interesting to him. He had been active in agriculturally related clubs since he was a small child.

I had been through 4-H. I decided when I was pretty young that I wanted to be involved in something with [agriculture] as an occupation. And then as I got into high school and got involved in the activities of FFA, Future Farmers of America. I liked everything they talked about so I decided, when I go to college, I'd probably want to be in an [agricultural occupation]. So, as I went more and more through high school, I felt more comfortable with my decision and I've been pretty much majoring in that since I've been in school.

He chose L.S.U. because he believed that it had the strongest agricultural program in the state. It was also close enough to his home that he could commute to campus. He had taken some classes at a smaller university but he transferred to L.S.U.

because L.S.U. had a larger program in his area of interest. Participant 1 was pleased with the education that he had received.

I like the degree program I took. I think a lot of the classes were good in the College of Agriculture. I think I got a fine education and it made me a really diverse student, as far as the flexibility they give you for electives. And all the departments here within the college are strong. I felt like it gave me a really strong basis in each aspect of agriculture that I would need in my profession. I thought they had some really good classes I took, and good professors.

Most all the professors in the [my department] were really good.

Participant 1 found his instructors to be universally helpful regardless of rank. He described two classes that he had enjoyed. The first course was taught by a professor, the second course was taught by a graduate student.

A few of them stick out in my mind across the classes. [Name] was in the [specific] department. I took a class with him and it was really, really good. I learned a lot in his class. I thought I knew a lot but not until he did his teaching and everything else. In the [another department], I worked with some pretty good people they have. [Name] he's a teaching assistant. . . . and I think he's a really, really good guy. Real knowledgeable. He worked well with the students.

He believed that a strength of the College of Agriculture was that the faculty created an environment in which the students were comfortable asking questions. He thought that the smaller class sizes in the College might be related to the instructor's ability to do this.

I think the students are more comfortable in the class because, I guess if you have a group of 50 students in any one class, not everybody's going to understand everything the professor talks about. But in most of the classes in the College of Agriculture, I felt like the students were more comfortable asking questions. Because if you go sit in a big lecture class sometimes and you ask a question, probably half of the students think, "Golly, that's stupid. You should have known that." And sometimes a professor will give you that kind of indication when he answers a question sarcastically or something like that. In a couple of big lecture classes I had, I got discouraged, just because of the way some of the professors acted when I asked them questions. So, that would have to leave half of the students in the class not even comfortable enough to raise their hand and ask a question related to the lesson. But most of the classes in the college, definitely, it was always -- I always felt comfortable when I asked a question at any time. I'd go to the professor's office, to get any kind of help outside of class that was necessary.

Participant 1 enjoyed that his courses that offered applications for the material.

Laboratory and field experiences were considered to be very effective teaching methods by this participant.

I think they emphasize application in the courses because a lot of the things you learn in a lot of classes has a hands-on application. You can teach it to somebody and they could write a procedure to do certain things, but I think a lot of the classes, whether it be through laboratory experience or you just go outside

of the class one day - They teach you how to do these things. So instead of just knowing a step-by-step process, to be able to write it down on a sheet of paper, they're really concerned that you know how to do this. The practical aspect to be able to apply it. I like that part.

He felt that laboratory courses needed small class sizes to work effectively. He was pleased with the laboratory experiences that he had at L.S.U.

If you're going to teach agriculture and offer all these things to major in, I think it's important that students be able to go see a pseudo-environment. This might be where you're working one day, [a place like this], so I think it's important that a student would be able to see that. In any aspect. A good faculty-to-student ratio would be important, I think. I wouldn't want to have too many students in any one class to where you'd lose the personal touch. I think it's important. Like they have here.

It was important to this participant that his instructors be able to communicate well. One aspect of good communication was a good command of the English language.

I wouldn't have any teachers that couldn't speak English at my university. . . .I think it's important that students be able to understand the professor and the professor understand the student. Not to say I wouldn't have any foreign faculty members, but they would have to be very fluent in English. I think that's important.

Although he believed that the language issue was important in some parts of university, he had not personally experienced this problem. His concern was based on the experiences that his friends had shared with him.

I haven't had that experience, but I've got a bunch of friends in the [different college in the university], and I've heard horror stories. Even some of them in [another department] are like that.

Participant 1 believed that L.S.U. was an excellent university. There were three factors that had positively influenced his opinion about the college. One was tradition. He believed that there was a tradition of academic excellence here and that tradition helped maintain this excellence.

I believe in academic excellence. I'm sure its a tradition that L.S.U. holds. It's got to have some tradition.

The second was the diversity of the student body. He felt that L.S.U. must be a good university if individuals were willing to travel great distances to earn degrees here.

If you have a good university, people would be more willing to travel in. I've got friends from North Louisiana. I've got friends from Texas who come to school here. I've had some people in my class from Las Vegas. Places you definitely wouldn't think [about], "Why did you come to L.S.U.?" They're not on scholarship. They just wanted to come to L.S.U. If I had my own university, you've got to make it to where you're good enough, you have the reputation so that you can get students from all over. Even students from different countries.

The final element was the influence of student organizations. This participant had been active in two different organizations related to his field of study. Student organizations were valuable to him because they provided an opportunity for students and faculty to interact with each other in an informal setting. They also allowed the students to become part of the larger off campus community.

I think student organizations are important. . . .I think it's important that students be able to interact with each other outside of the classroom too. And then, if you get in student organizations, you're involved with the faculty members in kind of a different relationship. I think it's kind of good to meet a professor at an outside event and just see he's a basic fellow too. He likes some of the same stuff. He's not always like that just because he's like that in class. But you get to interact with some of the faculty members that you probably never would have taken a class with. You get to meet a lot of the faculty members that way. You get to get involved with a lot of things off campus, which I think is good, because there's things that happen outside of L.S.U. around here too. So, everything's not just on the university level; there's some outside things too. And you get to meet a good diverse bunch of students. You meet people that you wouldn't have had in class.. So I think student organizations are important, not really to pass the time but just because of the benefits through faculty members and relationships. I think it's good.

Through these organizations, Participant 1 took advantage of some travel opportunities available with these groups. This allowed him to compare his experiences

with the experiences of his peers at other universities. These experiences reinforced his positive opinions about L.S.U.

. . . I thought that was good, just because it gave us an opportunity to see different universities, which I thought was great because you see everybody. They do things a little bit differently everywhere. But as far as what we read about in the newspaper as far as problems at L.S.U., it's like that everywhere. You learn that well, L.S.U.'s not really as bad off like the Governor says sometimes because everybody's in the same boat. But you get to compare notes on programs. A lot of times, talking to different students from different universities, it makes you appreciate the faculty members here a little bit more. I thought that was really good. You get to see a lot of different phases of agriculture. We just got to see so many interesting things. I thought it was great.

Partly because of these experiences, he believed that the faculty at L.S.U. was very knowledgeable. He believed that the research done at L.S.U. was important and judged the knowledge base of faculty based on the research projects that the university was engaged in.

It definitely made us appreciate agriculture a little more. We would see someone that we felt wasn't as knowledgeable sometimes. Like he really didn't know what he was talking about. As little as I am familiar with the research projects going on here, some of the universities just don't have a lot of things going on. The research projects here are pretty important. They have some pretty substantial stuff going on. I'll compare to it to [a different university]. We went

to their [laboratories] and it was unbelievable how much better L.S.U.'s was. So it made me appreciate the fact we had all these resources available and the kids at [that university], they just don't have it there. I thought that was good.

This participant hoped that the university would maintain the quality of its research programs. He thought that the university should replace retiring faculty with individuals of the same quality.

Try to keep the research forum the caliber that it is. Or make some improvements if necessary. More or less maintain the quality of the instructors and professors, because some of them are going to retire one day. But just make sure that you get people that good, or better because they've got a real good faculty here, in every department that I've been exposed to within the college. . .

In addition to research expertise, Participant 1 felt that faculty should have the ability to teach laboratory classes. He also believed that new faculty needed to be flexible enough to work within the present budget environment.

Well, if they want to come to work at L.S.U., they'd probably need to sell themselves to me. "So, I want to know what makes you a good instructor. Tell me why you would be a good teacher for whatever class at L.S.U.." They could talk about, "Well, this is the class I taught here," and give a breakdown, structure of it, and just look to hear the right things about their abilities. I talked a lot about how we like hands-on in classes. That's important. I think every student likes that. So, if somebody's going to come in as an instructor, if he tells you that, you say, "Well, good." But they need to be compatible with L.S.U. I know,

sometimes, as I went through school here, I just hear a lot about money that L.S.U. doesn't get anymore. That's important. But I think the people would have to understand -- I don't know what is the predicament of L.S.U.'s finances, but they'd have to understand that. So they would have to be compatible to deal with maybe limited resources as a teacher or researcher. They've got to be a good researcher too, because I think in every phase of the College of Agriculture, there needs to be research being conducted. So these people should be able to conduct research too. But the most important thing would be to prove themselves as a good instructor for the students. As far as all the instructors that I've been exposed to, I don't think there's any of them that I would get rid of. . . . But just make sure that when you replace some of the ones that are going to eventually retire, that you have [replacements] of the same caliber.

He also reflected that it would improve some departments if they would recruit some younger faculty members. He thought that younger faculty would be more likely to try different approaches in the classroom.

One thing I might have liked, I'd like to see some younger professors in some of the departments, because some of them are older. And there's nothing wrong with that, but it's good to have new ideas flowing in sometimes. And that would be the only thing I would look at differently. They're still capable. Don't get me wrong. But it's just good to see somebody young and vibrant come along every now and then, and maybe rock the boat a little bit and do some things a little different.

Although he knew that his exposure to other university faculties was limited, he thought that the faculty in his department were more personable than the faculty he met at other universities. He speculated that this may be due to the regional culture of South Louisiana.

I know it's not likely when you first meet a professor from another university [that you will get to know them] but I just feel like even if I'd known these guys a long time, I wouldn't know them as well as I did [faculty here]. But maybe it's just different geographic regions. They say people in South Louisiana are supposed to be so friendly.

Personal relationships with the faculty were important according to Participant 1 because the quality of these relationships affected how likely he was to seek help during office hours. According to this participant, students sometime find asking questions in class to be embarrassing. Good teachers were individuals who seemed approachable to this participant.

You've got to be able to [talk to them] if you do not understand something in class, because I've been like this occasionally. Even if you do have a good relationship with a teacher, sometimes you just really don't want to ask a question in front of the other students. You have to be able to go in and talk with this professor, be able to sit down one-on-one and say, "Look, I don't understand this. I didn't want to ask it in class." I think you have to be able to do that.

Like many traditional students in this study, Participant 1 disliked courses that did not seem to be applicable to his major field. He found it difficult to stay interested in such classes.

It felt like, sometimes I had to take classes [in the liberal arts] that I just couldn't figure out why it was important for me to take this class. If I don't like the class and I don't like what the professor's teaching, then of course, it's going to be like pulling teeth to make myself do the course work.

He believed that it was “good to take a variety of classes” but he also thought that there was enough variety in the agricultural fields to provide a diverse background for individuals in agricultural majors. In other curricula he thought that too many introductory courses discouraged students from pursuing specific fields.

It's good to take a bunch of different classes but at the same time, maybe not necessarily in my case but I know in some of the different curricula, you've got so many prerequisites to take that by the time you get into your major, you're burned out from your prerequisites. It's not really that case in the College of Ag because I think they separate it pretty well to where you kind of have classes that use it as a stepping stone. I'm just talking about the building [of a program], so there are not so many prerequisites. But I had taken several classes where I'm like, "Why do I need this?" I can't think of any offhand because all the classes I've taken in at least the last two years, have definitely concentrated on my major.

This participant thought that the purpose of the humanities electives was to provide a diverse education. He felt that since he had to broaden his education with a humanities courses, it would be appropriate for humanities majors to take an agricultural course. He believed it would make humanities majors more appreciative of agricultural research.

One thing a friend and I were discussing the other day, and it's kind of outrageous to suggest, but he's graduating this semester so we were just talking about everything that we had taken at L.S.U. So it came to it that the one class that we both really dislike having to take was a humanities course. So what he and I decided, what we thought would be a very good idea, [would be] if they can require everybody in the College of Agriculture, to take a humanities course, and why can't you require all the humanities or liberal arts majors to take an agriculture course? So they can better appreciate why so much money goes into the research and why it's so important to buy a new [equipment]. I just thought that was a pretty good idea he came up with. But that's outrageous to suggest and probably never would happen.

In this participant's opinion, better courses offered some type of laboratory experience. He valued the courses in his major because many of these courses offered laboratory experiences and related the material to an applied problem.

As far as a favorite class, the hands-on. I think that's great. I think any class that gets away from the typical lecture with the overheads, and tests on the Scantron . . . Anything different from that is greatly appreciated.

He continued on this topic.

You get a lot of hands-on experience. Most of the other classes I have taken within the college, even in a different concentration, were like that. They teach you everything you need to know about a certain specific area, but it's got to have hands-on application, which is important, whether it be in [a specific field or another]. They're doing a really good job of teaching you the hands-on as well as the knowledge.

He could not recall any teacher or classes that he had within the College that he disliked. He found that the introductory courses were the classes that he liked the least.

Some classes you just hear are horrible. . . . In the College of Agriculture, I never really had any bad professors that I can remember. Some of them made me work and I didn't like it then, but I think I'll appreciate it down the road. So I don't have any problems with that. . . . Some other classes, [introductory lecture classes], they have an eraser and chalk at the same time, going so fast. None of them were really that difficult. From what people said, "This is the hardest class. If you have to take it to make it, you just may as well drop out of school if you have to take this certain professor." But I don't know if I did a good job of avoiding the bad teachers, but I didn't have too many of them that I thought were really horrible. Not that I can remember.

Professors who did not clearly state their expectations were not respected by this participant. He believed that poor instructors did not provide enough information for students to meet the requirements of their courses.

I had a couple of professors I didn't have any respect for after I took their class. I respect a professor, that their knowledgeable about their subject area, but I can think back -- I took an [specific] class. Didn't learn anything in it. I've never been really weak in [this subject]. I've always done well in every class that I've taken, but this guy -- I wrote a lot of papers. I never could figure out what he wanted. I tried to ask him, "Tell me what you want me to write down on this piece of paper to turn into you?" So he'd write comments. I just felt like I couldn't talk to him. I just don't think of him as a good instructor.

This particular professor did not seem to be approachable outside of class according to Participant 1. The lack of personal interaction affected how the participant felt about the instructor. For Participant 1, respect seemed to be related to the quality of the personal interactions with the faculty.

Maybe it was a problem with me in the classroom too, as well as the other dozen people that weren't doing as well as they thought they should have. So I didn't respect him as an instructor after that. He might be a great guy outside of class, but I didn't care for him as a professor. . . . I just hated that class. I hated to go to it. I didn't like the professor. If I could get rid of any one in the whole program that you just didn't have to take, like you can not take one class, that would be it. That's the only one I've ever had any problem with.

Personal interactions with faculty and peers were highly valued by the participant. Consequently, Participant 1 thought that the relationships that he had developed during his years as a student were the high point of his college experience.

You actually learn something here. I think I did. But if I had to pick one aspect that I thought was the strongest or the best part of L.S.U., it would be the people. The professors, the students. All the interaction in-between classes and after classes, or where they'd be in study groups. It's just so easy to run across people that are so nice to meet. I made a lot of friends since I've been here. I went to [different university] for two years and it just didn't have that kind of interaction among people for some reason. When I came here, everybody was like, "Oh, you're taking this class? Well, here, I've got some old notes you can use to study for." Everybody just seemed so nice all the time; just so easy to make friends. And you appreciate that. If you're sitting through a three hour night class, you're just about to fall asleep, and the last thing you want to do is actually sit in this classroom. But if you've got a friend in there, you may have to sit here for an hour and a half and then we'll take a break and we can go outside and talk. That makes it a lot easier. But the people, just the quality of the people. Man, they're so nice. So outgoing. I just can't say enough about it.

He returned to this topic later in his interview.

I think it would be hard to make somebody . . . it would be hard to make them understand how valuable everything is. These are the classes you're going to take at L.S.U., and the professors are so knowledgeable. But I think it would be good to make them understand how personable the professors are in the college. Things like, "Look, you don't want to ever feel intimidated by this professor. You can go in his office at any time you want to and ask questions." . . .A lot of

kids are going to be coming from small towns. I don't know if you come from [a small town] but coming to Baton Rouge, it's a lot different. So I think trying to make them understand how good a relationship they would have, [these] working relationships with the professors. Make them understand about the students; how interactive they are with each other; how nice they are. I think that would be important. Definitely talk about the quality of their classes and a lot of the things we talked about earlier with the hands-on in the classes. Because kids will like that I think. They would appreciate that even if they were coming to the university.

Participant 1 had never experienced any doubts about attending a university. He stated that he "wanted to graduate". He believed that those individuals who did not finish had no one to blame but themselves.

The people that I know of that didn't make it, it was their fault. They just quit going to class, or quit taking tests. They just really quit caring. Class and passing courses was the last thing on their mind so they just didn't make it. It's not hard, I don't think. I mean, the whole college experience. It takes you about two semesters to figure out what it takes to get by and some people have to spend a lot more time studying than other people. It's just if you're dedicated enough to make the sacrifice.

This individual found it helpful to schedule his courses in so that he would not have too many intense courses in one semester. It was important to interact with a peer

group in order to identify these courses. He described how he balanced his semesters to reduce his stress levels.

I enjoyed the classes; most of the classes I took. I think you can balance everything out as far scheduling a semester to where you have two of these horrible classes that nobody at L.S.U. wants to take. You could take enough other electives, like the hands-on classes that you enjoy so much, or the ones in whatever department. I think it's always been important for me to balance my schedule out, where I had this class that I never would want to go to but then also one that I enjoyed. It just makes things easier. Whereas, if I took 18 hours of classes I didn't want in a semester, I probably would be working at McDonald's because I couldn't have done it that way. But I think it's important just to balance the schedule out, so you don't have all these overwhelming, demanding, lecture-type classes, where you have the tests almost the same time in the semester. If you take [related subjects], you're going to have the two tests in the same week, and they're both taught the same way, just information, information, that you have to regurgitate on the Scantron. So if you don't take too many of those at one time, I think you should be all right. But then, I think some people that didn't make it all the way through college just weren't cut out for it. I don't think everybody's cut out for school. Some of them just didn't fit the program here, or they just didn't make the sacrifices.

He returned to this topic again much later in the interview.

Tell them they need to balance their schedule out, like I talked about earlier.

"Don't bog yourself down in a semester like that. You're going to be here long enough to spread everything out. So, there's no use to take all these things all at one time." Tell them about some of the extracurricular activities, whether it be [specific clubs], or just the kind of people you need to try to meet in [certain organizations]. I mean, people that you meet in there would be invaluable. Try to make some really good friends, because there are people I met here that just gave me some guidance through classes, like, "Don't take these two at the same time," and things like that. That's really important.

He continued on this topic.

If you balance your activities like that, you're less likely to get burned out like some people. I had a cousin that majored in [non agricultural field] and it is one of those curricula where you have all these prerequisites to fill before you can take any other class. So for two years, he just ate paper. I mean, that's all he did was look at books. And he got burned out. He finished all prerequisites and everything and said, "I had enough. I don't want to be an [specific profession] anymore. I don't care if I make \$1 million an hour." So, he changed his major to [agricultural field] and he's as happy as can be now. But, just when he came in, he just went to the ground. I think he went straight to summer school out of high school. I don't suggest to anybody to do that. I didn't either, but you've got to be able to balance your schedule. You need to devote time to studying but you need to have some time to do nothing, if what you want to do is nothing. Or

you can get a student job somewhere. I think that's important to, to get some other exposure outside of class. But the biggest thing is it's not high school for one thing. They need to know that. It's going to be a lot different. Nobody's going to be making you go to class.

Advising was seen by this individual as valuable aid for incoming students.

First year students would not know enough about the program to be able to select their courses. Despite the usefulness of counseling, this participant felt that some information was best gleaned from independent study and peers.

I think you could even set up, for every incoming freshman in the college, a one-on-one counseling session with a counselor. They could say, "Well, okay, these are the classes you should take this semester because it's your first semester; you're just getting in." But there's still some things they'll just have to learn on their own, because nobody can teach somebody else study habits. Nobody can make somebody go to class. And there's no way you'll know how much you'll have to study individually for a test until you take the test. So there's only so many things you can tell an incoming student, and a lot of the things they'll just have to figure out on their own. Maybe provide them some guidance because I think some freshman will probably come in and not do too well the first semester. So maybe you could have somebody interject then [at that point]. The counselors, "Okay, well, maybe there's some things wrong. Maybe not wrong, but maybe you just need to do them different next time." So

that might keep them from doing bad the second semester. That might be the point at which you lose students.

One reason this participant was uncertain about the value of counselors was that he was doubtful that junior division counselors were very effective. He did not believe that they could be knowledgeable about courses offered throughout the entire university.

I just always wondered how a Junior Division counselor could be knowledgeable about every course in the university, because I think they had some that -- when I transferred, I was in my college, but from what I understood from other people, they have some that were like appointed to maybe two colleges. They probably had three of them for general college and one of them for Agriculture or Liberal Arts, or whatever the configuration was, but how is this counselor supposed to know enough about every class that every one of these students would want to take coming through junior division? I don't know that they could be knowledgeable enough to say, "Maybe you shouldn't take that course and this course in the same semester." You see what I mean? But they wouldn't know any better.

For this reason he supported the elimination of the junior division. He thought that most students could effectively advise themselves after their sophomore year by following a degree form.

If they do away with junior division, that would be good. I think they'd have some able counselors for freshman incoming. And even through the sophomore [year]. After your sophomore year, I don't think you need an academic counselor

any more. Your degree pretty much speaks for itself then. "Take these classes and after all the pluses and minuses, you graduate."

The last comment that this participant made about advising related to how helpful a particular individual had been as a freshman counselor. He thought that there should be more individuals like this individual.

I think like we talked about earlier, freshman counselors would be a good addition. [Name] does a great job, but she is only one person. About two more of her would do a great job. But they need to be just like her. Just like her. But two more of her.

Participant 1 was pleased with his experiences in college. He highly valued the personal relationships that he had developed with both the faculty and his peers through student organizations. He appeared to use these relationships as information sources and as a supplement to the formal advising that he received.

Participant 2.

Participant 2 was a quiet individual when compared to Participant 1. There were numerous times during the interview that he simply agreed with comments made by Participant 1. Although they were enrolled in different majors, they had taken some of the same courses and so they had some shared experiences.

Participant 2 chose L.S.U. even though he had scholarship offers from two other universities. He selected L.S.U. because it appealed to him emotionally.

It was just one of those things. I could have gone to [two other universities] I had partial scholarships to both of them, and I didn't have anything from L.S.U.

but it just seemed -- something just drew me to L.S.U.. I'm from Baton Rouge. I don't know. It wasn't the fact that I didn't want to leave home, because I could have very easily left home. That wouldn't have been a problem. But it was just something about L.S.U.

Even though he did not select L.S.U. for its location, after he was enrolled he decided that L.S.U.'s centralized location in the state strengthened its agricultural programs. He felt that the diversity within the state encouraged the university to offer very diverse agricultural programs.

I think a centralized location for a university is pretty important to take advantage of different geographic [regions] in a state. Certain techniques that work in North Louisiana for raising cotton don't have any application in Crowley, where they raise rice. . . L.S.U. has research being conducted all over the state. They don't focus on agriculture here around Baton Rouge. They have research stations all over the state. I think that's good. Just to be able to take advantage of the different types of production in the state.

He agreed with Participant 1 that the faculty was competent regardless of rank. He also appreciated the teaching abilities of the same teaching assistant mentioned by Participant 1.

[Participant 1] is correct, he is a really good guy. I took some other classes with some other different professors. They were incredible too. I've taken a couple of classes with Dr.[Name] and if I could know half of what he's probably forgotten in his lifetime, I'd be pretty wise. I enjoyed that.

He was impressed with the knowledge of his professors. He described the faculty as having concentrated areas of knowledge and he believed that “as a whole, they are all very knowledgeable. Although being knowledgeable was an important quality of a good instructor, Participant 2 felt that it was equally important that faculty members have good teaching skills.

I think people can be knowledgeable about a subject but can't teach it to someone. The ability to teach would have to be pretty important in a university.

It would definitely have to be important for a professor to be able to pass the knowledge on to the students.

He returned to this topic later in the interview. He thought that teaching ability was a particularly important element in the undergraduate experience.

Good facilities are important, and teacher-student ratio is real important, but sometimes if you just bring in average or below average teachers, they may not be getting the message across to the students. You got to have good teachers.

He found most of his professors to be good instructors. A good instructor was described as someone who motivates his students by providing encouragement through every step of a project.

All my classes I took require a lot of work, and I think a good teacher is somebody that can give you the motivation to do all the assignments. Not just because of the grade . That's always the ultimate deciding factor but no matter how hard a project was in some classes, the professor just made you want to do

the work. And they were encouraging and helpful throughout, every step of the way.

He disliked classes that lacked an applied component. He implied that it was difficult to relate such courses to other subjects or topics within the curriculum. In this participant's opinion, the application of the information made the material more understandable.

As far as some of the classes I've taken away from the College of Ag, a lot of them are, "Here's some transparencies. Copy this and you'll be tested on it on such and such a date." But I noticed that most of the teachers that I've had in the College of Ag, they want to apply it. It's all -- you take this and it builds on this. You're building something. And whether it be from the [one specific] standpoint, or it be from [another specific] standpoint. It would all build upon one another and you could see it actually working, instead of just copy these down; there's going to be a test and it doesn't make any sense.

Participant 2 described what made a poor lecture course. He disliked extensive use of an overhead projector and large class sizes. He found it difficult to see the applications for the material presented in such courses.

Because there's an overhead. I've had a professor in Chemistry who had two overheads working at the same time. Had a stack of transparencies. . . . He'd read through them but I can do that. There wasn't any [specific subject] involved. There was just writing and hand cramps involved. Plus, having 300

people in the lecture class. You could go see this guy every day of the year and he probably wouldn't know who you were anyway.

He thought there was a place for introductory courses as long as these courses provided a foundation for other topics that he would encounter again in higher level courses.

In many of my classes, you'll take what one professor taught one semester. Then the next classes you take, they will use some of that and elaborate on it. So it's good to have the knowledge in the beginning. That way you have the concept and this other professor will build on that concept. And you're like, "Well, hey, I recognize that. I remember that from last semester." It makes it a little bit easier when they keep building and building. It makes it a lot easier to understand.

Another quality that Participant 2 appreciated in his instructors was their ability to create a comfortable classroom environment. He felt that most instructors in the College of Agriculture encouraged student participation in class. If he was comfortable with the classroom interaction, it encouraged him to seek out the faculty member outside of class if he needed extra help.

I think the students are more comfortable in the class because if you have a group of 50 students in any one class, not everybody's going to understand everything the professor talks about. But in most of the classes in the College of Agriculture, I felt like the students were more comfortable to ask questions. If you go sit in a big lecture class sometimes and you ask a question, probably half of the students think, "Golly, that's stupid. You should have known that." And

sometimes a professor will give you that -- that kind of indication -- when he answers a question sarcastically or something like that. In a couple of big lecture classes I had I kind of got discouraged, just because of the way some of the professors reacted when I asked them questions. That would leave half of the students in the class not even comfortable enough to raise their hand and ask a question related to the lesson. But in most of the classes in the college, I always felt comfortable when I asked a question at any time. I'd go to the professor's office, to get any kind of help outside of class that was necessary.

Part of what made professors approachable outside of class, according to Participant 2, was the small class size in his major. He believed that this helped him become an individual rather than a number to his professors.

In all the Ag classes that I've had, they do make the classes a little bit smaller. They make themselves more readily available, as well as they're more personable as far as trying to get to know you. They come up and, "Hey, how are you doing? Hey, what's going on?" It's not like you're a number.

Participant 2 was enthusiastic about the quality of the faculty in the College of Agriculture. He described the faculty in complimentary terms.

First of all, I think it's important you've got to talk about the academic aspect. We've got just some super, super professors here on campus. I mean, without them, you obviously can't have the university.

Participant 2 agreed with Participant 1 that it was important that new faculty understand the budget situation in Louisiana prior to accepting a position here.

I agree with pretty much everything [Participant 1] said. . . . If I wanted a teacher to come here, let them know the situation here. Sometimes, I don't know pay scales or anything like that but, sometimes Louisiana politics doesn't allow for pay raises. They've got to be willing to put up with that as well.

He also agreed with Participant 1 that there was a need for some new people in the faculty. He disagreed with Participant 1 that new faculty needed to be young. He thought that faculty of any age could invigorate a program because the new ideas and experiences they brought with them that provided diversity. Diversity was not considered the sole province of youth by Participant 2.

Like [Participant 1] said, get some new faces. Get some younger people. I agree with that to an extent. But I've also had some experience with a couple of my professors here who were brought in from other universities who were just the opposite. They retired from a university and they came over here and just brought a whole new light, and just a whole mass of knowledge. I think L.S.U. does a good job of that. I know with [Name], he's a young guy. He's coming in. He's giving a lot of new ideas. But at the same time, they are also bringing in, a different faculty with a different viewpoint. The older professor who had already had 40 or 50 years with another institution. So you get the broad spectrum. You get both viewpoints. I think that's important.

Personal interaction with faculty and peers was also important to this individual. Unlike Participant 1, he had not joined any student organizations to developed these relationships. He found that College of Agriculture activities and the field experiences

within his classes provided these types of interactions independent of an organizational structure.

I've actually gotten to know some professors better through different functions that were out of the classroom setting. . . . You can do that. I've done it without having to go to the clubs.

He described how he was able to develop these relationships.

You just start. I know the College of Ag always has a crawfish boil and things like that. Different functions that you don't necessarily have to belong to a club per se, but just being in the College of Agriculture, it's like the big club. It makes it easier. The professors, they're real easygoing. You realize that they do have a life outside of the school and it's not just always the teaching atmosphere that you see them in. You get to see them on a personal level as well. I've also gotten to know professors better in [field experiences]. We have actually taken, in some of my classes field trips. And kind of get some time away from the classroom, but you're still doing class work, but it just doesn't seem like it. You can interact with your professors that way too.

This participant felt that the friendships that he had made were the best part of his college experience. He expected to maintain these friendships throughout his life.

Coming out of high school I had some close friends, so I thought. Over the past four years, I think I can honestly say I've got some friends that if I called on them 10 years from now, they'd be there to help you. To say that I've got friends now that will be my friends forever. That's not always easy to say but I think I can

say that. I mean, as well as the knowledge you learn. That's an important part. That's what you go to college for. But I think without the knowledge, as well as you've got to have some outside activities and I think when you make your friends, it also helps you in the classroom as well.

These friendships complemented the classroom experiences and provided a support network for this individual. He described how such friendships develop.

You go to class and say you had to go somewhere one day. So you borrow Joe's notes over here. Well, then you and Joe start talking and Joe may have some friends; you might have some friends. And then you just start building your friendships in a classroom setting. I've never met Joe before I had him in a class. But now I see him, "Hey, what's going on?" He had friends; I had friends. And now we all have the same friends. I think it was important to me. And it was real easy. I mean, I don't know about other majors. I've met some good people. Just laid back; just really nice people. That's one of the things I liked about it.

Participant 2 enjoyed the diversity of experiences available to him in college.

He was surprised at the diversity of course offerings just in the College of Agriculture. He also enjoyed meeting a variety of people from different backgrounds in an environment that was comfortable for someone from a small community.

The College of Agriculture is really diverse. I didn't realize it when I first started what all was involved in the College of Agriculture. You know, the different departments and things like that. It's important. But I didn't think about that. I didn't know X Department was actually considered the College of

Agriculture, and I think you have to let the kids who are thinking about coming, let them realize that, "Hey, you know, we've got a bunch of different things to offer." And then once someone is interested in a certain program, you get them interested in that program. And then you let them know that these people are willing to help you, and they're going to help you, and you're going to meet so many friends. Then you can come in and tell them about the more personal aspects that I think make it important. I know, a lot of the people in the College of Ag that I've met -- I'm from a small town -- and I let them know this isn't just going to be the big rush in the big city life and stuff. They've got some down home qualities that are just the same as from your small town. I know. I mean, I'm originally from a small town. I can relate. And you're going to be meeting people from different walks of life and I think that's what you need.

He returned to this topic much later in the interview.

Don't be afraid to meet new people. . . . Everybody is from different locations and regions. Don't be afraid to just go up and talk to somebody. Who knows, you might get to know and like that person.. Don't count somebody out.

This individual thought that the suggestion made by Participant 1 to require students in other majors to take a course in agriculture was a good idea. He thought this might be a good recruitment tool for the College of Agriculture.

I hadn't thought about that but that's a good idea. If we're supposed to broaden our horizons, then why shouldn't people from other [disciplines]. I had a guy that I worked with who was a [non agricultural] major, and I would come in

every day to work, tell him how great it was [and] what all we were doing in class. He switched his major. I mean, every day for a year, I kept telling him [about it] I mean, I wasn't even recruiting this guy . I would just come in there and tell him all the interesting stuff I had done that day and he's like, "Man," he said, "that's cool." "I learned about [specific subject] today," and that's pretty good. And one day he comes in and he said, "Guess what I did? I changed my major to [an agricultural major]." Changed into the College of Agriculture. And I was, "Man, that's great," But I think what [Participant 1] is saying is important. I think if you're going to require one set of students [take something] , you need to have everybody . Get them into [agricultural classes].

The best classes according to this participant were classes that had laboratory experiences. He believed that every degree program should offer some type of application or laboratory experience.

Anything that has hands-on. . . I'm not sure about other aspects of the College of Agriculture, but I can tell you with [specific department], there's just a number of hands-on classes that you can take. They have a research problems class that you can take It's not a requirement but I think that if you're wanting to go into [a specific field], it needs to be required. You need to have some hands-on. Plus it will help you know a professor better. I took a class under a professor and I didn't really know him that well. I had never had him before. I got to know that guy and now I can walk into his office and just sit in there and talk with him, just

like we've known each other for 10 years. So, it allows you to know your professor a little bit better. But it's the hands-on.

He continued on this topic later. He was surprised at how many subjects could be taught using a laboratory format.

I took a [specific course] this semester as well, and I was surprised. I mean, it was hands-on. I was taking it as an elective; I just needed three hours, but it was hands-on. I was surprised. The professor took us on a field trip. We had already had some introductory information given and we go on the field trip or whatever, and you can kind of see some of this starting to apply. And then later on, we had to visit another place and we had to write a paper on it. And then you use all the information. It just kind of built up and then you could actually see it in a working environment. I mean it can be done in any setting; it doesn't have to be just in [specific courses]. . . It can be done all the way around.

This participant never considered leaving college. He stated empathetically that "Quitting wasn't an option." He explained that although he never considered quitting college there were courses that he did not think he should have had to take. The courses he disliked were courses that he believed had little future applications.

Mine wasn't more as a whole lot -- "What am I doing in college?" It's more, "God, what am I doing in this class?". . . I've always wanted to go to college and I knew I would. That was just something that I wanted to do. It was more like, occasionally you might be in a classroom. "What am I doing here? How is this

going to apply in the future? Am I going to be doing this at the job I'm at?"

Probably not. You kind of start wondering, "Why do I need to take this class?"

He continued on this topic, describing a specific class.

I thoroughly disliked that class. It was kind of my fault for taking it at such a bad time slot, 6:00 to 9:00 on a Wednesday night. But I just couldn't understand why I needed to take that class. . . . I just thought that class was a waste of time.

Application of the material was important to Participant 2. He did not mind courses that were difficult. He found that student gossip about a course was often worse than the reality.

I came in my freshman year hearing horror stories of a certain professor. Just [people] saying, "Golly, I tell you what, you better be ready for this class." And you get in there and it's nothing like what you hear. You hear, "He's going to kill you." or "She's going to kill you." With just x amount of work. And you get in there and it is true, it might be a lot of work but the professor makes it easier. I haven't had too many -- most of my terrible professors that I have had, none of them have been in the College of Ag. Maybe I'm just lucky that way. But I can tell you, I had a couple of [introductory courses] and those are nasty.

Achieving a balance between the social and academic parts of college life would help many students success in college. Participant 2 thought that developing this balance had to come from the individual student. He thought that a certain degree of determination was required to graduate.

. . .The few that I know, that was their problem. They couldn't differentiate between the life-style and what you need to take, and what you need to do to do well in school. And you have to be able to balance that.

He continued on this topic.

[Separate] your school work from your away-from-school life. You have to be able to balance that. Some people just aren't cut out for college. They may come in saying, "Well, I'm going to give it a try." But the ones that are saying, "I'm going to try," they may not be the same ones that are graduating. Some of those people might be coming in saying, "I'll give it a try," and they like it. I would hope that you would have more of those than you would the people that come in and try, and end up quitting. But you never can tell.

He also thought it was important for students to select reasonable course loads and to attend class regularly. Participant 2 felt that being responsible for class attendance required some adjustment during the first semester a student was enrolled..

Go to class I'd tell them to go to class. That's always important. Definitely. I know, my first semester and a half, it took a little bit of adjustment. It's not like it was when you were younger, when you had to go to class. You start realizing, well, I have to put in something if I want to get something back in return. And you realize that those two things are related. As much effort as you put in, that's what you're going to get out of it. The earlier you understand that, the better off you'll be for your how ever many years of college. . . . Don't bog yourself down either. You have to find that middle ground between the amount of school work

and the amount of free time that you have as well. It's important to not just be a book worm 24 hours a day.

Despite the importance of attending classes and time management, Participant 2 did not feel that it was the responsibility of the College to promote these behaviors. He thought that developing these qualities was part of growing up and had to be accomplished through a recognized need brought on by personal experience. College was a valuable experience because it helped him mature.

I think that's just the way people are. I think, you know, you can tell somebody but until they actually experience it--- you can preach to them at student orientation, or whatever that you go to. And, actually, they do. They do tell you about that stuff. But until you actually get your feet wet, you're not going to truly understand what's going on. I think that's part of growing up. That's why you're in college. It's not just the books and everything, but you've got to grow up and you've got to find yourself as a person too. I think it works. It works.

Like Participant 1, Participant 2 felt that academic counseling was important at the beginning of a degree program. He thought that students would make more use of counselors if there were more counselors available. Participant 2 mentioned advising in more detail than Participant 1; he appeared to feel that there was a need for more academic advising as a junior division student than Participant 1.

Especially during the beginning, when I first got here, it kind of seemed like -- they said, "Well, there's academic counselors available." But I don't know, I never found them available. Maybe that's what it was.

He recalled that the catalogue had been overwhelming to him as a freshman. He believed that it would be helpful to have someone go over the degree program during the first term simply to explain how to read it.

It was basically, I sat there looking at my catalogue going, "Golly." . . . And maybe you should show them how that degree audit works.

He continued on this topic.

In your preliminary term, your first year, sit them down. Because I didn't have anybody do that. When I first looked at it I was [lost]. It's not hard by any means, but just looking at a bunch of little numbers and class abbreviations, for the first time, that's a little confusing. Once you know what's going on it's a breeze. But other than that, I didn't have any problems.

He found the advising with the College of Agriculture to be more available than in junior division.

That was really before I got to the College of Ag. That was more in the junior division aspect of it, where I was like, "Well, should I take this class or this class?" But I found once that I got into my major, that it all smoothed itself out. Maybe like [Participant 1] said, maybe before you get into your major you might need it. And not just, like, "It's available. Come on in," but more like call you up, or set some appointments. And not just one. Maybe a follow-up to kind of see how it's going. But that wasn't so much -- at least not in my instance, in my own college, it was more readily available.

Participant 2 was very pleased with his experience as a student in the College of Agriculture. He thought there was very little room for improvement.

I think the it [the College of Agriculture] is definitely on the right track. I think when something's on the right track, you just try to do the little things. I think once you're in the right direction, it's the little things that count more than some drastic step. I don't think that it needs to do 180° turn by any means. I think, the College of Ag, it's got the qualified instructors. It's got it there. It's got the different programs. You know, it's got just a lot of different aspects there going in the right direction. I don't know what the little things are, that's got to be worked out with each section. You know, how to improve our curriculum, or how to cater to the students, or whatever. But when it gets to how it is now, and I've been pleased. I've been very pleased with the College of Agriculture. It's just going to take some minor things to improve it. I really can't say what.

He continued on this topic.

It's kind of like an Olympic athlete. When you get to that level, it's not the big things that are going to matter, it's doing something real small that's going to bring you that much forward. It's that one little extra thing that you do that's going to show that you're better than all the rest. It's something real small that you might not even be able to measure it. I don't know what that is. But it's just that one little thing.

Summary of the Paired Interview

Although paired interviews have been noted in the literature as a less than desirable event, a description of the faults in this arrangement was not located by this researcher and appeared not to have been described in the literature. As illustrated by the summaries, the primary fault appears to be that one interviewee may overly influence the comments of the second participant. In this case, Participant 2 was the more introverted participant and he was often content to let Participant 1 express his ideas and then simply agree with Participant 1's statements. The resulting interview is in effect an interview with Participant 1 with commentary by Participant 2. Although this limited the quantity of ideas generated in this interview, it also gave emphasis to those comments in which Participant 2 disagreed with Participant 2. Since he tended to agree with Participant 1, it may be that when he disagreed with Participant 1, these were topics that were more important to him.

An example was the discussion of faculty diversity. Participant 1 felt that it was important to bring in younger faculty to generate new ideas within the college. Participant 2, in a rare disagreement, felt that the ability to generate new ideas was not limited to younger faculty members. He then described how older faculty members enriched his college experience. It was important to Participant 2 that the diversity be clearly identified as the important issue, not faculty age. Although in this study, this interview was unplanned and flawed, paired interviews that are designed into a study may be useful to examine how strongly participants feel about an issue. Paired interviews may be a method that merits future methods research.

Both participants highly valued the personal relationships that they had formed during their enrollment in the College. Participant 1 had joined student organizations to foster these relationships. Participant 2 found such organizations unnecessary because he was in a small department and he chose to attend College-wide activities. Both individuals used personal interactions as information sources to plan their semesters. Participant 2 was more interested in formal counseling than Participant 1

The warmth of personal interactions with the faculty affected how these participants felt about the faculty as teachers. Good personal relationships made these individuals more comfortable asking questions and seeking out faculty during office hours. Participant 1 placed more value on faculty research ability than Participant 2. Participant 1 saw the research activities of the faculty as evidence of the quality of the university. He also considered the diversity of geographic background among the student body an indication of academic quality. Both individuals were impressed with the knowledge of the faculty.

In summary these two individuals had been involved in College of Agriculture activities and knew the faculty in their departments as individuals. These relationships gave them a positive impression of the College and they were both very pleased with their experience as students in the College.

Interview 10

Interview 10 selected L.S.U. because of an interest in athletics. He was recruited by the university and he made his college choice based on how flexible he thought the university would be. Secondary considerations were the location of the university and

the influence of his peers. Flexible for this participant meant that he would be able to work his academic schedule around his athletic schedule.

It's mainly developed around [athletics]. I'd wanted to go to the [a different university]. I could have worked on their [team]. L.S.U. seemed better. . . they recruited me. I had a couple of offers from other schools in the state but I pretty much knew L.S.U. was probably the best. It wasn't exactly the college I wanted to go into as far as school's concerned, so I just knew that L.S.U. probably offered me a lot of better choices than any other schools in the state as far as being flexible. Especially if I was planning on going in Agriculture, it would probably be the best place to go. So that's why I decided to stay here.

Outside of the athletics, he did not come to college with any preconceived ideas about his possible career path. When asked why he came to college he simply stated "To graduate". Agriculture was appealing because he thought it would allow him to work outdoors.

I really wasn't sure. I kind of liked [a liberal arts field]. It was probably one of my stronger subjects in high school. But I really didn't know where I'd go with [it] once I graduated. I guess about all you could do with [that subject] is teach. I didn't know really what I was going to do. I'd just kind of got into something then somebody mentioned something about Agriculture. It was kind of developing into a good area to go into and I'd always been into the outdoors. I thought it would be kind of neat to try. I just went out on a whim, just went into that. It turned out to be [ok]. I stayed in it.

Agriculture was also appealing because he thought there would be good job opportunities in his field. He chose between two fields, selecting the one that he thought would give him the highest pay upon graduation.

There's more money in [specific agricultural major] than there would probably be if I decided to go into [second specific agricultural major]. I enjoy [my major] probably equally as well, if not more. . . I liked the idea of [my major field]. It's just something new.

Like the other traditional males interviewed in this study, he found it difficult to adjust to the responsibilities of college. Although he was classified as a senior, he had numerous courses left to take in his major field.

I really still have yet to get in my [agricultural courses] real heavy. . . .But I guess it's about what I expected. When I first got here my the first year, the grades were bad. Then it picked up again. . . . It took me a about a year and a half to get all my priorities straight I guess. Learn how to manage my time. It's been a lot better since then. .

He continued on this topic.

At that time, it wasn't my top priority was worrying about grades and how they were going to affect me later. . . . I just think back at how little I studied, and how hard I study now. Some of the classes I took back then, it's ridiculous to think of the grades I got.

He enjoyed classes that he thought were easy. He did not appear to be very interested in his coursework.

All of them that I got A's in were probably my favorite ones. . . [specific course names] just a few of easy ones. I enjoyed my first [agricultural courses, specific course] is very interesting. There are a few classes in there, the easy class you take just for A's that weren't necessarily interesting but it helps the G.P.A. . I'm trying to think if I had any class that I really enjoyed. Where I looked forward to going to this class every day. I can't really -- It's tough to do.

Interview 10 assessed teachers based on the grade he received in course. He found that peer study groups were helpful and he appreciated the opportunities to earn extra points.

I had a good teacher for my [specific introductory class]. I don't think he's teaching here anymore but I had to drop [it] about halfway through the first time I took it. I wasn't doing great in it but I just didn't have time to put any kind of effort into it. I picked it up again under him, and it turned out that he was a good teacher. It was just the way he organized the class, it was real, really helpful. I got an A in that class. I never thought I'd get an A in [that subject]. I actually learned something, so I would have to say he was probably one of my better teachers.

He continued describing this class. He also appreciated this instructor's willingness to help students outside of class.

First of all, when you got in the class the first day, you got into little groups of three or four people, and you stayed with that group through the whole semester. He'd hand out homework every once a week or so and you'd all four get together

and work on the homework, which was pretty helpful. He always encouraged you to go to his office and ask questions, or go see him, if you had some problems. He just explained in a way that was pretty understandable. The tests were not difficult but still enough to where he tested your knowledge in the subject in a good way. Just a good class. Lots of opportunities for points and for help.

The least favorite experience for this participant was failing a course. He believed that one reason he had difficulty in that course was that the teacher did not speak English well. He also admitted that he had not given his best effort in that course.

[A poor classes is] when your teacher doesn't speak English well. I had taken a class, and this was back when first started out. I really didn't have any patience to try to understand in the first place. I would have given a little bit more effort and it might not have been so bad. But the teacher, I guess he wasn't that bad, [the subject] really wasn't a strong point for me. I had a T.A. that wasn't necessarily the best at speaking English. I didn't really put in a good effort, so I really couldn't blame it on the teacher all that much. . . . I didn't like that class too much. . . . I think that was the only class I ever failed here.

Interview 10 reflected that in many courses he could have done better if he had studied harder. In some introductory courses he believed that academic success depended on who was the instructor. He believed that the difficulty of a course varied depending on who taught that course.

In first semesters, I really can't blame anybody for my not doing real well except myself. I really don't have too many classes I look back [on that] if I decided to really try hard I didn't do well in. Then again, it's the luck of the draw.

Actually, in [introductory] classes I had, I got aggravated in some [of those] classes, a lot of them. It's just the luck of the draw in those classes, as far as the teacher you get. A lot of them, you go in there, and you can just about write anything on a piece of paper that's halfway decent and they'll give you at least a B. A good grade and it's not really that much work. I had some [introductory] teachers [for whom], I just worked and I worked, and wrote papers, revised them time and again. I wrote some of the best papers I thought I'd ever written and come up with a C or something like that. I'd think, "Was that good?", and read some of my friends' papers and they got the A's and it'd just make me sick to my stomach. Like I said, it's just the luck of the draw with some of those teachers.

Interview 10 was interested in the effect teaching assistants had on the quality of a course. He had chosen this topic for a term paper and had informally surveyed his classmates. He compared his situation to that of the students he had talked with.

I had done a research paper for one of my classes about T.A.'s at L.S.U., and I had surveyed students about what they thought about their T.A.'s. If they could understand them, or if they thought they could have done better in another class where they didn't have a T.A. I really hadn't had any bad, truly bad experiences but I learned that a lot of them did, a lot of stories especially about some of my

friends in [specific subject courses]. I really hadn't had any really bad experiences that I can recall.

Interview 10 believed that departmental clubs were helpful for individuals not from the Baton Rouge area. He did not participate in student organizations because he was active in athletic organizations that helped him meet other students.

It's tough. . . . I could make a lot of friends by doing [athletics]. And meeting new people really wasn't that big of a problem for me, but for someone else coming in, one of the toughest things would be just to meet people and get adjusted to school and make friends. I'd set up an opportunity so they could have some kind of clubs like they do now, where you could go out and meet people that you can identify with, [who are] similar to you in some ways.

His time was limited and he regretted that he had not been more active in his departmental student organizations.

I regret that I wasn't able to join a few clubs, or do some things with [my department]. I regret that I didn't get to get into some of that because of my time with [athletics].

Interview 10 had maintained the friendships that he had developed in high school. He empathized with students who came to college with no social ties.

. . . I've been in Baton Rouge all my life, and when I started out in kindergarten, I had the same friends all the way through eighth grade. And a lot of the same friends I had in eighth grade went with me to the same high school. From high school a lot of friends I had came to L.S.U.. I always had [around me] people I

knew. So it really wasn't that big of a deal for me. I know people coming in from all different parts of the country and I can identify with them getting here and not knowing anybody. Just getting here, just out of nowhere and not knowing anyone when they got here. I've never been in that situation but I could just imagine how it would be. . . .

This participant felt that clubs may be helpful but that students could develop a social circle without a formal organization. He described how he developed his social circle. For Interview 10 his social life appeared to be unrelated to his academic life.

Just growing up, doing the typical college thing. Growing up, socializing on the weekends or during the week, whatever. Go out. You meet new people that way. Have a good time. Football games on Saturdays and all other sporting events that are there, whatever, things like that. Get involved.

He returned this topic later in his interview. Social activities helped him find a place at L.S.U. At first the university seemed very large to him. He found that having social connections made it a less scary place.

Do not be intimidated because it's such a big place. Once you make an effort to go out and get involved with whatever it is you're interested in. You make some kind of effort to meet people and do social things. That it's not that bad. It's such a big place, it was intimidating for me my first year. My first semester, at least. Like I said, I already knew a lot of people but it was still intimidating cause it's a big place, I didn't know where all the buildings were and it's kind of scary at first. . . . You can't just go to class and then go sit up in the dorm room all

afternoon and all night, and then just go to bed . Anything would be boring and scary. That's why, at least, you have got to go out and make an effort to find groups of people that are similar to you. There's something for everybody. If you don't, then it's your own fault.

After Interview 10 adjusted to campus life he developed an appreciation of the diversity on campus. He enjoyed meeting people from different cultures.

It's a good place to come. It's a good atmosphere. Tell all the guys that there's a lot of pretty girls running around. There is something here for everybody, no matter what your interests are. There's got to be something here for you. There is so much cultural diversity and just all kind of different kind of people here. You have to be able to fit in with somebody. It's just a fun place to be.

One reason this participant found social interactions to be so valuable was that he considered his classmates to be a good source of scheduling information. Peers would recommend which teacher to take for a course and how difficult that course was.

Try and make friends in your classes. There are a lot of people, not so much starting out in your general classes, but later on, you'll start seeing all the same people in your classes and they'll be in your field. And it's important to make some friends in your classes because lots of times, they'll have ideas on classes. If they're in the same field that you're in, and you're scheduling classes, you can say, 'Have you taken this class?', or 'What teacher is good?' And they can tell you, 'Oh, don't take that class.' Or they can say, 'Yeah, this is an easy class.'

Schedule this class. This teacher is easier.' It's important to make friends in your classes. I think it's important. Very important thing to do.

Easy courses were easy according to Interview 10 because some teachers make the material easy by the exam format they use. He believed that the difficulty of the course had little to do with the difficulty of the material.

A lot of times, it's not so much the material, it's just the way the teachers test. If it's real straightforward, easy, multiple choice. A lot of them say, like, "What walks on four legs?" You know, your choice would be: a) a cat, and b) a chicken, c) an eagle. Just some stupid questions and it's just obvious. Some of them will have things that could be in-between where you're really not sure. A lot of the way teachers test, it's really cut and dry answers. And then there's a lot of them that's kind of, well, it could be this, and kind of looks like it could be this, too, or whatever. It just depends on the way the teacher tests, I think, has a lot to do with it. Cause a lot of the material can be real hard. It could be hard material but if the teacher can test it to where it's a piece of cake. Sometimes, a teacher can have a lot of easy material and they can confuse you just by the way they ask the questions.

Interview 10 preferred instructors who used a variety of formats on exams. He thought that mixed format exams were more fair than single format exams.

A lot of times the format helps. If it's not 50 multiple choice questions.

Depending on the material, I'd rather have about 20 multiple choice, and a few matching, and a few fill-in-the-blanks. Kind of mix it up in case you're not good

at multiple choice. If you know the answers to questions and multiple choice fools you in some ways, you can just fill in the blanks with whatever you know. That way it is just cut and dry.

Interview 10 never doubted that attending college was appropriate for him. His parents expected him to attend and most of his peers were planning to attend college.

But just what everybody else was doing. I expected that I would be going to college in high school. . . . it was just understood that I'd be going to college. My parents had been saving up for me to go to college, so it was pretty much understood. I really never had any ideas about not going to college and the athletics was part of it. If I wasn't doing [athletics], I'd still be going to college. . . . But then, again, there were a few times where school was the biggest pain. . . . If I wasn't doing [athletics] I probably would have sat out a semester and worked or made some money. Maybe that aspect of it might have, I think, kept me in school a couple of times but not as far as getting here.

He never considered dropping out of college because the courses were not important to him. Attending college for this individual was the path of less resistance. He had only a vague idea of what he might do once he completed his degree.

I really can't say that I really had any doubts. My first two years just to have a major was an accomplishment in itself. I was taking class and I was heading for a certain goal, it didn't really matter as far as I was concerned about what I was taking or how I was doing. I was just doing it. I just kind of laid back. The last thing I had on my mind was worrying about it getting me. The kind of loot I

might be making later. I really never had any doubts about it. That's probably because I never cared too much about it. But it's never been to a point where in this major there's something else I'd really like to be doing instead of this. I like athletics, and I get a kick out of coaching others, and I don't know, I just like seeing other people do better. Coaching younger kids, encouraging them. . . . I mean, if I wasn't in agriculture, or whatever I'm in now, I'd like to maybe teaching, or coaching. Just something. I don't know. Kind of coaching or teaching, I guess. But I never really had any serious doubts, or serious ideas of changing my major.

This individual never seriously considered quitting school because of his interest in athletics. He stated that it was this commitment that kept him in school.

For at least the first two or three years, it was the fact that I was bound because I was on a scholarship and you couldn't quit. I had [athletic] goals. I didn't really have any academic goals at the time. That's the only reason I was in school, kept me going to school for that first three years. I probably would have taken a semester or two off, maybe just worked until I really got my act together or figured out what I exactly was doing here. So [athletics] was probably the only thing that kept me going for a while. But now that graduation is in the foreseeable future, it kind of took over, it is my goal now. I'm going to graduate and my grades are on the upswing and I'm finally starting to realize that it's not good to waste all the money your parents spent so much time saving over the years. . . . I was going to get the best out of it.

Goals were important to participant but he appeared to think of goals in short time frames. His own goals were to graduate and he believed that having such a narrow and specific goal made it more likely that he would achieve it.

They need to set some kind of goals. That they have a certain G.P.A. they want to reach. That they graduate in a certain amount of years. If they want to graduate with honors. Be in as many clubs as they want to be, or just that they have some kind of goals that they're constantly trying to achieve. You're just going through the motions so to speak, every day, going to class. Trying to just take your notes and take your tests, and just going through the motions, then they're not going to be pushing themselves to better themselves. It's just like I said, my main goal is the fact that I started out in the hole. Now my goal is to climb out of the hole and get my G.P.A. up to something respectable when I graduate. And that 3.0 is kind of an important thing as far as a lot of things. Things like, what kind of job you're going to get, or if you go to graduate school. . . There's a lot of stuff that evolves around that. It's kind of a magic number, so that's my goal. Or close to it. Basically, just to get better each semester.

Earning good grades had become an important personal goal for this participant.

Getting my G.P.A. over a 3. maybe be a good goal seeing as how I started out not really [at] that goal. . . .If I can, then I think I would have accomplished something.

Interview 10 did not have strong opinions about the classes that he had taken.

He enjoyed courses that had a variety of presentation methods. Courses where he could

see an application for the material were more interesting to him than courses based on material for which he could find no applications.

The routine of just going to class and then lecturing for an hour every -- three days a week, or whatever, just it gets old and boring after a while. It's just nice to do something different every now and then. Maybe just take a day off from notes and show some slides, or show a movie or something that's related to the material you're covering. Or just something for a change of pace, to get out of the same old routine. . . . Some of the [laboratories] for classes are actually okay. Some of them are more work than the class itself, and a lot of the work really doesn't seem like it relates to anything. It's just really tedious stuff that's not that important. Some of it's actually enjoyable and you can see where it relates to what you're doing.

Interview 10 later repeated the importance of the application of the material in less detail.

Just that it's related to what you're studying, to what you're spending all your money to go to school for. That you can see where it's going to be helpful later down the line, after you've graduated, in what you hope to be doing later

For this participant, a good instructor related his subject to real world applications. He thought that a good instructor was someone who could communicate on a student level. As might be expected given that Interview 10 did not have strong feelings about his coursework, he described the concept "good teacher" in very general terms.

I guess it's important they can speak English and that if you go and ask them a question, they can give you an answer that makes some kind of sense instead of just some stuff that just goes way over your head. A teacher might be the smartest person in the world but if they can't get down on your level and explain in terms that you understand, then they're not a good teacher. It doesn't matter how smart they are. I guess it's important that the teacher can just drop down to your level and explain things so you can understand instead of just talking like they're talking with a colleague [so that] you have no clue what's going on. Whenever they teach, they don't just stand up there and just read off the page. They encourage questions or talk about how this relates to something in real world or something, instead of just reading off a page -- just reading notes off a page for you to take them down. They can go off and explain how it relates to something that's happening in the world today.

This participant also found faculty involvement in a variety of research projects beneficial to him as an undergraduate. He was able to use the faculty as a resource in addition to the library resources.

I think there's all kinds of different ways you can find information around here. You go to the library, you can find a lot on the Internet, you can use the computers. Being a research facility all kinds of people are out here are just working on all kinds of research. I had to do a project this semester and half that information I got was just from people who did the research, or just who have

the connections. L.S.U. is a research university. The faculty has all kind of resources themselves.

Interview 10 wished that he had better time management skills and study skills when he began his college degree. He found it helpful to schedule time for social activities as well as academic activities.

No matter how hard it is, at the beginning they have to show some self-discipline and learn some kind of time management skills, cause if you start getting into anything besides school, the time just really starts to creep up on you, as far as studying and doing things you'd like to do. You have to be able to manage your time so you can go to school, so you can do your job and still have time to relax and do things that you have fun with so you don't go crazy. The thing that kept me going is just being able to set up my week, so to speak, and just say, "Okay. I have tests. This is when I'm going to have to study. This is when I have practice. And then Saturday, or Friday afternoon, this is when I'm going fishing.... I've got to go out Saturday and have a few drinks or something." Just socialize. You just got to show self-discipline and know your limits. Know when you have time to do certain things and when you have time to have fun. . . . Try and take your studies kind of seriously and don't slack off your first year or two because once those grades start low, it's tough to get them back up. It takes a lot of semesters of good grades to get them back up.

He continued his comments on this topic. He developed his time management skills through his involvement in athletics.

You have a certain set schedule of things you know you're going to have to do this time of the day every afternoon, or, this is what you have to do every Saturday morning. That's a given. That's a given time space. You do not do anything except for [athletics] during that time. And then you get home, and I might watch T.V. for an hour or so, then 8:00 to 10:00 or 11:00 I'm studying, no matter what. It just depends on what I have coming up. If I know I have a test coming up, a big test, then I know I'm going to have to start at least four days in advance or more than that. Start reading the chapters and study all the other [material]. If I know I have more than that to do, then maybe I'll have to knock off an hour from my T.V. watching just to compensate for it. Occasionally, I'll have to skip a practice or skip a class earlier in the day because I have a test later in the day.

Established deadlines were helpful for this individual because they prevented procrastinating. Even though he valued set deadlines he still wanted an option of negotiating a deadline if he had an unusual and unavoidable situation. Like other participants in the study, he defined "flexible" as willing to move deadlines.

It's important to have set limits so you don't procrastinate and then wait until the last minute and then really mess yourself up. If the teacher's flexible and they keep putting it back, you're just going to keep putting back when you're going to start on it. It's important that they put a set date. But that they're flexible to the point where that's where it needs to be done, but if things aren't working out then they'll put it back a couple of days. Most important is that you have a set date

and that's it. No exceptions. And stuff like that. It's important to have real good flexibility because there's all kind of stuff going on that you have no control over a lot of times. But if you procrastinate and do not start when you should, and you have plenty of time to [finish], then it's important that they keep those set limits.

He continued on this topic.

It helps you manage your time. It's some kind of structure as opposed to if they keep putting it back, you're just going to keep putting it back, and goof off. If you know you have something to do right then, then you know when you've got to start it. You know you're going to do it.

Interview 10 mentioned a few other topics briefly. He lamented the scarcity of women students in his major field. He appreciated the oak trees on campus. Although he had not been enthusiastic about coming to L.S.U., he had come to appreciate this university.

I really hadn't had any bad experiences at L.S.U. . . . I love L.S.U. . . . The reason I came here wasn't because I loved L.S.U. . . . I went here because it was down the street from my house, and because they had a good [athletic] program, and they offered me scholarship. It wasn't so much because I loved L.S.U. or because I really wanted to go here or because it was my lifetime dream to come here or anything like that. It was where I wound up. I've just kind of grown to really like it. After I visited a billion other colleges over the past four years and I like L.S.U. . . . I can't think of any of those other places that I visited that I would

pick over L.S.U.. The campus is great.. . . It's just a great place. I can't think of anything I'd want to change.

Interview 11.

Interview 11 began his interview by stating that he hoped that he would never grow up. By this he meant that he never intended to lose his exuberance for life and judging by his interview, it seemed unlikely. This was the most enthusiastic participant in the study. He was pleased to have been asked to participate and provided detailed responses on a wide variety of topics. He had accepted a position in his field and was looking forward to beginning work.

Interview 11 considered majoring in a nonagricultural field until he realized that to study that particular field he would need to leave home to go to college. He selected L.S.U. because he wanted to stay close to his family.

At that point, I realized if I want to get into that, I'm going to have to go away to college. I don't know if I'm ready to do that yet. I had really wanted to go to L.S.U. . . I know they don't have a curriculum for [specific area]. They haven't for a couple of years.

He returned to this topic later.

I chose it mainly because of location. A lot of kids that I went to high school with were coming here.. . . I chose here because I wanted to stay here. I was born and raised in Baton Rouge. Well, actually, just north of Baton Rouge. That's where I spent my whole life so it's home.

He had a job during high school that he enjoyed. This job influenced the selection of his major.

It kind of changed my outlook on life and on what I wanted out of college. And that was how I ended up I got in my freshman year in pre-veterinary curriculum. I wanted to be a vet student. Working there, it just kind of gave me a feeling for the animals. I worked there; I worked at a veterinarian's office real close to my house. So it was all kind of just focusing me into that one thing. So I guess things just kind of began to change from there.

Like many students who begin a pre-veterinarian studies, he had to reconsider his career path. He had come to terms with this disappointment and believed that he was better suited to his current course of study. He had married while he was in school and had become a parent. He believed that graduate work would have been too difficult combined with his family responsibilities.

The things that I wanted to do, the things I thought would be good at the time, I would go in a different direction. Once I get over there, I look back at to where I was going, I would think, "Oh, great. Good thing I didn't." No matter what it's been in. It's just funny how life works out like that. Several things that I've said, "Okay, this is what I want to go for. This is what I want to do." And somehow or another, you get swayed to do something else. Just like with vet school. I didn't get accepted and it ended up I spent the last two years of my college making a family, rather than going into vet school. So I think, "Whew, man." There's no way I could have had a family and vet school at the same time. So

things just kind of just happen, I guess, with a little bit of Divine guidance sometimes.

Although he enjoyed his major field of study, Interview 11 was concerned about potential future income. He was worried that agriculturally related occupations might not be as financially rewarding as some other occupational choices.

. . . But I always heard, that anything in the [specific field]. . . that's where you're going to get your money. A lot of the professors in the [my department] will even agree. It's like if you get a degree in [agriculture], you'd be kind of hard pressed to get a job unless you're running a farm. . . . And the pay isn't really going to be that great. Most of the other kids that I know that are graduating in the same thing, or have graduated in the same thing over the past two years, they start out and they're lucky to get \$26,000 a year. And I mean \$26,000 isn't bad, but if you can get \$30,000, that's better. And believe it or not, I can honestly say I think between the fact that I had the [nonagricultural] minor on my degree, and my work history was what got me the job I've got now.

Interview 11 had some difficult years in college. These difficulties were related to family stresses rather than academic difficulties.

Well, my first two years, I had a real rough time here. My parents went through a divorce. The guy that I worked, he was like my big brother. He had a divorce, within four months' time when my parents divorced. My whole world came crashing down on me in my second semester here; my very first year. There were even worse thoughts went through my head than just quitting school. It

was tough. It was extremely mentally challenging on me to, at some points, just get the intestinal fortitude to get up in the morning, much less even bother with school. There were times when I thought, "Forget this all of this. I'm going to just run off somewhere. Maybe go join the military. College can kiss my ass good-bye. I'm putting all this effort in here, what the heck am I getting?"

For this participant, the first two years in college were also difficult because he found it hard to measure his progress toward a degree. College does not have any intermediate milestones according to Interview 11. He found his first two years to be an isolating experience. He continued his description of these years.

Early on, it's easy to fall into that trap because you're taking these classes, and you're getting these grades, and, like, for what? For what? You can't see down the road like you can in high school. Because in high school, everything's laid out. All the freshmen together; all the sophomores together; and the juniors and seniors. And you progress up the ladder. Here, you're just kind of in this swimming pool, and you just swim around, you mingle, and you can see the other end of the pool down there and you know that's where everybody's ending up, but it's not really a clear path like there was in high school. Everything was so structured. You know, everything was laid out for you. Here, you're given the catalogue. "Okay, pick your classes." Damn. What the hell do I want to take. And in high school, it was always the case, you've got seven classes to take in one day. You got to school at one point and you always left at the same day. Here, you're on a much looser schedule and it's so easy to fall into that trap of

you just blow off the class here or there. You don't want to come today.

"School's just so boring. I don't feel like going sit through another lecture." It's just one thing after the other. And it gets discouraging because it's hard, in your first year, to really see that light at the end of the tunnel. It's so far away. The first time I ever got one of my degree audits, you sit there and they list everything that you've got to take to get that degree. And you're like need so many hours; you need so many hours. Completed, three hours. And it is tough. And then if you've got a lot of other problems in your life -- I mean, it would have been bad enough had I been in high school. . . .I wanted to drop out and have everybody leave me alone. It was so tough to keep focused. Like I said, I'm a busybody and it's hard enough for me [even on] days, when nothing's going wrong for me, to stay focused on what I'm doing. I get so excited. And it was discouraging. Not any one thing particular, but everything massed together. The fact that I felt so lost in this big sea of people, and losing all the people in my life that were really important to me, left you feeling real cold and alone; just sitting there. You feel like you're just going to get so swallowed up, it's not even funny.

This concept that goals in college are not well defined was important to this individual. He returned to this topic again. He believed that if he had not had the support of his mother that he would not have completed his degree.

It wasn't even a road. Like I said, it was more like a big swimming pool. It wasn't like I was traveling down a road, and there was a finish line down there.

It was just like the ocean. It was just this big sea. So, it was tough. It was really tough. But I must say, had it not been for the insight of my momma and her keeping her eye on me, God only knows what would have happened to me. I sure as hell wouldn't be sitting at this table today, and I sure as hell wouldn't be graduating next week.

Interview 11 needed the encouragement of others. He did not like feeling isolated. It made him uncomfortable not have others to help him celebrate his successes.

Being in a place like this is not a good place to be isolated. Because it can leave you so vulnerable and exposed to so many things. You need security in your life and you need to feel accepted, safe, feel like you're accomplishing something, feel like you're doing something. I always felt that in high school. Whether it was the fact that I won last night at [athletics], or I was looking forward to this test for the last two months and I really did good on it, and I shined, and I know I'm going to come through in the end in this class, or whatever. But it makes you feel so ambiguous. There was no definition to it. It was just there.

This individual felt that it was important to have a support group of student peers. He found that the encouragement of others helped him deal with challenging situations.

[You have] got to be self-confident and you've got to have support. College, just like a big job, is not for somebody that is weak at heart, or not ready for a good challenge. These last five years have been the most challenging of my life in so many different aspects it's not even funny. . . You can be book smart to no end,

but if you don't want to accept the challenge to succeed in this or that you wouldn't be here in the first place. But coming into college, you don't necessarily have to be the smartest Joe in the world to succeed real well, and I guess the point I'm trying to get across. But you've got to have your group of people, whether it be your family, your friends, whoever. The people that are going to support you and stand behind you, pat you on the back when you do good. But you need that in anything in life. But I must say that college is no exception.

Interview 11 was very grateful to his mother for the emotional support that she had given him.

I have to give credit to my Mom. The times when the road was real steep, it was real rocky, the seas got real rough, somehow she always managed to just kind of put her hand on your shoulder and just kind of give you that little bit of inspiration, and helped me keep going.

At some point in his college career, Interview 11 decided that college was important to him. Not for the job that he might receive or for the expectations of this mother, although these were influences, but because it mattered to him personally. This participant believed that this was an important event in his personal development. While he found the support of others valuable he did not believe that it would have inspired him all the way through school.

But, somewhere along the line, you have to sit there and think, "I got to do this for me." I can't do it for her. I can't do it for anybody else. Can't do it for the

dog; nobody. You have got to do it for you. And that didn't hit me until probably my fourth here year, believe it or not. The very beginning of the year. It's a shame it took that long, but God only knows how I managed through the first three years, because God knows, I had plenty of reason to quit and just truck on down the road and do something else. But you can't do anything that you don't want to do. If you don't want to do it, you know, it's only a matter of time before you're going to give up and quit. Fortunately, before I got too far, I got it inside of me that I wanted this for me. I needed to finish. I had to get through it, because I knew, somehow, somewhere, if I didn't -- I didn't want to have a job that was going to pay me \$5 an hour for the rest of my life. You know, a little [crummy] job. And it was really something that had to come from within. It was that fight. I had to go rage against the night. What is it the poem says? Everybody out there is trying to eat you up and gobble you up, get ahead of you, just like an Indy car race. You've got to put forth everything out of you that you can give. Nobody's going to get behind you and push you to do it. If you don't want to do it, you're you're not going to succeed. It was just something that clicked inside me. Whether it was the fact that -- I've had -- my little girl's just over a year now. Whether it was the fact I sat back and thought, "Okay, I've got to do this for her," or the fact that I thought, "Okay, if I want a good job, I've got to do this." Or, "Okay, if I want to get somewhere in life and own my own home one day, I've got to do this." Or, "If I want to be happy for myself, I've got to do this." It was a drive from within that just wasn't there in the beginning. And,

granted, it was there my first semester. Boy, you jump in out of high school, you're already fired up to tackle this new challenge and beat it down and, you know, you make whopping good grades and -- but that lasts for maybe two months once you get here and, after that, it fades away. But that's a lot of the hype that everybody builds up at you, "All right, Man, you're going to college. You're going to do this or that." And they're so happy for you and all excited. Then you get here and it's funny how all those people just disappear. You know they're there and they're all still excited for you, but you don't see it anymore. They did all this to pump you up and --it carries you through the first semester, but after that, you're on your own. You're on your own. And there, again, that feeling of isolation. You don't have those people there that you want to be there to cheer you on. Not necessarily to push you down the race but to be on the sideline saying, "Go, go, go." It's discouraging. So, I'm just really fortunate and lucky that I made it this far.

Now that he was within days of graduation, he was able to look back with relief that he was going to graduate.

My first two years of college, I came so close to burning out. I just wanted to throw my hands up in the air and say, "Forget all of this." "Get out of my way. I just want to do something for me." It was tough but I stuck through it and I tell you, everybody tells you, "Don't give up. Don't quit. Stick through it. You'll be so glad when you do." And it's like, "You don't know what you're talking about. You all are full of it. You all don't know what I'm feeling inside. I just want to

get the hell out of this." And now that I look back on it, I think if I had quit, that would have been the biggest disappointment of my life. So, I was glad I stuck with it. Glad, glad, glad. Next Friday will be the payoff.

Formal advising was not considered important by this participant. He preferred to interact with the faculty in informal situations and gather his curriculum information by these means. He made these faculty contacts through his involvement in student organizations.

When I first came, I was in J.D. of course. I've always been independent. I was the stubborn kind, just like my mama and daddy both. Both are on the hardheaded side. Wanting to do things your own way; make your own path. I probably got that more from my daddy though. "You do it on your own, Son. Don't lean on anybody else." So, in my years here, I never had any advising, as far as classes. Granted, I'd ask a professor, "You teach so-and-so, right? Is that a good course? What's it about?" But beyond that, I never had any advising. I can say though that, particularly out of the College of Ag, and the people I've had to deal with through [student organizations] we dealt with the Dean, the Associate Deans. They've been more than helpful. Dr. (name), particularly. He's probably the one person I've had the most doing with out of the College of Agriculture in any way, shape or form. . . . And he's just kind of, I guess, been a mentor. Kind of keep your eye out for you. He sees you, "Hey, how are you doing? How are your classes been?" He's always kind of concerned about how things are going. Whereas, most of the other people will just kind of stay out of

the limelight. I don't get to see the Dean that much. He knows me. And he sees you and, of course it is the same thing, "How are you doing? How have you been?"

He thought the College of Agriculture had uniformly excellent faculty members. I can honestly say that I don't think I've really had any problems with any of the faculty. I knew before I came in here I wanted to sit down and think [about it]. Not really come up with who I thought were good or bad teachers but people that I thought stood out above the rest, as far as whether it be on an academic side, their ability to teach, or whether they were just a good person. And there were plenty.

He continued commenting on this topic. Informal personal interaction with the faculty seemed to influence his opinions of them. One reason he liked faculty was that he knew them as individuals. He characterized them as good people.

But particularly in [my department], it is small enough that they can get to know you. They know who you are. They know everybody in their class by name. Of course, you end up, probably, through a five year period of going through all the curriculum, you end up having that teacher two or three different times. . . . So you get to know everybody and they're good people. . . . Dr. (name) . . . I think she probably impressed me the most at how she was able to work with the graduate students, teach her undergraduate classes, keep up with [student organizations] and then just kind of be a friend, a mentor, to a plethora of students that she had. I don't know how the woman found enough hours in

the day to do everything she had to do. . . . She has made an outstanding impression on me.

Interview 11 enjoyed all his classes that involved laboratory work or field experiences. He described two such classes in great detail and enthusiasm. Unfortunately, the details in these stories would identify his major field of study. A few fragmentary excerpts are offered as examples of this individual's appreciation of hands-on activities.

It was a [specific agricultural course] . . . It was a lecture and lab-type thing. We didn't do much in the lecture but you actually ran [laboratory] And we did everything . . . And I enjoyed the hell out of that. But I enjoyed a lot of my other classes, the ones that we had labs in. I don't mean like a lab where you're sitting there. [Laboratories] where you do the experiments.

. . . One of the other classes I really liked a lot, was [specific course]. . . that was neat because we actually got to [work through a] whole process, everything. . . That was a cool class. I enjoyed that. I really thought that was neat. We really got a hands-on experience. . .

Not all of his experiences had been positive ones. He had failed a course and this had been a very frustrating experience for him. He described his frustrations with that course and instructor in detail. In his opinion, a good teacher was a person who was effective at presenting the material and who could develop fair tests. Interview 11 appeared to believe that objective tests were more likely to be fair than subjective tests.

Well, not anybody can be a teacher, and some people can teach but they can't effectively evaluate the students' ability to retain and understand the knowledge. Then there are others that can't teach, but they can effectively test. What you need in a teacher is somebody that can teach and test. Say, "Okay. This person has understanding of this" and be fair with them when it comes down to grading. [Specific course] was my worst class I ever took in my entire life. . . . And I think a lot of it had to do with the way the teacher graded us. It was just an hour, three days a week. Just a regular 3-hour course. But I got in there and she gave you so much information. And then when it came time to test you, the entire test was subjective. It was essay. It was, you know, "What's your opinion of this if you're given this situation? What would you do? What is this? Please explain this." Not, "Okay, here's a multiple choice set. Here's fill in the blanks. Here's true/false." None of that. The whole test -- she would give us eight pages of subjective stuff, and I don't know if the woman had a death wish just for me, she didn't like the way I answered the stuff. I failed the hell out of that class the first go-round. And I had never been subjected to anything like that ever before.

Interview 11 believed that courses should become more difficult as the students progress through the curriculum. He believed that all courses at the same level should be about the same level of difficulty and should require similar amounts of work.

College slaps you upside the face and wakes you up. I was almost appalled that I had spent the whole semester in there to come out with what I came out with [considering] as much effort as I put into it. And it's only a 2000 level course.

You get a 2000 level course, they should all pretty much require the same amount of effort, across the board, no matter what subject it's in. If it's a 2000 course, it's a sophomore course, it requires X amount of study time, concentration, ability and effort. You know? Granted, they're going to vary a little bit but one shouldn't be up here and the other down here. And that's the way that class ended up being. I don't know if maybe it was my inability to learn the material or what. But even when I took it the second time, I was sweating all the way to the final. I was just barely going to squeak by with a C, and that's what I did. That was the most unpleasant experience I had had in my life. It was torture was what it was. It was torture. And I hated that woman. I still hate that woman to this day.

Interview 11 continued to describe this course. He disliked the course because he thought that the test were too difficult. There did not appear to be any other criticisms of this instructor. He found no faults with her lecture methods or competence. Fairness was the major issue for Interview 11 in respect to this course.

She lectured, just like anybody else would lecture. She was prepared for class; she could answer any question you could ask her. It was not like she was stupid. It wasn't like she wasn't trying. She was a great teacher. But when it came time for her to give us that test, you sit down with seven or eight pages, knowing you better write a dissertation in one hour's time. It just blew me away. . . . I want to say there were three tests and a final. The first two tests she gave during the semester, she gave the third test and the final on the day of the final. That way

you were able to have 400 points. No homework, no quizzes, no nothing else. I think she gave maybe five or ten bonus points the whole semester. Not enough to make a squeak bit of difference. But it was horrid. I had never struggled so hard in my life, only to come out with an F. I mean, there have been other classes; that were tough. But at least I was able to struggle through it, buckle down, work real hard and I came out with a C in the end. But I did the same thing here. In fact, I probably even tried even harder because going into it, I only had half my points. . . . I got my first test back and I really tried hard on the second. I got an F on it too. So even as discouraged as I was, I still tried my ass off to pull it out. It just didn't work. I'll never forget that. It's just one memory I want to erase.

Other instructors that Interview 11 had milder feeling about were individuals who prepared what he considered to be fair exams but who were not effective lecturers. He found such classes to be unpleasant but not unbearable. For this individual, fairness appeared to be a more important quality in an instructor than speaking skills.

Part of it is the way he is. He's a slow guy. He's probably one of the nicest people I know, as far as dealing with him as a person. But you get him in the classroom, and something it would take one teacher one minute to get across to the students, it takes him five. And it's the same way out in the [laboratory]. He has a tendency to ramble. And somebody that's high-strung like me gets bored very easily. Those are the kind of classes I can't stand. His class is not all that bad. His [subject] is not the greatest in the world because [the subject] is a

boring topic to begin with, no matter who teaches it. . . .I've gotten A's out of both of his classes but they weren't necessarily as fun as another teacher's class because you'd get caught up in the boredom of him talking so slow, and taking so long to get his point across, that it takes a little bit of fun out of it. But it was still an overall enjoyable class.

Interview 11 echoed the comments of other participants in this study and described college as a game. The game of college for this participant was to figure out what the teacher expected on the test. The tests were seen as obstacles. In some cases, Interview 11 thought that gamesmanship interfered with learning. A good player could make excellent grades and understand very little of the material.

One other thing though that I would add in there, it took me seven semesters to catch onto the game. College is a game. It's not like high school, where they give you this much information and on the test, they ask for this much information. You spit out what you've learned. OK. Here, it's different. It's a mind game. Just because somebody says something, somebody shows you something, just because you do something in class, doesn't mean that that's what you need to know to make an A. Somebody can teach you how to write, how to give a speech, how to learn a subject, how to memorize information, but if the way you give it back to them isn't the way they want it, you're not going to get the A out of that class. Or, you know, if what they're looking for is not exactly what you know, you know, you're not going to get through it. It's a game. It's all about you being able to outsmart and outwit your competitor in one way or

another. And the competitor is not necessarily your students; it's not necessarily the teacher; it's not always the test. But a lot of times it is the test. I must confess, in a lot of my classes, I ended the semester with an A in the class but I didn't learn a damn thing. Not a thing. You know, because it's like, you go through and sometimes people put a lot of emphasis on making the good grades, and you do that. And you learn how to take the tests and you do great in the class but, in the process, you kind of lost the fact that you were there to learn the material. And a lot of that happens -- sometimes the teacher emphasizes that. You know. Boy, they're all stressing on the test. And they don't take so much time to teach you, let you understand what the class is about. They spit you these facts and say, "Learn this, this, this and this, just like this. When I give you the test, spit it on it and I give you an A." That's what they're worried about. And then it gets you worried about it just like that. Yet somewhere in there, I took the class and I didn't learn what it was about. So, it's a game, and it took me three and a half years to learn how to play the game and how to win at it. My first semester -- by the end of my fourth semester, the end of my second year, I had a 2.65 overall G.P.A. Then in my fifth semester, my third year, was when I started catching on and I have not had below a 3.0 since. And I finally -- the end -- now that I've caught on to the game, I'm ready to graduate, I'm going to make a 3.6 this semester and all I can think, "Damn it, if I knew then what I know now." But it's a big game. It's the game of life, most probably, is what you can describe it as. Learning how to play the game.

This individual wished that he had time to explore some of the subjects that he had studied a little more. He implied that the emphasis on completing a course often removed the focus of the course from the subject matter to the grading issues.

I think I spent an ample amount of time. Five years is long enough for a degree. But I must say, even with all the courses I took, I still, sometimes, to some extent, I feel like I took these courses not necessarily so much to learn what the material was about but to learn how to get through the course. And in some instances, I almost feel, not necessarily gypped, but I feel like I wish I would have been able to take that course and go through it and learn the material, and not worry about whether or not I was going to be in the top 8% with the A, or the middle 40% with the C's. Not worrying about that, but worrying about whether I learned what the class was about.

Like several other participants, Interview 11 wished that some of the degree could have been left open for general electives. He thought that there needed to be more opportunity to explore diverse subject areas

So much emphasis is put sometimes on a particular thing. Students aren't given the opportunity to explore other areas. To some extent we are, but, I mean, the college kind of provides for that. You have to take so many humanities, so many sciences. You have to take a certain number of things, just to get through any degree program. I wish now I could have had maybe one more semester to just kind of spread things out. Maybe take a Theater class, an Art class maybe. . Just some fun stuff just for me. I felt like I spent so much of my college time --

"Okay, I 've got to take this one, this one, this one. . . . I have got to concentrate on what they want me to learn," and, granted, that's good. There's a lot of information to be learned in there, but it puts blinders on you. You get a focus and you almost quit looking around for other things to do. . . .Not necessarily cut back on any of the number of required courses, or add to the number of electives I have to take, but encourage students maybe to keep their eyes open. Don't look straight ahead. Look to the left and right too.

Interview 11 had been very active in two student organizations. He spoke extensively about the activities and concerns of these organizations. He described the numerous projects and activities of these organizations. He remained active in these organizations until his first child was born. He remained active in one organization because he had made a commitment to certain projects with that group and wanted to see those projects through. Although his complete comments are too specific to include in their entirety some of his enthusiasm can be illustrated in fragmentary quotes.

But I was in the [specific] club for my first three years here. I was still officially a member the fourth year but I didn't really participate much. My wife had had our little girl and I didn't have the time. I had enough time to devote to one thing and that was [second student organization]. . . We did a lot of service-related things. . . .We made a good service organization. . . . And the faculty advisors, they were all like, whoa, two years ago this was the worst thing they had ever seen and now it was just something so great, there is so much participation, enthusiasm, energy in it. And that was probably one of the best things I could

have ever gotten in. . . . It worked out for the best. . . .And it took a lot of time but it was really worth it. It was fun. It was something I enjoyed.

Interview 11 enjoyed being on campus. Campus appearance was important to him because it made him feel at home. He thought that L.S.U. was a friendly campus. Although he had described college as a game he did not see the professors in his department as obstacles.

It's a nice place. It's really pretty in the spring. I can say that. That stems from the fact that I've grown up here; I've loved what it looks like; I'm used to the heat, other than come the first of the spring when your body's used to the winter and you got to get readjusted right now. The worst time of the year. . . . It's really a pretty place. One of the neat things is, the people here seem to be pretty friendly. . . . But one of the things was that the faculty here impressed me. A lot of them, at least, as far as [my department] I can't speak [about] other colleges because I don't know, but the people here made an effort to be friendly; they wanted to be your friend; they wanted to get to know you; they wanted to kind of bring you in [may be] not necessarily take you under their wing but in some instances they did. They really wanted to make it a point to make sure if you're having a problem or need help with something, if you need advice, we're here for you. "We're not out to get you . We're not out to fail you out," and all this. Some of those professors from the first year, from just your big, generic classes, they seemed like they were, but I'm sure, in their heart, they weren't. But

everybody here is real friendly, and real nice. A lot of people are just easy to get along with.

Other topics mentioned by this participant included, football, the inefficiencies of the student government, and the need for maintenance of some of the older buildings on campus. He also believed that Reggie system was a good registration system. Like several participants in this study, he mentioned that it was difficult to get into some classes. He thought there could be more sections offered of the introductory courses. Interview 11 thought that the tuition was reasonable considering the quality of the education offered by L.S.U.

Finally, this participant summarized his own interview. When asked if he wished to add anything, he reflected back over his experiences at L.S.U. He found his college years to have been an enriching experience.

I'm going to miss this place. That's a true statement. Just being here five years, I've gotten sunk into the routine. It's almost fun now, whereas, two years ago, if you'd a asked me about it, "That's a pain in the ass." You know? "College stinks." Then again, it's because this is my last semester. The finish line is less than 10 feet away now. I've got two more steps and I'm there. I've got one more final. Tomorrow, and I'm done. I'm going to walk into the Assembly Center, and they're going to call my name, and I'm going to be graduated. And even the final I got on Saturday, that's not an obstacle. It's something I'm just going to go through and do. It's not like that grade is depending on whether or not I'm going to graduate. Go through and do it. I'm going to be out of here. I'm going to

miss this place. I made a lot of friends here. I enjoyed a lot of the experiences I had here; all the teachers I got to take. But it's just like with anything that you had fun in. I miss all my high school friends. You know, I still think about them. I don't get to talk to them much. You know, I see a few here. But I'm going to miss this place. I'm going to miss the people I went to classes with; a lot of friends I made. But I must say, this place did prepare me in so many ways that I never fathomed that college was about. I got thrown in here coming out of high school, and it was such a shock in so many ways. Number one, just finding my way from CEBA to Coates. You know? And then having to walk miles every day between the parking lot and Union and CEBA and back to the Quad. All over kingdom come and creation. And I look back on now with good memories, whereas, two years ago, I felt like, "Boy I hate this place, Boy I'm never coming back". My attitude has changed and a lot of it is because where I'm sitting now. I'm sitting on this side of the table, not that side of the table. I'm on the side by the door and I'm ready to walk out. I can have a positive attitude about it, whereas, when you're stuck in the middle, you know, when you're stuck in a rut, you don't think. Just like, if you drive your car off the road and you get stuck in the dirt. When you're trying to get it out, you think, "God, this is the worst situation I could be in the whole day. This is the worst thing that's happening to me. It is so horrible, I'm having such a rough time. Things are going so bad today." And then you get it off the road, you get home that evening, and you stop and you look back at things that happened to you today, "I

learned a lesson from this. I got a good experience from this. I made a friend because this person helped me do this or this today." And then, I accomplished something today, I made it through, and I may be made three or four people smile cause I said something, I did something good. That's where I can sit at now. Things, that while I was in the middle of them, seemed like natural disasters. Things that were so rough on me but now that I look back, it was a growing experience. That's what college was. It was a time for me to grow -- to just kind of expand, broaden my horizons, learn so many things, that when I was a senior in high school I had no idea of what college was about. I figured, you know, it's "big high school" (laughter). That's the way you look at it. Okay. I'm in high school. I'm going to go to "big high school". And it's not. It is not. It's like, you know, how some people believe in purgatory? There's earth, purgatory and heaven. Well, college is purgatory. You're not down here on earth anymore, but you're not into heaven yet. You have got to get your hands and feet wet in the water before you're ready to take the trek. And it has prepared me in so many ways for the trials and tribulations that I think I'm going to have throughout life. Nobody goes through life without trials and tribulations in one form or another, whether it's the death of a loved person, or whether it's -- you know, you get in a car wreck and your spouse gets killed. Just things that are going to happen to me in life. I can take the experience that I had from college in so many different ways, from being with so many people and learning so many things, having to take every knowledgeable thing that I have, every ounce

of me that I have, and use it in so many different ways. Be so flexible and so diverse that I look at it now and it's worth more than \$10 million, to have had the opportunity.

Summary of the Traditional Male Interviews

Interview 10 and Interview 11 were an interesting study of contrasts. Interview 10 had never really selected a major field of study; he had come to college for athletics and had selected a major that he could schedule around this interest. Interview 11 had selected a major field early and had changed major but he had been very involved in the College related activities. Interview 11 seemed to be more interested in the activities related to this major than Interview 10. This impression may have been due to the enthusiasm of Interview 11 for student organizations. Interview 10 had not participated in any departmental or College related organizations.

Both individuals felt that it was important to be a part of a group. Interview 10 chose to associate with a group related to his interests because he believed making friends on such a large campus would be difficult without some type of group contacts. Interview 11 also enjoyed the social contact of the organization in which he was a member. He believed that being a member of a departmental organization helped develop closer interactions with the faculty. This was particularly valuable for the informal advising opportunities that were often part of these interactions.

Interview 10 was not very interested in advising from faculty members. Since his degree was an aside to his college activities, he was interested in locating the easiest

courses and instructors. This allowed him to spend more time on his real interests. He believed that fellow students would be his best source for this type of information.

Interview 11 was an interesting participant because he had married and became a parent during the course of his degree. Although, he had very much enjoyed being active in students organizations and had remained active during his marriage, parenthood caused him to cut back on these activities. The responsibilities of parenthood were mentioned as a concern of other participants in the study, particularly in the nontraditional female group and the nontraditional male group.

The topics discussed by all the traditional male participants are briefly summarized in Table 5.

Table 5.

Traditional Male Students

Questions from the interview guide	Paired Interview	Interview 10	Interview 11
What attracted you to L.S.U.?	-Experience from 4-H in high school -emotional reasons	-Athletics -Parental influence to go to college	-Location -Close to family
What is your opinion of the programs you enrolled in at L.S.U.?	-Strongest agricultural program in the state -Diverse course work -Professors were very knowledgeable	-Flexible, able to schedule around other activities -Potential to make a good income	-Need more advising in junior division -Faculty and deans of the College of Agriculture are very supportive and available -Faculty knew students as individuals

(table continues)

Questions from the interview guide	Paired Interview	Interview 10	Interview 11
Describe the ideal college. How is it different from the program at L.S.U.?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Good teachers -Small classes -A lot of hands-on experience -Pleased with their college of agriculture 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Students are assigned to study groups -Courses are easy -Teachers are available outside of class -Student organizations would be available for those who are interested in them 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -No change in faculty -Better parking during special events -Student government would be reformed
What parts would you do differently?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Require a research or laboratory class for all undergraduates -Require all majors to take a course in agriculture 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -More opportunities for extra points -Grading would be more consistent across courses -More fun activities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Need to schedule more sections of the introductory classes
If you had some doubts what influenced these doubts?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Courses that did not have an application such as humanities electives -Course where the objectives were not clearly defined. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Considered a different career path that might be more closely related to personal interests 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Family crisis -Hard to measure progress toward graduation -Feeling isolated -Time pressures due to family responsibilities
What are some of the doubts that you had?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Is [specific] class useful to me latter in life? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Concern about future income 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Should I be enrolled?
What parts of the program worked well for you?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Personal interaction with the faculty and peers -Student organizations -Student activities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Subject is interesting -Variety of presentation methods -Teachers were able to teach the material on an understandable level 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Student organizations -Peer interactions -Faculty interactions -All applied courses
What are some of the things that helped you to finish when others did not?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Never considered quitting -Went to class -Took responsibility for own degree 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Athletics 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Mother -Birth of child; fear of future regret and future lost income -Expectations for the future -Learned to play the game

(table continues)

Questions from the interview guide	Paired Interview	Interview 10	Interview 11
What do future students need to know about themselves?	-Need to balance their social and academic lives -Need time management skills	-Need self discipline -Time management skills	-Confident -Decide on course for yourself after considering advice of peers
About the program?	-Super faculty -Course offerings are very diverse -Very personal -Plan the courses so that the course load is reasonable -Realize that college is not high school	- A lot of diversity among the student body -Fun place to be -Teachers with rigid deadlines help students avoid procrastination -L.S.U. is a big place, friends are important -Need friends to help select teachers for courses	-Nice place to be -Friendly campus -Faculty really care about individual students -Peer support is important
What would you like the college to know?	-There is a need for more freshman counselors	-Appreciated the campus -Would change nothing	-Would like time to take courses of personal interest -Many good teachers in the college
Is there anything else you would like to mention?	-Important to have new faculty with a different viewpoints -Require other majors take a College of Agriculture class as a recruitment method	-Regret not joining a departmental club - Did not join a club due to lack of time	-Going to miss this place -College helped me grow into an adult -Experience gained in college can be used so many ways

Student Summary

In the study, certain themes appeared at least once in every group. By comparing the comments of all participants in the study on a single theme an ontology can sometimes be described. There were two ontologies that emerged from these interviews and focus groups. The first was the description of “college as a game”. The second was

“college as a partnership”. These world views or ontologies did not appear to be stable. Individuals seemed to move between these ontologies based on the quality of their interaction with the faculty. The more complex ontology was “college as a game”. It is represented in Figure 11.

In “college as a game” the objective is nearly always to graduate. In order to graduate, a student needs information. This information includes subject material but more importantly, it also includes the hidden bits of information that can help smooth the path to completing the degree or course. Examples would be how to choose which instructor to take for a course or how to gain access to laboratories after hours. In this view, the faculty member is seen as an obstacle to gaining this information. Grades are seen as favors to be awarded. Faculty are cast in this role usually because students see them as withholding information or assistance. To succeed the student believes they must find some way to work around the instructor. Students who have adopted this world view describe courses in terms such as “he gave me the grade”, “I showed him, I made an A in spite of him” and “it was a weed-out course”. If the faculty member is the advisor, the student may decide that this individual is too busy or too uninterested in him to care about the student’s interest. The result is that the faculty/student role is perceived by students as a competitive relationship.

This competitive stance is important because it affects future interactions with that faculty member. A student in competition with a faculty member appeared to respond to the faculty in two ways. If he perceived that he was on good terms with the faculty member he may decide that he holds favored status. If he perceived that he was

not on good terms with the faculty, he may consider himself outside the favored group. This group is not a social group; it is category formed by exclusion. A student who identifies himself as not favored considers himself an outsider. He is part of the “others” meaning that he is not a member of an elite group.

Individuals who identify themselves as “others” were more likely to self-advise than to seek the help of an advisor. They recognized that they need access to information and resources but are reluctant to deal with the faculty. Such individuals may decide to seek this information through membership in a student organization. If they are comfortable in the student organization then they have found a cultural fit. If they remain a part of this culture they will have more interactions with the faculty. If these interactions are positive, the student may decide that he is becoming a favorite.

In this ontology, favoritism is important because it leads to tangible benefits. If the student is fortunate enough to become part of a favored group, he is considered to be an elite. For a student, being an “elite” had direct and indirect benefits. It was thought that students who were in the elite group were given better student work assignments and had a better chance at scholarships. Since being part of an elite group created more opportunities for informal interactions with the faculty, such status provided more chances to discuss class material and a chance for informal advising. This was believed in turn to indirectly lead to better grades.

In some cases, because of scholarship award or other reasons, students were only briefly part of an elite group. They would leave such a group because of a poor cultural fit. An example would be an individual who felt uncomfortable because he was the only

individual in the group from an urban or rural background. Individuals who were poor cultural fits usually came to identify themselves as “others”.

Those individuals who considered themselves as “others” sought information related to their degree from sources other than the faculty. They often selected courses based on the advice of their peers. They sought access to equipment or laboratories through contacts with graduate students. They depended on other social groups such as sororities and fraternities for emotional support.

In the second ontology, “college as a partnership” the competitive relationship with the faculty never develops. In this view, there are many possible goals for the student to pursue. These include personal growth, preparation for a career, to redress a regret and many others. This ontology is illustrated in Figure 12.

In this world view the faculty/student role is considered to be supportive. Personal interaction with the faculty developed a sense of student responsibility for his own education or ownership. Such students described their courses as “our class”, “our college” and “we did” meaning that the faculty and students worked together. There is a perception of the open communication between the faculty and the students. If the students find a cultural fit they may choose to join student organizations. This often leads to an increased sense of ownership. If these students do not have a cultural fit, they still view the faculty as supportive. The faculty hold many roles including that of resource, advisor, mentor and role model.

In both of these ontologies the central element is access to information. In college as a partnership this information was obtained through good personal

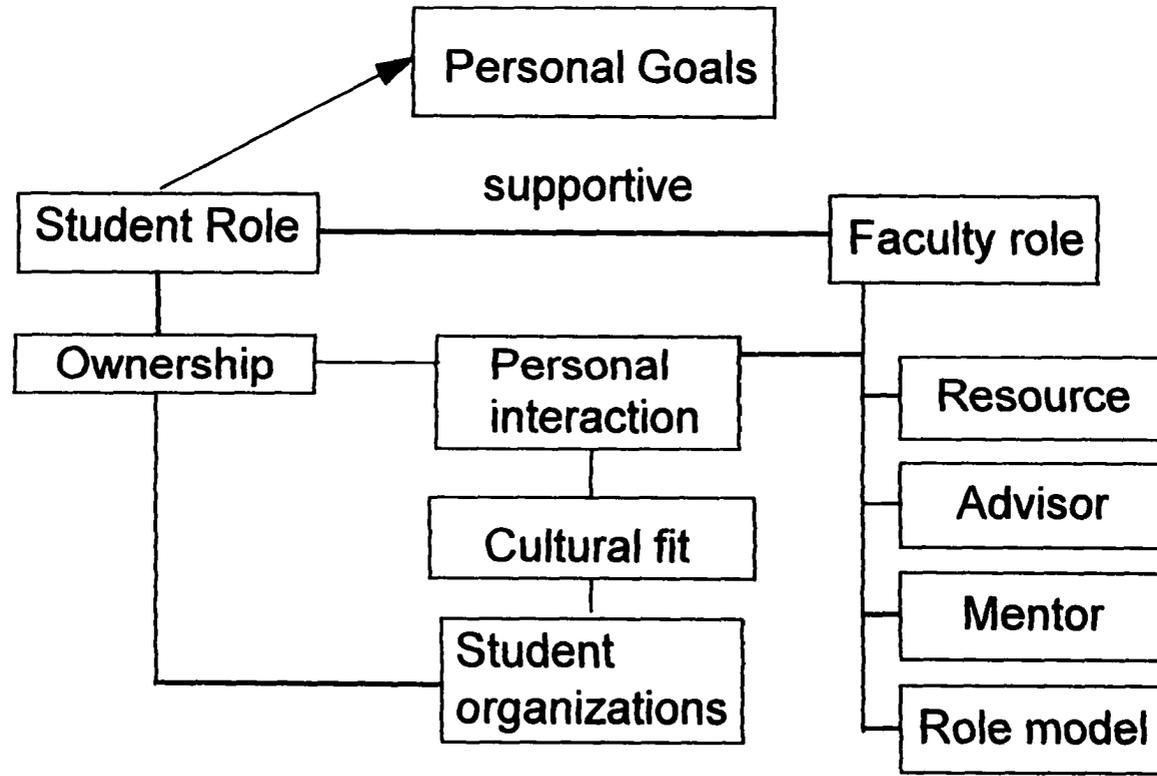


Figure 12. College as a Partnership.

relationships with the faculty. In “college as a game” this information was often obtained through other sources. In both ontologies, personal interaction with the faculty was important because it was believed that such information was needed or helpful in the successful completion of a degree or in the reaching of a goal. Students may enjoy personal interaction with the faculty but it is considered beneficial to them beyond the social interactions. Students believed that positive interactions with the faculty will help them perform better in college because such relationships are an important information source. It follows then, that to avoid the appearance of favoritism, such information should be made available to all students whenever possible.

A good example is the use of old exams as a study guide. Students who are connected to certain groups have access to these exams, others do not. Since students believed that having access to the old exams is a great advantage, by making old exams available, information that was once available to only one group would now be available to all. Such a system would be a small step in removing the concept of favored groups from the college.

The Faculty Study

The profiles of the faculty interviews resembled the results found by Boice (1992). Boice, in a ten-year study of faculty life, found that faculty members approach their research, teaching, and service commitments differently based on where they are in their career ladders. Beginning faculty tend to be very concerned with research issues and tenure review. At mid-career individuals who remain in academia usually selected either teaching or research as their primary focus, in some cases without even realizing

that they have made such a decision. Individuals who are approaching the end of their careers have established their professional reputations and they often increase their service activities and their interest in teaching increases. According to Boice (1992) most faculty progress through these stages. The faculty interviews in this study appeared to match the patterns described by Boice. Faculty attitudes toward undergraduate education appeared to be related to the type of appointment they held and where these individuals were in the academic career ladder.

In order to protect the anonymity of the faculty participants, their comments are summarized by common themes. Faculty members had a wide range of concerns that extended beyond the undergraduate program. In some cases, faculty members held appointments that were primarily research appointments. As might be expected, topics of concern to these individuals were often only marginally related to the undergraduate experience. Such topics were included in the summaries when they were an important part of an individual interview. Although faculty of both genders and of all ranks were included in the study, this information is not included in the summaries. The pronoun "he" was used for all faculty participants regardless of gender.

Work Environment

One theme identified only in the faculty interviews was work environment. The faculty interviewed in the study were comfortable with their work environment and enjoyed their professional relationships with their peers. They were pleased that their work environment was a supportive one. They often described their work environment in terms of the quality of their relationships with their peers.

. . . We don't have back-stabbing, like there is in departments I've been around, or heard about. Everybody cooperates. Everybody has their times when they argue and disagree, but it's really a cooperative atmosphere. I don't know if other departments are as much like this. I've seen some others where half of the department is pitted against the other half, and when somebody goes up for tenure from one group, the other groups vote in block against them. And we don't have that here. It's all very cooperative. . . . It's almost like a small college.

During the student study, several students referred to the College of Agriculture as being like a family. This analogy reappeared in the faculty interviews. Faculty appreciated a supportive environment where their work was recognized and appreciated.

There is very much a family spirit at LSU that works from the top administrators down to the students that I've never seen at any other university I've been associated with, and it's not school spirit, but there's very much a sense of identity at LSU. There's very strong quick recognition for a job well done. That's not always in terms of a pay raise, but it's in terms of letters and a handshake, and administrators and students letting you know you've done a good job. And that's made it a good place for me to work. You know, just some appreciation for what I've done.

One quality that made it a good work environment was when the faculty worked well together. One individual compared his present to his previous experiences.

I'd say it's just relationship with the other faculty members. I've been to several schools, obviously, and it's not uncommon to have very prima donna-type

faculty that are interested primarily in their own fame and fortune, don't work well with other people and everybody's got 10 faculty, and we've got 10 different guys and they're doing 10 different things, and it's not like that here, at least in our section. We work very closely together, and it works out very well because I have kind of a diverse background. I've done a little bit of everything. But we work very well together because of that. And a good meshing of personalities. We don't have personality conflicts, no more than usual I guess, but we work very, very well together. And that, to me, has been great, because I'm not enamored with the politics of being at a university, and we have to deal with that very little. So the most positive thing, I'd say, would just be the general work environment. The people I work with have been almost uniformly excellent. I've had very few problems in 10 years with personality, and that makes it enjoyable.

For some individuals, the departmental relationships were described as less congenial than others. In such cases, these personal interactions were explained as the result of other causes.

They all have a sense of belonging to the faculty, belonging to the department as a unit. They don't always work together as well as they maybe could, but they work the best they can. We have our difficulties just like every other department, and people who knock heads against each other. It used to be smoother than it is now but there's so many more pressures now than there were in previous years. The pressures of research alone. . . The process of tenure has

stiffened compared to what it was years ago. Teaching loads are less but more is expected and there's more outside service, community, grants, supporting yourself through grants, that was not here years ago. But I see more faculty having more stresses and I think that takes time away from them being able to be friendly with all the other faculty.

In some cases, it was expected that working in an academic setting would be competitive. It was considered to be the natural order of academic life. One individual felt that working between the cooperative world of the students and the competitive world of the faculty was difficult.

We have lived in a world where you aim to be a star. And that means getting as much prestige and as much advancement for yourself, and you really don't interact with others that much. And I'm afraid many people in the academic world, and I'm referring by that to the faculty -- that the professors themselves are not really the easiest people in the world to get along with. And so you kind of have this contrast between the faculty and the way their mentality is made up, and they're very individualistic, and they're people who are mostly concerned with themselves, in getting as much prestige and working their way up into the society, the profession, the whole thing. And then you have these agricultural students who are probably going to top out at a B.S. or M.S., and very few of them are going to get into the kind of world that we are in up here, but yet they're much better at getting along together in a working kind of way, and know how to get along with people much better, and to sense what a person can and can't do,

than the professor. And how you bring those two kinds of things together is hard.

Other qualities that affected the quality of the work environment were specific departmental missions which were seen as a strength. One individual described a department that he had admired.

. . . They [faculty at another institution] sat down very early and said, "Okay. What do we want to do? Where do we want to go? What do we want to produce? What types of courses do we want to produce? What types of students do we want to produce?", and had a real direction there. Much of it was due to one person. They had a very unique individual there who was someone whose major interest was [administration]. And so that was a big advantage for them, to be able to take advantage of his area of interest. Most people are not interested in that area, myself included, so I think they had a very organized faculty, they had a good plan, they had some money and they went after it. And that made them a very, very good program. And I think that probably would differentiate most of the good programs from the, I don't want to say poor programs, but just the lesser programs, the diversity and breadth of the faculty and their willingness to develop a quality research and teaching program. Sometimes it comes together; sometimes it doesn't.

Several faculty described what attracted them to their current professions. There seemed to be two general career paths. A few individuals entered academia because they were interested in university work.

I like being with people; helping people. In the research end of my job, I enjoy it because I feel like that's one of the last frontiers we have left that hasn't been fully charted. The pioneer spirit's still in me and as you think about people who settled this country, they got in their little wagons and out west they went. Exploring. We still have some of that in the world such as, the North pole, the South pole, and then outer space. But that's not accessible to me, so this research gives me that avenue. Then to be able to blend the two; bring the research into my class. And that's wonderful

Other individuals were interested in a specific subject. The pursuit of that interest led to a career in academia.

I think that there are probably a great many of us in academia who have just sort of gravitated to it, and I would say that I'm included in those numbers. I started off wanting to go to veterinarian school. I was at [a large university] and they didn't have a vet school. They had an exchange program with [another university], but only 10 people per year were able to go to [that university veterinarian school], and there were 150, approximately, students in my class vying for those 10 spots. There was encouragement to us to consider areas of veterinary practice that wouldn't be considered traditional. Primarily, a large animal practice. And I was a city boy and so didn't have a whole lot of feel for large animals and, therefore, I went into the [another department], and so I was in agriculture, but didn't end up going to vet school. I was in agriculture with a city boy background and realized that I had to go to graduate school and

specialize even more if I was going to be able to get a job. And so I went to graduate school. And then in graduate school, I realized that I probably wasn't going to get the kind of job that I wanted, even with a master's degree. Went on, got the Ph.D. and ended up staying in academia. So it was by accident.

Faculty Roles

Although the students in this study tended to view faculty members primarily as teachers, faculty members believed they held many roles, including teacher, advisor, administrator, researcher and professional service roles. In several interviews, the faculty members seemed to identify themselves as researchers who teach or teachers who do research. It was generally accepted among the faculty that teaching is not as valued an activity in an university environment as research. This is not surprising; the dichotomy between research and teaching has been well documented in the academic and popular press.

. . . The normal sort of academic rewards are all slanted still towards the research component. So faculty may perceive that to be a cost to them, to be heavily committed to their teaching, and because no one I think in history here has been denied tenure for being just an average teacher and a good researcher. I mean, that's sort of the model, is the minimizing kind of model in some cases. So the worst case scenario is the person who outwardly says that and lets the students know that they're here to do research and his teaching is treated as a secondary activity. And I think the students pick that up very quickly, even if it's not stated in some cases. But that is a very rational and totally maximizing,

profit maximizing response to a set of incentives that have been established by the university, with the weight on research. Now in the College, it's been refreshing to see the emphasis placed on teaching, to increase recognition and awards, and some places for promotion I think in that case. But that's been reslanted a little bit. There are a lot of faculty teachers that are not playing that game I think. They're going to keep the emphasis on the research because that's where their appointment is. . . . So the people who teach a lot or teach well, frequently are doing it because it's sort of a vocation for them, or just an interest, or they're sometimes more efficient in doing both. And we have great examples in the college of internationally recognized researchers who are internationally recognized teachers. And that can serve as a role model. But those people also just work themselves to death. But it is perceived, I think, by most faculty as being a costly activity in terms of their profession, . . . So the incentive structure runs through the training process, all the way through, that teaching is the second thing you do after you do research. And it's a lesser activity in the professional sense.

One participant believed that the type of college one worked at determined how important teaching was as an activity. He did not believe that in a research institution good teaching carried much weight.

. . . You go to small colleges of course, and they're almost all 100% teaching. And if you really want super, high quality, tuned to the student-type instruction, go to a small college, because those people in general are great teachers.

Because that's all they have to do. But we have a lot of good teachers on this campus too, but you get promoted from doing research and publishing papers. I don't care what they say about teaching. I mean, I don't care what they say about putting together your teaching portfolio and all that stuff. It just doesn't count as much as research projects do and, ergo, it tends to take a back seat.

Another participant commented on this topic.

. . . If it's a good research university, that doesn't necessarily mean you're going to get a good undergraduate education. I know when I was a graduate student at [large university], the undergraduates were always upset because the faculty said, "You're here because you're a necessary evil. We need the funding from the state. We want to just do our research and we've got to teach you." So that's probably not the best. . . . It does come down to if you're a really good teacher, you're not going to be pirated away by some other university. You're only going to be pirated away if you're a superstar researcher. And I don't know if things are going to change. It's just that everybody wants that grant money . . . So just as an undergraduate student, you may want to stay away from those universities, or you need to find colleges or departments that still emphasize teaching.

Individuals who described themselves as teachers seemed to recognize that there was a professional cost to concentrating on this activity. They did not always agree that the university emphasis on research was a good decision.

. . . I'm a teacher. Number one is teaching. I put it first. It's really been second or third with this university, and a lot of others in the state, but with this

university . . . it has not been first. But it's been my number one. So I'm in conflict with that. Second, has been service, because I honestly believe in that, in fact, that's why I selected -- and I have only worked at A&M universities. Because I see that as the major responsibility of an A&M university. They have the academic responsibility and there's many people to take care of that, but they have the service responsibility. So many, many, many things I do are service-type things. And they're not service-type things where I'm going out and making extra money on the side in consulting. This is part of your load and responsibility here. And then the research part. I can do as much research as I want to do. . . So, I've had them backwards, as compared to the university, so there's been a conflict. I feel that the quality I do in the classroom ought to compensate for that. I feel comfortable, I've been rewarded several times for that. If all your problems in life can be taken care of with money, you don't have problems. I've been wealthy for many years. Wealthy means you've got enough to live on, a little bit extra, and you save for the future. . . . The small amount you'd get for promotion may not be worth putting teaching and public service aside, to satisfy what they call [research] and it's really not research. That's the wrong word. It's called publications. It's not called research. It's called publications.

Another participant believed that the combined role of teacher and researcher was an unrealistic work arrangement. He did not believe that being a good researcher made one a good teacher.

There are a lot of people that aren't interested in teaching. They take a university job cause they want to do research and they have to teach. And it's obvious when you talk to them that -- they complain about teaching. They don't want to teach. And it's almost, I think, a given that if you have somebody that's doing something like that because he has to, but he's not going to put the effort into it that somebody who does it because they really want to. People that are disorganized, it's really obvious, I think, when you get to know them and talk to them. If they don't communicate well, if they just don't speak well. They can write, they can do research. That's the easy part to them. But getting up in front of a class of students and trying to explain something so that the students understand it, it's very obvious that they just can't do that. And they don't want to do it. And they shouldn't have to do it. I mean, the idea that you split appointments with research and teaching, to me, is just a total waste. It's just not the way a university should be organized. It is [that way], unfortunately. A researcher should do research. A teacher should teach. They shouldn't necessarily have to be both.

The Influence of Research on Undergraduate Education

Despite the recognition that teaching and research activities are often in conflict with each other, many faculty believed that research enhanced the classroom experience. They believed that one benefit was that the research component kept them current in their field.

. . . I found that my research has always complemented my teaching and that, because I teach to juniors and seniors and graduate students, it's incumbent on me to be up with the latest issues, problems, techniques, methods that I'm going to be teaching in class. And the way I teach, I use a lot of examples. So I'm frequently handing things out from my research, or talking about research that's going on in the department, and trying to educate the students that faculty are not just here to teach them, Monday, Wednesday and Friday at 9:00, but they also are here eight hours a day doing research and that teaching is one of a number of things they do. So, I find the students get pretty interested in sort of learning about the teaching and the fact that they frequently have student worker jobs, they're sort of involved with what faculty are doing.

Participating in research conferences also broadened faculty experiences and introduced them to new ideas in related fields.

But just the fact that you're doing [research] keeps you up on edge. When you go to conferences you're listening to other topics that are being researched and because you keep actively involved, you're a better consumer of what you're reading in other areas that may be out of your own research topic, your focused research [area]. It just helps keep you, and then, as a better consumer of research, as you read through other people's works, you're able to bring that into your class.

Another possible benefit proposed by participants is that introducing research to undergraduate students would create better citizens. The definition of a better citizen seemed to include a predisposition to support university funding at the polls.

We have the -- a few years ago we had -- with this other department chair we had, we didn't get along with [a research institute]. . . . And it got to the point where they were calling us second class researchers and all this. And I've come away with a philosophy -- a lot of the funding has gone to these elite centers, and that's what [this institute] was trying to be. . . . And if you think about it, we need to educate our undergraduate and graduate students, so we need some money to do research, because if you separate the research from the teaching, you're not going to get the science across. And the thing is, if you just have elite centers, well they'll have money for a while but, pretty soon, when all the people are not educated in science, because there's so little money and it's only going to these elite scientists, then who's going to vote for taxes for funding scientific research? Really what we need is a cooperative collaborative effort where all of these students are raised up. . . . If we raised all the students to at least a mediocre knowledge of science, that I think that would be doing something, because most of the public is ignorant of what science is. They don't understand. They're all confused. You know, they come out with one study with these results, and a different one [reports different results] and they think something's weird when it's just science. That's how the process works. So I think we need to do what we're doing here, take our research and use it in the classroom. . .

.And so that helps the student because we're active in research, and reading the literature. I think that's a real advantage to the student when we do that.

According to one participant, a good way to create an awareness of the importance of the research is to illustrate course content through applications that have meaning for the students.

. . . I recognize, as they graduate, they'll, at some point, be voting on funding and legislation for agricultural support, or research support at a research funded university, and I'd like them to understand that it wasn't the situation that you see in the newspapers about the math professor that had the international student go in and teach a section of students while they did the high-powered research, or presented the papers, and all that. With us, it's much more applied, hands-on, and the students, I think, can directly see an impact in agriculture on their lives, on their career paths. So I've always tried to integrate those two . . . And as a professor directing five graduate students, I also feel like I have a responsibility to help them learn to teach, so, you know, the graduate teaching, the graduate research responsibilities, all those kind of get intertwined with the undergraduate teaching. So I don't separate them or compartmentalize them, like a lot of faculty do, and I think that's helped my program in general.

The integration of research findings into the classroom environment helps to make the classroom environment a more interesting place. The research experience was believed to provide a context in which to present the material.

When we teach these students what you can take out of a book it is fairly dry and uninteresting for the most part. It's only through our own personal experiences with that material that's in the book that we can bring it to life, so to speak. So if we aren't having our own experiences with the knowledge and understanding that's being presented in a book, then we aren't going to be able to bring it to life, and we won't be as effective in teaching the subject matter. So that's kind of my own philosophy. By doing this research, it helps me to bring the information that we try to present in many of our classes to life and give it a little bit more of an interesting slant.

Finally, one individual believed that although not all good researchers are also talented teachers, good researchers were believed to attract other individuals to a department. These other individuals might be good teachers. Apparently, one individual felt that good teachers were attracted to departments that provided opportunities to work with good researchers.

This is sort of a dilemma that we have in academia. The well-known faculty, faculty that have strong resumes, tend to be the ones that are doing lots of research, and research that's on the "cutting edge", and that doesn't necessarily guarantee that they're going to be good teachers. What I've found though is departments that have well-known faculty attract good faculty to those departments. And so, even if that well-known faculty member isn't necessarily a good teacher, it's likely that there are good teachers around him or her. And so,

it's hard to go very wrong with, going to or seeking out institutions where there is well-known faculty on the staff.

The Influence of Undergraduate Education on Research

Teaching seemed to have positive as well as negative influences on the work of a researcher. Teaching well is a time consuming activity and time devoted to teaching results in less time available for research. However one participant found that preparing for a class was also good practice for conference presentations. This person enjoyed being able to share his research with others through teaching.

. . . It [teaching] has affected the research side of my work because of all the experience I've had in the classroom, being used to confronting questions and giving lectures, and having people interrupt me, and then getting back on track and dealing with questions that come out of left field. And having to prepare for an hour and a half talk, which is a long time to speak in front of a group twice each week. It's given me a lot of experience, by just talking in front of people in any case. You're more comfortable, you know how to deal with things that throw you off. You just have much more experience if you have a teaching background. So those were the two main things. I think, since I've gotten involved in [teaching], there's been a third motivation, and maybe I was subconsciously aware of this at the time I began. But it's the opportunity to share. Just to share things. When you're in a research capacity, you really don't do a great deal of that. You do it somewhat through your writing but really, very often, your writing might have a limited number of people that actually read and

put it to use, whereas, when you're a teacher, even if your classes aren't big, you're affecting more people it seems. At least you can see the results of what you do and it's more, in a sense, more rewarding that way. To give you an example of what I mean, this class I had this last spring, was probably one of the most unique classes that I had. After the first test, I think one-third of the class got straight A's on the first test and one-third flunked. So I had this really black and white-type thing. And the one-third of the class that failed -- the class was small -- I had about 12, okay, so we're talking about maybe three or four that got real good A's and three that failed. I really felt that the three that failed should have a retest of some type and get some help. And rather than just letting them fail, I would try to help them in some way. So I gave them the opportunity of taking a retest and I assigned one of the A people to sort of be a coach for them to improve. And it was a very rewarding experience to see how these people that first failed did much better, not only when they took the retest of the first test but took the subsequent test too. And, in particular, there was this one black girl who did extremely badly on the first test but, you know, through my efforts and hers, she got a B. You know, she brought the grade up. So it's really a rewarding kind of thing to see a person grow like this.

The relationship between research and undergraduate education is not always a smooth one. Teaching responsibilities can be in conflict with research responsibilities. The same individual described this conflict. He had considered looking for a different position where he could devote more time to teaching.

The only undesirable thing that I see about teaching is the teaching is in combat with my research time. It's just too much to do. . . you're talking about a lot of work, and I'm under pressure at the same time to write up my research, and to find new research and to do all this, and there's a conflict in terms of time. I have really thought considerably about working towards a career where I would either at this school or someplace else get completely out of research and the amount of hassles, and get completely into a teaching kind of job full time.

This conflict often creates stress due to time pressures. There is only so much time and since teaching is a secondary activity for many faculty the time is allotted accordingly.

It hurts it, I think, because it creates a stress. You see? Such that the time I have to devote to one of them, say the research, is going to take away from the time I can devote to the teaching, and vice versa. If I didn't have research to do, I think I would -- I do revise my lecture notes from time to time, of course. I think if I weren't doing research, I would revise them a lot more, because I would have more time. I read a great deal and as I read, I come across -- "Boy, this would be good to bring up in my class." You know, this type of thing. Or, this would be - - and, "Gee, I wish I could revise my lecture notes to incorporate this new thing that I found out," you see. But revising a lecture is not like sitting down in an afternoon and writing letters to your old friends. I mean, it's a considerable amount of work. And if you're taking care of [research activities] and trying to write papers for publication, there's a conflict there. So as often as not, I just use

the old notes. Not because I want to, but because I just didn't have time to incorporate the new things. And, you know, sometimes, when I come to that lecture, it may pop into mind, "Oh, well, I could throw this in." But that's not really the way I would like to do it. What I would like to do is I would like to revise the whole thing.

One participant frankly described his teaching responsibilities as a "distraction" to his research. This participant said that it would be helpful if he could teach a course related to his research interest. He had taught a course for three semesters that was not in his research area and he was not comfortable with this arrangement. He had taught himself the subject that was covered in his course assignment and was concerned that he did not know the subject well enough. He could not find any interaction between the classroom and his research area.

You really should teach a course which is part of your discipline. You go to your class and you can't talk about your research because it doesn't have anything to do with the course. So there isn't much of a interaction [between teaching and research]. But you do hire student workers and the student workers can get experience in the lab, so there is some interaction. In fact, an undergraduate is going to have a paper published with me in a well-respected journal. . . . And they can get experience in laboratory. In fact, lack of funding assists that in that I do not have a research associate. I rely more on student workers. It's been good and bad. Good, in that you really get some excellent people in very different specialities. I had a fellow who's a computer programmer, and then this lady

who's written the article with me, she seems to be a pretty good analyst. So you can't get the same thing in the same person, so having these different student workers may be a little bit better even than an associate. That's where the research and the undergraduate comes into play; more in the laboratory than it does in the classroom.

Student worker assignments were mentioned by several participants as a method of providing some research experience for undergraduate students as well as cost effective labor for research projects.

Funding Issues

Locating money for research was a major concern of certain faculty. It was a stressful subject for these individuals and a topic that seemed to occupy a good deal of these individuals' attention. One participant felt that this problem would improve as he developed a wider professional reputation.

. . . And getting the [research] money is difficult. . . . We're not even talking about me as an individual. Your position carries this weight which allows you to do work. But this doesn't happen overnight. For some folks, it does, because their position's so important. . . . It just takes a while to get that money and during that time, things certainly get difficult. And during my time of trying to [reach that point] -- I kind of feel that I'm more and more toward that state of getting that money -- , but getting to that stage, we had financial exigency. And so that was kind of a double whammy. It wasn't easy to get the money and then the financial exigency on top of that made it twice as hard.

He felt that the tenured faculty could better support beginning faculty and that the reduction in faculty stress would improve the work environment.

They can provide better support for the beginning faculty. The tenured faculty can assist them in getting grants. You would lose some independence in that and that the professors may even tell them "You're going to work on this project or you will submit a proposal for this organization." I think that's a lot of it. The professors [should] assist the assistant professors in acquiring grants. . . . The other [point] is that assistantships would be given to the assistant professors.

The number one priority so that they can get a student for free.

Another participant described the search for funding as the least desirable activity of his position. A partial solution for this individual was to work with others on their funded projects.

Well, probably the least desirable [activity] is just getting funding to do research. And this is probably a nationwide thing and a university-wide thing. You know, dollars are tight and you always have to keep doing that [looking for funding]. And then you're asked to do everything. You have got to teach better, serve on committees and do all kinds of service better, and do research better, and do it all. And it's just -- and it's never enough. And then you get tied down with all the other things and then, in a sense, you do get locked into where you're at because you become almost mediocre, okay in everything. . . . Some people are allowed to become superstars in one thing and they let them slide with the others, but you really have to be good in the research to do that. That's probably

the toughest thing, although by doing a lot of collaborative research, you can get by.

In addition to locating research funding, it was also necessary to locate money for instructional needs. This was seen as an added and unwelcome burden.

We've got to have the computer facilities. We've got to have the technology available for every teacher. It can't be just innovative grants. If you're expected to write grants for research, and that's tough and that takes all -- I mean, you're so busy -- our teachers teach classes that are 20 hours out of the class for each hour in the class sometimes. Especially the first time I teach it but even each time, when I keep updating it, it takes time. I don't have time to write grants for teaching. I don't. I don't know how they expect us to do that. And then, also try and do your research as well. You're just pulled in many -- I think that's the key -- you're just pulled in many directions. Administrators are probably pulled just as bad. I think there are probably too many administrators, and I think there are a lot of administrators that cause more paperwork for faculty. Look at my desk. Pieces of paper crossing it over and over.

Funding also affected the number of support staff personnel. The lack of adequate secretarial support and the widespread use of computers meant that faculty were performing some tasks themselves that they once had delegated to others.

. . . The more we get involved with computers, the more you're expected to do your own secretarial work, do your own planning work, write this, write that. That takes many, many hours. You put a computer in at your house, you end up

sitting at your house at your computer and working. . . . The hours that it takes filling out degree forms, putting this program together, writing it, doing this form, trying to justify your existence with all types of evaluation types of things, writing yearly evaluations of other people, writing letters of recommendations, working with graduate students. . . . I mean, it is tough, tough work, and it spends hours and hours and hours. . . .

Student Expectations for Faculty

In any business, the amount of funding available affects the type of projects and activities undertaken in the organization.. Unlike most nonacademic businesses, the faculty employees of the university are expected to produce “products” such as good teaching, quality research and are required to help locate the funding to make these endeavors possible. It is a distinctly different organizational environment from that found in a commercial enterprise. It is unlikely that undergraduate students would understand such an organization since they have likely never encountered any other enterprise that operated like this. The various roles expected of faculty are outside of the student experience. Faculty recognized that students may have unrealistic expectations for them.

The graduate students understand what the real world's like and understand what a faculty member is going through to be able to teach and do research and service, whereas the younger students demand [more]. Years ago, I had a student come in. I was [working in the laboratory]. Two students came in. And one used to always bug me. He was always in my office and I'd be [working in

the laboratory] or doing whatever, and he'd be there asking me about his notes and all that, which is fine. I didn't mind doing that. And, one of the students that was a graduate student, I think, and the [graduate] student said, "Well, that's really nice of him. While he's [working in the laboratory] he's helping you with your notes." And [undergraduate] says, "That's his job. He gets paid to do that." So, in other words, the view is that we're supposed to be there all the time.

We're like a high school teacher and we're supposed to be teaching all day long, and be with students and grading all the time, when what the university is rewarding us for is research, service.. And teaching, I mean, for some extent there are rewards for teaching. In the College of Agriculture there is. But the impression [of the undergraduate] is that all we're supposed to be doing is teaching and helping students. And so, that's where the lower level [students] would be more critical of us, because they don't understand what our mission is, completely, and the higher level students would understand the mission better and be more appreciative.

Although faculty members often listed personal interactions with students as a strength, in some cases it was also a burden. Students were often unaware of the other professional obligations of the faculty.

I think sometimes the undergraduate students feel like we don't have enough time for them. And they don't understand, they think, "Well, you're only teaching two or three classes. You should be available." . . . sometimes they don't quite understand the work. So you have to explain it to them. They come

and, "Oh, I've got time to kill." You know, I just cringe. And you can't tell them that. They don't understand. If they can't find you, and I don't mean just me, any of us around here, they complain. Well, So and So's never in. They don't understand all the things that we have to do. I try to take time to explain it to them, at the beginning of class. "You know, I have office hours but I have this date planner. Call me. You can set up an appointment when its other than the office hours." And I think that's the philosophy of every one here. Sometimes they don't understand or remember that and they come by and they want immediate service, and you're not right there where they can get their hands on you.

One individual reflected on his own college experiences. He believed that undergraduates are not as respectful of the faculty as he remembered them being from his own days as a student.

I would have to admit that the impression seems to exist that college professors are overpaid, underworked, kind of sponges of the taxpayers' money, almost making us second-class citizens. I seem to recall when I was in college, especially as an undergraduate that the university community and the faculty were highly respected, regarded individuals. I don't have that feeling in Louisiana. I don't get the feeling that the faculty is a highly-respected component of the society.

This same individual was disappointed in the role of the undergraduate student on campus today compared to his memories of his own undergraduate experience. He

described the student roles today as more consumer oriented than it had been when he was in college.

My observation would be that students these days see the university and, perhaps, society in general as something from which they're going to take something. They want to get something from this system, and they aren't necessarily all that interested in what they can give to the system. In other words, it's become a very one-way service-oriented concept which differs from my experience as an undergraduate. I was just appreciative of the availability of that system and looked at it as, yes, I was getting something from it but I was also contributing to the whole process. And so it was a two-way street. It seems to have become much more a one-way street for students these days.

Personal Interactions and Teaching

In the student interviews and focus groups, students spoke repeatedly about the value they placed on personal interactions with faculty members and other students. They appreciated being treated as individuals. Faculty members in the college recognized the importance of these interactions to the student and worked to keep this characteristic in their programs.

We've got a faculty that cares about students. We have a very nurturing, caring faculty. . . . And we sit down and we spend a lot of time [with our students], which is very time consuming on our part. When they get here, we get to know them as people, as a person, and we try to customize their curriculum to meet their needs. We add that personal touch. I think that means a lot to the students.

I've had many, many students tell us how much they appreciate that we take an interest in them as an individual, that they're not just some number in a class.

In some cases the size of the department helped the faculty and students to get to know each other individually.

I would say that there's a lot of opportunity for personal involvement in our program because it's small. Our students have the opportunity to interact almost on a one-on-one basis with faculty, with graduate students, with professionals in the area. It's very much a small, small pool, within the large university, that we feel that our students can find a home-like atmosphere.

Beyond the presentation of the material, teaching was considered important because the teacher determined how comfortable students were in taking control of their own education. The tone of the classroom determined how likely the students were to participate in a course.

Now personal interaction, the teacher has a tremendous amount of responsibility for that. You set your class up at the beginning of a semester, and the students know whether they can take ownership of that class; be a part of it. "This is my class." You hear a person talk about it, "Well, I'm taking a class over here." Or, "Well, my class is doing this." And you just listen to them and you can tell a little if they feel like there's ownership. Not everybody. But you can tell whether they feel like there's ownership or not. . . . I mean, when the students talk about our class did this and our class did that, they know that they're part of that class. When they say the class did this, the class did this, the teacher did

this, the teacher did that -- just listen to them. I think you need to feel the ownership.

This individual defined the concept of ownership. Good teachers develop ownership in their students.

Ownership means, "This is my degree. I know what it is. What I do is as important to what happens to my degree as what you do to me." Selection of classes is ownership. "I'm just going to take any class that comes up because it's convenient." Well, you're not showing much ownership of your life. Taking responsibility.

Some faculty believed that their teaching skills had become better with experience. They were not certain if their teaching skill had improved or if the students had changed.

Perhaps I've seen an increase, and, it could be just since I have matured as a teacher, I tend to elicit more responses from the students, so it could be due to me more than to the students. But one way or the other, I get a lot more reaction from the students, and I can actually engage students in questions and answers. And I like to teach that way. I like to give them a few facts and then leave out the last one and say, "So what does this mean?" And, of course, it's my impression that 10 years ago, I got a lot more blank stares than I do now. And I get a lot broader response, it's not just one person that always answers because a good student, they always know the answers. I can get a lot more opinions from

the class in response to what I'm trying to get them to think about. And I think that's improved. I think that's improved in the students, which is good.

There were several descriptions of a good teacher. A good teacher was enthusiastic, empowered their students, had good communication skills and had an inner need to share information with others. One participant offered a detailed description of such individuals.

When you talk to him [a good teacher] about the research, you can see their interest in the people that are doing the research. They talk about their graduate students and the projects, but also what a good job their graduate student is doing, or that they took this idea and went off in a totally new direction. And if you ask them what they teach, they'll talk about it. It's not, "Well, I teach [this subject] you know". But they'll say, "Well, I teach [this course] and it involves this and this, and I take the students here and there, and we do this and this." So it's easy to see that they're interested in them. And you can also tell just by talking to them, that if they're well-spoken, they have kind of a bubbly personality, someone that's -- you can give them an idea and they can talk about for a half an hour, that person is going to be a good teacher, most of the time. As long as they don't ramble. And if they have those characteristics and they have some semblance of organization, they almost have to be a good teacher. You can pretty much pick them out.

Good teachers gave their students the ability to learn independently according to faculty participants. Students were motivated to pursue information in a subject even after completing a course.

I think that a good teacher is someone who imparts to their students the ability to learn after the course is over. Any number of ways that can be accomplished. I think if a student stops learning the material covered in the course when the final exam is over, then you have not done as much service to the students as you could have. So to summarize it, I think it's an ability for lifelong learning in that area.

In addition to creating the ability to learn independently, a good teacher also gave his students a love for learning.

. . . I like students. I want them to learn; I want them to see the value of an education; I want them to experience it all. I don't want them just to think learning occurs only in the classroom and in a textbook. It's not like they could read the book. We're here to share a wealth of other information with them. It's why we send them to the library. . . That's why we ask them to read a research article and see somebody else's viewpoint besides our own opinion . . . I'd like students to experience it all, not just in the classroom, also that experiential learning in that club, organization. I don't want them to leave here and regret that they didn't give it their all.

It was also important that a teacher enjoys sharing his knowledge with others to help others benefit in some way from that knowledge. For one individual, this quality was basic to the concept of being a good teacher.

The most important thing to be a teacher is wanting to share. I don't think it's what you know. It's not even how well it's said. And it's certainly not the prestige of the particular teacher for a particular class. I think what really makes someone a good teacher is someone that wants to share, and enjoys seeing people appreciate or benefit in some way from what they share.

Being an advisor

Advising was considered to be very beneficial for undergraduate students. Although students could use a catalog and REGGIE, an online/telephone registration system, to select their courses, most faculty still felt there was a benefit for the student in meeting with a faculty advisor. It was believed by some faculty that students were often confused by the catalogue or did not read it correctly.

Incoming freshmen are each given a university catalog when they come for orientation and registration, and this catalog is their guide to success while at L.S.U. Most students however do not take time to familiarize themselves with what is in the catalog. Thus it is important for students to seek guidance from an academic advisor or counselor.

REGGIE, an online/telephone registration system, by allowing students to select their own courses also allowed students to select courses based on the times that these

courses were offered rather than how these courses fit with the goals of the student enrolled. This was considered unfortunate by several interviewees.

REGGIE allows students to request their courses via telephone, thus facilitating registration. However, REGGIE allows students to "self-advise" and there are students who will do just that and just pick courses that will fit their desired schedule and not necessarily their degree program. I am a firm advocate of students seeking the assistance of an academic advisor.

An advisor helps students map out the course of their degree. This was seen as helpful to students just beginning their degree programs.

We have a very, very open, undergraduate degree, and if you don't have a good advisor, you're going to be lost in our program. . . . If they don't have an advisor that'll sit and spend an hour, hour and a half with them the first time they sit down, to [the point] where they come away with their [program of study] sheets full, they're going to be lost. Because then they come in every semester asking, "What shall I take?"

Another possible benefit to regular advising would be to promote new courses and work opportunities. Since many students do not need to see an advisor after they have set up their degree, it is difficult to tell these students about these opportunities.

. . . And as someone who went through college where, as a freshman, my advisor sat me down and showed me how to sign his signature, and said, "Okay, you're on your way.", I'm amazed at the amount of advising these students get. A lot of them are self-advised and they can look at a fairly straightforward

program and know they need to take English and Chemistry, and know which one it is because that's what everyone takes in that program. And they might see someone once to lay out a program and not need to see them again. So a lot of our faculty will have contact with a student once, help set up a program, but we would like the students to come back in as they go through the program, the juniors and the sophomores and all that, to talk about internships, to talk about a new course that may have surfaced, to talk about the development of minors and areas of concentration and so on. So we're doing everything we can to try to get our hands on them again, and we do that through our introductory classes, which they're all required to take. But I know on campus, there are a lot of students that are self-advised. They don't have to see a faculty member, if they can read a catalogue, they can go through their program. And that's just -- you know, we're consumers. That's the reality of it.

Advising was only considered effective if students took advantage of it early in their degree program. Students who had waited until their last year to seek advising were not likely to be well prepared for their future goals according to one participant.

I would say if the person has waited until they've graduated to address that question [of which career path to pursue], they've waited way too long. If they want to go on to graduate school, they're about two years too late, and they'll be doing a lot of catch up. If they want to go into industry, they should have been taking business courses all along the way so that if they want to go into government research, there are all sorts of administration skills that they should

have learned, that sort of thing. And that's one of the things that we do well here, is we talk to our students, find out what they're interested in, and we're asking those questions when they're juniors.

Student Expectations for College

In general, faculty believed that most students attended college for some other reason than interest in the subjects they were studying. They provided a variety of reasons that an individual might enroll in a university. A college degree provided many things, a rite of passage, job training and a sign of accomplishment.

My perspective working with a lot of freshmen is that [going to college] was the thing they did, as much as going to high school [was] and [they were] graduating for their parents. Now going to college is sort of an automatic thing and having been here to see that transition between the entrance requirements, or the before and after students, in '87, I had a lot of students who were not qualified to be in college, who not only lacked the interest but lacked the mental capabilities or academic training to be here. And at least now, the students we get that are here, why ever they're here, at least are qualified to be here. But a lot of them, they just didn't know what else to do. And that the second reason that you hear is to get a job, and it's very vocational oriented. They have to get a job and today in society, you have to have a degree to get a job and, frequently, I'll hear the comments made it didn't matter what kind of grades they make in college, they just need that LSU degree. And it didn't even matter what major they were in necessarily. It helped if they were in the College of Ag, but they had the job

waiting for them, or they would find the job. And so it's not what the faculty wants them to be thinking, I think, when they come in. When they come in, and frequently it's very much to get a job versus getting an education which would prepare them for a variety of career paths. And I think that is just the very pragmatic leftover effect of the 80's, in terms of some of the objectives of the youth at that point.

In some professions, a degree is required to work in that profession. In other professions although a specific degree may not be required, having earned some college degree is. According to some faculty, earning a degree was used by industry as a visible sign of persistence.

[in reference to a degree no longer offered] . . . Industry was looking for someone who had a B. S. degree, because that told them something about [that person]. Okay, you had the tenacity, you had whatever it took to get through your program. You had that. You did it. You got your paper. You got your license. Now, let's look at what you can do. If you can't do something for me on the job, then the license -- you've got to have the license but if you can't do something on the job, the license is not going to carry you. Well, our students did produce on the job. They could do what they were supposed to do technically when they had their B.S.

In the nontraditional student interviews, many participants in the study had described how earning a degree was a sign of a personal accomplishment. One interviewee described how these students viewed earning a college degree.

. . . There's a big difference to a kid that's got three years of college and the kid that finally got through and has their degree. I counseled many, many, many students, older students, and they'll sit down and they said, "Man, I learned everything I need to know. But now I'm at the point where the heart is hurting, I don't have that degree and I'm being passed over, even though I'm better, because I don't have that degree." . . . Remember the last part of the Wizard of Oz . . . The wizard is sitting there and Toto has the curtain pulled back, and the wizard says, "Don't pay attention to that old fool there." And he finally goes out and gives an award, a courage award, to the lion, gives the heart to the tin man, and gives the diploma to the scarecrow, and that's the key one right there. The scarecrow had plenty of brains, planned the whole thing. Very smart. What did the scarecrow need? An outward indication of inward ability and experience. And that's what it [a degree] is. It's very important.

The most often cited reasons students attended college according to the faculty was as preparation for employment. In some fields the employment outlook was good, and this was used as a recruitment device.

We feel that our graduates would be very competitive for some of the highest paying jobs in the agricultural industry. . . . So we try to sell our program based on that; there is a large industry with a much greater demand than there is a supply, so you're in a market where you will be in demand. And not only that, you'll be in demand for high-paying jobs, compared to other components of the agricultural industry. I would say our students would tend to compete with

business students. Maybe not engineering, but they even get close to engineering students in terms of what they could expect for a first time employment [in terms of salary].

Another participant commented on this topic.

In my area. . . the wonderful thing is that the students can get jobs when they graduate. As a parent, that's the first question I would ask of a dean, department head or professor, if my son or daughter were going into the program.

In other fields, the prospect for employment was not as strong. In these areas the poor job market combined with low pay were described as possible deterrents for a student considering certain program areas.

Well, the weakest thing is really something you can't help, and that would be that it's a poor job field. And this, of course, discourages people from entering the field. And it also influences the quality of the students that you get, so I would say that's the weakest thing. I've heard countering opinions that, actually, the job field is good. I find that rather difficult to believe because most of the undergraduates that I talked to, and in my classes there are a lot of seniors who are contemplating entering the job market, they're very disenchanted with the job prospects. Not only the number of jobs but so low paying, you know. And you can't blame students these days, considering the amount of time and effort and money that it costs to get an undergraduate degree these days. They are expecting something when they get done. And you hear these reports of the very limited kinds of opportunities for the [our] major, and making \$22,000 a year,

and you might get an increase or two, and end up topped out with something like \$28,000 for the rest of your life. Well, this is a very discouraging thing.

Although many students attend college for vocational reasons, some faculty were disappointed in the student emphasis on potential future income as a factor in the selection of their major field.

I have had more than one occasion in the last few years, of students asking, "How much money can I make at this job? How much money am I going to make in this field?" I'm very honest with them. I tell them, "Look, if you want to make money, go be a lawyer or be a doctor. Be an optometrist. You don't get rich in this [field]. You're just not going to." And to me, that's a little disappointing, when students say that. I understand it's a valid reason. They don't want to go to school for four years and end up working for \$12,000 a year. . . . I mean, you really have to have a dedication to science if you're going to do this kind of work. And I guess it's probably the same in all disciplines in that students go to college and they want to know what monetary reward's going to be at the end of the rainbow. And I can understand that somewhat. But a student that continues to -- I have one that has seen me about four or five times, and it's always, "Well, how much money am I going to make and am I going to make enough to be happy?" To me, if it takes you that long to figure that out, you shouldn't be in this field anyway, because you obviously want to make a lot of money and you're not going to be happy. So I guess that's a trend I've seen.

Faculty spend years gaining their expertise and this emphasis on income seemed to be disheartening. It was as if one had presented a perfect gem to a friend, only to have that friend announce that they preferred imitations; they give the same effect for much less cost. In the same way, students were often seen as narrowly focused on their career goals and considered to be not as interested in the knowledge as they were in completing the requirements for a degree.

I think everyone starting out as a faculty member naively thinks that students are here to learn and to enjoy the subject matter that you spent years and years mastering as a Ph.D., and conduct your life in research around, that they would have the same enthusiasm and desire to learn that material, sort of for the learning sake, for the knowing sake. And, again, with the focus of our program, the students are much more vocationally oriented. I think a lot of our younger faculty are somewhat surprised the first year when they're exposed to students in the college; students can pretend for a while but I think a lot of them just are not that intellectually challenged by the material. It's just another hurdle, another goal to get over, and I think the faculty would prefer to restructure the programs assuming the students want the material, enjoy the material and think about it and dwell on it, and internalize it as much as the faculty, and that's not the case. And I recall Dean Richardson make a comment about our program once that we were still kind of stuck in a mind-set of trying to train Ph.D.'s, not undergraduate majors, and of trying to recreate a model of ourselves, which was in diminishing demand, by the way.

As was seen in the student summaries, the students in the study attended college for a variety of reasons. Most students had selected L.S.U. because of the geographic location in the state. Students often did not wish to live too far from their families. At least one faculty member recognized this.

. . .But there are other reasons they come [to college]. If you're not close to family, I'd think going to a university would be tougher. I know it is. If you're not close to part of the country that satisfies you emotionally -- some people like water, some people like cold weather, some people like [other things],and that's so important, because it makes a difference to you. If you're a sports fan, I mean if you are an honest-to-goodness sports fan and that's key to you, then you got to go somewhere where you're proud of the sports team. Maybe not that you're active in it but you're a passive participator in that. And there's pride there. If you're not proud of what you're doing, whether you're going to school or whatever it is, don't. Don't. You're wasting time and it's too expensive a situation.

Another consideration that could affect a student's decision to attend a university was the national reputation of that university. For some faculty, the national ranking of the university might be factor in how prospective or current students felt about that university.

. . . We are not one of the big name schools, and yes, we are the main agricultural school in the State of Louisiana. And in terms of our state, yes, this is the best place you could come to, but we are not what are considered one of

the top-ranked schools. We aren't Cornell. We are not California. We are not an N.C. State and we're not the University of Florida at Gainesville. We aren't on a par with these schools. And that might be something they would be concerned about.

Another difference between the student study and faculty study was the interpretation of the term "college". Ask a student about his "college" and he tended to respond with information about the university as a whole. Faculty seemed to have difficulty thinking of the college experience as a university experience. They tended to segregate the university by departments and colleges.

I don't know because I never really talk to students about the full concept of the whole university. As a whole, it's so micro here, so focused, that I don't think we go beyond to look at the total university that much. Interesting. I'll have to bring that up in class in the fall. Get students' perception of what they think of the whole university. You just hear bits and pieces here and there, but for me to come away and say, "Oh, they just all think it's wonderful. This is the greatest place in the world." or "We have this winning football, basketball," or whatever. I don't know. I feel kind of ignorant right now on that part.

Student Preparation for College

The increased admission requirements were seen as an improvement by several participants. College was considered by some faculty to be an inappropriate place for some individuals.

. . . There are students that come to universities as we all know, that are not going there for an education. And there are other ones who have been pressured into it, who are really either not emotionally or intellectually able to handle it. I think when LSU initiated entrance guidelines that lowered the number of entering freshmen but has not affected our graduation rate. And so I view that as a good thing.

Some faculty found that entering freshman were still not well prepared in high school for college work. According to this participant, entering students needed some idea of what they wanted to do in college and a good secondary school preparation to do well in college.

First thing that I would want to know about a student is what kind of job that they were looking for. What they would want to do once they got done with here. If they have some idea of what that's like. Other things that I would want to know about this student that would influence me whether I would want them in the major. His background. I think that's really important the academic background. Unfortunately, in our state, I'm afraid many people aren't prepared for university work based on their experiences in high school. So that would be an important thing to look at.

Differences between a University and a Technical College

Some faculty contrasted their programs with related programs at a technical college. Technical colleges were seen as offering an education suitable for an entry level position while a university offered a broader education.

[in describing the difference between a college graduate and a technical school graduate] As far as the technical education, I don't see that much difference. But as far as the liberal arts background, I see a big difference. And I think that, for the most part, we're trying to teach, as far as our career orientation, we're looking at more of mid-career, what are the skills they need to be successful later on in the job and . . . technical institutions are looking more at getting people their first job and whether or not they advance in whatever discipline they've chosen is another issue. And so, I would, if I was looking for entry level students where it was a dead end, I'd probably hire technical school graduates. If I was looking for students I was anticipating promoting up through the ranks up into management, I'd probably go to the university, although you could make a mistake either way I'm sure.

For some students, a technical college or community college could be a good first choice according to some faculty.

. . . Start out anywhere. It doesn't matter. If you have a city college, if you have a community college in your town, start out. See what you can do. Get your positives going. Now, now we're getting serious. Now we're up to the sophomore year. Now, where would it be neat to go for my profession? Well, there are about 20 universities in the United States that have a good reputation for my profession. Pick one of the 20. Which one do you enjoy? Well, there are other reasons for going to school. If you don't like being there, if it's cold weather and you like warm weather, if you're a long way from home, then the

motivation's not going to be there. You cannot, in my profession, select one university in the United States that has the name of the best anymore. It's not that way.

Diversity of Course offerings

The variety of course offerings available to undergraduates was seen as evidence of a good program. Good programs according to faculty members provided more than specific skill preparation for a given profession. They also place the material in a broader context.

. . . Frankly, I would like to see them take more interest in some of the business related courses to our field. They have got to have the science orientation, but [they need] a few applied business courses. Most of the students, I can counsel them and say, "You need to go this route." and sometimes they will do it. . . I think that's most important in today's work environment.

The variety of skills that a student has mastered was considered important. In some fields, it is difficult to find work if the specialty area is too narrow.

. . . I think program focus would be one. I would want a broad program focus so they get exposed to a lot of things. I think it's becoming preeminently important for students when they get out of school, even in a masters level, to know how to do lots of things. You know, 100 years ago you could get out of school as a [specialist] and go somewhere because you wanted to work on [a narrow speciality] your whole career. Well you can't do that anymore. You have to be able to do lots and lots of different things. So it would be important, I think, for

that program to have diversity of emphasized areas, a diversity of areas that the student could be exposed to. So I think that would be probably of premier importance.

Communication skills were recognized by the faculty as an area in which many students needed improvement. One possible solution according to a participant would be to use the general electives to meet this need.

Although the general education core is being loosened up, I think that it was ineffective for many years, when it was first introduced, because there were too few courses that students could take as part of the liberal arts. I feel that a good liberal arts exposure is important. Perhaps, we went a little too far in our general education requirements. It limited the number of courses that could be included in a student's major as well. I guess my view is that the curriculum at the freshman, sophomore level is in greater need of repair than for our particular component of the curriculum.

This individual continued on this topic.

. . . Maybe if any part of the general education core could be focused, it would be in the communications courses; technical writing, speech, those types of courses.

Liberal arts courses were also considered valuable because they introduced new perspectives to the material. These subjects were seen by one individual as a good preparation for the study of concepts and for advanced study.

I think it [a liberal arts requirement] gives them exposure to conceptual development and less of a vocational [perspective], I guess I think of it as a

competency-based curriculum, or competency-based versus vocational-based training, much like engineering, education, library science, many of your agricultural disciplines. I think in the vocational [aspects], they train you like in veterinary school training, to be something. Whereas, I think a liberal arts degree gives you a lot of skills, perspectives -- and it's not soft liberal arts. I qualify that. I want you to take the math and science and the languages, and its not the worthless English major when you're done, but either you can get a job with that or you can go on for advanced training. And the trend is now for the better students to go on for advanced training. So I think the liberal arts degree by far trains you better to do that.

One part of a broad education was exposure to the theoretical base in a field.

This is difficult to do in an undergraduate program because undergraduates may lack the prerequisite skill to study such subjects until they are approaching the end of their program.

As a discipline, we work from [specific theories]. And one of the things we've done in our program is to cut off the formal exposure at, I think, a fairly low level in our department. And that's a running debate in the department, that by asking our students to take another junior or senior level class, we would expose them more to the nuances of the theory and they could be, perhaps, much more engaged by it. Instead, they see it as sort of a superficial application of it in a lot of upper level classes. That's kind of an internal professional debate, but there's a certain point where you've seen mathematics, and you can add and subtract,

and then there's another level where you can do algebra, and algebra is obviously more interesting than adding and subtracting. . . . And our students don't really get exposed to the depth of [the theoretical base].

Diversity of Faculty Background

Participants described strong programs as programs that offered a variety of courses for the undergraduate student. One difficulty is that to offer diverse courses in a department, faculty who can teach those courses must be available. It was considered a strength to have large departments because the students would be exposed to a variety of viewpoints.

. . . I would say that a couple of problems that we have, number one, is lack of faculty. The students get a lot of courses from me, because I've developed them all. . . So they're not getting a real diversity of viewpoints and, even though most everything I say is correct, you still like to have a diversity of viewpoints for the students. If there's a weakness there, it would be nice to have two or three more faculty. And going on with that weakness, it would give us more of a diversity of expertise also. . . It'd be nice to have all kinds of expertise on the faculty. I don't think the courses that we teach shortchange the students per se, but they could get more out of those courses with more [faculty] expertise in a given area. More faculty would also provide more opportunities for students to experience an international perspective on the problems in their field.

If you have a university where everyone's 100% teaching versus one where everyone has a 50-50 split, you're roughly going to have twice the number of

faculty at the university [with the 50-50 split]. Students are going to have the opportunity to become involved with research projects, if they choose. You probably will have a much more diverse faculty than if you have [a university] that is straight teaching. Many, many researchers at universities are foreign-born nationals. I mean, after World War II, there was a large influx of European scientists in this country, and I had any number of German, Hungarian and other scientists in classes.

Another method of introducing undergraduate students to faculty with diverse expertise would be to offer some courses that are team taught. One interviewee described specific courses in which he felt that this method had been effectively used. He believed team teaching allowed more faculty to teach their specialty area to undergraduate students, provided a diversity of viewpoints on a general subject area and reduced class preparation time for the faculty.

. . . but I think those kinds of blurring the boundary lines and getting into team teaching . . . because it allows you to really specialize. And what we've done is we've developed [some team taught courses] -- you specialize in certain areas, then you can really focus and do a better job for the students, than being a jack of all subjects.

Diversity Among the Student Body

Several faculty interviewees felt that student diversity added an extra dimension to their classes. Courses that attracted students from a variety of majors were considered challenging to teach.

I enjoy teaching and working with young students. This is what I like to do.

Teaching is challenging, especially if students taking your class come from academic units other than the College of Agriculture. One also has to keep up-to-date with current information and technology, especially when teaching a beginning course and make it an enjoyable class for everyone. I tell students that learning is a continuous process. One learns something new and hopefully fascinating every day .

According to another individual, the classroom interaction among these different groups was considered an enhancement to the classroom discussions

. . . The classes I teach, and that's an introductory class and a junior level class are extremely mixed in our department. They're made up of students from across the college. So one of the nice things about that is that I do get the heterogeneity of the student population. I'm not just looking at a group of [our own majors.] At any time there's someone from Human Ecology, or Animal Science, or Environmental System Management, and because their, I think, career needs and interests are different, it helps keep me on my toes and keep me from sort of getting in a rut and assuming that I can just teach to one very select, very limited audience. So that's one of the things I like about it. And the way I teach also, I use a lot of interaction with the students and at the beginning of the classes I always pass around that sort of traditional information sheet that I [use to] identify students as my expert in wildlife or device production person, or the person that's interested in nutrition, and then I try to use their expertise or

interest during the semester; draw on them in the class. And just having that diversity, compared to some of my colleagues' comments where they just are teaching a very small section of just our majors, I enjoy [my classes] a lot more. And I get to know more students as a result.

This individual continued on that topic. He believed that there was an increase in gender diversity in college programs.

And that [diversity], again, goes across majors, increasingly across gender which is not as much an issue in our department but we're becoming more representative, with men and women in the program, but there was a heavy bias for just men in the program for a while, and in our profession in general. So, it's been nice to see the different mix of students come into our program but also through the other classes I teach.

Traditional and Nontraditional Students

Other faculty members identified specific types of students within the student body. One of these student types was nontraditional students. The term nontraditional students in this usage appeared to be defined as older students. According to one interviewee these students were often a positive addition to the classroom interaction, but such students often did not realize this.

. . . I'm a facilitator. I'm not a fountain of knowledge, I'm just a facilitator and so with the classes, I enjoy the mixture of students. I like the older students. And I like the younger students, to watch them grow. And to see the mix when you get the undergraduates and you've got such a mixture of older students and younger

students, and to watch them. At the beginning, they're separated. And as the class goes on, you can't tell them apart. We have one older student who dropped out because she didn't know if she really fit, and the younger students are missing her. They want her back, because they really loved the stories she had to tell. And she had a great personality.

Another faculty member described nontraditional students as more demanding than traditional students.

Our curriculum attracts a lot of nontraditional students. They're returning, they hold one degree. They're coming back for a second degree since they've got the family through school. They're coming back to finally get their own degree. They may have gotten their pink slips so they're coming back to get reeducated. Those nontraditional students I find to be more demanding. And that's okay. That's not a complaint, provided you place those demands in a proper way. You know, "I would like," instead of "I want." But that's a major complaint I have of students today. You know, they're very inflexible, some of them.

A third interviewee believed that the experience of the older students helped them understand the course material and relate it to problems that they encounter. They were also considered to be better at time management.

[in describing the nontraditional student] I'm sure they have less time to study and they use their time better. They're not worried about their date, their dress. I'm sure they're worried about other things like the car payment, the house payment, picking up the children, whatever, but they handle all of that better.

I'm sure maturity sets in. Plus they have a lot of experiences from everyday life that they can use to relate to what they are doing in the classroom.

Traditional students were described as being less focused than nontraditional students. One individual believed that this lack of focus affected their learning.

I think they [traditional students] are here to get an education, but I don't think they always know what that education is going to be, or where it is going to take them. And they're taking classes and they're not sure it's really what they want to do, and that affects their learning. Whereas, the nontraditional people who are back in school, they know this is what they want so they're trying to get everything they can out of it.

For some individuals the expectations the students held for the faculty seemed extensive and somewhat unrealistic. Students were thought to need more structured classes to encourage them to be better prepared.

You need to blur some of the boundaries between departments. Everybody fights for their turf. Ideally, I'd probably try and blur some of the boundaries and if you really want to get a good undergraduate education, you need equipment money, you need more laboratories and, I think I'd have classes that met four and five times a week instead of just three. I think you need to be able to place certain demands; students are real difficult. They want entertainers in [the classroom]. They want you to tell them what's on the test. They want you to tell them what's in the book. They don't want to read the book. I think you need real support from the administration, so that you're going to be tough, and you're going to

demand that students read the book and that they do homework assignments.

That would really help the undergraduates; that they'd be better prepared. . . .

Diversity of Backgrounds

One characteristic that emerged from these interviews was the classifications of individuals based on their backgrounds. Individuals were identified based on whether they came from an urban or rural background. Several faculty members identified their own backgrounds during their interviews. It was considered advantageous to have a rural background. Certain fields within agriculture were apparently less accessible to individuals from urban backgrounds.

. . . And I was a city boy and so didn't have a whole lot of feel for large animals and, therefore, I went into the [another department], and so I was in agriculture, but didn't end up going to vet school. I was in agriculture with a city boy background and realized that I had to go to graduate school and specialize even more if I was going to be able to get a job.

Another faculty member felt that the students avoided certain areas in agriculture based on certain stereotypes. Students were reluctant to enter an agricultural major when they came from an urban background. Students from urban areas often have a distorted view of what agriculture is, according to this participant.

In agriculture, there is the stereotype, I believe, that people in agriculture have come from a farm background and are production oriented people. In reality, and I know this now, agriculture is much more than just production of commodities. . . . At first, I felt that I was, going into agriculture as a teenager

essentially, or I was in my early 20's, late teens or early 20's when I was making these decisions, I was thinking this was a silly step to take because I didn't have the farm background, yet I was going into agriculture. What was I going to do? But now I see that, it's a very large industry in agriculture, that doesn't depend on the production aspects or [areas that] you would maybe consider a country boy background necessary to get involved with production agriculture. With a city boy background such as myself, I could still be in agriculture, be in an important part of agriculture. And so that was an important realization that I made through this process of going to graduate school. But as an undergraduate, I didn't understand that. And we face that in our field all the time. In [my field], people recognize that [this field] is in agriculture, in the College of Agriculture, but it really doesn't have a whole lot to do with production agriculture. Kids coming out of high school that want to be engineers or chemists, or microbiologists, or whatever, could achieve those goals in agriculture but the students just don't understand that and that's one of our biggest problems in attracting students to our field. The production oriented people, the country boys, the folks that have come through a farm background, are more interested in those commodity-oriented departments. Students that really would be excellent prospects in the [my area] have no concept that they could go into a department in the College of Agriculture, having come from the city, and have a real viable career path available to them. That's something we struggle with all the time.

Being from a rural background was also valuable for faculty members because they can use this experience in the classroom.

. . . And I grew up on a farm so I bring in a lot of those experiences in that introductory class. . . .

A farm background was seen as an advantage for students because these students often had some experience working in agriculture prior to beginning their degree program.

. . . They can use farm equipment. They can rebuild the tiller and make it work better. They can -- they've used a backpack sprayer and they know what sprays to use, and they know the safety things you need to use around the spray rig. And they -- they can do a lot of things. They can make things. They're inventive. They're original. I mean, all these things, they've gained from the kinds of backgrounds that they come up with, whether it has been on a farm or near a farm . . .

Although being from a rural background was seen as an advantage, it was not a requirement to be from a rural background to work in an agricultural field.

And I'm thinking of this summer, one of our students who is from New Orleans, with no Ag background at all, and the woman was picked over a number of "farm boys" for an Ag sales position, but she had superior communication skills and a number of other attributes in terms of the course work. But, I thought at first, that they would have been biased toward the guys who had the experience. But they're looking at someone they can train.

A farm background was also believed to develop certain personal characteristics such as self-reliance.

. . . Another thing that I would look at, and this is kind of hard to put into words, but it would be a sense of the person's get-up-and-go. I mean, how self-reliant [are they?] How able are they to deal with things. And a lot of the kids I've seen -- I say kids, they aren't kids -- but a lot of the undergraduates, in particular ones from a rural, or a farm background, tend to really do well at that. They tend to be people that can handle situations. I get the impression that they've been in charge of things since they've been five or six, I guess, and they seem to know how to stay on top of things.

This individual continued on this topic.

And, I've observed how some of these people have worked together on things. I mean, I can observe it in my work. . . . you get two or three farm boys together and they'll know more about these things than me. And they're deciding how to put this to work on this -- well, I won't bore you with the details of a research type thing. But someone says, "Oh, you should do it this way." Someone says, "No, let's try this." And they interact when they work together. There may be someone who knows more than what most of the rest know, so he's kind of in charge and he even tells me what to do. But the other one, he might know some things too, so he can chime in. And you see the way they work together. You see this on all kinds of things, not just work, but you see there's an event of some kind, and someone is making the chicken and someone is doing this. And I

would think that would be a very positive type of thing. Because learning how to work together and get along with other people is going to be something very important in terms of how successful someone is at a job. As a matter of fact, I would guess that your typical farm boy undergraduate, or farm girl, who gets through with their B.S. or B.A. here, is probably going to be more adapted at a working environment and getting along with people than probably many of the professors with Ph.D.'s, because we have not come up in a kind of world where we learned to get along, and to give and take and this type of thing.

Students who came from rural backgrounds were believed to seek out others who were also from rural backgrounds. One faculty member described this arrangement as a clique. They believed that these students were comfortable being with students like themselves.

The people who are agriculturally oriented at this university tend to flock together, from what I can sense. They tend to [group together], there are a lot of farm boys in the [specific organization], and a lot of them are friends with others that aren't in that [organization], and then they have several clubs throughout [the university] that tend to bring kids together of the same Ag background. . . . I get the impression that it is kind of like a huge clique. And these are people that really want to be with people like themselves. After all, I think a lot of agricultural people are very conservative and the definition of that word is people who like the same things. And they don't like change. And so I think another thing that someone would say about the school here being important for

them was just bringing a very large group of people together in one place at LSU here, who are oriented the same way and the interaction that occurs.

This classification of individuals based on farm or urban backgrounds might be controversial. Some participants in the study edited their comments on this subject out of their final transcripts. The classification of individuals based on rural or urban background had also occurred during the student portion of this study, notably in Interview 2.

Elite Groups

During the student interviews, several student participants described what they considered to be elite groups of students whom they considered to be in an advantageous position compared to themselves. According to these students, such individuals enjoyed greater personal interactions with the faculty and were often involved in student organizations. One faculty participant recognized this division in the student population. According to this individual, students who were active in student organizations tended to have very positive views of the College of Agriculture but the opinions of students outside of this group were less well known.

They move in different circles. You have a group of students that would come and visit you and meet you in a focus group and talk to you, and then there's probably the other 90% of the students that we really don't have that much contact with. There's a group that the college has access to through clubs and leadership groups, that's sort of an elite group, not necessarily because of grade point average but that group is very, very pro-college and I think, very much an

advocate of the department and they liked a lot of the changes they're seeing. . . . We have another group of students that I think sort of float through the program. They have very little contact outside the classroom with faculty; they don't think of it as a program. It's just, "I'm getting my LSU degree." And so, I think you'd get different pictures from them, one fairly ill-informed about really what the program is, or a lack of thought about it being a program.

Intellectual Engagement of the Student

According to faculty, an educational program should engage students in the subject and help them to explore the subject independently and in depth. Students who viewed college as a process to be completed were thought to be unlikely to develop a holistic view of their fields of study.

I think that [students] are sometimes challenged by the difficulty of a computer program, or an application, but I don't think they have to use, I'll use the term "critical thinking skills", problem-solving. . . . they're not intellectually engaged in their work so it becomes something they might sit around and talk about in the evening, in a discussion. And I think that's a function of it being a little more mechanical. . . . Working with a lot of student groups and seeing students after hours, I rarely see them talk about or really get engaged in the conceptual framework of [a specific field], which is our parent discipline. . . . I just don't see it as being intellectually interesting for them. And the few students that we sort of identify as being that way, we tend to put into our honors program, and there's a noted difference in them. They're more interested in the, sort of, well

can we express this mathematically. Can we conceptually develop this? The linkages of the theory; the nuances of it, and then the use of it. And those students are fairly unusual but we've had a number of them go through the program and they stand out in stark contrast to our average student. And that's not to be negative about the average student, but I think a lot of college education today isn't intellectually challenging. And I think our programs are not doing a lot in that area.

Another faculty member felt that the lack of intellectual engagement in his students was a result of the lack of interest on the part of the students.

As a faculty member told me when I was an undergraduate, "There's no such thing as a boring course. There are only boring students." And that if a student wants to learn, and they want to acquire what the university has to offer, they will succeed and they will normally do well. But the students that just wait to be told each step of the way what page of the book to read, that sort of thing, are pretty unmotivated to me, and I think they miss many of the opportunities that we have to offer. Because with 25,000 students here, it's hard for faculty members to go out and get each student to take advantage of things, but the students that come to us and ask for additional assistance, or additional reading, or whatever, I think they're the ones who get the most out of it.

This participant expanded on these comments later. He thought that student interest may be related to how applicable the material was to applications of interest to the student.

You may see that [being an instructor] is a much harder job than you thought it was and that it goes back to that comment earlier, maybe it's not a boring class, maybe they're boring students in it, because I'm always amazed at if someone's truly interested in a topic, how much they will read about it and how boring and dry the writing style can be, and they'll find it fascinating. A friend of mine ties flies for fly fishing, and he will read chapters on how to achieve a particular look in a fly. And as far as literature, it is not going to win a Pulitzer ever. But because he's very interested in the topic, he finds it very interesting and can read it for hours, and apply it. And a lot of it, as undergraduates, a lot of time I think the difficulty is in making it addressable to students so they can see how it's applied, how they need that information. A classic example is math. Most students never learn why they need to know Geometry, Trigonometry, Calculus, all those math courses, because of the difficulty in applying it to real life. And, of course, it's hard to apply it until you have a certain level of knowledge.

Another individual thought that this lack of interest in academic matters was culturally based. He believed that many students had not grown up in a culture that valued academic pursuits so they had never developed good study skills.

. . . I have had a lot of student workers and graduate students with me across the years. And a lot of them have been good, and they've been smart. But very few of them have really had a disciplined academic-type of mentality. I mean, the academic part of life is not something to be emphasized. It's not something to work hard on. It's more important to be social, to have a lot of friends, to be out

drinking with women or boys, whichever sex, you know. I just don't see a lot of conscientiousness about them. Academic pursuits. And I think a lot of that has to do with the culture they grow up in. And not that this is bad, but the emphasis is on having a good time, and that school is something you do just enough to get by with. And if you're on a sports team, well, you don't even have to go to classes. And you know, this type of thing. So, you know, any kind of academic pursuit is being put down and considered to be unimportant. Well, naturally, when they get into school here, what do you think they're going to be like? So often I've been talking to a student . . . they tell me, "Well I never had to study in high school at all and I never studied until the last second before the test and my study habits that I have here are just poor. I just can't sit down and study." And I don't know what you can do about that. But I think that is a real problem.

Although this individual felt that students may not have grown up in a culture that valued academic pursuits, he believed that these students were appreciative of research work that he introduced in classes and in how it related to their own lives. He felt that undergraduates were more interested in the material than they were often given credit for. He implied that finding a course to be difficult was not the same as being uninterested in the material.

. . . I think a lot of people, a lot of faculty, underestimate and degrade the undergraduates in terms of what they really are, or what they want. They like to portray them as people not really interested in the subjects being talked about in the class, or people that are just trying to get by with the least amount of work,

etc., and so forth. And, sure, there are some of those, and I had some of those in my class, but the overwhelming experience is people that seem to want to learn, is what I find. People that seem to be interested in the different aspects that I bring in. Some of the students in my class sometimes get discouraged because they feel what I'm lecturing about is too hard, and some of it is complex. But they seem to be able to gut it out and learn what I'm trying to get across. In my classes, the tests are sort of a reflection of the lectures. My tests aren't, "Repeat four of the six things I told you last week." They are, "If you were put into this kind of case, and someone came up and asked you this, and this was going on and this was going on, what would your answer be and why?" Those are the types of things that I ask. And some of the people are really turned off by that because they're so used to fill in the blanks and true or false. They aren't used to trying to assimilate information and process it in a way that you can give an answer to something like this. But, surprisingly, I think most of them appreciate that kind of approach, and I find it works. I mean, I'm not up there simply to dole out the information. Sure, some of it is that. Some of it is definition of concepts, and there are certain parts of my tests where you simply have to repeat things and then either know the answer or you don't. But much of what I ask, the student is going to have to understand the concept of what's being taught about here. And he's going to have to know how to assimilate a bunch of the information and to integrate it in a way that he or she can synthesize it and answer.

Industry Expectations

When asked about industry expectations for graduates, participants listed several qualities that they felt were important to industry. One of these qualities was the ability to identify and solve problems. This ability was described using various terms such as critical thinking skills, analytical thinking. This was an important topic, “thinking skills” were described by every faculty participant in the study. The following quotes are representative of these comments.

Analytical thinking. I try to emphasize that as much as possible. I'm not much of a factoid person. I end up teaching some of that. You have to have some of that on a test. They have to have a basic knowledge of whatever subject matter you're into, but if I give them a page full of numbers, I don't want them to memorize those numbers. They can go look them up. That, to me, is not learning. That's not that important. Now, if they need to know how to use those numbers, why those numbers are important, to know 50 means a lot more than 10 on a scale of 1 to a million, or whatever. . . . it's the use of that information that is important. . . . I give them little scenarios in class. . . . What happened and why and how do you figure it out?" And we just do that in class. We go through what would you investigate, how would you do it, and why would you do it. What are you looking for. You know, those kinds of things. Because, to me, that's the thing that's not developed very well in the students, is their analytical abilities. And we'll get kids out of here -- kids out of school that have a 3.9 GPA cause they can memorize anything. But when you're done and you

get those kids into graduate school, then you say, "Okay, now you need to develop a research proposal on a given problem.", they look at you like, "What?" You know, they have no concept of how to even ask a good question. And that's important. In our discipline, that's very important is how to ask a good question. You have to do that. And so, well, I'm sure we could do better than we do, but at least we're conscious of it and we make an effort to develop those kinds of abilities.

Another participant commented on this topic.

My philosophy of teaching, more than anything, is to develop analytical abilities and the abilities of students to integrate information from different sources, to come up with a solution for a problem, or to come up with an analysis of a situation. And I suppose it's probably what a lot of things are about. But to me, that's really the greatest benefit we can have, to students, is to teach them how to think and how to analyze. The teaching of all the little factoids is okay, and they have to have a background in that, but if they can't go to a novel situation and have a methodical way of approaching a problem, then they're not going to do well in most jobs. And I think for a long time, even back when I was in school, they talked a lot about teaching students how to think, and I think that's very important. I'm not sure everybody has a real good handle on what that means and, maybe, I don't either, but to me, we need to create students that are independent kind of thinkers, and are able to go out and go to novel situations and analyze all of the variables that could be impacting that situation, and come

up with a solution. And that, to me, is kind of a philosophy of where we should be going in the future. And I think that contrasts quite a bit with at least some other cultures. We get a lot of Japanese, Chinese students here. They come in with just the world's greatest grades. We've had kids come in with 800's on either the verbal or -- usually quantitative, part of the GRE, just incredible scores, because they can memorize. I mean, that's what their teaching is about. They memorize and memorize and memorize, and they're very good at it. But you sit them down and ask them to analyze a situation and give you a solution and they're lost. And it's always been kind of amusing to me that you hear the reports of how far behind Japan America's schools are. Well, that's not really true. That's not really true. The emphasis is different, and I think that the emphasis that we have is the emphasis needed and particular in the computer age -- I mean, you know, in 20 or 30 years, all these kids are going to have computer access. There isn't any fact they're going to need to know, really, that they can't look up, other than just basic minimums. And that expertise will never go away. You're always going to have to know things. But information is going to be so readily available that the emphasis is really going to be on taking that information and doing something with it. That's important.

Another participant commented on this topic.

. . . So some people take different approaches to what they may want to do. And not being just a lab technician. Those days are past, of being able to walk in a laboratory and spend your work day analyzing samples. You have to be

knowledgeable about the entire business operation because industry is demanding that. An ability to go and talk to the supervisor, and an ability to put things down on paper, in writing, [give it] to that supervisor or manager, whoever it may be. And then have enough maturity to stand up for what you believe in. And then show that person that you can do it. Industry demands people with abilities. . . . But they expect you to hit the ground running and do your job correctly.

These types of skills were considered important because they allowed graduates to assess information not only for problem solving but because it would help them stay current in their fields.

What we're trying to do in our department is to teach people to teach themselves when they get out there because they've got to respond to technical change. So we try to give them transferability-type skills. We're going to give you the basics. But you've got to be able to train yourself too, to keep up to date. A good example is software. Now, would it help to teach you which button to push or would it be better that I taught you that this is what the software is capable of? Now here's where you can go to figure out which buttons you need. You can use on-line documentation, you can get a book and learn to use [the program]. But if you know what you want the software to do, then you can figure out the mechanics because that's going to change every six months to a year, with the way the software industry's going. So we're better off to teach the transferability skill -- the ability to teach themselves.

One measure of the quality of a program according to some participants was the placement and job performance of the graduates of that program.

From my perspective, I would look at whether or not the students could get jobs. I'd look at their employability. Are the kids, or the students who graduate from that program, are they employable? . . . I'd go to someone and ask, "If you were to hire a graduate, which university would you like to hire them from?" That would be, to me, the best indicator of success of a successful program is whether or not that student is successful in what business and industry considers to be [important] and their experience in hiring these kids.

One individual believed that an important quality of a good university was the placement and career counseling provided by that program or university.

The first thing I would look at would be does the university have a reputation, or what is their reputation . . . for providing assistance in placing that student when he or she graduates and what is their reputation in terms of providing counseling. I would hate to send a student off to the university -- I don't care what university -- unless he received assistance in counseling. But the main thing this society is geared to is; you're going to graduate, you're going to get a job, so you can provide for your family. So the reputation and quality of instruction, of course, would certainly be a big part of that. Primarily, what does the department do for the student in terms of counseling, job placement and so forth? That would be one of the first questions I would ask.

Other individuals were concerned that an overemphasis on job placement would create too much of an emphasis on skill development at the expense of critical thinking skills. To these individuals a university education is not a job training program.

[If industry took over the program] I have a feeling that it would become much more of a technical program. It would be like a technical school. I have had numerous discussions with other faculty members around LSU and at other places also, of what kind of technical expertise do we give our students? And it's always been my point, or at least a point, that this is a university and we are providing students with an education. This is not Spencer College, where we're giving them an A.A. degree. You could do that. You could certainly do that. No question about it, although the demand is not there to make it worthwhile. But you could certainly do that. And I would think that if most agencies were to come in and take over a program, they would all have certain kinds of things that they do that they'd want to see in that curriculum. But I think most of them would be very much geared towards -- all right -- "We have a [specific] component that we do, and so we need your students to learn [that]. . . . Much more of a technically-based education. Now, we expose the students to that kind of thing. I mean, I don't think we're weak on that. I don't think we're as strong on it as some employers would be, but it's always been my view that, first and foremost, that we have to educate these kids, and it's a lot more than just teaching them how to use [the equipment]. We can do that in 10 minutes, but teaching them why you would use it, and what aspects of [its applications] might

be important, and why [certain events happen] and what's gonna happen, and [what causes these effects]? Those are the things, to me, that are much more important. And so I guess if the programs would differ, it would differ more in developing, again, that analytical kind of thinking versus the hands-on, I can do this-kind of approach.

Another participant commented on this topic.

They [industry] would turn it into what would be more a technical kind of school type thing. Where you would learn to drive tractors, and you would learn that this spray kills this weed, and all the basic scientific things would more or less go out the door. The physics and the chemistry. They would just train someone specifically for what they want. It would not be a good thing

Another participant commented on this topic.

For advancing the field, for advancing our understanding of . . . that's not something they can learn with how to run a [some equipment]. Those are things that we have to understand population dynamics, and socioeconomic factors, and how come [we have] such problems. I mean, why did we get here? If we don't know how we got here, we're not going to be able to fix it. And that, to me, is what a university is about. It's not about training workers.

Finally, a university education was considered important because it is a place to learn how to think and reason about many subjects including technical ones. The ability to reason through a problem or an issue was considered to be a quality of a good citizen in our society.

And it may be idealistic that [that education is altruistic], sometimes we think of academic institutions as having these ivory towers, that the faculty hole up in.

And maybe that's not all that bad. That there be examples of the whole -- I keep saying "process" but I don't think it's process -- it's the academic system [which is] an important part of our society. It's there to have our young people go to in order to develop their ability to think, to apply their understanding to issues, both technical and global, or social, or whatever, and it allows them to be molded or brought along in the process of becoming a thinker in our society. Because that's what we're all about. We're trying to make people think. . . . The academic institutions are here to try to help people learn how to think. It's not to cram a lot of knowledge and information in their heads necessarily but, rather, to help them understand what the thinking process is all about.

Instructional Environments

Certain types of courses were considered better suited to the development of these types of skills. Laboratory courses, field experiences and internships were all considered useful formats for the development of these types of skills.

Lab courses tend to encourage critical thinking, especially lab courses that have individual projects as part of those courses, so the student is forced to utilize the knowledge that they've been gaining, to solve some problem, and they're forced to think on their own. They're not simply earning their grade by memorizing a bunch of facts and information. They have to utilize that information in some way, and utilize it in an effective way.

These types of experiences can be difficult to design. One faculty member thought that student projects that would last over long periods of time would be ideal. Such experiences could link the content in the curriculum together.

. . . I would probably, if I could do anything I wanted to, I would probably have the students doing more hands-on management, not so much the techniques of learning to use the various pieces of equipment, but doing more, "Let's go develop a [plan]. That's what we are going to do this semester. We're going to go out and we're going to take all kinds of measurements. . . We're going to come up with our objectives on what we would do, and we'll come up with a plan, how and why they would want to do that. That would be a nice way to do it. It would probably take two years to do something like that, so it would be, you know, a very -- it'd be kind of, you take the same class four semesters in a row, and you'd work your way through it. Those kinds of things, I think, would be tremendously beneficial to the students.

The application of the material to a specific concrete problem or topic was also seen as a way to present material within a course. This might be useful in combination with theoretical courses. It was believed that this arrangement encouraged students to go beyond rote learning and enhanced their ability to think about a problem.

. . . We're looking at trying to offer [the class] more frequently because there's a demand by students who want to learn the material where it's actually applied to some concrete problem or topic, and that is a definite theme, how this affects you, how it's used for you, by you, on you, and why it's going to be something

that will follow them through their lives. . . .And the students are now scheduled to take my class and then they take [a related class], and they seem to think, well, they take them simultaneously. And there seems to be a real nice synergism with the courses where they might see it twice but, gee, you know, he talked about it in a real life setting and it made more sense.

In some departments, the programs did not focus on developing subject specific experiences because these departments considered their programs to be pre-graduate school programs. One participant stated that such an arrangement might leave the baccalaureate degree graduate at a disadvantage when finding employment.

Perhaps there's a weakness in hands-on experience, taking the kids out and actually showing them, giving them the experience of working in the field. It's a field-oriented discipline obviously, so a lot of the things we do, we could spend a whole other course worth of time, taking them out and showing them how to use the various equipment. And they get a little bit of that in [various courses] but they could probably have more of that. We don't emphasize that as much as some other programs do. There are programs where they have a lot of their undergraduates get out and go to work in an [industry]. Our undergraduate program, at least in my view and the view of the other professors here, is that this is a pre-graduate program. We're training students to go to graduate school, because for the most part, they're not going to get rewarding careers with an undergraduate degree. It's just not going to happen. They need to go on for a Masters degree. And because of that, when you go into a masters program, you

get so much experience with all different kinds of equipment that, in my view, it's not critical that those kinds of students get that in the undergraduate level. That is probably somewhat of a weakness; students could be exposed to more of the techniques and equipment that is used and, certainly, if a student was going to come out of our program and go right into a state job, then from formal course work, they might not have as much experience as they need.

One method to compensate for a lack of hands on experience in a program was to hire undergraduate students as student workers.

The other reason we don't offer a lot of informal course work is because we hire most of our majors, we hire them as student workers, and they spend at least one, or two, or three years of their career here going out with graduate students and getting that hands-on experience. So that avenue is also there for those students and, normally, I'd say, even though it may be a weakness in a formal training, the informal training they get as student workers more than makes up for it. And they have a tremendous ability to learn everything there is to learn that we have here.

This individual stated that there were student worker positions available for those students who were interested in such positions. The availability of these positions was related to the amount of research being funded in the department. Student workers apparently worked as assistants to graduate students and helped with laboratory maintenance.

Most of the programs that I've been to, there are a few students that end up working as student workers. In our particular field, we just have a lot of soft money and we have a lot of research programs going on, and we are able to hire those students. And, again, not all of them take advantage of it. The good ones do, the ones that are going to go on and go to graduate school are only too anxious to get the experience. And I would say that's probably not -- it's not as ubiquitous at other schools as here. Most schools do have student labor jobs. You just have to, because the graduate students need help and if you're running a lab, you've got to have somebody that'll wash the glasses and help you with the equipment. But it's probably more prevalent here than at any other school. But that really is just because of the availability of soft money. If we didn't have any soft money, we'd have a lot fewer student worker jobs too

Another quality that faculty members listed as an industry expectation for graduates were communication skills. In a number of interviews this was considered a weakness in the preparation of the undergraduates.

We have juniors and seniors, well juniors and mid-level seniors, doing internships during the summer and during the year. And so we're starting to get better feedback in [regard to what industry expects]. . . . Communication skills always comes out really high, and it's much to everyone's chagrin, because they would rather have, "Oh, I'd like your [subject specific skills].", but they put a premium on communication skills. . . .

Another participant commented on this topic.

Well, if grades were all equal, [industry] would probably look for that student who is polished, presents himself well, and has excellent communication skills. I think that's what they're looking for. [Industry is looking for a] person who, given that everybody's got an equal amount of training, is polished and communicates well, is enthusiastic, will be a loyal and responsible worker.

Teaching these communication skills was considered difficult. One reason given was that large enrollments made it difficult to grade a large number of papers. Small classes encouraged the development of communication skills.

When you have a large class with 50, 60 students, and you don't have a teaching assistant, you're a little more hesitant to assign a paper or two or, God forbid, four or five papers in a semester, because you've got to grade them. You don't have enough time in your class to have oral presentations. So the communication skills are not going to be developed unless you have the smaller classes. . . . And, we're in better shape in agriculture than in many of the liberal arts curriculum offerings, where there's probably very little opportunity to have very small classes, where written and oral communication skills can be developed and encouraged. We have at least a few classes where we can do that in agriculture.

There are other skills that it is believed that industry expected of graduates. One of these skills was self-reliance. Some students were thought to come to college with this quality as a result of their background.

. . . Another thing that I would look at, and this is kind of hard to put into words, but it would be a sense of the person's get-up-and-go. I mean, how self-reliant [are they?]. How able are they to deal with things. And a lot of the kids I've seen -- I say kids, they aren't kids -- but a lot of the undergraduates, in particular ones from a rural, or a farm background, tend to really do well at that. They tend to be people that can handle situations. I get the impression that they've been in charge of things since they've been five or six, I guess, and they seem to know how to stay on top of things.

Another quality listed by this individual as important was experience in skill specific tasks. Students with practical experience were believed to have an advantage over students without these skills. This was considered to be more valuable to prospective employers than a strong grade average.

They don't necessarily want a great grade point. They wouldn't have to have the kind of grade point [needed] to get into graduate school. As long as your grade point wasn't extremely low. It could be down into, say, the low 2's. They're looking for someone who could "do a job." That's the most important -- and this is one thing I think that I see a lot of in the undergraduates in our department. They do know how to do a job. I mean, they can use farm equipment. They can rebuild the tiller and make it work better. They've used a backpack sprayer and they know what sprays to use, and they know the safety things you need to use around the spray rig. And they can do a lot of things. They can make things. They're inventive. They're original. I mean, all these things, you know, they've

gained from the kinds of backgrounds that they came up with, whether it has been on a farm or near a farm or what. And so I think that's the main thing. The industry is looking for someone who has gotten through the academic background to the major. The student does not have to have great grade points but they want someone who can really take charge and do things. Whereas someone with a better grade point, let's say has a 3.5, but doesn't know how to hook up the rig to the tractor, or if he drove a tractor, went off into a ditch or, you know, this type, they prefer not to have that.

Another participant believed that the most important quality was not background or skill competencies but how trainable that individual was.

. . . And then I think they want in that package someone that they can train to do very specific job requirements. That's what we've seen quite a bit on the internships. . . . But they're looking at someone they can train. And that seems to be an important characteristic.

One participant neatly summarized the qualities that he felt were important to employers. He added one more quality; that the students be willing to relocate to find employment.

What employers look for in a graduate. Prospective employers of graduates look for an individual who, first, has the ability to communicate either on one on one basis or in a group and in writing. Yes, most college student cannot write answers to essay questions using complete grammatically constructed sentences that would be brief, concise and to the point. The communication skills are very

important. Second, an individual who has the academic background and hands-on experience; one who can apply the principles he learned in class to actual situations and problems. Third, one who is self-starting, enthusiastic, trainable if need be and is willing to be relocated.

Student Organizations

Student organizations were considered valuable experiences for undergraduate students by many faculty participants in the study. Such organizations helped students mature and develop social skills that they will need in their future careers.

. . . They're maturing, [learning] how to present your best self and how to meet people from the businesses, because they meet a lot of people from business, the industry, as well as other students, and I think it's a polishing activity, and I think helps groom them for the future. I think the [specific organization], they do a lot of things in that, in raising money, and a lot of their judging activities that relate to what they're going to do when they graduate. So it is professional because they're going to use those kinds of skills, those leadership skills, that they're learning through those organizations. They're applying what they're learning and they're developing new leadership skills which they'll use once they graduate. So I think that's pretty important that we continue to nurture those kinds of activities for undergraduate students because we can't teach leadership skills in our classes. We can, but not as well as you can in some kind of youth organization, and give them a chance to build confidence, to practice what they've learned, and develop that working relationship with other people, and

they may not even know it. A team effort. A lot of team effort. Now you can do some team effort in classes, and a little bit of leadership by working on the team, but nothing like when you can with a youth organization or a professional student organization.

Despite the benefits of these organizations and the fact that some faculty members promoted these organizations in class, not all students in the college participated in these activities. One individual believed that the group of students that participated in these organizations was a small group compared to the general enrollment in the college. This group was described as having very positive feelings toward the College of Agriculture.

. . . I've been amazed at the club association and the student activities that are tied to the college. And, again, that's out of almost a thousand students, maybe it's two hundred, but those students are the ones that you see, or will talk to you, you know, in these kinds of studies, and will be over represented probably.

They're very interested and I think benefit from those social ties, and they cut across departments and disciplines. . . . They sense an identity with the college.

They see themselves as College of Ag students, which is more than I sense with some other majors or areas on campus. . . . But I also recognize there's a group of students that kind of go through the program through any university that just never ever see an advisor and, since they're self-advised now, never really come into a department and really don't have much contact with faculty outside a classroom. And, you know, I'm kind of at a loss what their satisfaction level is

or what they'd say about the college. I think, in general, it would be positive but also it would be sort of distant, a little more removed.

This group of nonparticipating students was a concern of some of the faculty. They believed that there was less student involvement on campus than there once was. This was thought to be a result of the off campus activities of these students and it was considered to be an unfortunate trend.

Our students are different. They're not as involved in extracurricular activities because they are working, because the cost has gone up. Many are paying for their own way. So there's less student involvement and, maybe, a little more student flare-up or irritability that, to me, did not exist years ago. Maybe it's because I've aged too that I'm looking at it differently. Most of the people who have been here as long as myself will tell you the students have changed. And I've been on a leadership development discussion group for the university and all of us say students are not as involved as they were. They don't have time for it.

Another participant commented on this topic.

A lot of the students today have just different demands on their time. I advocate to a freshman class now, "You should get involved in our club. It's fun. You'll learn a lot. You'll get to know the faculty. We can write better letters for you when you're seniors, when we know you better. You'll go on field trips. You'll get some professional exposure to things you don't get in class, and it'll just be a nice way to meet other students." Now I have a number of students raise their hands and say, "Well, that's fine, but I have three children at home. That's fine,

but I have a full-time job. That's fine, but I'm driving 60 miles. Is there any concession for that?" And I just see students now with different time commitments, and that's something we've had to sensitize the faculty to I think in the College and the administration's been trying to do that in terms of that students are not like us when we went through, in terms of well, there was no question I was going to finish in four years. No question but I was going to take 18+ hours. And our students, in our department, it seems like they take a lighter load but they work, and some of them have time for the clubs but a lot of them don't. And in Agriculture, frequently they're farming or they're all tied up with sort of an industry-related occupation. So I think it's a time commitment in a lot of respects because we do make an effort, a tremendous outreach in the integral classes throughout the college to engage those students. And I think a lot of them would like to be more engaged and it's just a time commitment [that keeps them from participating].

Campus Resources

A variety of resources were available for students enrolled in the college. Some of these resources were highlighted by individual faculty members. One such resource was the library.

The library was described in as a frustrating place for students by one faculty member. They were disappointed that so many materials seemed to be missing from the collections.

I have numerous students come here and complain to me that they cannot find a journal, that if the library has it, it's off being bound. If they find it, it's been torn out. We're constantly getting lists from the library to cut back. They're going to cut back. Which ones can we absolutely do without? I'm kind of tired of it. And one of the things that keeps a research one institution accredited is having a decent library. Now, this is not a problem unique to us. This is all over the country. And that's something I'm very concerned with. If we can't provide means for our students to find a way to do their own little research efforts, whether it's a term paper for a class, or a project, or if it's their master's thesis or their dissertation, [then it's a problem] I've had doctoral students come in here who have ordered copies of articles through the library because they don't have the journal, and they haven't had them in three months, and still can't get the copies.

Another faculty member appreciated the leanness of the library holdings. It allowed him to make more use of online full text data services.

As far as library, we have turned a sow's ear into a silk purse. Because we didn't have money for that library now we've got this thing called, Albert or whatever, in Colorado. And that is great. In fact, I get on the computer and there are times when I say to myself, "I don't want this journal in our library." If it isn't, I can download it. It can be faxed to me, and it doesn't cost me a cent. I mean, this library thing has turned into a great thing and it's only because we didn't have

money. Only about one or two schools in the nation utilize the Colorado Electronic System the way we do. We're really in the forefront on that.

Another resource that concerned faculty was the availability of computer laboratories for undergraduate use. Several faculty members felt that the computer laboratories in their department needed upgrading.

You're handicapped for some of the things you could do because we don't have the financial resources. Technology is hard to keep up with. We have a lab; it's outdated. I can see several of us back there teaching a lot of classes, Dr. [Name] could go back there and teach his classes back there, if it was hooked up to the mainframes. It'd be nice. . . .I mean, if we just had it then we could do it. It would be nice to have all the computers hooked up to the Internet, because I know [Name] does a lot with having students surf the Internet for information, and he gives them their assignments through E-mail. We can expand our services across the state using the Internet. I know of colleagues I work with through professional organizations, that are up in the northern part of the country like North Dakota, and they use E-mail, the Internet. It's used for distance learning. It's a wonderful medium. So I think it would provide an outreach for us if we had the financial resources to update our department, to make it on the cutting edge; to better provide some of those services.

Other faculty wished that there was a centralized computer laboratory for all students in the college to use.

I think they'd like more computer experience and that's another problem. There is no access to computers. We've got a computer lab with 12 computers. There's no other building that's going to allow us to bring [in so many students]. We teach 180 to 200 in one section, and three sections of 60, or 180 total, of [several] majors. Now that's what, 100 -- close to 360 or 400 students, and we would love to have them all get access to a computer. . . .But it's not realistic. Then you get into the grading and all that. But if they don't have access to a computer, and many students have their own personal computers but not everyone's rich. I don't have my own personal computer, I only have this one at work. And that wouldn't be fair. . . .We don't have this wonderful, centralized computer laboratory that every student could have access to. And other universities in Louisiana apparently have those things, at least that's what I heard of at a brown bag seminar. So [students] would probably complain about computer access. . . . I've heard other departments, not every one, but lots of other departments have this same complaint. This has to be a real embarrassment for LSU, that we don't have adequate computer facilities. It's pockets of small amounts, and for a flagship, major research university that's supposed to be teaching undergraduates, if that really got out, that would be bad. I mean, some faculty have even proposed, "We ought to write letters to the legislators saying we're going to make these public if you don't fund us better." Or something like that. I mean, then we'll have no students.

A third resource that was described by a faculty member was the services provided for students with disabilities. They were concerned that these services were not well promoted to the students they were intended to serve.

I think most of them don't realize how many other services are available for them on campus. We have an excellent Student Services department that can help them with . . . any disabilities that they have -- the services for students with disabilities is phenomenal, and they're not even aware of it. Because they don't want to admit they have a disability. I found out my student worker was blind in one eye. I said, "Get yourself over to the Student Services Office." And all of a sudden there was support for her with registering early. She said, "I couldn't believe it. How come people don't know about this?" I said, "It's in the catalogue. They don't read the catalogue. Or you skip freshman orientation, when you find out about all of these things." LSU has lots of support, but I don't think it's highly publicized for all of the students.

Campus Safety

Some faculty were concerned about personal safety on campus. They felt that students should be more aware of the crime incidents on campus so they would be more cautious.

They probably should look at safety. I think it's very important. For females as well as males. And there's a lot of things that go on this campus that does not get in the media. And that's typical of any large university. Women are raped and it's not reported. Men are mugged, brutally, and it's not reported. And I

think that's a disservice to the students. I think it should be reported to heighten their awareness that this can occur, so they'll take more care in leaving the library at midnight by themselves; they will go out in pairs. It's not meant to scare them away. This isn't like the inner city of New Orleans. I think it's to make them more protected, to make them more aware of their environment so they will be safer. I think there need to be more street lights on this campus. It's the darkest campus I've ever seen. I noticed today, over at the corner of the building, we've got three bushes coming up right there, right by the door. That's not good. They need to be trees, or cut the lower limbs or something, because one time coming out of [specific building], it was late, 9:00 class, 9:00, 9:30, two of us, and we saw a man standing in the bushes behind -- and it was kind of in a corner like that. So we called the campus police and he ran. Now, what was he doing standing against the brick wall behind the bushes? You know? And I looked and I thought that was strange, so, we need more campus security. And look at all the computer and computer related equipment that has been stolen on this campus. . .

Other Topics

Other topics that were mentioned by the faculty briefly included the difficulty of scheduling classes when students wanted to take them, the wealth of cultural opportunities for students on campus, and the need to promote the college and individual department to prospective students. Depending on their interests, there were

faculty who believed that there was little administrative support for teaching and also faculty who believed that there was little administrative support for research.

Finally, there were some faculty who were concerned about the usefulness of social science research in general and this study in particular. Despite repeated attempts to reassure participants that this study was not an evaluation of their program, at least one faculty member was still uncomfortable with this study.

. . . One of the things that I find very problematic about this whole process is sometimes it seems like our students' opinions, and this is coming from personal experience, my own opinions, are very accurate, and sometimes it seems like the way I felt after a given course was over -- or a given degree program was over -- is just completely inaccurate. There have been times when I was very pleased with each of my degrees, and other times when I said that this was the worst institution, the worst program in the world. And as far as what they say, I think it depends upon the students, their abilities, their experiences. You know, I think their most recent experience heavily -- weighs very heavily upon how they're feeling with their program. And I'm sure they can come up with very strong opinions both ways, and I'd be very surprised if you didn't get very contradictory comments. The fact that we aren't pleasing all of them, I think, is a good thing. If we were able to please everybody, I don't know what we should be doing wrong. It just wouldn't seem possible to me.

Summary of the Faculty Interviews

As might be expected, the faculty interviews were more reserved than the student interviews. Some faculty apparently had considered what might be the possible questions asked in the interview, and they had mentally prepared statements highlighting the strengths of their departmental research and instructional activities. This implies that these individuals may have regarded this study as an evaluation of their departments. Such individuals were difficult interviewees; they often did not answer the question they were asked but the question they had expected to be asked. Some participants chose to heavily edit their transcripts and remove any material that was conversational. They often formalized the language of their comments and thereby inadvertently edited out the richness of their interview. This may have been due to a misunderstanding of how the interview material would be used and the type of information that would be of use to this study. In retrospect, focused interviewing as a data collection technique may have been a more effective data collection method for this group if some general information about this methodology had been given to the participants when they were recruited as participants in the study.

There were many topics discussed in the faculty interviews. Some topics that did not directly relate to undergraduate educational experiences were concerns about state support for higher education and the past budget crises. The faculty have long memories; certain budget decisions and requests, particularly the two percent voluntary pay reduction still rankled some participants. The political climate created doubts about

the effectiveness of higher administration officials. Two participants believed that media publicity about the funding problems in higher education was harmful to morale of the faculty and a deterrent to prospective students.

Other topics that were of interest to the faculty were funding issues. Faculty believed that professional advancement was based in a large part on research productivity and the securing of funding to support their research activities was seen an important part of their work. For those individuals who were primarily research appointments, teaching undergraduate classes was sometimes seen as a distraction. It was often difficult for such individuals to tie their research work to their teaching responsibilities since their research interests were not usually closely related to the courses that they were assigned to teach.

Promotions of the College of Agriculture and of specific degree programs in the college to prospective students was an area mentioned for improvement. Several individuals felt that although their departments had strong offerings, their programs were not easily located by the students. They believed that some programs do not fit student held stereotypes about agriculture and that students tended to dismiss certain program areas based on these often inaccurate stereotypes. It was proposed by these individuals that better promotion of the programs to prospective students would overcome this problem. Some faculty mentioned that the agricultural extension service through 4-H clubs and other youth activities was particularly effective at developing an awareness of agriculturally related occupations.

The library was mentioned as a concern by a few faculty. It was felt that materials were often missing or not easily retrieved. Some individuals were working around the library difficulties by using online data services. Graduate students in particular were considered to be handicapped in their studies by these difficulties.

Faculty participants in the study were generally pleased with the work relationships they had with their colleagues. When these relationships were congenial, such relationships were considered to be the best part of working at L.S.U. When peer relationships were less cordial, this was often attributed to stresses created by the multiple roles required of the faculty. One individual suggested that the competitive nature of working in a research university is counterproductive to the development of cooperative work environments. A clearly defined departmental mission and the acceptance of this mission by the members of the department was considered to be conducive to the creation of a good work environment by one individual.

Individuals appeared to be attracted to academic careers through two general career paths. Some individuals were interested in becoming faculty members because the teaching and research responsibilities of an university professor was appealing to them. Other individuals were drawn to their profession by a strong interest in a specific subject and being a faculty member allowed them to pursue that interest.

A faculty position entails multiple roles. Two of these roles, researcher and teacher, were discussed by nearly every interviewee in the study. For most interviewees, being a researcher was considered to be the most professionally rewarding role. Most participants believed that advancement in their professions was dependent on their

research productivity. Although efforts to increase faculty awareness of instructional issues by the College had been noted; teaching was still considered to be the lesser activity by most participants. Several individuals believed that the undergraduate education at a strong research institution would be less student oriented than the undergraduate program at a smaller college. Those participants who were interested in undergraduate instruction appeared to be interested in this part of their work because they found it to be emotionally satisfying. They enjoyed teaching, and teaching was valued independent of any possible rewards or costs that might be involved in instructional activities. Teaching was believed by some participants to enhance the research component by developing an awareness of the importance of research in undergraduate students and by allowing faculty members to develop effective presentation skills. Teaching could negatively affect research work because teaching was considered to be a time consuming activity.

Personal interaction with the students was also described as a time consuming activity. Faculty appeared disappointed at how poorly undergraduates seem to understand the multiple roles expected of the faculty. They found that some students perceived faculty members solely as teachers and this perception led to unrealistic student expectations for the availability of the faculty outside of class. Some faculty thought that students were less respectful of the faculty than they themselves had been as undergraduates. Students were described as being consumers of higher education services rather than partners in a common interest.

According to some participants, the quality of faculty/student interactions affected the undergraduate students in two ways. Positive personal interactions within the classroom increased the student's sense of ownership in his degree. Students who developed a sense of ownership were seen by one participant to be accepting of their personal responsibility for their own education and career choices. Positive personal interactions outside the classroom also allowed the faculty to informally advise students and to make them aware of different career opportunities and courses that they may have overlooked. Student organizations were the most commonly cited mechanism for out of class interactions.

Many participants felt that advising was essential for undergraduate students. Although some individuals felt that with a catalogue and the on-line registration system, academic advising was less important than it once was, most participants believed that advising was needed to prevent scheduling problems and to help focus a student's work. Some degree programs were very open and the faculty were concerned that students would fill their schedules with courses that were offered at convenient times rather than selecting courses that met a specific career or personal goal.

Good teachers were described as organized, enthusiastic and willing to share the material. They inspired their students to develop a life-long interest in the subject area. Such individuals were described as offering practical experiences and examples of applications for the material in other subjects and venues. They recognized their students as individuals. They developed thinking skills as well as subject specific skills.

These participants believed that students came to college for a variety of reasons. These reasons included, job training, possibility of increased income, an opportunity to mature, expectations of society or family and a visible sign of personal accomplishment. The most frequently mentioned reasons for undergraduates to attend college was as preparation for employment. In some majors, employment with a baccalaureate degree was unlikely. In those departments, undergraduates were encouraged to pursue graduate work and the faculty believed that most of their undergraduates viewed these programs as pre-graduate programs.

Students were thought to have selected L.S.U. as their university because of its location in the state, its status as the flagship university and the specific programs offered in agriculture. One individual believed that the national reputation of a university would be an important consideration to a prospective student. Some individuals felt that early exposure to the university through the extension service programs such as 4-H encouraged students to select L.S.U. as their university.

A common disappointment mentioned by these participants was the lack of intellectual engagement among many undergraduate students in the knowledge base of the fields which they were studying. This was thought to be partly the result of a lack of prerequisite expertise that made it difficult to introduce undergraduates to fine points of theory. A second possible cause was that the social culture did not value academic pursuits. Several faculty were interested in ways to introduce more complex ideas to undergraduates to stimulate their interest in the theoretical foundations of their

discipline. Except for adding more advanced courses to the undergraduate program, no suggestions were made about how to accomplish this goal.

According to one participant, whether the student had graduated from a private or public secondary school did not make a difference in the performance of undergraduate students past the second year of college. Several faculty noted a marked improvement in the preparation of the undergraduate students since the increased admission requirements and they believed that this had been a good decision. Numerous faculty mentioned the importance of study skills and time management skills and felt that these skills often had not been well developed in the secondary school systems.

These individuals believed that an university education differed from technical school education. An university education prepared individuals for advancement into management rather than entry level jobs, according to one participant. Most faculty described how an university education also provided students with an opportunity to develop reasoning skills.

Diversity had been an important quality of a good program according to the student participants. Diversity was also a characteristic of a strong program for the faculty. Strong programs offered a diversity of courses in the degree plan particularly in the applied liberal arts and business courses. It was considered important that students develop a variety of skills so that they could work in a number of areas within a field. Communication skills were considered to be a demand of the industries that hired program graduates. Some faculty supported a liberal arts component because they felt

these courses developed stronger writing and speaking skills and they provided a good foundation for future study.

Specific skill development in the use of equipment was supported by the faculty with reservations. Although students were thought to need some skill training in order to gain employment, it appeared to concern faculty that such courses often took time away from a program that could be used to develop what was described as more transferable problem solving skills. For this reason, some faculty supported the development of these skills through student work assignments, internships or industry based employment through cooperative programs.

The diversity of faculty backgrounds was considered by some participants to be an indicator of a strong program for three reasons. First, it was thought that having larger departments would allow more faculty to teach courses within their research areas providing opportunities for students to interact with individuals who were influential in those areas. Second, larger departments also meant that students would have different instructors for different courses and so would be exposed to a variety of viewpoints. Third, the inclusion of international faculty would provide an international perspective on the problems and issues in a given field. One individual suggested that team teaching might be an useful method to increase faculty diversity even in small departments and they hoped that in the future various college and departmental boundaries would be less rigid so that more team teaching would be possible.

Diversity among the student body was another aspect of diversity that was described by the faculty. Some faculty enjoyed teaching courses that brought students

from a variety of fields within the college together because this variety of interests often created rich classroom environments. One individual felt that the degree programs within the college were becoming more appealing to female students and that this gender diversity was a positive trend.

The diversity among the student body was also described by these participants as various subgroups. Students were described as traditional and nontraditional students. Nontraditional students were described by various participants as being older than traditional students, more focused in their expectations for the college experience and sometimes more demanding in requests from faculty. Faculty also described themselves and some students according to whether they came from a rural or urban background. Individuals who were from rural backgrounds were thought to have valuable practical experiences based on that background. In some fields, individuals from urban backgrounds had modified their courses of study because they believed that certain areas within agriculture would be difficult to work in for individuals who were from urban backgrounds. Students were also described based on how active they had been in College of Agriculture activities. Students who had been very active in student organizations were often seen as very supportive of the college and were described by one individual as a kind of elite group. Students who were outside these organizations were described by this same individual as a less understood group. Student organizations were believed by several interviewees to be very beneficial to those students who participated in them.

Chapter 5

Summary, Conclusions and Recommendations

This chapter provides a summary of the objectives, procedures and major findings of the study. The summary of the findings includes a description of the identified major evaulands identified in the study. Detailed summaries of the results of each part of the study can be found in Chapter 4.

Purpose and Objectives

The purpose of this study was to determine appropriate evaluands for a College of Agriculture based on the perceptions of two shareholder groups of the college, the faculty and undergraduate students. There were two basics questions addressed in the study:

1. What characteristics meet student expectations for their experiences with the undergraduate agricultural college programs?
2. What characteristics define the concept "good" program for agricultural faculty?

Student expectations were found to include instructional, emotional and professional expectations. Student opinions about their college experiences as expressed in the study seem related to the goals and influences that prompted them to attend college. These goals and influences apparently determined which characteristics and competencies they expected to gain from their college experience. In general, competencies that most students expected to gain included good oral and written

communication skills and some subject specific skills that had applications in their areas of interest.

Faculty expectations for student competencies and characteristics also included oral and written communications skills and subject specific skills. Faculty hoped to develop their students' intellectual curiosity and engagement in the subjects that they taught. They also felt that it was important for students to develop critical thinking skills.

Methodology

There were three parts to the study; a pilot study, the undergraduate student study and the faculty study. The pilot study consisted of one focus group and four individual interviews. The purpose of the pilot study was to validate the interview guide. The interview guide was considered effective based on the pilot study and except for addition of an introductory question was unchanged for the undergraduate study. Undergraduate students were classified based on two break points, gender and nontraditional/traditional student status. Nontraditional students were narrowly defined as students who were older than 26 years of age. Traditional students were narrowly defined as students who were 26 years of age or younger. These break points were selected because gender and nontraditional/traditional student status were identified in the literature review as characteristics that could affect the discussion patterns. The resulting four groups were traditional female students, nontraditional female students, nontraditional male students and traditional male students. For the female groups, data were collected using focus groups and interviews. For the male groups, data were

collected by individual interview. Including the pilot focus group, there were four focus groups conducted for the study. A fifth focus group had only two participants and was treated as an unplanned paired interview for analysis. Including the pilot interviews, there were thirteen individual student interviews conducted in the study. There were seven student participants in the pilot and twenty-nine student participants in the student focus groups and interviews. A total of thirty-six individuals participated in the undergraduate study.

The data for the faculty study were collected using individual interviews. Faculty participants were nominated by their departments. There were twelve faculty interviews conducted for the faculty study. Interview transcripts were reviewed by each participant. In addition, this study was reviewed by a graduate examining committee that was drawn from the same population as the faculty participants. Their review of the findings of this document provided a de facto member check for findings of the faculty study.

Findings

Many themes developed in the student and faculty discussions. Several themes may be considered subsets of larger themes. In this summary, the primary themes are identified in bold type, the secondary themes are listed in italics.

For individuals in this study, student satisfaction with their college experience developed from two factors, **goals** and **ontology**. **Goals** were of two types, *less-defined goals* and *well-defined goals*. *Less-defined goals* included *societal reasons* and *general*

employment requirements. Well-defined goals included a need for *personal growth*, preparation for *employment opportunities* and a *strong interest in the subject material*.

Goals determined how a student viewed the success of his college experience.

Influences were related to **goals**. **Influences** were motivating factors that caused an individual to attend college or to enroll in a particular program. **Influences** included *family, societal expectations* and *economic considerations*. Although many faculty recognized that there were multiple reasons that students attended college, some faculty considered college primarily a *professional preparation* either for finding a job as a means of increasing income or as a *prerequisite for graduate study*. Other faculty believed that college was a means for *self improvement*, a search for *knowledge* or an opportunity to learn *to think*. It is important to recognize that if the student considered his experience successful then it was a successful experience for him, even if it did not lead to related employment or graduate school enrollment. What the student hoped to achieve determined the criteria on which he judged his experience.

There were two ontologies that affected how students felt about their college experiences, **college as a game** and **college as a partnership**. These ontologies were not stagnant but appeared to vary from course to course. In both ontologies, an intermediate objective was to gain information or assistance that would help the student reach their particular goal. In **college as a partnership**, (see figure 13), primary information sources were *personal interactions, advising, and student organizations*. In **college as a game**, (see figure 14), primary information sources were, *peers, graduate students and other social groups*. If the individual was a good *cultural fit*, student

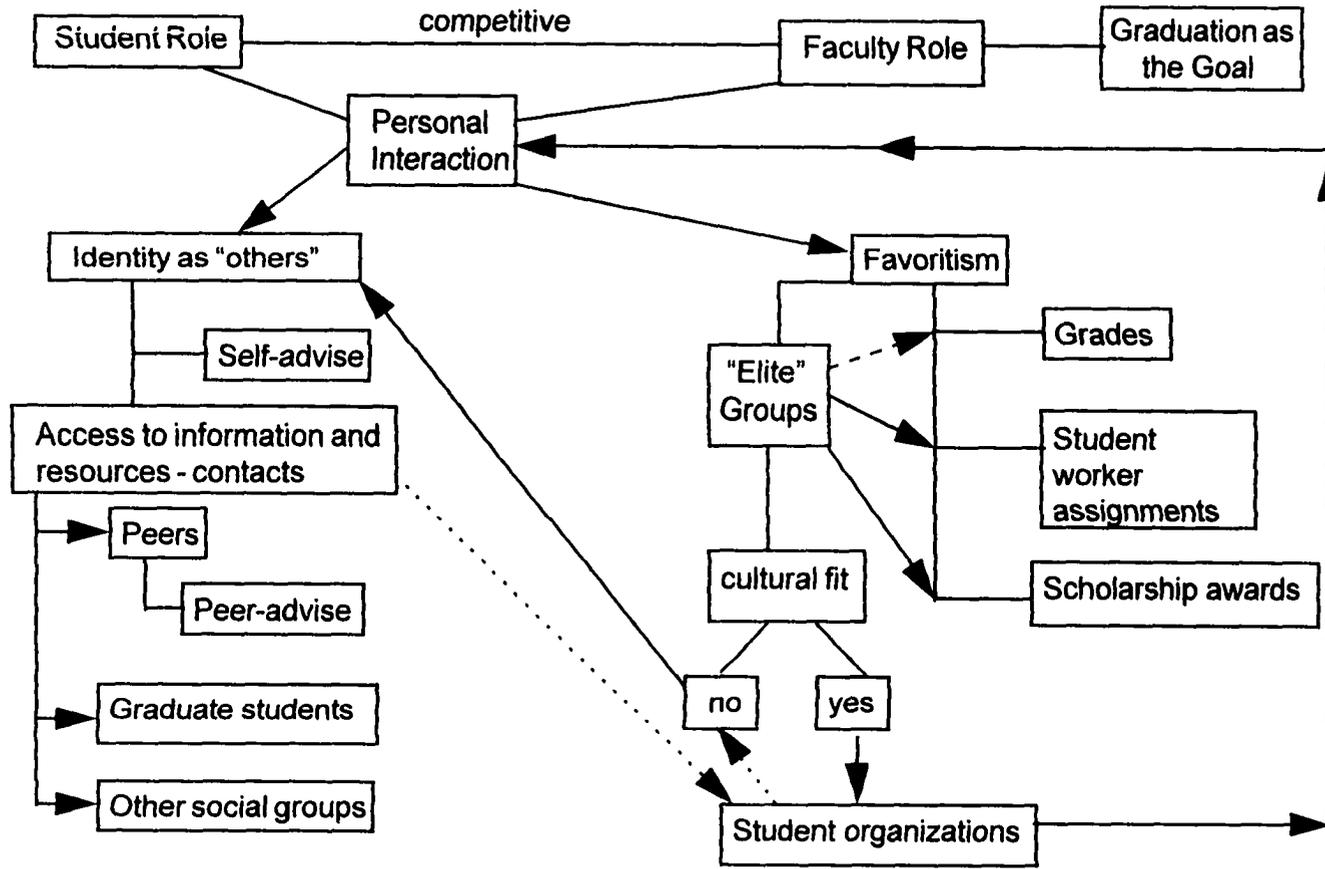


Figure 11. College as a Game.

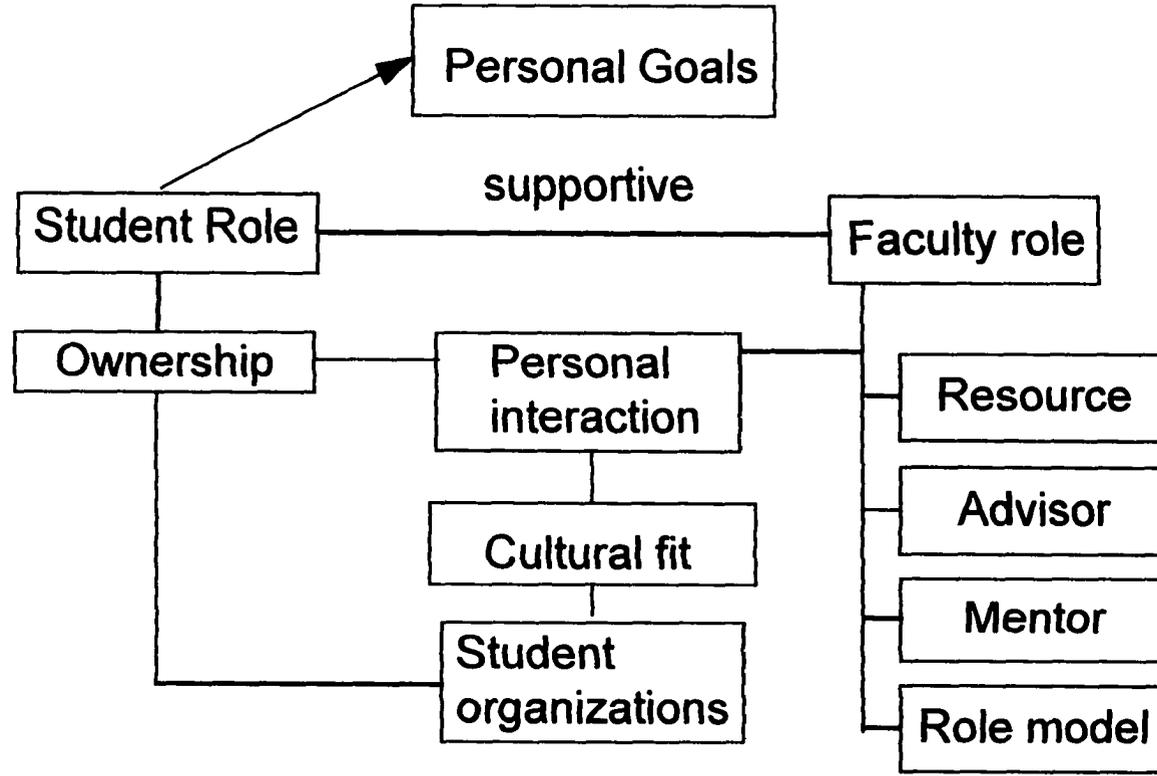


Figure 12. College as a Partnership.

organizations may have been an additional information source. The common mechanism for obtaining information in both ontologies was through **personal interactions** with faculty, administrators and students.

Personal interaction with the faculty, administrators and students was a major theme in the student and faculty interviews. Students see such behaviors as *faculty knowing their name, being spoken to outside class* and detailed *feedback* in their work as evidence of *mutual respect* between the faculty and the student. Faculty see personal interactions as an *opportunity to advise* the students and to *intellectually engage* the student in the subject matter of their field. If the student is comfortable in his personal interactions with the faculty it may encourage a feeling of *ownership*, the idea that the class belongs to the students in **partnership** with the faculty. If the student is not comfortable in his interactions with the faculty, he may be a believer in college as a **game**.

For some students, a measure of success in a college course is how well they play the *game*. They viewed education as a contest in which the goal was to succeed in spite of the teacher. Grades were seen as favors to bestow rather than as measures of achievement. The primary purpose of grades was to *weed out* students who are undesirable. To succeed you must discover the *secrets*. These *secrets* varied but usually include skills or behaviors not directly related to the content of a course. Examples include such information as knowing how to get into laboratories after hours, knowing who is responsible for desirable student work assignments, having contacts who can work through the bureaucracy. In **college as a game**, this information was

usually discovered by the student through information gathered from other students since the faculty was seen as a barrier to success. Often, the type of information sought would not be known to the faculty. Students who believed in college as a **game** often saw themselves as educational *consumers* and faculty and administrators are *service providers*. In their view, their success or failure was primarily a result of how effective the providers were in meeting their needs and these needs include everything from classroom success to the job placement and personal counseling. The *responsibility* for their success was the task of the faculty and their expectations for the faculty were extensive. Since the objective in this ontology was to take the path of least resistance, they are unlikely to participate in any activity that they perceived as a potential source of extra work, such as a student organization, unless this activity provided them with contacts to obtain needed information.

In the student viewpoint, the characteristics of a good class or a good teacher vary depending on whether they see themselves in **partnership** with the faculty or as a player in the **game** and how these characteristics relate to their **goals**. If the goal of attending college is to obtain a degree simply for the value of having a degree, then a good class might be one with minimum outside work, no laboratory and a flexible schedule. If the student is a player in the **game**, lectures are preferable since they require the least amount of contact with the instructor, often repeat information in the text thereby saving the student from having to read the text. The test format should be objective so that the student can avoid having to determine the *hidden agenda*. If they see themselves in **partnership** with the faculty, they may participate in student

activities to gain insights to better understand individual faculty members to determine the smoothest path to completing their degree. The objective is to earn the best grade in the least amount of time and effort since this is the fastest way of obtaining the degree. In contrast, a student who is attending college for *personal development* prefers discussion, rigorous standards, and expects outside work and projects. His goal is to become *an educated person*; if he is a player in the **game**, he will seek out the faculty during office hours to explore additional information that the instructor did not cover in class. If he is not a player in the *game*, he may seek *diversity* of courses to develop himself into a more rounded person. These interactions can create effects that have many possible causes. It is also possible that apparent relationships may not be relationships at all but rather convenient coincidences, an important consideration when using these constructs to design survey instruments.

Cultural fit was another factor that determines how some students feel about their experiences. The college appeared to be home to different social cultures. These can be described as *farm boy versus city slicker*, *elite versus others*, *gender and age issues*, and *international culture issues*. These cultures were identified by both faculty and students as important factors in student success. These cultural characteristics vary from department to department within the college and students felt most successful when they felt a part of the group. A good fit encouraged *ownership*. A poor fit often resulted in a change in the major field of study or a minimal participation in college activities or even dropping out of college altogether. In its most destructive form, a

poor cultural fit seems to encourage a *pack mentality* where outsiders are persecuted or ostracized by the dominant group.

Other issues were related to age and to gender. Nontraditional male students expressed disappointment with lack of respect toward faculty that they felt was displayed by the traditional students. Nontraditional women students felt more conspicuous as older students than nontraditional males. Regardless of age, the expectations and stress affecting student participants who were parents were more similar to concerns of other students with family obligations than they were to other individuals their own age and gender who were not parents. For the student participants in the study, parenthood was a more important descriptive characteristic than nontraditional student status.

Though these separate cultures appear to exist, **diversity**, both in course offerings and student and faculty composition was important to students, particularly female students. In their view, part of the college experience was the opportunity of meeting and interacting with others not like themselves to gain a broader perspective. Faculty and males see the diverse backgrounds and work experiences of faculty and students as an enrichment to the degree program. Females see these issues more in terms of the characteristics the individuals represented, such as race, gender, and cultural background.

Diversity for students had many separate meanings. Diversity of courses referred to the variety of courses that were available for them to take within their degree program. In this content, diversity was related to degree of structure of a degree plan.

Depending on their goals, course diversity could be a negative or a positive quality in a program. For individuals who were attending college as preparation for *skill development*, diversity was considered a negative because these individuals were interested only in courses for which they could see a direct application of the material. For these individuals, diversity of course work was only positive when it meant a diverse selection of course work within the major field of study. In contrast, individuals who wanted to become *an educated person* enjoyed diversity of course work. For some individuals, diversity of course work meant the opportunity to enroll in courses in which they were interested that were outside their major field of study.

A second meaning for diversity was as a synonym for variety. A diverse class was one in which a variety of instructional methods had been used. Related to this meaning was the description of a course of study as a diverse program. In that case diversity meant that there were a variety of experiences available for students to participate in.

Diversity was also used to describe the variety of cultural backgrounds of students and faculty. Most participants in this study considered a diversity of cultural backgrounds to be a positive element in a university. Faculty with international backgrounds were considered to be a strength as long as those individuals spoke English clearly. Faculty also used diversity to describe the variety of research interests and expertise of the faculty; this meaning was not used in the student interviews or focus groups.

Good teachers were described as *personable, organized and fair*. *Personable* had four elements; *available outside of class, knew students by name, caring and enthusiastic*. *Organized* faculty were *flexible and did not allow their research to interfere with their teaching*. *Flexible* had three different meanings; there were adjustable deadlines, a variety of instructional methods, and time was allowed for questions in class. *Research* was a concern of most students who were concerned that research obligations interfered with the time that a faculty member would be available to work with students. Students were concerned that faculty who were involved in research would be less *prepared for class*.

Other terms seemed to be commonly defined by nearly every student. *Fairness* had two characteristics, fairness in *grading and lack of favoritism in personal interactions*. Grading issues had two elements, *favoritism and testing*. Favoritism was considered evident when there was a lack of consistency in grading across courses or between individuals. *Testing* had three elements; concern that the test material reflected the activities in the class, that the tests were regularly updated and that the expectations for the course were clearly defined by the instructor. Fairness could be related to favoritism. Faculty/student interactions were considered to be favoritism when they resulted in one group or individual receiving information or assistance that was not offered to the rest of the group.

Other terms had multiple meanings. Support referred to both personal and financial support. Personal support was an emotional outlet provided by either family members or peers. Financial support allows for more time to be spent in campus related

activities. Many students appear to select their major based on the availability of scholarship support. *Scheduling* problems are mentioned by many students and were related to advising. Students find course rotations cumbersome and if they take a course out of sequence it may delay graduation by as much as a year. For some students, scheduling issues are related to *safety* issues. Some individuals are not comfortable being in certain areas on campus at night and will avoid night classes held in these areas. This concern was expressed by both genders.

Advising is mentioned as a need by both faculty and students. *Advising* is an area of frustration for some faculty members who find it difficult to keep up with students who can self advise with a degree form and REGGIE, an online telephone registration system. These faculty believe that students who self advise often enrolled in courses without regard to the course rotation schedules which helped create *scheduling* problems. Faculty also believed that students might not be mature enough or experienced enough to select courses that were suitable for their goals. It was also considered difficult to promote new courses and student activities to self advised students.

Many students mentioned the importance of the appearance of the campus. They are proud of their school and *maintenance* is important so that the campus is an impressive place to show to family and friends. This is particularly important to students who are first generation college students. These students appeared to hold an idealized image of what a university should look like and it was important to them that L.S.U.

look like this idealized image. Few students mentioned the library except to comment on how difficult it was to retrieve materials from the collections.

Other concerns mentioned primarily by the faculty include *lack of job opportunities for graduates*, the need for *better written and oral communications*, the opportunity to *apply knowledge* and need to develop *critical thinking skills*. The *lack of job opportunities* is seen as a function of the economic status of agriculturally related segments of the overall economy and is perceived as outside the control of the university community. Because of the difficulty of finding employment, a number of faculty see graduate degrees as a requirement for work in some agricultural professions. The opportunities to apply knowledge occurred in various venues in the university, including laboratory experiences, internships, co-op programs, field experiences, student organizations and student worker assignments. Faculty saw these experiences as providing the needed hand-on knowledge that may not be easily presented in a classroom environment. Unfortunately, except for laboratory classes, field experiences, and student organizations, students did not relate these experiences to their program of study. For example, a student who is assigned a student work position to gain expertise that he lacks often perceives that experience as evidence that his classroom preparation was weak rather than as an opportunity to learn new material. Thus the statement "I learned more from my student worker assignments than from my class" would be considered a negative comment by many students but would be considered a positive statement by some faculty members. In the best case, student workers saw their

assignment as a convenient way to earn income, in the worst case they saw these assignments as “busy work” that the faculty were too lazy to complete themselves.

Critical *thinking skills* appear to be important to the faculty and they use several different methods and instructional formats to encourage these skills in class. Although students list examples of activities that they participated in that were intended to promote critical thinking skills, they very rarely describe these activities with the term critical thinking. It may be that even though they appear to develop some of these skills, the term has no meaning for undergraduates.

Other areas mentioned by faculty include time management, responsibility and safety. Time management was seen as an important skill for both students and faculty and is recognized as such by both groups. Responsibility for faculty generally referred to personal responsibility of the students. *Safety* issues were mentioned by both the faculty and the students and referred to personal safety on campus.

Conclusions and Discussion

Evaluands

Depending on the purpose of the intended evaluation, any of the minor or major themes could be used as evaluands. Which theme to develop into evaluands would depend on which quality the evaluation is intended to measure. For example, the qualities of that “good teacher” included the themes, *personable*, *fair*, and *organized*. To assess the quality of teaching in terms meaningful to the students, survey items could be developed around these three themes rather than the less defined concept “good teacher.” These themes would be used as evaluands for the concept of “good teacher.”

However, if the quality of interest is “fairness” the themes related to fairness would become the evaluand for that concept. The themes that are appropriate to use as evaluands depends on the degree of specificity required by the evaluation.

Certain themes that developed during the interviews and focus groups in the study were important to nearly every other theme in the study. These themes should be considered the primary evaluands identified for the College of Agriculture. These eight themes were influences on college attendance, goals, ontologies, personal interactions, diversity, good teaching, thinking skills and communication skills.

Influences on College Attendance

There were two factors that affected how students viewed their college experience, influences and goals. The first factor was the influences that motivated an individual to attend college. In this study, these influences came from three sources; family expectations, societal expectations and economic expectations. These expectations could be motivating or they could be a barrier. How the student dealt with these influences often affected his goals for his college experience.

Goals

Goals were related to influences. Goals were the standards by which the student would judge the success of his own college experience. If the individual achieved his goals in college, whatever these goals were, he considered his college experience a success. There were varieties of goals, some of which were more defined than others.

It is important to identify a student’s goals and influences because these factors affect what types of educational environments the student considered to be beneficial.

Program or instructional characteristics that were considered positive by one student might be considered negative by a different student who held a different primary goal. For example, an individual who hopes that college will make him an educated person valued a loosely structured degree plan that allows him to explore other fields. In contrast, an individual whose primary goal is preparation for employment often preferred fewer open electives; he wants to concentrate on developing specific skills within his field. Both of these individuals have legitimate goals but their assessment of the same program, department or course will be different. It is not enough to ask students what they valued in a program unless it is also known how they determined these value judgements. An effective student follow-up should recognize the different expectations that students bring to college since these are part of the standards by which they judge their experiences in that program.

Another illustration from the study was the frequent comment by the students on the importance of the appearance of the campus. One building, the CEBA building was roundly disliked by nearly every student in the study. It was described as an “office building” and it “did not fit” with the rest of the campus. After repeated comments about the attractiveness of the campus in general and this building in particular, it became apparent that these comments were not just comments about architectural aesthetics. It was important to these individuals that L.S.U. look like a university. “Real” universities do not have class buildings that look like office towers. CEBA was unacceptable because it was unauthentic; it did not meet these individual’s

preconceptions of a university. They wanted to attend a genuine university, part of their standard for such a place included what a university should look like.

As this example illustrates, the surface answer may depend on other connections unknown to the researcher. This study attempted an outline of some of these preconceptions so that future researchers can develop appropriate questions. In the above example, a more accurate question would not be “Did you find the campus attractive?” but rather “Did the campus meet your expectations for the campus of a major university?”. In the application of these findings to future projects it is important to consider the underlying idea and connections behind these concepts.

Ontologies

There were two ontologies identified in the study. The first ontology, “college as a game” was a view of the university experience where the students and faculty have competitive relationship. The second ontology, “college as a partnership” was a view of the college experience where the faculty and students were in a supportive relationship. Both of these ontologies were described in detail in Chapter 4.

Which ontology a student believed in affected how he interacted with his peers and with the faculty. Taken with information about the student’s goals, these ontologies would be helpful in identifying what experiences students value.

Using these two factors, students could be classified into one of ten general types. Not all of these types were represented in this study. The possible types are illustrated in Table 6.

These types are not stable with respect to ontologies. Students seem to move between ontologies depending on the quality of their interactions with the faculty.

Type 1 and Type 2 students have less defined goals. They may be attending college because their parent required them to attend or because they believed that they need some type of degree for employment. If their relationship with the faculty is poor, Type 1 students may decide that part of the requirement for success in college is to work around the faculty to find information. In such cases they would tend to depend on their peers for academic advising. If their relationship with the faculty is good, Type 1 valued this relationship because of the benefits that such a relationship could provide. Some of these individuals expected faculty to help them find jobs upon graduation. These individuals enjoyed loosely structured degree programs that allowed time for “fun” classes. Good teachers were expected to be flexible with “flexible” meaning that they were willing to adjust deadlines. They appreciated a variety of presentation methods particularly discussion and group projects. They enjoyed the “war stories” of the faculty because they liked having a familiar relationship with the faculty.

Type 2 students were similar to Type 1 except they viewed the faculty as being in partnership with the student. When they formed positive relationships with the faculty, they did so because they enjoyed getting to know these individuals as people. They enjoyed the “war stories” of the faculty because they were interested in history of these individuals and the practical lessons contained in such stories.

Type 3 students were attending college because they felt they need a college degree to gain a good job. They preferred degree programs that were highly structured with predetermined elective so that they could avoid any costly mistakes that might

Table 6. Student types

Less defined goals	Goals	“college as a game”	“college as a partnership”
	Social reasons	Type 1	Type 2
More defined goals	General employment requirement	Type 3	Type 4
	Personal growth	Type 5	Type 6
	Employment opportunities	Type 7	Type 8
	Strong interest in the subject material	Type 9	Type 10

delay their graduation. They preferred lectures and individual projects because these were quick to complete. In most cases, they saw faculty as a resource for help with specific problems. They expected their interactions with the faculty to be confined to the

subject at hand; they did not enjoy personal stories or war stories. They did not participate in student organizations because such activities took time and were not directly related to earning a degree.

Type 6 individuals were interested in personal growth and attended college to become “educated” people or to redress a regret. They enjoyed interactions with faculty because such interactions made them feel valued as individuals. They liked being a part of a college community. Such individuals appreciated diversity of all types. They enjoyed all types of classes including liberal arts courses. They had some expectations for college that may be described as the “ivy halls” viewpoint of college. Faculty were expected to be knowledgeable, disciplined and somewhat formal.

Type 7 and Type 8 individuals were enrolled in college to develop skills for a specific profession. Both types admired faculty who had some experience in industry and had little patience for individuals who were career academics. Favorite courses for these individuals had some application of the material to a specific problem. They did not enjoy liberal arts courses. Type 7 individuals were interested in interactions with other students to find better ways to meet the expectations of the instructor. When they had a poor relationship with a faculty member they tended to avoid interacting with that individual. Type 8 individuals were similar to Type 7 individuals except they saw the faculty as a resource for information and as advisors. Type 8 individuals were more interested in interacting with faculty because they hoped this would help them gain jobs. Some of these individuals were considering attending graduate school in a professional field.

Type 10 individuals were attending college because they had a strong interest in the subjects that they were studying. Some of these individuals were considering graduate work but unlike Type 8 individuals, the attraction of graduate school was to learn more about a subject area rather than to prepare for a specific profession. These individuals enjoyed interacting with the faculty because they were interested in the research work of the faculty. They enjoyed diverse course offerings in their area of interest and valued working with faculty who had diverse backgrounds in the subject area.

Two possible types were omitted from this description. There were no individuals who fit the profile of Type 4 in the study. It may be that there are no Type 4 individuals. It seems more likely that there were no individuals who fit this profile who participated in the study. There was one student participant who may have been a Type 9 individual, but this participant was a part of the pilot study and as such, his interview was not included in the data of the study.

This listing illustrates that the interaction between goals and ontologies can affect how a student will evaluate his own experiences. In the design of a follow-up study of student satisfaction, an understanding of these relationships would be helpful in designing accurate survey instruments.

Personal Interactions

The single most important characteristic of the College for both faculty and students was the quality of personal interactions that they encountered. For the students, positive personal interactions with the faculty were interpreted as the faculty taking

interest in them as individuals. For the faculty, personal interaction provided an opportunity to intellectually engage the students in the subject matter and a chance for informal advising.

Personal interactions were important because these interactions provided information to the students. Students who were not comfortable interacting with the faculty sought their information through other associations. These students appeared to be more distantly involved with their education. Students who were comfortable with the faculty and peers in their departments were often members of student organizations. Members in these organizations were believed to gain emotional and other benefits from their increased access to the faculty. Some students thought that this arrangement led to better student work assignments, scholarship opportunities and indirectly to better grades.

In designing a follow-up survey for the College, it may be useful to know if students found information related to their degree or courses to be readily available for all students. Since access to information appeared to be one reason why students appreciate personal interactions with the faculty, one way to measure the importance of faculty/student interactions may be to find out how students seek additional information when they need it. If they are comfortable seeking faculty assistance outside of class, this may be one measure of positive interaction between the faculty and students.

Another indicator of the quality of faculty/ student interactions could be involvement in student organizations, at least for traditional students. Students who were active in student organizations were very involved in the College often had warm

relationships with the faculty. This would not be a good indicator of personal interactions among nontraditional students. These students rarely participated in student organization due to time pressures and family responsibilities.

Diversity

Diversity was considered by all participant groups to be an important element of a university. Diversity had multiple meanings for participants. Diversity of courses meant the variety of courses that were available for students. Diversity of experiences referred to the variety of activities available for students such as study opportunities, student organizations and travel opportunities. Diversity of culture referred to the various ethnic and cultural groups represented on campus.

Diversity of faculty had two meanings. First, diversity referred to the advantage of having an international perspective among the faculty. This was considered a valued part of the university experience. Second, it referred to the various work, educational and research expertise the faculty brought to their departments. Some students felt that a mix of older and newer faculty enhanced this type of diversity in a department.

Good Teaching

The definition of a good teacher was uniform across all groups in the study except for the term "flexible." Teachers were described as personable, organized knowledge, fair and flexible. Flexible had multiple meanings; willing to move deadlines, willing to use a variety of instructional methods and allowing times for questions in class. Since these meanings are so dissimilar, flexible would be a difficult

word to use in a survey design. If a student were asked on in a quantitative survey to rate how flexible his instructor had been it would difficult to know which of these qualities he would be referring to.

Thinking Skills

One quality of a good undergraduate program according to the faculty was the development of thinking skills. Although students described activities that used critical thinking skills they do not use this term. The concept is important but the term appeared to be unknown to many undergraduates. Since even in the faculty interviews, this concept had by several names, such as analytic thinking, problem solving, the ability to think, this term may not be useful in a follow-up survey. Although “critical thinking” is an established term in the literature, (Brookfield, 1987), it does not appear to be a term common to the student vernacular.

Communication Skills

Communication skills were considered important by every group in the college. This term always meant writing and speaking skills.

Recommendations

Methodological Recommendations

Besides identifying the primary evaluands, the design of the study provided a comparison of two different qualitative methodologies, focus groups and focused interviews. For establishing general common themes, there were no major differences found in the quality of these methods. Detailed information was more likely to be discussed in the interviews, particularly for topics in which the participants had some

emotional investment. It was also easier to pursue comments made during an interview that were of specific interest because of the conversational format of the interview. Interviews were also easier to schedule but they were more costly. For this type of study, either method appeared to be appropriate. If the sensitive topics were to be examined or if populations to be examined were to be from an exclusive group, interviews would be the more effective method.

Other recommendations include the need for over-recruitment of undergraduate students, particularly nontraditional male students in future studies of undergraduate students. Although a standard recommendation for most focus group research is to over-recruit by two individuals, this was not effective for undergraduate traditional male students. Based on the experiences with this study, it would be more effective to recruit twice the number of participants desired for a focus group to be held with undergraduate male traditional students. For other undergraduate groups, it would be more effective to over-recruit by four participants for every focus group planned.

Another recommendation is that the purpose of the study be clearly defined to potential participants. Since interview and focus group research is a novel experience for many participants, they are uncertain about what they should expect. By providing some information about the purpose of the study along with some general information about the interview or focus group experience, potential participants might be less likely to prepare answers to questions that they expect to be asked.

It is also recommended that future researchers obtain signed informed consent forms from all participants. Although some participants may be intimidated by this

request, the author believes it is in the best interest of both the researcher and the participant to obtain informed consent. Interviews are legally exempt from the requirement of informed consent unless all of the subjects are recorded in such a way that they can be identified and linked to the subject and this linkage could place the subject at risk of criminal or civil liability or financial standing or employment and the research deals with sensitive or illegal behavior on the part of the subject (Department of Health and Human Services, 1981). By these criteria, the study was not required to obtain legal consent since all three of these elements would not be met. However, Seidman (1991) encouraged the use of informed consent even when it is not legally required to provide an ethical common ground and to protect the researcher from potential misunderstanding. For this reason, it was decided to use a consent form in the study. During the course of this study, this proved to be a fortunate decision in at least one case.

Recommendations for Future Study

The first follow-up study developed from this work should be to use this information to design a survey of industry experts on what they consider to be important characteristics and skills for recent graduates of a College of Agriculture. Information collected in this study could be used to develop seed items for a Delphi study to identify this information. Such a study would allow all major shareholders of the undergraduate program input into the design of a follow-up survey for graduates.

A second study would be to use the results of this study and the results of the industry study to develop a quantitative survey of program graduates. Another possible

use of this work would be to examine subgroups within the undergraduate student body and to compare these groups based on common evaluands. No ethnic minorities were included in this study. A similar study with ethnic minorities might provide some information about how these students view their college experiences as compared to other student groups.

A very interesting observation in this study was the realization that, for the participants in this study, students who were parents appear to be more similar to other parents than to other students their own age. A traditional student who was a parent appeared to have stresses and concerns similar to those of a nontraditional student who was also parent. This finding should be examined in a quantitative study to see if it is generalizable to any other group besides the participants of this study.

Finally, paired interviews as a method to explore the strength of convictions should be explored. This method may be a useful way to verify the findings of qualitative study or to explore divergent viewpoints that have been identified in a quantitative study. It may be possible to pair participants in interviews with divergent perspectives in order to explore the basis for these perspectives. Since more commitment to an idea is required to defend that idea or to disagree with an opposing viewpoint, such disagreements may indicate areas of particular importance to those individuals. The potential for this method may have limited use as since some information about the participants would have to be known in order to select appropriate pairs.

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Appendix A

Sample Nomination Letter for Department Heads

The text of the letter read as follows:

In today's environment, it is increasingly important that publicly funded programs have value for the publics they serve. The identification of the values and priorities of affected groups is important in the development of an effective longitudinal follow-up program for graduates. Qualitative methods have been used successfully in defining and clarifying the concerns of multiple stakeholder groups.

A study is currently underway using a qualitative approach to identify the important factors that should be included in the development of a follow-up program for graduates of the College of Agriculture. This study will involve both advanced undergraduate students and experienced faculty in the college. Input from these two stakeholder groups will be used to identify the elements that are considered core to all undergraduate degree programs within the college. This study has been developed on behalf of the College of Agriculture and is being conducted under the direct supervision of the Dean's office. This project is a first step in the development of a follow-up program model for all graduates of the College. Your input, review, and assistance will be sought at several points during the development of this model.

For this initial step to be successful, we need your help in two areas, the selection of faculty participants and the encouragement of student participation. Please provide the names of two faculty members in your department who meet the following

criteria:

1. They have taught undergraduate students in the College of Agriculture within the last four years.
2. They have taught at L.S.U. at least three years.
3. They are willing to be interviewed in two separate sessions lasting no more than one and one-half hours each.
4. They are individuals that you believe would willingly participate in this study.

In addition, please encourage the faculty members selected and the student representatives which will be selected from each of the undergraduate departments in the college to participate in the study.

As would be expected, in a study of this type, individual contributions will not be identifiable in the final document. Interview and focus group responses will be considered as confidential information, with the provision that in the student focus group responses are shared by the entire group. In no case will the transcripts or tapes of the interviews be circulated.

Your support of this project is much appreciated. Attached is an abstract of the project. If you have any questions please contact either of us, Mike Burnett (at phone number) or Karen Juneau (at phone number).

Appendix B
Consent Form

Although it is a highly unlikely event, you should be aware that research interviews are not privileged information and are thereby subject to subpoena by the courts. Therefore, illegal activities cannot be held confidential if they are revealed in an interview or focus group and are subsequently requested by a court of law. If you are involved in any illegal activity and reveal that activity during this study, that information cannot legally be held confidential.

Please sign and date this document to indicate that you have read, understand and agree to the conditions outlined above.

Participant name: _____

Participant signature: _____

Date: _____

Appendix C

Interview Guide for the Student Participants

1. Objective: What competencies and characteristics meet student expectations for their experiences with the undergraduate agricultural college programs?
2. Questions
 - a. Introductory remarks and participant introductions
 - b. Introductory question
 - i. What attracted you to come to L.S.U.?
 - c. Transitional questions
 - i. Now that you are seniors, what is your opinion of the agricultural programs you enrolled in at L.S.U.?
 - ii. Imagine the ideal college program. What would it be like? (Use response cards)
 - (1) How is it different from program at L.S.U.?
 - (2) What parts of our program would you hold on to?
 - (3) What parts would you do differently?
 - d. Key questions
 - i. Almost everyone has doubts along the way, moments that you wonder if this is the right program for you.
 - (1) When you had some doubts, what influenced these doubts?
 - (2) What are some of the doubts that you had.
 - ii. For you personally, what parts of the program worked well for you.

- iii. Given that many students who began with you will not finish, what are some of the things that helped you to finish when others did not?
- e. Summary questions
 - i. Imagine that your younger brother or sister or maybe a cousin are considering earning a degree in your field. What do they need to know
 - (1) About themselves
 - (2) About the program
 - ii. What is the one thing about students like yourself would you want the college to know when reviewing this program?

Appendix D

Interview Guide For the Faculty Participants

- I. Objective: What competencies and characteristics define the concept “good” educational program for agricultural students?
- II. Introductory remarks
- III. Introductory questions
 - A. What are the most positive characteristics of your educational program?
 - B. What program characteristics do you consider to be the least desirable?
 - C. What are the most positive characteristic of your work environment?
 - D. What characteristic of your work environment is the least desirable?
 - E. How do you see the educational program for students in relation to the work environment for you?
- IV. Transitional questions
 - A. Imagine you have a child who is graduating from high school this year who is planning to study an agricultural field? What would you want your child to consider?
 1. If he is looking at programs nationwide?
 2. What about L.S.U.?
 3. What characteristics of the college and/or program influenced your selection?
- V. Key questions
 - A. What do you think industry is looking for in recent graduates?

B. If industry could change your program, what do you think they would do?

1. Would their ideas be right?

2. What changes would you want?

VI. Summary questions

A. I am also talking with student groups. How do you think they will describe their experiences in your programs?

B. When this discussion is summarized, what is the one item that you want to be sure is included?

Appendix E

Sample Student Letter

The basic text of the student varied slightly depending on whether the student was an interview or focus group participant. The text of the student letters read as follows:

For the focus group:

Many individuals reflect on their college days as a particularly important time in their life. During your years at L.S.U., you have gathered many experiences. Certain faculty and courses may have greatly influenced your opinions and plan of study. There may also have been other experiences that you find memorable that helped you develop socially. Each of these influences is part of the particular undergraduate experience that helped define your identity as a student in the College of Agriculture. It is the importance that you place on these experiences that is of particular interest to the College.

It is essential that the College of Agriculture understand what experiences undergraduates value most as we seek to shape our programs to meet the needs of future students. You have been chosen as one of a small group of students to participate in a discussion group called a focus group. Your participation will allow you a significant role in charting the future direction of the College. Since the group of which you are a member is very small, the participation of each member is important. The College of Agriculture considers your participation a critical element in the success of this activity. Dean [Name] and I hope that you will decide to participate.

Your perspective of the College of Agriculture at L.S.U is unique. Although every student has singular experiences, other perspectives are held in common with your classmates. Often individuals do not realize that they were part of a shared experience that was particularly important to them until they listen to another individual voice a similar opinion. Focus groups are useful for exploring these types of experiences. Your focus group will last not more than two hours and will meet for only one time. Only students like yourself can give us the information that we need.

This is your chance to make a real difference in the growth of your College. I hope that you will not miss this opportunity. I will call you within the week to make an appointment with you to discuss the details of the focus group and to answer any questions that you may have. I am looking forward to meeting you.

For an interview:

Many individuals reflect on their college days as a particularly important time in their life. During your years at L.S.U., you have gathered many experiences. Certain faculty and courses may have greatly influenced your opinions and plan of study. There may also have been other experiences that you find memorable that helped you develop socially. Each of these influences is part of the particular undergraduate experience that helped define your identity as a student in the College of Agriculture. It is the importance that you place on these experiences that is of particular interest to the College.

It is essential that the College of Agriculture understand what experiences undergraduates value most. You have been chosen as one of a small group of students

to participate in an individual interview. Your participation will allow you a significant role in charting the future direction of the College. Since very few students are being asked to participate, each individual interview is important. The College considers your participation a critical element in the success of this activity. Dean [Name] and I hope that you will decide to participate.

You have an unique perspective of the College of Agriculture at L.S.U. Only students like yourself can give us the information that we need. Your interview will last not more than 90 minutes and you will have the opportunity to review the summary of the interview after the summary is complete. All individual interview responses will be treated as confidential information and you will not be identified in the summary.

This is your chance to make a real difference in the growth of your College. I hope that you will not miss this opportunity. I will call you within the next week to make an appointment with you to discuss the details of the interview and to answer any questions that you may have. I look forward to meeting you.

After the student had agreed to participate, a second student letter was sent as a reminder. The text of the second student letters read as follows:

Thank you for agreeing to participate in the focus group. As I explained on the phone, the size of the group is very small so your participation is critical to the success of the group. I have enclosed a partial map of the campus; the highlighted building is the Old Forestry Building. This is a two-story pink building which is labeled on the South Stadium Street facade as the School of Vocational Education. I will meet you in the lobby of this building since it is small and is a good meeting point. We will move to a

meeting room after the group is assembled. Please wear something comfortable; there is no need to "dress up" for this meeting.

I have also enclosed two copies of a consent form that you should read and sign. This form explains the limitations of confidentiality of focus groups and interviews and is a formal presentation of the information I discussed with you on the phone. Please bring one copy with you; the second copy is for you to keep. If you should forget to bring this form with you, I will have extra copies available before the beginning of the focus group session.

The focus group will begin promptly at [time and date] and will conclude at [time]. If you have any questions that I have not addressed about this activity, please call me at (office phone) or at (home phone). I am looking forward to meeting you.

VITA

Karen Renee Jordan Juneau was born in Shreveport, Louisiana, in 1957. Her parents are Mr. and Mrs. G.M. Barziza and she has two brothers, Mr. Randall Jordan, and Mr. Glynn Jordan. She moved to Texas at an early age. She graduated from Texas A&M University in 1980 with a Bachelor of Science degree in Industrial Education. She married just prior to beginning her graduate studies and completed a Master of Science degree in Industrial Education at Texas A&M University in 1981. After graduating, she and her husband moved to St. Louis, Missouri, where she worked in construction management as a cost estimator and later began a small computer-related business. After five years, the family moved to Baton Rouge, Louisiana. She worked as an industrial arts teacher in a local high school for two and half years, leaving that position for a position at the university. For nearly six years, she has been an instructor in the Industrial and Manufacturing Systems Engineering department at Louisiana State University. She is married to Dr. Jon Juneau and they have two daughters, Christina and Nyssa.

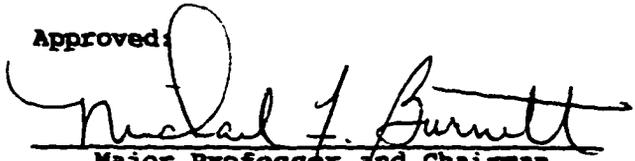
DOCTORAL EXAMINATION AND DISSERTATION REPORT

Candidate: Karen Renee Juneau

Major Field: Vocational Education

Title of Dissertation: An Identification of Primary Evaluands as Perceived by Undergraduate Students and Faculty in a College of Agriculture

Approved:

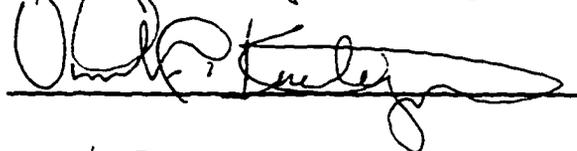

Major Professor and Chairman


Dean of the Graduate School

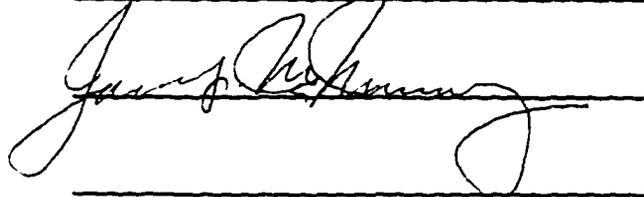
EXAMINING COMMITTEE:











Date of Examination:

December 18, 1996