





This is to certify that the  
dissertation entitled

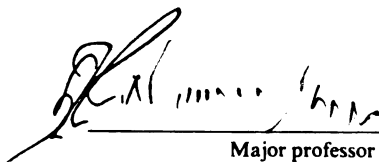
**THE COLLEGIATE EXPERIENCE OF FIRST TERM  
TRADITIONAL AGE  
COMMUTER STUDENTS**

presented by

**LISA MARIE JOHNSON**

has been accepted towards fulfillment  
of the requirements for

Ph.D. degree in **EDUCATIONAL  
ADMINISTRATION**



Major professor

Date 5/9/91

**PLACE IN RETURN BOX to remove this checkout from your record.  
TO AVOID FINES return on or before date due.**

DATE DUE	DATE DUE	DATE DUE
MAR 06 1995	_____	_____
MAR 12 1992	_____	_____
MAR 30 1999	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

**MSU Is An Affirmative Action/Equal Opportunity Institution**

c:\circ\datedue.pm3-p.1

**THE COLLEGIATE EXPERIENCE OF FIRST TERM  
TRADITIONAL AGE  
COMMUTER STUDENTS**

**By**

**LISA MARIE JOHNSON**

**A DISSERTATION**

**Submitted to  
Michigan State University  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the degree of**

**DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY**

**Department of Educational Administration**

**1991**



## **ABSTRACT**

### **THE COLLEGIATE EXPERIENCE OF FIRST TERM TRADITIONAL AGE COMMUTER STUDENTS**

**By**

**Lisa Marie Johnson**

The first term collegiate experience of nine traditional age (17-19 years old) commuter students at a large mid-western university were described and explained through an analysis of the events, activities, behaviors, and interpretations that were a part of their university experience. The commuter student orientation meeting, classes, academic advising, interaction with peers, interaction with faculty, and use of campus services and programs were all investigated.

Ethnography or the field methods of participant observation, observation, and interviewing were used as the methodology to collect data. Moreover, the researcher's observations were supplemented by the accounts and interpretations received by the students in the sample through taped interviews and personal journals.

The major findings show that on the university campus where the study was conducted, commuter students were neglected in programs, services, and staff time. Furthermore, they had little contact with their peers and almost no contact with faculty.

Although nearly half of the students who attended this university were commuters, most of the students in the sample

felt a stigma about their commuter status. Many of the participants felt somewhat isolated from the social life on campus and had no commuter group to identify with. They did not utilize the vast majority of campus programs and services. No systematic process was in place to make them aware of what was available.

Other areas which negatively impacted on the commuters in the sample included the following: poor academic advising, limited on-campus parking, too much free time between classes, and large (hundreds of students) classes. Also, several participants felt there was no one comfortable and convenient place for commuters to spend their free time.

Finally, at the end of the term, most of the participants did report having a sense of belonging with a group of peers or a class but felt no strong connection to the university as a whole.

Copyright by  
LISA MARIE JOHNSON  
1991

TO MY HUSBAND  
HANK VENUTI  
WHO THROUGH HIS LOVE AND WISDOM  
TAUGHT ME LIFE'S MOST  
IMPORTANT SECRETS

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

There are many people who in various ways helped me through this project. First and foremost, I want to acknowledge my husband, Hank Venuti. He helped me develop the topic for this dissertation and gave me constant guidance and support. Hank listened to me for sometimes never ending hours while I reflected and processed all that I was learning. His editorial suggestions provided me with the sophisticated touches needed for a finished product. Finally, he gave up Boston, an exciting lifestyle, and his own career ambitions so that I could complete the Ph.D.

A second, very significant person is my grandmother, Emily Faris. As a strong, and yet gentle woman, she has always been a role model for me. Through her encouragement and support, she helped me feel close to home even though I was far away.

At Michigan State, several individuals made this accomplishment possible. Dr. Eldon Nonnamaker, who was the Chair of my doctoral committee, served as a teacher, advisor, and sincere human being. While I studied the ideals of higher education, he reminded me of the realities. Throughout my doctoral program, he encouraged me to develop my ideas and to

believe that I would finish the tasks required to receive my doctorate.

I'd also like to thank the other members of my doctoral committee, Dr. Louis Hekhuis, Dr. Marvin Grandstaff, and Dr. Keith Anderson, for their time, expertise, and guidance. Their confidence in my project gave me the enthusiasm needed to finish.

This study would, of course, not have been possible if it were not for the nine commuter students who volunteered to share their college experiences with me. They gave me many hours of quality, unrushed time. Of these students, Kelly Reed\* and Julia Winslow\* deserve a special thanks. Their excitement about having their story told was inspirational.

In addition, the staff at the Service-Learning Center, where I worked for the three years of my doctoral program, provided me with the flexibility one needs to be a student and an employee. Mary Edens, the office director, taught me many things including the role of experiential education on a college or university campus.

Finally, I wish to recognize the word processing skill of Mary Splitt who put my manuscript into this final form.

\* Names are pseudonyms

## **TABLE OF CONTENTS**

<b>List of Tables</b>	<b>vii</b>
<b>List of Figures</b>	<b>viii</b>
<b>Chapter 1: Overview of the Study</b>	<b>1</b>
Introduction	1
The Problem	1
Purpose and Research Questions	5
Methodology	9
Sample	14
<b>Chapter 2: Review of the Literature</b>	<b>18</b>
Introduction	18
Definition, Diversity, and Distribution	18
The Residential Tradition in American	
Higher Education	21
The Neglected Majority	24
Attitudes Toward Commuters	25
Needs and Concerns Common to	
Commuter Students	29
Steps to the Design of a Commuter	
Program	31
The Freshman Year Experience	36
Essential Experiences for First	
Year Students	37
Orientation	37
Academic Advising	40
Freshmen Commuter Students and	
Faculty Interaction	42
Freshmen Commuter Students and	
Peer Interaction	45
<b>Chapter 3: Methodology</b>	<b>48</b>
Introduction	48
Theoretical Framework	48
Features of Qualitative Research	50
Methods of Data Collection	52
Sampling	60
Data Analysis	62
Pre-Field Procedures	63
Limitations and Advantages	65

<b>Chapter 4: Presentation of the Findings</b>	<b>69</b>
Introduction	69
Preparing for the New Academic Year	69
Background on Commuter Students in the Sample	71
Julia Winslow	71
Kelly Reed	71
Victor Robins	72
Boris Allyn	73
Ariel Howe	74
Rip Hayes	75
Bill Hipp	75
Tom Morrison	76
Joe Trinity	77
Orienting New Students to the University	78
Commuter Student Orientation Meeting	79
Commuter Resource Fair	84
Commuter Weekly Meetings	85
The First Few Days of College	86
Mobility, Parking On-Campus, and the Commuter Bus	86
Registration	88
Buying Class Text Books	89
Learning the Campus	90
The Stigma of Being a Commuter Student	91
University Classes	93
Time Between Classes	98
The Result of Too Much Time with No Where To Go	99
Contact With Peers	100
Contact With Faculty	103
Academic Advising	105
Campus Services & Programs	108
Developing A Sense of Belonging	110
 <b>Chapter 5: Summary, Findings, Conclusions,             Recommendations, and Reflections</b>	 <b>113</b>
Introduction	113
Summary	113
Purpose of the Study	113
Field Methods Used	113
Findings	114
Review of the Literature	114
Major Findings and Conclusions	114



Recommendations	123
General Recommendations	123
Specific Recommendations	124
Reflections	124
Recommendations for Further Study	125
Appendices	
Appendix A Information Sheet	126
Appendix B Letter of Consent	127
Appendix C UCRIHS Approval Letter	129
Appendix D Commuter Resource Fair Participation Letter	130
Appendix E Events and Happenings	131
Appendix F Commuter Student Weekly Meeting	132
Appendix G Ass't VP Job Description	133
Bibliography	135

## **LIST OF TABLES**

<b>1.</b>	<b>Profile of Commuter Students in the Sample</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>2.</b>	<b>List of Classes Visited</b>	<b>94</b>

## **LIST OF FIGURES**

<b>1.</b>	<b>Steps of the Design of a Commuter Program</b>	<b>36</b>
-----------	--	-----------

## **CHAPTER 1**

### **OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY**

#### **INTRODUCTION**

This study was designed to describe and explain the first term collegiate experience of traditional age commuter students at a large mid-western university. It contains an analysis of the events, activities, behaviors and interactions that were a part of their university experience. Consequently, the commuter student orientation meeting, classes, academic advising, interaction with peers, interaction with faculty, and the use of campus services and programs were all investigated. The researcher's observations were supplemented by the accounts and interpretations received by commuter students through taped interviews and personal journals.

#### **THE PROBLEM**

According to a recent article in The Chronicle of Higher Education, "only two million, or about 17 percent of college students nationwide live on campus; the rest are commuters" (Jacoby, 1989, p. A44). These figures would suggest that about 83 percent of undergraduate students in the United States do not live in college or university owned housing.

Moreover, it has been estimated that about 69 percent of all entering freshmen are commuters (Rice, 1990, p. 316).

Even though commuter students have been the majority population on many college campuses for some time now, they are frequently ignored and misunderstood. The neglect of this student population was summed up by Linkins when she said, "It has taken many educators too long to realize who their students are versus who they have been, who they think they are or who they want them to be" (1986, p. 11). Linkins' statement was reaffirmed by Rice when he said "despite their numbers, the commuting freshmen have largely been ignored by college and university officials" (1990, p. 317).

Various reasons are cited in the literature as to why college and university officials have not given equal attention to, and hence not understood, this group of students. One reason often mentioned is that "Most educators' formative undergraduate experiences, as well as their professional preparation, are rooted in [a] residential model" (Linkins, 1986, p. 11). Even professional preparation programs for student affairs/development administrators have been unresponsive to commuter students. Stamatakos has identified some of the obstacles in student affairs/development professional preparation programs in relation to commuter students. The first is the fact that most of these programs tend to be located on university campuses with rather large residential populations (Stamatakos, 1980, p. 1). Even if commuter students are the

majority population on one of these campuses, the fact that there is a large residential population means most of the graduate assistantships will be in the residence halls. When a program has so many graduate students working in the residence halls, most of the examples of incidents or student populations discussed in classes are taken from a residential model.

Another reason given by Stamatakos relates to the basic literature written and read by professionals in higher education. The professional literature tends to focus almost exclusively on traditional resident students (Stamatakos, 1980, p. 2). Resident students have always been easy to study because they are a captive group with similar characteristics. According to Stamatakos, "The sum and substance of these observations then is that by habit, tradition, mutual arrangement, past experience, examples, the structure and nature of our literature, and limited perceptions of the opportunities on our own campuses, preparation programs do not prepare new professionals for working developmentally with the large majority of American college students" (1980, p. 3).

Research conducted and reported by Preusz supports Stamatakos' observations about preparation programs. Preusz surveyed 78 heads of college student personnel programs to see if they were aware of the unique needs of commuter students and to see if they offered courses in their preparation programs about commuters. Of the 65 individuals who responded, 54 of them said they did not offer any courses on

commuter students (Preusz, 1986, p. 371). Moreover, 31 of them believed that the same type of professional preparation was needed for those who work on residential or commuter campuses (Preusz, 1986, p. 371).

When commuter students were studied and written about, they were often compared and contrasted to resident students (Rice, 1990, p. 318; Rhatigan, 1986, p. 4). According to Rice, these early investigations created "...a tendency to view commuting students as a homogeneous population thus fostering a stereotypical view of the commuter" (1990, p. 318). Rhatigan went on to say that "It is inappropriate, and certainly misleading, to view commuting students as a homogeneous" (1986, p. 10).

The characteristics of the commuting student population vary from campus to campus. In fact, some have said that the most striking characteristic of this group is their diversity (Knefelkamp and Stewart, 1983, p. 62). Stewart and Rue said that "Unlike describing homogeneous resident student populations, it is not good practice to transfer generalizations about commuter students from one institution to another" (1983, p. 7). Because they could vary in age, gender, race, employment status, family circumstances, career goals, full or part time status, and so on, their needs and collegiate experiences would be different. This diversity in the commuter student population has also contributed to the unresponsiveness this majority has received by college and university administrators.

The consequence of this lack of information, experience, and understanding about commuter students can be found on campuses throughout the United States. Many educators are making decisions, writing policy, and setting up programs on their campuses based on a residential model. It is hoped that this research study will, in some small way, help educators understand the commuter experience as it pertains to traditional age students on a large mid-western university campus. A detailed description and analysis of a segment of the commuter student experience might broaden the perspective as well as sensitize individuals who themselves have not experienced college as a commuter.

#### **PURPOSE AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

The researcher's purpose in this study was to describe and explain the first term collegiate experience of traditional age commuter students at a large mid-western university. To accomplish this, the following questions were generated to provide a framework for this investigation.

1. How often do first term traditional age commuter students interact with university faculty?

Alexander Astin (1975) conducted a longitudinal study of college dropouts which identified factors in the college environment that significantly affected student persistence in college. Astin used these findings as the basis for his student involvement theory (1984, p. 302). According to Astin, "Frequent interaction with faculty is more strongly



related to satisfaction with college than any other type of involvement or, indeed, any other student or institutional characteristics" (1984, p. 304). The importance of first term traditional age commuter student and faculty interaction cannot, therefore, be over estimated.

2. Where and how do first term traditional age commuter students meet their peers?

An important aspect of the college experience is meeting other students and forming new friendships (Wilmes and Quade, 1986, p. 31). This is sometimes a challenge for commuter students because it is difficult to get to know others within many formal classroom settings. Are the university classrooms providing first term freshmen commuter students with opportunities to meet their peers? Or, are first term commuter students finding other vehicles on campus to satisfy this social need? Finally, do first term freshmen commuter students want to meet their campus peers?

3. What do first term traditional age commuter students do between classes? Where do they go? Who are they with?

The more time a student spends on campus, the better that student will feel about the institution (Wilmes and Quade, 1986, p. 28). It is, therefore, important for commuter students to feel comfortable on campus. Do first term commuter students frequent lounges, the union, cafeterias, etc.? If so, are they meeting and interacting with others who are a part of the campus community?

On the other hand, if first term traditional age commuter students are not staying on campus between classes, where are they going? Are they spending time off campus for practical, personal, social, and/or economic reasons? Finally, who are they interacting with off campus? What commuter students do between classes is certainly an important aspect of their collegiate experience.

4. How accessible is information, university programs, and personnel to first term traditional age commuter students?

Failure to provide commuter students with timely and accurate information about the campus can have a series of negative effects on students one of which includes lower satisfaction with their college experience (Wilmes and Quade, 1986, p. 30). It is, therefore, important to know if, where, and how first term traditional age commuter students receive information about the university.

Alexander Astin said, "The theory of student involvement, however, suggests that the most precious institutional resource may be student time" (1984, p. 301). Astin acknowledges that educators are competing with other forces in students' lives for a share of that finite time and energy (1984, p. 301). This is particularly true for commuter students who have to deal with mobility issues involved in moving between home, college, and usually work.

So it is extremely important that university programs and personnel be accessible to commuter students. The commuter

student experience is different from that of the resident student who has access to information, programs, and university personnel in the residence halls around the clock.

5. Which, if any, campus services and programs are utilized by first term traditional age commuter students?

The Council for the Advancement of Standards and Guidelines for Services/Development Programs (CAS) is the result of over six years of work by hundreds of higher education/student development professionals from twenty-two different professional associations. The section on commuter student programs and services lists the minimum goals and standards which should be a part of any commuter student program. According to these standards and guidelines, the broad goals of a commuter student program must be to

- Provide services and facilities to meet physical, personal safety, and educational needs of commuting students based on institutional assessment of their needs;
- Ensure that the institution provides commuter students equal access to services and facilities;
- Make available opportunities to assist commuting students in their individual development; and
- Act as an advocate for commuting students.

(CAS Standards and Guidelines for Student Services/Development Programs, 1986, p. 27)

These guidelines delineate the importance of knowing if, and when, campus services and programs are utilized by commuter students. Moreover, if campus services and programs are used, how did commuters find out that they were available to them and for what reason did they seek them out?

6. After one term on campus, do first year traditional age commuter students begin to develop a sense of belonging with the university?

According to Wilmes and Quade, "All too often, institutions perpetuate a variety of roadblocks that inhibit the student's ability to develop a sense of belonging" (1986, p. 28). Moreover, these authors have indicated that involvement in campus life is related to the student developing a sense of belonging (Wilmes and Quade, 1986, p. 28).

Because most colleges and universities are committed to the education of the whole student, it is important to understand if and how first year traditional age commuter students begin to develop a sense of belonging with the university. Andreas et al. have said, "Student development educators who work with commuting students know how important it is to help them make connections and build support networks to enhance their opportunities for interaction, involvement, and investment in the campus" (1988, p. 1).

These six general research questions initially guided the researcher's observations and interviews. But as is expected with an ethnographic study, as the investigation proceeded, new avenues of inquiry were generated.

#### **METHODOLOGY**

In order to describe and explain the first term collegiate experience of traditional age commuter students,

the researcher needed to get as close as possible to them to analyze their behaviors, perspectives, and interactions, as well as the events they encountered. Moreover, these actions needed to be understood in the natural setting of which they were a part (Bogan and Biklen, 1982, p. 27). Hence, ethnography or the field methods of participant observation, observation, and interviewing were selected. This researcher knows of no better way to learn about a group of students and their experience with a university than to participate in their collegiate experience.

The participant observer gathers data by participating in the daily life of the group he/she is studying (Becker, 1958, p. 652). Bogan and Biklen describe this method by saying "The researcher enters the world of the people he or she plans to study, gets to know them, and systematically keeps a detailed written record of what is heard and observed" (1982, p. 2). For this study, the researcher watched and participated with first term traditional age commuter students to see what situations they ordinarily met and how they behaved in them (Becker, 1958, p. 652). Moreover, the researcher entered into conversations with these students to discover their interpretations of the events observed.

According to Becker, "The first thing we note about participant observation research is that analysis is carried on sequentially, important parts of the analysis being made while the researcher is still gathering his data" (195, p. 653). So as data was gathered, a kind of provisional analysis

of it determined what further information was needed. As Bogan and Biklen said, "You are not putting together a puzzle, whose picture you already know. You are constructing a picture which takes shape as you collect and examine the parts" (1982, p. 29). So sequential analysis not only determined what to study next, but it also dictated which field method (participant observation, observation, or interviewing) was the most appropriate in gathering the data desired.

The researcher participated in and/or observed every significant aspect of the collegiate experience of first term traditional age commuter students. As a result, the researcher experienced with participants the logistical difficulties of being a new commuter student. These included scheduling problems, finding a parking place on campus, riding the commuter bus, as well as locating and getting to classes. Moreover, the researcher participated in and/or observed planned university functions and time off between classes. Some of these planned functions included the commuter student orientation meeting, the commuter resource fair, classes, and commuter student meetings.

Since the researcher's purpose in this study was to gain a total understanding of the collegiate experience of the commuter students who participated, the methodology of the personal interview was also adopted. According to Bogan and Biklen, "Qualitative researchers are concerned with what are called participant perspectives. They focus on questions

like: What do they take for granted?" (1982, p. 29-30). Therefore, each of the commuter students in the study were privately interviewed twice. Interviews took place at the middle and again at the end of the term. All interviews were taped to ensure accuracy of records.

The interviews were guided by the research questions presented earlier. But, because the experiences of each commuter student were unique, the researcher kept the interviews flexible. In some cases, the researcher probed additional areas of the collegiate experience that became important as the interview proceeded. In each case, every attempt was made to understand and document the interpretations and perceptions of the respondents.

Finally, because it was impossible for the researcher to be with participants every minute of their first term collegiate experience, one additional method was used, the journal. All of the commuter students who participated in the study kept a personal journal of their first term college experience. Participants were asked to write in their journals at least once a week. The researcher used these journals as respondent validation thus checking many of the inferences which were drawn from other data sources (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1990, p. 198). So that each journal would reflect the unique collegiate experience of each participant, the researcher did not put too much structure on journal entries. Consequently, the commuter student participants were told to write about any event, activity,

person, emotion, etc., that they felt was significant to them regarding their college experience.

As stated earlier, the purpose of this study was to describe and explain the first term collegiate experience of commuter students at a large mid-western university. Because the sample is unique, the researcher makes no broad claim of generalizability. Rather, it is hoped that the reader's understanding of this commuter student population and their experience on a large university campus is enhanced. Glaser and Strauss have addressed the issue of generalizability in qualitative studies by saying, "Conventional theorizing claims generality of scope; that is, one assumes that if the relationship holds for one group under certain conditions, it will probably hold for other groups under the same conditions" (1967, p. 106). Other qualitative researchers "concern themselves not with the question of whether their findings are generalizable, but rather with the question of to which other settings and subjects they are generalizable" (Bogan and Biklen, 1982, p. 41).

Finally, the researcher used every available method of data collection (participant observation, observation, taped interviews, and student journals) to increase the reliability and validity of this study. Yet, because the study does not contain quantifiable data or standard tests of validity and reliability, this limitation needs to be addressed in light of the strength of this methodology. Cusick did this quite eloquently when he said,



As one lives close to a situation, his description and explanation of it have a first-person quality which other methodologies lack. As he continues to live close to and move deeper into that situation his perceptions have a validity that is simply unapproachable by any so called standardized method. Likewise, as his validity becomes better, so his reliability, which is an extension of his validity, becomes better. As the researcher is the actual instrument, as he becomes more aware, more valid, so he must of necessity become more reliable.

(1973, p. 232)

### **SAMPLE**

In this study the researcher attempted to describe and explain the first term collegiate experience of first term commuter students. Hammersley and Atkinson said that "In ethnography, decisions must be made about where to observe and when, who to talk to and what to ask, as well as about what to record and how" (1990, p. 45). Thus, theoretical sampling was deemed the most appropriate sampling technique. Glaser and Strauss have defined theoretical sampling as "the process of data collection for gathering theory whereby the analyst jointly collects, codes, and analyzes his data and decides what data to collect next and where to find them in order to develop his theory as it emerges" (1967, p. 105).

Glaser and Strauss have also written about the contrast between theoretical sampling and statistical (random) sampling. According to these authors, "Theoretical sampling is done to discover categories and their properties, and to suggest the interrelationship into a theory" (1967, p. 106). By contrast, "Statistical sampling is done to obtain evidence

on distributions of people among categories to be used in descriptions or verifications" (Glaser and Strauss, 1967, p. 106). Therefore, an "adequate sample" for one type of research would be very different from another type (Glaser and Strauss, 1967, p. 106). One who generates theory does not need to combine random sampling with theoretical sampling when setting forth relationships among categories and properties (Glaser and Strauss, 1967, p. 106).

Bogan and Biklen said that when using ethnographic research methods, "because of the detail sought, most studies have small samples" (1982, p. 2). With this in mind the sample for this study consisted of nine traditional age (17-19 years old) first term commuter students. There were three female participants and six male participants. The participants came from five different hometowns and thus represented various commuting distances from campus. Moreover, they represented different family compositions, hours of employment, and college majors (see Table 1).

On Sunday, September 16, 1990, the Office of Student Life on the campus where this study was conducted, sponsored a Commuter Student Orientation Meeting from noon-1:15 p.m. for all new commuter students. The meeting was designed to give new commuter students some basic information about the campus prior to registration and classes. The researcher was given permission to give the students who attended (about 50 students) a few words about the study. The researcher asked anyone present who thought they might like to participate in

**Table 1****Profile of Commuter Students in the Sample**

<b>Student</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Family Composition</b>	<b>Hometown</b>	<b>Hours Employed</b>	<b>Major</b>	<b>Gender</b>
<b>Julie Winslow*</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>Stepparent Family</b>	<b>Lansing</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>Resource Development</b>	<b>F</b>
<b>Kelly Reed</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>Divorced Mother</b>	<b>Lansing</b>	<b>25-30</b>	<b>Political Science</b>	<b>F</b>
<b>Victor Robins</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>Intact Family</b>	<b>Perry</b>	<b>10-15</b>	<b>No Preference</b>	<b>M</b>
<b>Boris Allyn</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>Divorced Mother</b>	<b>Lansing</b>	<b>25-30</b>	<b>Electrical Engineering</b>	<b>M</b>
<b>Ariel Howe</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>Intact Family</b>	<b>Haslett</b>	<b>none</b>	<b>Math</b>	<b>F</b>
<b>Rip Hayes</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>Stepparent Family</b>	<b>Potterville</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>Micro. Biology</b>	<b>M</b>
<b>Bill Hipp</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>Uncle</b>	<b>Lansing</b>	<b>none</b>	<b>Computer Engineering</b>	<b>M</b>
<b>Tom Morrison</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>Aunt</b>	<b>Lansing</b>	<b>none</b>	<b>Electrical Engineering</b>	<b>M</b>
<b>Joe Trinity</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>Stepparent Family</b>	<b>Owosso</b>	<b>none</b>	<b>Mechanical Engineering</b>	<b>M</b>

**\*All participant names presented in the study are pseudonyms.**

the study to complete an information sheet (see Appendix A).

Later, a meeting was set up with each student who completed the information sheet. At that meeting, the study was fully

explained. Students who were still interested in participating were given a Letter of Consent (see Appendix B) to read and sign. Moreover, each was given a journal, which was purchased by the researcher, to use for the study.

The study was conducted at a university that has a housing policy that states:

All freshman and sophomore students, including transfer students (0-84 credits accumulated), are required to reside in University housing, with the following exceptions:

- a. Married students.
- b. Students who will be twenty years of age by the last official day of registration fall term of the current academic year (the current academic year is fall term through spring term).
- c. Veterans with one or more years of active service.
- d. Students living with parents or legal guardian.
- e. Students taking 6 or less credits during the term in question.

(Spartan Life, 1990-91, p. 117)

Consequently, all of the students in the study were able to commute to campus during their first term because they lived with a parent or legal guardian. During the fall 1990, there were 6234 new first time freshmen at this university and of that number only 232 were commuter students (Enrollment Highlights, Office of the Registrar, Michigan State University, Fall 1990).

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE**

#### **INTRODUCTION**

The researcher's purpose in this study was to investigate and then describe and explain the collegiate experience of first term traditional age commuter students. In this chapter, the researcher examined the literature on commuter students. In addition, the residential tradition in American higher education was reviewed. The negative attitudes toward commuter students were addressed.

Although commuter student populations are very diverse, they do have some common needs and concerns which are outlined. Moreover, the initial steps to the design of a commuter student program are identified. Finally, the researcher looked at key aspects or elements of the commuter student college experience.

#### **DEFINITION, DIVERSITY, AND DISTRIBUTION**

Anyone who has ever attempted to discuss commuter students on a college campus learns quickly that the term "commuter" has various definitions depending on whom one is talking to. For the purpose of this study, the definition used by commuter student specialists will be employed.

According to these specialists, commuter is used to convey the broadest possible meaning: those students who do not live in university owned housing on campus (Stewart and Rue, 1983, p. 4; Rhatigan, 1986, p. 4; Jacoby, 1989, p. 1). Rhatigan points out that "In this context the definition is put in negative terms, but is perhaps the most accurate one" (1986, p. 4). So, even among people in higher education who are supporters of this population, commuter students are defined by what they do not do rather than by what they do.

Using this broad definition of commuter, one can easily see that commuter students are the majority population on most college and university campuses in the United States. Their actual percentages in the literature range from between 80-83 percent of all college students (Jacoby, 1989, p. A44; Stewart and Rue, 1983, p. 3; Litkins, 1986, p. 11; Rice, 1990, p. 316). Even with the many college and university policies which require freshmen to live on campus, "69 percent of all entering freshmen are commuters" (Rice, 1990, p. 316).

Along with the tremendous size of the commuter student population comes great diversity. Stewart and Rue have identified three variables which yield eight distinctly different types of undergraduate students:

1. dependent, traditional, full-time
  2. dependent, non-traditional, full-time
  3. dependent, non-traditional, part-time
  4. dependent, traditional, part-time
  5. independent, traditional, full-time
  6. independent, non-traditional, full-time
  7. independent, non-traditional, part-time
  8. independent, traditional, part-time
- (1983, p. 5)

The diversity of these eight different types of undergraduate commuter students are in sharp contrast to what would be the typical resident student. Most resident students are traditional age and attend college full-time. Moreover, they would usually be dependent on their families for most of their financial support (Chickering, 1974, p. 54).

The sub-population of commuters selected for this study are dependent, traditional age and full-time. Sloan sums up the researcher's rationale for this selection when she said, "While we focus our attention and shift our way of thinking toward the ever increasing presence of adult students in higher education, it is important not to lose sight of the fact that on many campuses the majority of commuters are 18-22 years old and many of them live at home with their parents" (1988, p. 1). Levine reaffirms this when he said, "While the average age of today's students is twenty-six, most of today's freshmen were born in the early 1970's" (1990, p. 17). Thus, it is the traditional age, dependent, first year commuter student who could use the attention and support of college and university faculty and staff.

The dependent commuter student would live at home with a parent or guardian. Because they are of traditional age at the time of college entrance, they would usually be between 18 and 23 years old (Stewart and Rue, 1983, p. 4). It is, however, important to point out that the term "traditional age" has varying definitions in the literature though most refer to individuals between 18 and 25 years of age.

## **THE RESIDENTIAL TRADITION IN AMERICAN HIGHER EDUCATION**

Higher education in the United States developed around a residential model. According to Fenshe, "The first American colleges were modeled directly on the English residential college system, which assumed that all faculty and academic administrators acted in loco parentis" (1989, p. 22). The whole notion of the collegiate way, which dominated higher education during the colonial college period, was based on this residential tradition. Rudolph defined the collegiate way as

...the notion that a curriculum, a library, a faculty, and students are not enough to make a college. It is an adherence to the residential scheme of things. It is respectful of quiet rural settings, dependent on dormitories, committed to dining halls, permeated by paternalism.

(1962. p. 87)

Thus, college students were expected to "...dine together and share common lodgings in buildings sufficiently compact and secluded to permit officials to exercise a constant surveillance..." (Allmendinger, 1988, p. 76).

It was not until the early nineteenth century that this residential model started to collapse. Once the typical college student population became more diversified with the invasion of the poor, order and uniformity began to crack (Allmendinger, 1988, p. 67). Along with these changes came what could be called the first commuter students. As Allmendinger put it:

College officials of the early nineteenth century had to abandon the assumption that students must be



housed and fed in a self-contained community. They found it impossible to accommodate the range of tastes and needs that accompanied a mixture of social classes within a single, small institution. Alternatives to the residential college began to appear spontaneously. Students scattered into the adult society of college towns, taking rooms with families, in rooming houses, in hotels and inns, and finally in houses maintained by students themselves.

(1988, p. 67)

This breakdown of the residential model did not last long. College officials learned from this short period that they could not accept the chaos and disorder of this fundamental change in higher education. According to Allmendinger, "Through a massive and expensive effort to revive the residential college - to create what had become a romantic conception of the collegiate community. Students again found themselves being gathered together under the discipline of the old, but reviving institution" (Allmendinger, 1988, p. 69). Although the residential model was once again vibrant, commuter students were still a small part of higher education.

Around the turn of the 20th century, "The initial concept of the dormitory as a place where students could be supervised and controlled gradually shifted toward an educational focus" (Jacoby, 1989, p. 10). At about the same time, colleges were making appointments for deans of men and deans of women. Harvard claims to have been the first to appoint the first college dean in 1870, "...so that by 1900 nearly every sizable men's or co-educational college or university had a dean of

men" (Fenske, 1989, p. 31). The student personnel profession became more organized after World War I and the "...residence halls were regarded as sites for personal and social, as well as education, development" (Jacoby, 1989, p. 10). It was not until the end of World War II when another large number of commuter students would again enter higher education.

The Serviceman's Readjustment Act of 1944 (the G.I. Bill) entitled all veterans to financial support for college costs upon enrollment in an accredited college or university (Fenshe, 1989 p. 14). By the time the last veteran had received his last check, the Veterans' Administration had counted 2,232,000 veterans who had attended colleges under the G.I. Bill (Olsen, 1974, p. 43). College and university administrators responded to these new students by constructing new residence halls. Student personnel administrators "...continued to concentrate the majority of their efforts on the development of intellectual, cultural, and extra-curricular programs in the residence halls despite the huge influx of veterans and other 'new' students who commuted to college" (Jacoby, 1989, p. 10).

Between 1955 and 1975, the number of college students climbed from 2.3 million to 7.42 million (Chickering and Havighurst, 1981, p. 16). This time, higher education responded by doubling its colleges and universities and adding hundreds of community colleges (Jacoby, 1989, p. 10). According to Cohen and Brawer, in 1954-55 there were 569 public and private two year colleges and by 1974-75 that

number had increased to 1203 (1982, p. 10). During this period, "...the vast majority of the growth in the student population was the result of commuter students (Jacoby, 1989, p. 10). The large number of commuter students on most college campuses did little to change the way things were done. The dominance of the residential model remained pervasive.

The projections of college enrollments from 1990-2000 show a decline for students overall during the 1990's (The Chronicle of Higher Education Almanac, 1990, p. 14). This decline will be especially severe for full-time students. College and university administrators will have to do all they can to attract and retain the students they have. Since the majority of U.S. college students do not live in university owned housing, it only makes sense for higher education to look beyond the residential model of the past and to find ways to integrate all students into the campus community.

#### THE NEGLECTED MAJORITY

The term "neglected majority" has been used by several authors to describe the response higher education has had for commuter students (Slade and Jarmul, 1975, p. 16; Jacoby and Girrell, 1981, p. 36; Jacoby, 1983, p. 49). Commuter students are often neglected in services, programs, advocacy, and research. After gathering data for his book College: The Undergraduate Experience in America, Ernest Boyer said, "...we found during our study a deep division between commuting students and resident students. All too often students who

commute are in the shadows. Most recreational, social, and cultural activities are geared to serve residential students" (1987, p. 210).

Commuter students are not only neglected by college and university staff, they are also neglected by the media which permeates our society. As Likins says, "Frequently, when higher education and students are discussed or portrayed through various media, the traditional residential context is assumed" (1986, p. 11). We see pictures of eighteen year old students packing their bags and moving to campus to attend college full-time. As Jacoby points out,

Books and films like Love Story, Animal House, Breaking Away, and Goody-Bye, Columbus have become part of American contemporary culture. Each fall television and newspapers feature stories about students packing up their cars, saying good-bye to their parents, moving into residence halls, and meeting their new roommates.

(1989, p. 11)

The dominance of the residence hall system and resident student model continues to affect the way most people think about the college experience. Is one truly a college student if he or she does not live on campus?

#### **ATTITUDES TOWARD COMMUTERS**

The dominance of the residential tradition in higher education has produced negative attitudes toward those students who have not fit into that model. Boyer reported:

One campus in our study has become so sharply divided between residential and commuter students that there is no evidence of activity that brings

the two groups together. The Vice-President said he is 'disturbed' by the image of the institution as a commuter college. 'For me that conjures up images of someone coming to campus, using the services here, and then leaving.'

(1987, p. 211)

The attitude of the Vice-President mentioned here is not unique. Many college administrators including student affairs administrators have negative attitudes and feelings about students who live off-campus. A study was conducted by Foster, Sedlacek, Hardwick, and Silver at the University of Maryland to measure professional student affairs staff attitudes toward commuters. Generally speaking, their study does suggest that prejudice toward commuters does exist and it can be measured (1977, p, 291-297). It is important to point out that the University of Maryland has an extensive commuter student program and houses the National Clearinghouse for Commuter Programs. One can only speculate what the results of this study would have been like with a staff who were less sophisticated in commuter student affairs.

Negative attitudes toward commuter students are also shared by many of their resident peers. Again, Boyer reports:

Student leaders also puzzled over ways to get commuters, many of whom are older, more involved. 'Most of the off-campus group couldn't care less about campus life,' we were told. But we saw no evidence that efforts to reach them had been made. And on this campus there wasn't even a convenient place for commuters to assemble between classes.

(1987, p. 211)

Negative attitudes about commuter students help feed a number of myths about this population. Rhatigan has

identified four myths which are often used when assumptions are made about commuter students which "...have resulted in a tendency to treat them as a homogeneous population" (1986, p. 4).

The first myth is that "Commuter students are less committed to their education" (Rhatigan, 1986, p. 4). The diversity of the commuter population and the lack of understanding about the aspiration of these students contribute to this myth. Also, because the residential model requires considerable out of the classroom time demands, commuters who don't fit into that model, appear uncommitted. According to Burnett, "Most of a commuter student's time on campus is spent in the classroom. The quality of the teaching and developmental advising experience is crucial for the commuter student with more limited access to peer study groups, peer counselors, or even faculty hours" (1985, p. 5).

The second myth is "Commuter students are less able academically" (Rhatigan, 1986, p. 5). This myth stems back to the time when commuters were thought of as the locals who were given some kind of conditional admissions status hence the "townie" label took on a negative overtone (Stewart and Rue, 1983, p. 4). There may be some subgroups within the total commuter student population who are more academically deficient than others. It is the responsibility of each institution to determine who needs assistance academically and why.

A third myth is "Commuting students have no interest in

th

Ac

Co

in

be

and

act

who

cha

wou

and

the

as

fre

on

Qua

stu

ins

198

unde

spec

the campus beyond their classes" (Rhatigan, 1986, p. 5).

According to Wilmes and Quade,

For many commuters, multiple roles and commitments limit the amount of time they can invest on campus. Unfortunately, it is often assumed that the amount of time the commuter spends on campus is proportional to his or her desire to be a part of the campus community.

(1986, p. 28)

Commuter students have to put a great deal of time and energy into most of the events they attend outside of the classroom because these activities are usually geared toward the life and schedule of resident students. Consequently, many activities are held at night. That means commuter students who wanted to participate would usually drive home to eat and change and then have to drive back to campus. Very often they would have to park away from the building housing the event and have to walk at night alone to and from their cars. For these reasons and many more, commuter students do not appear as interested in campus life. The sad result is that they are frequently judged by the norms of involvement and commitment on campus as if they were residential students (Wilmes and Quade, 1986, p. 28).

Finally, the fourth myth is that "Since many commuter students attend part-time, it costs less to provide them with instruction and the spectrum of campus services" (Rhatigan, 1986, p. 5). Again, this myth is the result of a lack of understanding in general about commuter students and more specifically about their many subgroups. Because most



commuter colleges and universities use an FTE (full-time equivalent) to determine funding, there is a discrepancy between the actual number of students who are served and the FTE (Rhatigan, 1986, p. 6). As a result, many institutions do not have the staff or the funds to identify and meet the needs of the commuter students on campus.

#### **NEEDS AND CONCERNS COMMON TO COMMUTER STUDENTS**

Although the commuter student population on most college campuses is very diverse, there are some needs and concerns which transcend the commuter subgroups. The first issue relates to mobility. Commuter students spend a great deal of time on concerns regarding transportation: parking, inclement weather, car maintenance, finding alternative forms of transportation, and transportation expenses (Wilmes and Quade, 1986, p. 26). Even in good weather, parking is a problem on many college campuses. When the weather is bad, college and university officials are reluctant to cancel classes if they have any kind of a resident student population on campus. Rarely will administrators talk about their concern for commuter students who have to travel when there are poor road conditions. Moreover, snow and other poor weather conditions usually make limited parking more of a problem.

Because transportation or mobility issues are so prevalent in the minds of commuter students, they will usually try to pack their classes together so that they can come to campus only once and leave as soon as they finish.

Consequently, "Time on campus is spent in the classroom or going to and from the parking lot" (Wilmes and Quade, 1986, p. 26).

In addition to being a student, most commuters have to deal with issues related to the **multiple life roles** that they have. Most commuter students are employed, have family issues and problems, and have household responsibilities (Wilmes and Quade, 1986, p. 27). Moreover, traditional age commuter students have to face issues with former high school friends who may or may not be supportive of their college experience.

Another area of concern for commuter students stems from their **integrated support systems**. Generally speaking, commuter students' support network (parents, spouses, children, employers, high school friends, and coworkers) exist outside of the campus (Wilmes and Quade, 1986, p. 27). Unless these significant others are somehow integrated into a commuter student's college experience, problems can develop between the student's campus life and the rest of his or her world.

Finally, commuter students sometimes find it difficult to **develop a sense of belonging** with their college or university. Since many commuter students come to campus, go to classes, and then leave, it is difficult for them to develop any significant relationships with people on-campus. Moreover, many colleges and universities do not take steps to help commuters feel a part of the campus. According to Jacoby, "Individuals rarely feel connected to a place where they have

no significant relationships" (1989, p. 6). In addition, commuter students often do not have adequate lounges or places to feel comfortable between classes. They sometimes do not have methods in place to receive accurate and timely campus information. All in all, when one exists in the shadows of a college campus, developing a sense of belonging can be difficult even when it is desired.

### **STEPS TO THE DESIGN OF A COMMUTER PROGRAM**

Every college and university must consider the diversity and the uniqueness of their own commuter student population. Therefore, there are some initial steps that need to be taken before appropriate programs and services are put into place.

First, each campus must define the term commuter. Once a definition is agreed upon, it should be shared campus wide so that when the term is used, people are thinking of the same group. As mentioned earlier, most commuter specialists suggest using the broadest definition of commuter: those students who do not live in university owned housing (Stewart and Rue, 1983, p. 4; Rhatigan, 1986, p. 4; Jacoby, 1989, p. 1).

The next step is to profile the commuter students on campus. According to Jacoby, "Whether an institution has a small number of commuters or serves only commuters, basic questions must be answered if the institution is to understand who its students really are" (1989, p. 42). A commuter student profile will usually answer some fundamental questions

about the population. These questions might involve age, gender, race, travel time to school, employment status, number of children, marital status, etc. Rhatigan encouraged each campus to profile their commuter students:

Many campuses with significant numbers of commuting students could benefit from a clearer differentiation among them. While the available literature may be of general assistance, each campus must develop its own profile.

(1986, p. 6)

The next critical step in this process is to conduct periodically a **needs assessment**. According to Kuh, "Accurate assessment of needs is thought to increase the likelihood that activities and programs can be more efficiently mounted, that students' needs will be satisfied, and that subsequent improvement in students' behaviors and degree of satisfaction will be evidenced" (1982, p. 202). Needs assessment not only informs and guides the planning of a program, but it also helps to assess how satisfied students are with the current level of services and programs offered. Moreover, Andreas says, needs assessment "...instruments focus on student perceptions of needed services and satisfaction with existing services" (1983, p. 17).

To be effective, a well designed needs assessment tool must be written with feedback from all segments of the campus. In addition, according to Kuh, "To be politically and logically defensible, needs assessment must be a public and conscious effort to understand the requirements and perspectives of all students and groups..." (1982, p. 207).

Because student populations and their characteristics are always changing, needs assessment must be an on-going process. Information collected through needs assessment should be disseminated to the appropriate areas of the campus. In fact, Rue and Ludt reported that according to the twenty institutions they studied regarding commuter programs and services,

The most popular method for raising awareness is to perform ongoing demographic and needs assessment to determine the numbers and characteristics of commuters and to disseminate this information in a variety of forms to key decision makers and the general campus population.

(1983, p. 29)

Once this data (commuter profile and needs assessment) is collected and analyzed it can be used to form goals and objectives for programs and services designed to meet the needs of the commuter students on a particular campus. Rue and Ludt point out that "The decision to establish or recognize student services with a commuter focus should be based upon careful consideration of institutional mission and goals and a concomitant analysis of student characteristics and needs" (1983, p. 25).

Goals and objectives need to be concrete, observable, and written in precise language. In a chapter on assessment and evaluation, Lenning outlines some points about program goals which were made by Conrad (1974):

...they are standards against which to judge program success, they provide a source of legitimacy for the activities of the program, they define and order program needs, they define the

units of program outcomes, they identify the program's clientele, and they define the relationship between the program, the institution of which it is a part, and society.

(1983, p. 333)

Regardless of specific institutional differences, a very valuable resource by which a particular commuter program can be designed and measured is the CAS Standards and Guidelines for Student Services/Development Programs. As mentioned in Chapter 1, the section on commuter student programs and services lists the minimum goals and standards which should be a part of any commuter program.

After the program goals and objectives are established, the next step is implementation. This phase requires the necessary support both in terms of human and financial resources. As Jacoby said, "Because each institution is a distinctive combination of students, faculty, staff, mission, history, curriculum, and environment, it is impossible to provide a recipe or blueprint for change" (1989, p. 65).

Although the combination of these factors may vary from campus to campus, implementation of a new commuter student program requires advocacy. Linkins outlines several important reasons why advocacy is needed:

1. Advocacy is essential to overcome the historical, predominant, and often exclusive residential perspective, and thereby, to enable the commuter perspective to be developed.
2. Given the historical neglect of commuters particularly when compared with residents, advocacy assists in overcoming the difficulties and inequities associated with

- neglect.
3. Commuters frequently are both less visible and less vocal, and consequently, the need for advocacy on their behalf is greater.
  4. Our institutions need commuter advocacy to enable them to be more responsive to this majority of the student population and thereby, to improve the institutions' effectiveness with recruitment and retention and to garner the support of these students for our institutions, both now and in the future.

(1986, p. 13)

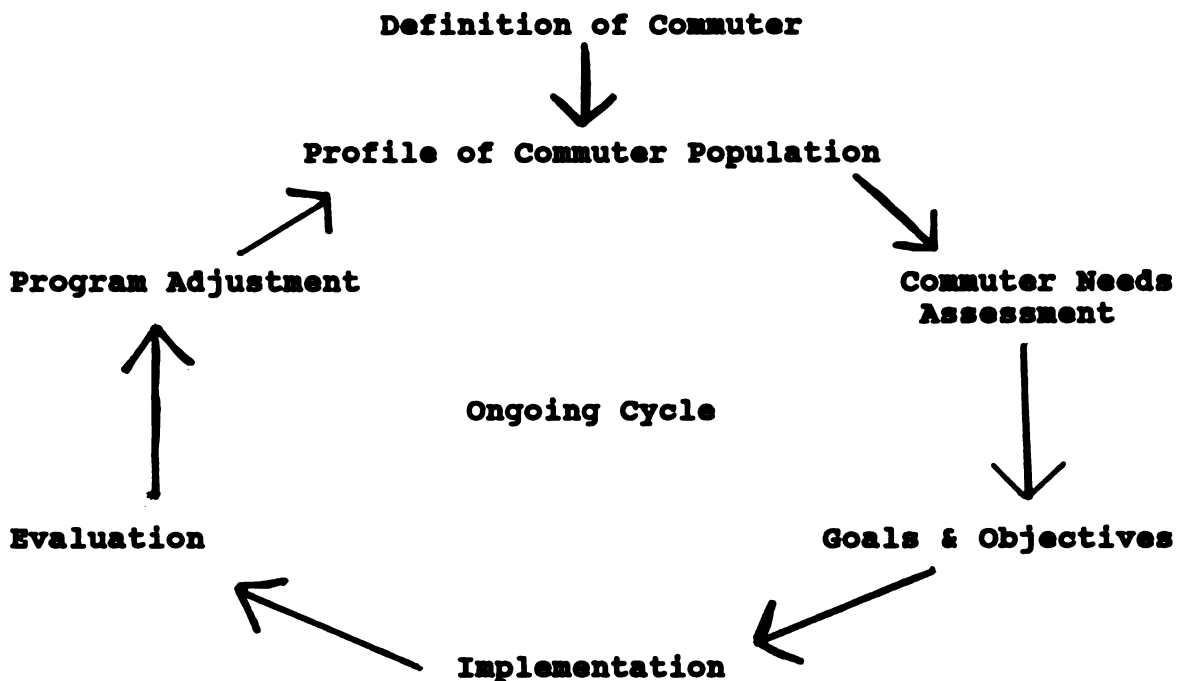
Once a program is in place, it needs to be **evaluated** periodically. Harpel addresses this process by saying, "Two types of measures should be included in our evaluations: (1) measures of activity or output (such as the number of students served or applications processed) and (2) measures of impact or outcomes (increased skills, reduction in attrition, or increased satisfaction, for instance)" (1978, p. 32). Because it is easier to measure a particular program solely on the basis of attendance or number of students served, output evaluation is very common. But, if a program is truly designed to have a substantial impact on the student population being served, then measures of outcome must be a part of the evaluation. The results or interpretations of an evaluation can be used "...to make judgments or decisions about the value and worth of a service, activity, or program and its possible deletion, replacement, modification, or revision" (Lenning, 1989, p. 340).

For this reason, the final phase in this process is **adjustment** or redirection of the program. Sometimes this may

mean going back to an earlier stage in the process and reworking something to get the desired outcome. According to Lenning, "The process often involves making a judgment or decision about the best ways to bring about improvement" (1989, p. 340).

Figure 1

Steps to the Design of a Commuter Program



At each stage information should be disseminated to the college or university.

### THE FRESHMAN YEAR EXPERIENCE

The first year of college is a transition period for many freshmen. In fact, the most difficult time during that year occurs in the first few weeks. Of the freshmen who drop out during the terms (as opposed to between terms), half drop out



in the first six weeks (Levits and Noel, 1990, p. 66). It is, therefore, crucial for college and university administrators and faculty to do everything they can to help make students' transition as easy as possible. According to Levitz and Noel,

If students make it through the first year successfully, the chances that they will persist improve considerably. When we examine data from individual institutions, we find that attrition generally decreases by almost 50 percent with each passing year of a student's education. Clearly, then, the most effective way to boost the freshman-to-graduation retention rate (for both two-year and four-year institutions) is to improve performance in the first year.

(1990, p. 65-66)

## **ESSENTIAL EXPERIENCES FOR FIRST-YEAR STUDENTS**

### **Orientation**

Generally speaking, if colleges and universities want to keep the freshmen they enroll, efforts must be made to connect them to the college environment. One of the first efforts made by college and university administrators is **orientation**. Orientation is defined as "any effort to help freshmen make the transition from their previous environment to the collegiate environment and enhance their success" (Perigo and Upcraft, 1990, p. 82). According to Boyer, "Research makes it clear that the greater a student's social and academic integration, the more intense his or her commitment to college. Orientation, when well accomplished, improves the student's day-to-day ability to cope and it has a positive impact on persistence" (1987, p. 47).

Orientation programs are especially important if commuter students are to make the transition successfully. Commuter students are not on campus as much as resident students and often experience difficulties connecting with the campus community. Taub and Ellis have identified four common issues as important to students as they make the transition into the campus community. These issues are "...gaining mastery over the environment, social and interpersonal adjustment, academic adjustment, and developmental concerns" (1990, p. 2).

Mastery over the environment helps students feel physically comfortable moving around campus. Students need to know where they can park on campus and how they will get to their classes. Moreover, a feeling of mastery includes "helping them learn the location of campus buildings and offices, teaching them how to negotiate the institutional system, and helping them begin to gain a feeling of ownership of the campus" (Taub and Ellis, 1990, p. 2).

Orientation programs can assist commuter students with their social and interpersonal adjustment. Commuter students need to feel personally connected with the campus community, but it is difficult because most of the time they spend on campus is in class or getting to and from classes. According to Taube and Ellis, strategies for assisting commuters in social and interpersonal adjustment through effective orientation programs include the following:

- providing formal and informal opportunities for meeting current students and other new students
- familiarizing students with social opportunities

- available on campus
- encouraging on campus involvement while validating commuters' off campus involvement with family and community
- and transmitting campus traditions.

(1990, p. 3)

To feel successful in college, students must do well academically. Consequently, helping students with academic adjustment should be part of orientation. Perigo and Upcraft said that "The most important goal of orientation is to help freshmen succeed academically. Freshmen should be familiar with academic requirements and be able to make realistic assessments of their ability to meet them" (1990, p. 83). Taub and Ellis believe that it is important to teach freshmen commuters how to handle other aspects of their lives (transportation issues, multiple life roles, integrating their outside support systems, and developing a sense of belonging) that may have an impact on their academic performance (1990, p. 3).

Finally, most entering students, particularly those of traditional age, have a number of developmental concerns. Issues related to the development of autonomy, competence, and identity would be the same for a commuter student or a resident student, but the circumstances surrounding the issue would be different. Taub and Ellis elaborate on some of these differences:

While residents experience the transition of moving away from home to a new environment-the residence hall, commuters usually maintain their place of residence and experience, instead, transitions (or additions) in roles and lifestyle. For commuter

students, developing autonomy may be related to decreased reliance on family for transportation and developing competence may be related to mastering the intricacies of the commute (transportation issues). Multiple life roles may contribute to commuters' identity concerns as they struggle to add the new role of college student while keeping their other roles in balance.

(1990, p. 3)

The examples given demonstrate the importance of college and university administrators understanding commuter students and their issues and concerns. Orientation must be a comprehensive effort by everyone on campus if "...equal access to the sophomore class for all who enter as freshmen" is to be achieved (Perigo and Upcraft, 1990, p. 94).

#### **ACADEMIC ADVISING**

Quality academic advising is important to all college students. However, it is particularly crucial to freshmen who are new to the academic environment. Freshmen are not aware of the campus resources which are available to them. Therefore, academic advising must be comprehensive. According to Kramer and Spencer, "Academic advising must assess needs, give freshmen individual assistance in course scheduling, identify tutorial needs, connect areas of students' interest with campus resources, and familiarize freshmen with academic departments and faculty" (1990, p. 97). For freshmen commuter students, academic advisors serve as a primary source of information about all aspects of the institution. They are among the few people on campus with whom commuters spend

individual time (Jacoby, 1989, p. 53).

Academic advising is usually coordinated by academic advisors who primarily work with new and/or students who have not yet selected a major or by faculty in academic departments. Winston, reporting on a study conducted by Crockett and Levitz (1984), found "that on 80 percent of the campuses surveyed, academic advising is provided by faculty members who are uncritically selected (or not selected at all--everyone does it), who receive little or no training, who are not systematically evaluated, and who are generally unrecognized and unrewarded for good performance" (1989, p. 390). For these reasons and others, there continues to be movement toward "academic advising centers (predominantly at public institutions) that are staffed totally or in part by personnel with educational preparation and experience as student development specialists" (Winston, 1989, p. 390). Others, however, believe that academic advising and counseling are part of the necessary interchange between teacher and student (Eble, 1988, p. 108; Kramer and Spencer, 1990, p. 105).

Generally speaking, there are seven principles or conditions that are considered essential to academic advising if it is to have a developmental focus. These principles or conditions were outlined by Ender, Winston, and Miller:

1. Advising is a continuous process with an accumulation of personal contacts between advisor and student - these contacts have both direction and purpose.
2. Advising must concern itself with quality-of-

- life issues, and the advisor has a responsibility to attend to the quality of the student's experience in college.
3. Advising is goal related. The goals should be established and owned by the student and should encompass academic, career, and personal development areas.
  4. Advising requires the establishment of a caring human relationship - one in which the advisor must take primary responsibility for its initial development.
  5. Advisors should be role models for students to emulate, specifically demonstrating behaviors that lead to self-responsibility and self-directiveness.
  6. Advising should seek to integrate the services and expertise of both academic and student affairs professionals.
  7. Advisors should seek to utilize as many campus and community resources as possible.

(1984, pp. 19-21)

Even though most college and university faculty and staff would agree that strong academic advising is vital to a student's success, few institutions put time and energy into the advising process to make it work well. Thus, Boyer concluded:

The successful college offers a well-planned program of advising for all students, one that provides support throughout the entire freshman year. This is the goal, and yet we found advising to be one of the weakest links in the undergraduate experience.

(1987, p. 51)

#### **FRESHMEN COMMUTER STUDENTS AND FACULTY INTERACTION**

Many authors have investigated faculty-student interaction at college and have written about the positive influence it can have on student development and persistence in higher education (Gaff and Gaff, 1985, p. 647; Pascarella

and Terenzini, 1977, p. 550; Feldmen and Newcomb, 1973, pp. 252-253; Wilmes and Quade, 1986, p. 32; Astin, 1979, p. 169; Rice, 1990, p. 319). Pascarella and Terenzini conducted a study which examined the patterns of faculty-student interaction and how this interaction related to college persistence and voluntary attrition among freshmen. According to these authors, "...frequency of informal interactions with faculty along six dimensions was still found to discriminate significantly between those students who withdrew voluntarily from the institution at the end of their freshman year and those who persisted into their sophomore year" (1977, p. 550). Feldman and Newcomb said that "The amount of faculty-student contact is an important element in the impact of faculty on students' education and career plans" (1973, p. 253). Moreover, Wilmes and Quade suggest that "...the ability of students to interact with administrators and faculty members in addition to other students has a great impact on their undergraduate experience" (1986, p. 32). Finally, Astin said "These strong associations of satisfaction with student-faculty interaction and academic involvement suggest that the student's undergraduate college experience might be more meaningful if there were more personal contact between faculty and students..." (1979, p. 169).

Yet, commuter students often have great difficulty developing meaningful personal contact with faculty (Demos, 1970, p. 229). According to Chickering, "Commuters who live at home consistently have least frequent exchange with

teachers in or out of class..." (1973, p. 55). Hence, "...freshman commuters are less disposed than residential colleagues to engage in the social and academic encounters that can enhance their educational persistence" (Rice, 1990, p. 320). Therefore, Rice points out the "...importance of providing a comprehensive educational environment centering on integrating freshmen into campus life and providing avenues for them to interact with faculty and peers" (1990, p. 320).

The actual size of the college or university can also have an impact on student-faculty interaction. According to Feldman and Newcomb, "The large size and scale of many universities has often been cited - by student, faculty, administrators, and citizens alike - as an important cause of the lessening of meaningful faculty-student interaction" (1973, p. 267-268). These authors' findings are not surprising when one considers what influences tenure, pay raises, and promotions at most large universities. Eble reported the findings of a study conducted by Kasten in 1984 which concluded that, "...what influences tenure and merit pay at a research university arrives at the not surprising conclusion that the effects of teaching and service are 'moderate in comparison to the effect of research and somewhat idiosyncratic'" (1988, p. 23). Add this to the fact that many large universities have large numbers of students in classes which make it almost impossible for faculty to get-to-know the students they have in any personal way.

After an examination of the data he collected about the



undergraduate experience, Boyer summarizes what the ideal freshmen experience should be like:

We conclude that a successful freshman year program will convince students that they are part of an intellectually vital, caring community. In such a setting counseling will occur in scheduled sessions and also in hallways, over a cup of coffee, or on a stroll from one building to another. The spirit of community will be sustained by a climate on the campus where personal relationships are prized, where integrity is the hallmark of discourse, and where people speak and listen carefully to each other.

(1987, p. 57)

College and university faculty and administrators need to work to create the atmosphere Boyer described. As Pascarella and Terenzini explain, "...certain administrative policies and programs, particularly with reference to such areas as freshman orientation, student residence arrangements, and faculty recruitment and reward structures, may help foster an institutional social climate which facilitates such interaction" (1977, p. 551).

#### **FRESHMEN COMMUTER STUDENTS AND PEER INTERACTION**

There is another important part of a new student's college experience, interaction with members of their peer group. Feldman and Newcomb said, "Students feel that their fellow students are of greater influence than faculty on their social and interpersonal development, and on their personality development (including changes in self-image)" (1973, p. 258). Moreover, "New students have a strong urge to get acquainted and get along. They juggle the old and new and improvise as

best they can" (Boyer, 1987, p. 45).

For freshmen commuter students, the transition to the college environment can be very disappointing. Very often, they find themselves losing their old friends faster than they can make new ones in the college community (Rice, 1990, p. 321). Making new friends and trying to fit into a college peer group is especially difficult for commuter students who live at home with their parents. According to Chickering:

Students who live with their parents differ substantially from dormitory residents in their relationship with other students. Although all three groups reported similar numbers of close friends, commuters reported fewer close friends at their college and more close friends either at another college or not in college at all.

(1974. p. 62)

Part of the reason commuter students have difficulty making new friends in college is that there are usually few places on campus where they can gather, feel comfortable, and meet their peers. As Wilmes and Quade put it, "If the commuter's self-contained world is his or her car or knapsack, all connection with campus is dissolved each day when the student leaves" (1986, p. 28). The growth and development colleges want to see taking place in students is hindered if students do not have opportunities to interact with their peers. "A student's set of friends can be important in reinforcing certain of his values and attitudes" (Feldman and Newcomb, 1973, p. 243). College and university faculty and administrators must create and promote social opportunities for commuters to meet campus friends and start to develop a

sense of belonging with the institution.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **METHODOLOGY**

#### **INTRODUCTION**

The researcher wanted to understand the collegiate experience of first term traditional age commuter students from the perspective of those individuals who participated in this study. To accomplish this, ethnography or field work was used. Spradley said, "In doing field work, ethnographers make cultural inferences from three sources: (1) from what people say; (2) from the way people act; and (3) from the artifacts people use" (1979, p. 8).

#### **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

The fundamental premise of the methodological approach used in this study was symbolic interaction. This theory not only guided the assumptions made by the researcher but also was ideal for explaining the interactions between first term commuter students and the university environment they encountered. According to Blumer:

The term 'symbolic interaction' refers, of course, to peculiar and distinctive character of interaction as it takes place between human beings. The peculiarity consists in the fact that human beings interpret or 'define' each other's actions instead of merely reacting to each other's actions. Their 'response' is not made directly to the

actions of one another but instead is based on the meaning which they attach to some actions. Thus, human interaction is mediated by the use of symbols, by interpretation, or by ascertaining the meaning of one another's actions.

(1962, p. 97)

According to this theory, to describe and explain the collegiate experience of the students involved in the study, the researcher had to determine the meaning the participants placed on the social interactions and experiences they encountered. As Spradley put it, "People did not act toward these things, but toward their meanings" (1979, p. 6).

Blumer goes on to say that "This mediation is equivalent to inserting a process of interpretation between stimulus and response in the case of human behavior" (1962, p. 97). To understand the students in the study, the researcher also had to be conscious of the way that they looked at themselves in this new college environment. Blumer said:

He can act toward himself as he might act toward others. Each of us is familiar with actions of this sort in which the human being gets angry with himself, rebuffs himself, takes pride in himself, argues with himself, tries to bolster his own courage, tells himself that he should 'do this' or not 'do that,' sets goals for himself, makes compromises with himself, and plans what he is going to do.

(1962, p. 98)

The researcher had to be aware of the changing perspective a student can have as he or she experiences university life. For instance, early in the term, one student wrote in his journal, "It's indescribable the way I viewed

life and how proud I felt to be here...." But later in the term, the same student wrote, "I'm tired almost all the time, unable to concentrate in my ANP 171 class since I'm always overcome by a sleepiness which will not go away, and I feel alone and stupid." The researcher made every attempt to describe and explain the meanings the participants placed on their interactions and encounters at the university, as well as the factors these students felt influenced their feelings or perspectives about their collegiate experience.

#### **FEATURES OF QUALITATIVE RESEARCH**

As stated in Chapter 1, the researcher chose ethnography or the field methods of participant observation, observation, and interviewing for this study. As Cusick said:

The methodology works at two levels -

(1) Description: the researcher on the scene describes what he reads, sees, and hears and then expands his descriptions from the accounts of the situation by his subjects, and,

(2) Explanation: the researcher attempts to make sense of his subjects' observations, and by further searching and questioning of informants, he obtains the explanation of the situation from the actors.

(1973, p. 230)

In an effort to gather as much data as possible, the researcher also had participants keep a personal journal during their first term.

There are several features to a qualitative study. The first is that "Qualitative research has the natural setting as the direct source of data and the researcher is the key instrument" (Bogan, 1982, p. 27). Thus, the researcher spent

a considerable amount of time participating with and observing the participants while they were on campus. The university campus in this case was the "natural setting" in which the collegiate experience of the participants needed to be understood. Consequently, the researcher went to classes, spent time with students between classes, went to organized university events (like the commuter orientation meeting, commuter resource fair, and commuter student meetings), rode the commuter bus, and ate with commuters, in various locations, in and around the university.

The second feature is that "Qualitative research is descriptive. Data is collected in the form of words or pictures rather than numbers" (Bogan, 1982, p. 28). The researcher collected field notes, interview transcripts, participant journals, and other university documents or records that were relevant.

The third feature is that "Qualitative researchers are concerned with process rather than simply with outcomes or products" (Bogan, 1982, p. 28). In this case, the researcher looked for the reasons behind the answers to questions. Do first term traditional age commuter students interact with faculty? If so, how? Or, how do these students meet their peers? Do first term traditional age commuter students develop a sense of belonging to the university after one term? If so, how does that happen? Thus, it was the process, or the how, not the outcome that the researcher attempted to describe and explain.

A fourth feature is that "Qualitative researchers tend to analyze their data inductively" (Bogan, 1982, p. 29). The researcher did not know what would be found when the study began. So every available piece of data was collected so that the collegiate experience of the participants could be described and explained. As data was collected, the researcher learned what was needed and what was important to the study.

Finally, "'Meaning' is of essential concern to the qualitative approach" (Bogan, 1982, p. 29). For this reason, the researcher asked the participants questions about their collegiate experience in an effort to make sense out of what was seen, heard, observed, and said. As Bogan put it, "qualitative researchers are concerned with what are called participant perspectives" (1982, p. 29).

#### **METHODS OF DATA COLLECTION**

As mentioned earlier, several different field methods of data collection were used in this study. One of these methods was participant observation. According to Cusick, "Participant observation then, (1) describes a social situation through the senses of the researcher and his subjects, and (2) explains the situation from the point of view of both the researcher and his subjects" (1973, p. 230). Thus, the researcher entered into the everyday life of the commuter student participants while they were on campus experiencing college for the first time.



To understand the collegiate experience of the participants, the researcher had to be accepted by them. Bogan describes how this can be done:

The observer participates in the everyday life of the people and situation he wishes to understand. He speaks with them, jokes with them, sympathizes with them, and shares their concerns and accomplishments. His goal is to see the world as the subjects conceive it. He enters the experience of his subjects by sharing experiences with them.

(1972, pp. 3-4)

During the early days in the field, the researcher worked on establishing relationships with the participants. These relationships involved trust and the freedom to say and do what came naturally to each situation. All of the subjects knew when the researcher would participate in their day. Arrangements would be made with participants prior to all interactions with them. So the researcher and the participants would agree upon a time and place on campus to meet. After meeting, the participant would go about his or her normal college day. The researcher then participated in the everyday experience of the subject.

To gain entrance and acceptance, the researcher dressed like a typical college student. Consequently, casual clothes like jeans, sweaters, sweatshirts and sneakers were worn. This unassuming attire was important because it helped the researcher establish a good rapport with the participants very early in the study. The researcher knew she was accepted when participants invited her to spend time with them often. Moreover, the participants shared deep feelings and personal

experiences easily.

After each interaction with participants, the researcher recorded field notes. As Bogan put it, "The substance of systematic, objective, and analytical participant observation lies in keeping complete, accurate, and detailed field notes" (1972, p. 39). Although the researcher carried a notebook at all times during formal participant observation sessions, the most intensive note taking took place after the interaction away from the subjects.

The researcher always scheduled participant observation sessions at times when she had no following commitments. This allowed the researcher time to complete field notes while everything observed was fresh in the researcher's memory. Once in a while, the researcher would write down a word or phrase during observations to help remember information for the notes written later.

Field notes were taken in chronological order. The date, place(s), name of participant(s), and the time of the involvement were recorded at the top of each page. The researcher then recorded everything that was remembered about that session. The researcher included information about the physical setting(s) of observations as well as characteristics of the people encountered.

A second method used in this study was **observation**. This was slightly different from participant observation in that the researcher did not actually participate in the activities of the subjects. As Hammersley and Atkinson describe it, "the

'complete observer' has no contact at all with those he or she is observing" (1990, p. 95).

At the beginning of this study, the researcher told participants that they may be observed at various times throughout the term during their regular college day. The researcher collected the class schedule of each subject. This information helped the researcher know where participants might be on any given day.

Observation was mostly used to watch subjects in class. The researcher wanted to see where they sat in their classes, whom they talked to, and/or if they asked questions. So the researcher attended classes unannounced and sat in the back of the classroom where the subjects could be observed. Most of the time, subjects did not know the researcher was present because many of the classes were in large lecture halls with several hundred students. But, on occasion, the researcher would be noticed by the subjects. In these cases, the researcher would acknowledge the subject but would not interact with him or her.

In the smaller classes, the researcher's presence was of course noticed. In these cases, prior to the class, the researcher got the permission of the instructor to attend the class. The researcher did not tell the instructor which student or students were being observed unless the instructor specifically asked. Only a couple of instructors wanted to know which student(s) were being observed. The classroom settings and activities were much more natural when the

instructor(s) did not know who was being observed.

When observing participants in classes, the researcher was able to take notes during the observation because everyone in a "typical" college classroom has a notebook open and is taking notes on the lecture. In fact, the researcher would have been much more noticed as an outsider if she was not taking notes like everyone else.

The third method used to collect data in this study was the personal interview. Each participant was formally interviewed twice during the term - once at the mid-term and again at the end of the term. These interviews all took place in private or semi-private places on campus.

The interviews were all taped so that the researcher would have a verbatim record of what each participant said. The researcher used a very small micro tape recorder so it could be carried around campus easily and not be too obtrusive during the interviews. The researcher followed the precautions outlined by Gorden for the use of a tape recorder during interviews:

- a. The interviewer should become thoroughly familiar with the machine so that he does not feel insecure in its use or devote too much attention to it.
- b. The physical setting should be arranged, if possible, so that the tape recorder is out of the respondent's sight.
- c. The microphone should be inconspicuous and out of the direct line of sight as the interview and the respondent face each other.
- d. The use of the recording machine should be explained in forth right and matter-of-fact way.
- e. Once the interview begins, the interviewer should show no awareness of the tape

recorder's presence.

(1975, p. 275)

The researcher tested the tape recorder prior to the interviews and found that regular voice conversation could be picked up from five to seven feet away from the recorder. Therefore, the researcher placed the recorder within the required range, yet out of the direct line of sight of each participant. As a result, all of the tapes produced were of good quality.

The interviews which were held with all participants at the mid-term gave the researcher an opportunity to test out hypotheses arising from the other data collection methods. A series of six general questions were developed from the research questions outlined in Chapter 1. The researcher used non-directive questions to stimulate each respondent into discussion of the broader issue area. According to Hammersley and Atkinson, "Non-directive questions, then are relatively open-ended, rather than requiring the interviewee to provide a specific piece of information or, at the extreme, simply to reply 'yes' or 'no'" (1990, p. 113). The information provided by each student who was interviewed was unique to his or her own experience, so each interview was guided by the personal experiences of each respondent. It was the researcher's role to guide the interview so that important issues to the study were addressed. Hammersley and Atkinson elaborate on this role by saying, "The interviewer must listen to what is being said in order to assess how it relates to the research focus

and how it may reflect the circumstances of the interview" (1990, p. 113).

The interview which was held at the end of the term clarified the hypotheses which were developed and tested throughout the term. Some of the newer issues that emerged were discussed (academic advising, college majors) because of the importance these areas had or have in the collegiate experience of the participants.

There are several advantages to using the interview, rather than the questionnaire, to gather research data. Gorden has outlined these advantages:

1. The interview provides more opportunity to motivate the respondent to supply accurate and complete information immediately.
2. The interview provides more opportunity to guide the respondent in his interpretation of the questions.
3. The interview allows greater flexibility in questioning the respondent.
4. The interview allows greater control over the interview situation.
5. The interview provides a greater opportunity to evaluate the validity of the information by observing the respondent's non-verbal manifestations of his attitude toward supplying the information.

(1975, pp. 76-77)

The researcher noticed other advantages to using the interview. For instance, the interview gave the researcher a chance to probe the responses of the participants. This probing allowed a greater understanding of the issues, situation, and feelings of each student. In addition, when respondents' answers were not consistent with data received from other sources, the interviewer could confront the

inconsistencies with the subjects.

Each tape recorded interview was transcribed word-for-word by the researcher. Because the researcher conducted each interview, having the same person do the transcribing allowed for fewer errors. Furthermore, the time spent listening to the tapes over and over again while transcribing gave the researcher the opportunity to discover missing information and similar themes. On average, it took the researcher about two hours to transcribe every half hour of tape.

The final data collection method was the **personal journal**. The researcher asked each participant to keep a journal of his or her college experience for the term. Participants were asked to write in their journals at least once a week. Additionally, they were instructed to date each journal entry. Other than these guidelines, the participants were given the leeway to record experiences, ideas, problems, fears, feelings, mistakes, confusions, breakthroughs, significant encounters, or anything else that they thought was important in the college experience.

Because the researcher could not be with each participant every minute of their first term at college, the journals helped to fill in gaps. The journals provided a personalized story of each participant's experience. At the end of the term, after the researcher collected and read the journals, the real importance of this data collection method became more apparent. Several of the journals contained entries or information that the researcher had not discovered through any

of the other methods of data collection.

### **SAMPLING**

When using field methods or ethnography, the two most important decisions that need to be made regarding sampling are "the specific organization or situation to be investigated and the substantive topic of research" (McCall and Simmons, 1969, p. 65). In the case of this study, the specific organization was a large mid-western university. The substantive topic of research is the collegiate experience of first term traditional age commuter students who are attending college for the first time at the large mid-western university.

As mentioned in Chapter 1, theoretical sampling was used in making initial decisions regarding sampling. According to Glaser and Strauss, "Theoretical sampling is the process of data collection for generating theory whereby the analyst jointly collects, codes, and analyzes his data and decides what data to collect next and where to find them in order to develop his theory as it emerges" (1967, p. 105). So the process for sampling and data collection was controlled by the emerging theory or in this case the description and explanation of the collegiate experience of first term traditional age commuter students. While writing about theoretical sampling, Hammersley and Atkinson point to two complementary strategies for using this approach which were originally outlined by Glaser and Strauss. The first is to



minimize "the differences between cases to highlight basic properties of a particular category; and then subsequently maximizing the differences between cases in order to increase the density of the properties relating to core categories..." (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1990, p.4).

Using these strategies, the researcher first had to narrow down the commuter student population to some similar characteristics, thus minimizing the differences between cases. For this reason, first term traditional age commuter students were selected. Once this decision was made, the researcher wanted to maximize the differences between cases so commuter students in the sample represented various genders, hometowns, commuting distances, family backgrounds, and majors.

The actual sample for this study consisted of nine traditional age (17-19 years of age) first term commuter students (see Table 1). One student in this sample decided to move into the university residence halls during the term, so his participation in the study was terminated shortly after his move. The researcher did not drop him from the study completely because of the importance of understanding the factors involved in his decision to move on campus.

In Chapter 1, the researcher explained the process and procedures used to recruit and orient the subjects to the study. To protect the anonymity and privacy of the subjects, their names were only known by the researcher. All of the subjects names presented in this study are pseudonyms.

### DATA ANALYSIS

In ethnography, the analysis of data is not a distinct or separate stage but rather an on-going process. In fact, analysis actually began when the researcher was formulating and clarifying the research questions that provided the early foundation or framework for this study. These research questions provided some general themes, hypotheses, and categories to investigate.

To keep the pages of data in order, the researcher set-up a file system using the early categories. As the data collection continued, new file categories were developed. In addition, a file was made for each participant. Every piece of information that was collected regarding an individual subject was put in his/her corresponding file. Participant files contained letters of consent, personal information sheets, field notes made by the researcher, and transcriptions made from the personal interview tapes. Later the personal journals of each participant were added to these files.

Once all the data were collected, the researcher employed some simple techniques for analysis. First, the researcher read through all of the data that was collected attempting to test hypotheses and ideas that were developed. This careful review of the data helped the researcher finalize the themes that were important to the investigation.

Second, the researcher developed a one-page summary on each of the commuter student participants. These summaries contained information that was unique to each student and

could have had an impact on the student's collegiate experience.

Finally, copies were made of all field notes, transcriptions, and journals. The researcher used these copies for coding of information. Different color highlighters were used to identify information that pertained to the themes and categories pertinent to the study.

#### **PRE-FIELD PROCEDURES**

All research conducted at Michigan State University that involves people, requires the approval of the University Committee on Research Involving Human Subjects (UCRIHS). This committee carefully reviews the research proposal, design, safeguards for insuring anonymity of subjects, and all consent procedures and forms. This review/approval process demands that the researcher think through every important aspect of the investigation before it begins. On August 31, 1990, the researcher was granted full approval by UCRIHS to proceed with the study (see Appendix C).

The researcher also undertook other vehicles of preparation prior to entering the field. First, the researcher needed to understand commuter students in general and traditional age commuter students more specifically. Because the researcher was a traditional age commuter student herself back in 1976 when she first entered college, some first-hand knowledge of that experience was already known. In addition, the researcher was the Director of Commuter Students

in a previous administrative position in higher education. In that administrative role, the researcher conducted other research studies on this population and wrote corresponding reports on the findings. Together with the background mentioned here, the researcher conducted a thorough review of the literature on commuter students.

Second, the researcher needed a better understanding of ethnography or field methods. This was acquired by taking the course EAD 951H Field Research Methods in Education. Through this course, the researcher was introduced to the theories that support field methods. Moreover, several books and articles written about studies using field methods were read and analyzed. Some of these books included: The Egalitarian Ideal and The American High School by Philip Cusick, Westhaven by Norris Johnson, and God's Choice by Alan Peshkin. Finally, as a part of this course, the researcher had to conduct and write up a field study.

Once the researcher had the foundation of this field methods course, she continued to improve her understanding of this methodology through a review of the literature. The course helped the researcher sort through the volumes of information written about field work and to focus on those pieces most relevant to this project.

Finally, the researcher needed to know as much as possible about first year students and their needs. The framework for this understanding was begun in the coursework the researcher took for a Master's Degree in College Student

Personnel from 1982-1984 and continued in the coursework for the Ph.D. in College and University Administration. In addition, a review of the literature provided the researcher with a good understanding of this population.

### **LIMITATIONS AND ADVANTAGES**

There are several characteristics to field work or ethnography which are considered advantages. First, according to McCall and Simmons, "A major characteristic of observation and interviewing in the field is its non-standardization" (1969, p. 20). Because analysis is carried on sequentially, changes in the research direction can be made easily to pursue emerging hypotheses or categories. This is in contrast to the survey researcher who is often stuck with the topics or categories he or she originally selected.

"A second characteristic of observation and interviewing is that it makes effective use of the relationships the researcher establishes with informants in the field for eliciting data" (McCall and Simmons, 1969, p. 20). Because the researcher gained the trust and confidence of the students in the study, they shared personal stories and experiences which would have been difficult to discover using another method. Also, the personal relationships that were developed with the subjects helped them feel a real part of this research project. On many occasions, the subjects asked when the study would be written up so that they could read it. Moreover, several of the participants put a great deal of time

and effort into writing about their college experience for the personal journals they were keeping for the study.

This close contact with the subjects lends itself to a third advantage. McCall and Simmons say that "the researcher is better able to avoid misleading or meaningless questions" (1969, p. 22). If it appears that the subject has avoided a question or simply did not understand a question, the researcher could confront or probe the subject. Moreover, the actual behaviors (non-verbal body language) of the subject can be contrasted to their answers. When the two don't match, the researcher can investigate the discrepancy.

This cultivation of the relationship with participants helps the researcher draw out depth material that can only be gathered when the informant is ready (McCall and Simmons, 1969, p. 23). For instance, toward the end of the term, one of the male participants disclosed information to the researcher about being approached by a homosexual student. Due to the sensitive nature of this encounter, the researcher doubts that the subject would have shared this story if a trusting relationship had not been developed.

A fourth advantage is that "It is easier for the field worker to make use of selected informants' skills and insights" (McCall and Simmons, 1969, p. 23). Subjects are doing and saying what comes natural to each situation. They are able and encouraged to talk about what ever is on their minds. This free rein opens up many possibilities. Again, this is in contrast to what survey researchers do which is to



get subjects to respond only to what they want them to respond to.

Finally, "The impressions of a field worker are often more reliable for classifying respondents than a rigid index drawing upon one or two questions in a questionnaire" (McCall and Simmons, 1969, p. 22). The researcher spent so much time talking to, participating with, observing, and listening to the subjects that the level of understanding them and their experience could not be duplicated with other standard methods like the questionnaire or survey.

There are, of course, limitations to this methodology. One such limitation is that "Because of the non-standardized way the data are collected, they are not generally useful for statistical treatment" (McCall and Simmons, 1969, p. 20). The researcher does not see this limitation as valid to this study because it was not the purpose of it to produce quantifiable data. In fact, it was the researcher's intention to do just the opposite. The design of this research was to use a methodology that would help the researcher (and others) understand the unique, personal experience of each subject. For example, Ann Frank's diary has helped us to understand what it was like to be Jewish during the Holocaust in a way that numbers never could (Cusick, class notes, 1990). Although both are valuable, their purposes are very different.

Finally, McCall and Simmons have identified a second major limitation. According to these authors, this limitation "flows from the researcher's use of the relationships he



establishes in the field, that is, the likelihood of bias" (1969, p. 21). In an effort to avoid bias, the researcher used various methods of data collection (participant observation, observation, interviews, and student journals). The collection of data from different sources reduces the chances that the researcher could be too influenced by limited information and thus be biased toward a particular outcome.

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **PRESENTATION OF THE FINDINGS**

#### **INTRODUCTION**

The researcher, using ethnographic methods, presents data collected about the first term college experience of traditional age commuter students. Furthermore, a summary of background information on each student in the sample is offered. Specifically, information regarding orientation, parking on campus, classes, time between classes, contact with peers, contact with faculty, academic advising, and campus services and programs is reported. Finally, how the collegiate experience contributes or does not contribute to a commuter student developing a sense of belonging to the university is discussed.

#### **PREPARING FOR THE NEW ACADEMIC YEAR**

##### **Student Affairs Staff Fall 90-91 Kickoff**

Every year, the Vice President of Student Affairs and Services hosts a fall kickoff for his staff. The kickoff is one of the only times during the year when the Vice President has an opportunity to address the Student Affairs staff as a whole. As a result, the Vice President uses the fall kickoff to get staff to think about the upcoming year with a speech

that is very much like a pep talk designed to influence and encourage the staff to do a good job.

This year the kickoff was held on Thursday, September 13, 1990 in the Ballroom of the Union. The following is a piece of the Vice President's address:

What I'd like to ask you to do, each of you, is to take just a minute or so to think about how you felt when you were about two weeks from going off to college for the first time. And if it was not the first time away from home, to college, it was the first time away from home. I'm serious about that. Think about that. Just take a minute to think about what you felt and what your anticipation was.

After all of the Student Affairs staff took a minute to think about how it felt "going off to college for the first time," the Vice President continued with:

The reason I ask you to do that is because I think the nature of what we do requires us, particularly us in this business of student services, to be able to relate to what it means to be a freshman coming here for the first time. And if we can't do that then we have a problem getting on with the work that has to be done in this business. We have to be able to put ourselves in their places. We have to be able to understand, as they say, where they are coming from.

In this speech, the Vice President asked his staff to think about how they felt "going off to college for the first time." He did not ask them to think about what it was like or what it might be like commuting to campus from home. Yet, he said that "the nature of what we do requires us, particularly us in this business of student services, to be able to relate to what it means to be a freshman coming here for the first time." What does it mean to be a traditional age commuter

student who attends a large mid-western university?

#### **BACKGROUND ON COMMUTER STUDENTS IN THE SAMPLE**

##### **Julia Winslow\***

Julia is an 18 year old female student who is from Lansing, MI. She lives with her father, stepmother, 16 year old sister, 6 year old half-sister, and 3 year old half-brother. Julia's mother lives in Phoenix, AZ with her stepfather. Consequently, Julia sees her mother only a couple of times a year.

It takes Julia about 10-15 minutes to drive to campus. Julia said that being a commuter student "feels like a job...." She goes on to say that "...as a commuter student my existence is like 9 to 5." Julia drives to campus each day by herself.

During the summer and Christmas vacation, Julia works about 30 hours per week as a seasonal post office employee. While college is in session, Julia works between 5-10 hours per week (on work-study) as an information person in the administration building on campus.

Julia was in the honors program in high school and received a partial academic scholarship for college. She began college as a no-preference major, but changed that to natural resources before classes started.

##### **Kelly Reed\***

Kelly is a 17 year old female student from Lansing, MI. She lives with her mother, her mother's boyfriend, her middle

school brother, and her high school brother. Kelly does not see her father.

It takes Kelly about 10-15 minutes to drive to campus from her home. When asked about her experience as a commuter student, Kelly said, "I don't think it's been really any different than any other student. I get up in the morning and I drive to school and I go to classes and then I drive home." Kelly also drives to campus each day by herself.

Kelly has worked at a video rental center for many years. She works between 25-30 hours per week, even when she is attending college full-time. Kelly claims to have a very good relationship with her boss and feels a sense of responsibility for the success of his business. Consequently, she will adjust her schedule when her boss needs her help on the job.

Kelly was an honors student in high school. She is currently a James Madison major (liberal arts/political science). The James Madison program of study is designed around the residential college experience. Therefore, Kelly had to apply for permission to commute to college while in that major. According to Kelly, she is one of only two freshmen in that major who commute to campus.

#### **Victor Robins\***

Victor is an 18 year old male student who is from Perry, MI. He lives with his mother and father.

Because of the traffic, Victor says that it takes him about 40-45 minutes to get to campus each day. Victor

describes commuting as "quite difficult." According to him, "coming back and forth all the time and homework is difficult."

Victor works between 10-15 hours per week. Once he started college, he scheduled all of his work hours on the weekends so he would have time during the week for classes.

Officially, Victor is a no-preference major. He had, however, thought he would major in chemical engineering. Consequently, he took the classes that a chemical engineering major would take. But, toward the end of the term because he was "not doing so hot" in chemistry, he said he "probably would go into some kind of computer engineering, artificial intelligence field."

#### **Boris Allyn\***

Boris is an 18 year old male student who is from Lansing, MI. He lives with his mother and younger brother. Although Boris' father does not live with him, they see each other often.

It takes Boris about 15-20 minutes to drive to campus each day. When asked about his experience as a commuter student, Boris said, "Well, it's kind of hard to keep coming back and forth to the campus all the time and when you have to have extra help; it's especially hard because you have to come all the way from off-campus to on-campus and find somebody that can actually help you with it." Boris drives to campus each day by himself.

Boris' college tuition was paid by his grandmother through the Michigan Education Trust (MET) program. But, Boris still works 25-30 hours per week. He started the term with a job he had during high school in a video rental store. Half way into the term, Boris found another job in the local mall.

Boris was also in the honors program in high school. He is an electrical engineering major but has been having trouble in a required math course for his major.

#### **Ariel Howe\***

Ariel is an 18 year old female student who is from Haslett, MI. She lives with her mother and father. Ariel and her parents are all Born Again Christians and are very involved in church activities.

It takes Ariel about 20 minutes to commute to campus each day. Ariel is driven to and from campus and picked up after her classes by one of her parents. She does not have a car of her own to use for transportation. According to Ariel, "It is difficult to be driven to school. It is almost embarrassing to have my mom drop me off."

Ariel is not employed during the academic year. During the summer, she usually goes to a Born Again Christian camp.

Ariel is a mathematics major because her father thought she would find a good job if she studied math. Ariel does, however, think she might like another major (like elementary education). But for now, she is giving mathematics a try.

Ariel said that she "would get all A's in high school" but is now "not doing well."

**Rip Hayes\***

Rip is a 19 year old male student who is from Potterville, MI. He lives with his mother, stepfather, younger brother, and two younger half-sisters. For a long time, Rip had not seen his father, but this year he has put more time and effort into developing their relationship again. As a result, Rip sees his father occasionally.

It takes Rip around 25-30 minutes to commute to campus each day. He describes commuting to college as "hectic" because he has "to drive all over the place." Rip drives to campus each day by himself.

Rip works 40 hours per week in a restaurant as a bus person. Because of his job, Rip usually gets home each evening around mid-night. He has to get up for classes each day at 6:30 a.m. so he has long days on about 5-6 hours of sleep each night.

Rip is a microbiology major. He also received very good grades in high school, but according to Rip, "I don't feel like the student I was in high school. I'm not getting good grades."

**Bill Hipp\***

Bill is an 18 year old male student from Taylor, MI, but lives with his handicapped uncle in Lansing during the



academic year. Bill's uncle is not at home much because he runs his own business and spends many hours at work. Bill visits his family in Taylor on long weekends and vacations.

A couple of Bill's former high school friends attend the same university and live in the residence halls. Because of this connection, Bill purchased lunch meal tickets so he can eat in the residence hall dining rooms with his friends.

It takes Bill about 15 minutes to commute to campus each day from his uncle's home. According to Bill, as a commuter "I've learned to do a lot of things through reading because I don't have the time to run to each department..." Bill drives to campus each day by himself.

Bill is not employed during the academic year. He works in the summer back in his hometown.

Bill is a first generation college student. He did well in high school so according to Bill, "Everybody has expectations of what I should do. So I'm trying to live up to those expectations." Bill is a computer engineering major.

#### **Tom Morrison\***

Tom is an 18 year old male student from Pewamo, MI. He decided that he would save money by living with his aunt in Lansing and commuting to college. Tom was raised on his family's farm in Pewamo and visits as often as he can which is usually weekends and holidays. He also has a significant relationship with a young woman who lives near his family's home.

It takes Tom about 15 minutes to commute to campus each day from his aunt's home. After a few weeks of commuting to campus, Tom decided that he wanted to move to campus and live in the residence halls. So, during the first week in October, Tom moved into one of the residence halls. According to Tom, "One of my reasons for moving to the dorms is the time I have been wasting traveling back and forth." He used to go back to his aunt's home after his morning classes and then have to commute back to campus for his afternoon class.

Tom, who is an electrical engineering major, said that he was not doing well in his classes when he was commuting because he was too unhappy to study. Moreover, he had hours off between classes with nothing to do and nowhere to go.

#### **Joe Trinity\***

Joe is an 18 year old male student from Owosso, MI. He lives with his mother, stepfather, younger brother, and the family dog named Joshua. Joe's half-sister visits the family once or twice a month.

It takes Joe about 30 minutes to commute to campus each day from his home. According to Joe, "You know you don't get the basic feeling for the school because your are not there most of the time unless you just stay late after classes." Joe commutes to campus each day by himself.

Joe was not employed during his first term of college. He did, however, talk about how he wanted to try to find a job. He didn't seem to follow through with any effort in this

area.

Joe did pretty well in high school as far as grades are concerned without putting too much time into studying. He is a mechanical engineering major and is now having trouble with math and chemistry. Consequently, Joe is not sure if he will be able to continue in his major.

\* All names presented in this study are pseudonyms.

#### **ORIENTING NEW STUDENTS TO THE UNIVERSITY**

At the university where this study was conducted, new students are introduced to the campus through Welcome Week. During the 1990-91 academic year, Welcome Week began on Monday, September 10, and ran through Sunday, September 16.

Welcome Week, as well as other orientation activities, is coordinated by a professional staff member in the Department of Student Life. Back in the Spring of 1990, eight undergraduate students were selected to assist this staff member with the planning and coordination of the orientation program. These undergraduate students were called UGUIDES.

Each UGUIDE was given a part of Welcome Week to help coordinate; thus, one of these undergraduates was appointed to Chair the Commuter Committee. The individual who Chaired the Commuter Committee attended the university as a resident student when he started college. In fact, after his first year as a resident student, he became a Resident Assistant (RA) a position he held for two years. So although this individual had strong leadership skills, he had not

experienced college as a commuter student. Two female commuter students were, however, recruited to assist him with the planning of Welcome Week activities for new traditional age commuter students. In his annual report the Chair of the Commuter Committee said:

The Commuter Committee took a much different focus than the other committees of UGUIDES. Our efforts were directed on a much broader scale as we looked toward an entire year of planning, and not just to one week of activities. This different focus took us out of the mainstream of the group I feel, which was fine. Our program just seemed to be disconnected with the efforts of the rest of the group, and this made at least myself feel less a part of the whole.

(Annual Report 1990-91,  
Commuter Committee, p. 1)

This quote demonstrates how easy it is to feel "disconnected" when one is working on programs for commuter students who are "out of the mainstream" of the residential model.

#### **COMMUTER STUDENT ORIENTATION MEETING**

The only part of Welcome Week specifically designed for new commuter students was a meeting which was held on September 16 from 12:00 noon to 1:15. This meeting took place in one of the residence halls.

There was some confusion finding the room for the meeting because the literature which was mailed to new commuter students listed the hall, but not the room for the meeting. So new commuter students entered this massive residence hall and asked the reception desk staff where their meeting was.

The reception desk staff did not know which room had been reserved for the meeting. Also, the residence hall was very busy with new resident students moving in. Even the researcher was not aware of the specific place of the meeting. After a few minutes, the Chair of the Committee arrived and led a group of new commuter students to the location of the meeting. He then quickly hung up a few signs to help others find the room.

The meeting began with a welcome and the introduction of the three member Commuter Committee. The only full-time professional staff member at this meeting was the Vice President of Student Affairs and Services. He was scheduled to give a few opening remarks at the beginning of the meeting. After his late arrival, the Vice President addressed the fifty or so new commuter students who were present. The Vice President began his welcome with:

Good morning. Thank you very much. Did you all pray this morning? No? The first thing you gotta do to succeed is to pray on Sunday; it helps. I did for you. I'm pleased that you are here and I think the computer (sic) program, the notion that recognizes that commuter students are an important factor. An important piece of the many pieces about the university and I'm excited about your willingness and recognition. There is something to be learned about being successful as a commuter student.

When the Vice President asked these new commuter students if they had prayed that morning, a nervous silence filled the room. Not one of the students answered his rather personal question. The Vice President's response to the group's

silence was to assume they had not prayed. That's when he gave these new commuter students advice on how to succeed, "to pray on Sunday." This advice was not qualified for non-Christian students or atheist students who may not have anticipated getting this kind of advice during orientation from the Vice President of Student Affairs and Services of a public university.

The Vice President closed his nine minute speech with:

We feel as good about you being here as we do about students who live in the halls or residence halls or one of those places. We think that we have as much obligation to you as we do to those students. And I challenge you to assure that we meet that responsibility to you. Don't let us off the hook.

After his address, the Vice President left the meeting and the Chair of the Commuter Committee continued with the program.

A twelve minute ice breaker was the next item on the meeting agenda. This activity gave the students an opportunity to move around the room and get to know something about some of the other new commuter students who were there.

Finally, the members of the Commuter Committee reviewed the following items: parking on-campus, commuter bus, campus bus, bike registration, bookstores, student employment, intramural sports and facilities, registration, and the weekly commuter meetings. At the end of the meeting, commuter students were given an opportunity to ask questions. The following questions were asked by the commuter students in the audience:

1. Where can you buy books for the best price?

2. Where do you find out about financial aid?
3. What is a student aid grant?
4. What is work-study?
5. Do we have to show them (financial aid) where we are working?
6. I see they have a ten minute time slot for registration. Is that how long it takes to register?
7. Should I come to registration earlier than my scheduled time?
8. What do I do if I want to drop a class?
9. When do graduate students register?
10. Where do you get football tickets?
11. How do we know what our student number is?
12. After you go to registration and you go to the pit (registration card arena) for drops and adds and you take on additional credits, do you have to go back to registration to pay additional fees?
13. What is the time limit on drops?
14. If we receive financial aid and we get more than we needed for tuition can we use the rest for books?

The questions asked here demonstrate that these new commuter students were primarily concerned with financial aid and registration. Concerns regarding their personal and social development took a back seat until the academic side of their college experience was in place.

As mentioned in Chapter 1, the researcher was introduced to these new commuter students during this orientation meeting

and was given an opportunity to explain briefly this study. The meeting provided the researcher with a unique opportunity to recruit students to participate in this research project. The process used to recruit and select the sample for this study is also elaborated on in Chapter 1.

The Commuter Orientation Meeting ended with ice cream, but few students had the time to enjoy any due to the day's schedule. The New Student Convocation was scheduled at 1:30 in another building on-campus so anyone who wanted to attend had to leave immediately following the close of the program.

The value of this Commuter Student Orientation meeting varied from participant to participant in the study. None of the students in the sample referred to the meeting in their journals. Consequently, their feeling and perceptions about the meeting were learned during the taped interviews.

Several of the participants made comments about the value of being with other commuter students at the beginning of the meeting. For example, Tom Morrison said, "Yeah, it was kind of helpful. I mean just to see other people who are like me and everything." Rip Hayes said, "You got to meet other people a lot easier. Normally, if I were a student commuting, I wouldn't meet as many people as I had." Additionally, Joe Trinity thought the session was helpful and replied, "I think it was because you learn more about the campus and met people."

Other participants either didn't remember anything about the meeting or did not find it helpful. Ariel Howe said,



"Honestly, I don't remember what was done at the orientation." Others like Kelly Reed seemed let down because as she said, "It didn't help me feel more comfortable with the university because I picked that up, you know, that came pretty naturally. And I just didn't feel that it was any special help at all."

Some participants had mixed feelings about the Commuter Orientation Meeting. According to Bill Hipp, "Well, the orientation itself wasn't helpful." But later, Bill said, "I mean it was just a fun time to get to know everybody there. That's what I think the orientation was."

In another example, Victor Robins said the orientation wasn't helpful because he "...already knew the campus..." But later he said, "It informed me of the things I needed to get for like registration, for my car, and where to register..." Some of Victor's negative feelings about the orientation seemed to stem from the fact that it was just a one hour, one day event. As he said, "That was helpful in the beginning, ...it just helps you in the beginning really. It doesn't help you right now."

#### **COMMUTER RESOURCE FAIR**

The three member Commuter Committee also planned a Commuter Resource Fair which was held during registration on Monday, September 17 and Tuesday, September 18. The Commuter Resource Fair was held in the commuter parking lot from 9:00 - 5:00 p.m. on each of these two days.

The Chair of the Commuter Committee and a professional staff member in the Student Life who coordinates Welcome Week sent a letter to various offices on campus asking them to participate in the Fair (see Appendix D). Office directors were asked to provide office information and/or personnel for the Fair. The only offices who sent personnel (and not for the whole Fair) included: the health center, automotive services, and the service-learning center. The following offices provided information: career planning and placement, computer center (Tuesday only), religious studies (Tuesday only), and the undergraduate university division (late Tuesday only).

Turn out for the Fair by commuter students was also light. Most of the students in the study said that they did not park in the commuter lot during registration because the lot is so far from the main campus and they had not planned to stay on campus very long. Commuter students can pay to park in a lot that is much closer to the building where registration took place.

#### **COMMUTER WEEKLY MEETINGS**

The members of the Commuter Committee had planned to have weekly meetings on various topics specifically for commuter students, but after a dismal turnout (only two students attended each meeting) for the first two meetings, the rest were canceled.

The meetings were scheduled each week on Mondays at 2:00.

Commuter students who attended the Commuter Orientation Meeting were given a schedule of events and happenings (see Appendix E) which included the dates, times, and locations of these meetings. In addition, commuters who attended the Commuter Resource Fair were given a schedule of information regarding the Monday meetings (see Appendix F).

Only two commuter students attended the first commuter meeting on Monday, September 24. One of these two students was Joe Trinity who is a participant in this study.

The second meeting, which took place on Monday, October 1, was again attended by only two students, one of whom was Joe Trinity.

Most of the other commuter students in the sample said that they had not attended any of these meetings because they were scheduled at a bad time. Moreover, the meetings were scheduled in locations which were difficult for commuter students to get to.

#### **THE FIRST FEW DAYS OF COLLEGE**

##### **MOBILITY, PARKING ON-CAMPUS, AND THE COMMUTER BUS**

All commuting students have the privilege of driving on this university campus. This privilege costs \$18.00 per year because all of the cars that are driven on campus must be registered. Thus, commuter students pay to drive on campus, not to park. Parking (in certain places) is free for registered cars.

Once a car is registered, it can be parked in a commuter

parking lot which is located in a wooded area on the edge of the campus, far from most academic buildings. There is, however, a commuter bus which runs to the center of campus from 7:33 a.m. to 6:17 p.m. To ride this bus, a commuter student must pay either \$9.00 per term or \$20.00 per year.

Another bus runs frequently through the rest of the campus each day. It costs .60 per single fare to ride this bus or \$24.00 for Fall & Spring, and \$30.00 for the Winter term. There is a \$60.00 annual fee for a pass for this bus.

When automobile registration fees and annual bus fares are calculated, it costs commuter students \$98.00 per year to park on the far side of campus and take the bus to their classroom buildings. The commuter parking lot fills up early in the morning so many commuters park in a grass field across the street from the lot.

The commuter students in the study were not very happy with the parking situation on campus. In her journal, Kelly Reed expressed her feelings on this subject:

As usual commuters get screwed over, we have the worst parking situation on campus. Very few places; and it sounded as if anyone could get a sticker for the lot. We can only park in one place and others get a wide variety including our lot.

Bill Hipp describes his feelings after he went to the Department of Public Safety to purchase his registration sticker and found out where he could park:

I looked down at the lot at the bottom of the map and the first thing that popped into my mind was 'why is the lot miles from any of the buildings on campus?' It would be lot easier for a lot of students to park closer to the center of campus

than far away. I learned while I was there I was glad that I had purchased a year bus pass. As I see, I will need to use it a lot.

The commuter parking lot is separated from the rest of the campus by railroad tracks. When trains run over those tracks, students are stuck on either side and must wait until the train has passed. Consequently, commuter students worry about being late for class because of these circumstances. Julia Winslow reported in her journal that she wished the first commuter bus would run earlier than 7:33 so she would not be late for her 8:00 a.m. class. Julia makes sure she is at the commuter lot early so she can get on that busy first bus. As she put it, "I wasn't the only one out there, that's for sure. Luckily, we didn't hit a train."

For a commuter student like Ariel Howe, who does not have a car, getting to school each day presents its own set of problems. Either her mother or father drives her to campus in the morning and picks her up following her last class. According to Ariel:

It is difficult to be driven to school. It is almost embarrassing to have my mom drop me off. Sometimes it is a hassle because classes get out a little early and I have no place to go until my mom gets there.

So it seems no matter how commuter students get to campus they must deal with the problems, time constraints, and circumstances surrounding parking and mobility on campus.

#### **REGISTRATION**

Freshmen and transfer student registration is held in a different location than the regular registration for upper

level students. The researcher participated in registration with three students in the sample. On the way to registration, Boris Allyn said that he was so nervous about registration that he could not sleep the night before. He feared that he would not get the classes he wanted or that he would not know how the process worked.

But to his surprise, the lines for registration were short and there were staff available for questions even though this large university has over 6,000 new first time freshmen. As a result, the students observed made comments like Boris Allyn's: "Registration was surprisingly smooth." Kelly Reed said, "I didn't have any trouble with my schedule at all. It was much easier than I expected."

#### **BUYING CLASS TEST BOOKS**

Purchasing text books for class proved to be a challenge for many of the new commuters in the sample. College courses are all coded by the department, course number, and section number. These codes are used in the bookstores to locate the appropriate text books for each course.

The researcher observed three students in the study buy their text books. Their initial excitement about this experience turned to frustration when they discovered that they did not know what to do once they entered the bookstore and found rows of books all coded. They did not want to ask a store employee for help because that would identify them as freshmen which is a label they wanted to avoid. So they

walked up and down the aisles trying to figure out the system. After a few minutes, these students realized that they needed help and finally asked an employee how they would go about finding their books.

Once they learned the system, they needed to decide on new or used text books. These three economically minded students decided that they would save a few dollars and went with the used books when they could. The cost of buying text books was a shock to these students. They each paid between \$150.00 and \$200.00 for books for one term.

#### **LEARNING CAMPUS**

As mentioned earlier, several of these new freshmen did not want others around them to know they were new to college. On the first day of class, the researcher was with two of the participants as they tried to locate their classroom buildings. At one point, these two freshmen started to suspect that they were not going the right way to the building they were trying to locate. They asked the researcher which way they should go. The researcher asked them how they would find their way if she were not with them. They said that they might look at the campus map, but they did not want to pull it out because everyone would know that they were freshmen.

Because the researcher did not help them, they eventually had to pull out their map. They pulled the map out, toward the back of a building, in a place where there was not much

student traffic. The map was taken out quickly, looked at, and then put away as fast as possible.

To avoid this embarrassment, Julia Winslow said, "Since I'm from the area, I had a chance to find my classes...and walk the whole campus. I experienced the confusion before anyone else was there to witness it."

### **THE STIGMA OF BEING A COMMUTER STUDENT**

Even though almost half of all the students who attend the university where this study was conducted commute to campus, many of the freshmen in this study expressed negative feelings about being a commuter. As Boris Allyn said, "When you talk to other students and they ask 'where you are staying', and you reply, 'home, I commute,' you feel like a mutated vagrant."

These negative feelings about commuting are sometimes associated with a feeling of disappointment about the college experience. According to Julia Winslow:

It's just disappointing to stay home. Right from the time I was little, I imagined the day college began as the day I packed all my stuff into a van, waving from the back window. Instead, I get up and creep around the house, trying not to wake anyone and drive out to ride a bus to my first class. Commuting definitely is not very glamorous.

Rip Hayes also expressed feelings of disappointment and loneliness. He said, "I'm beginning to envy those incoming freshmen staying in the dorms. At least they have a roommate to pal around with." Kelly Reed expressed a similar feeling



when she said, "I've talked to a lot of people and most of them are really nice, but it seems as though I am cut off from them all. They live together and do all kinds of things together and because I do not live there, I am not included in anything but casual conversation."

At times, commuter students may use the fact that they are commuters as an excuse or reason for something not working out. Victor Robins described such an incident in his journal:

There was this kid that I met that lives in the dorms. He was a pretty cool guy, we would go over to his place and study together. We were doing this for a good two weeks. All of a sudden he started telling me he didn't want to study. The next day I found out he was studying with some other people that lived in his dorm. This kind of hurt me, but I didn't let it too long.

For a while, Victor thought his new friend had just preferred being with other resident students and, consequently, that was the reason he was rejected. Luckily, Victor got up the courage to ask his former friend what the problem was. According to Victor, this is what happened:

I finally went up to him and asked him what his problem was. I was really demanding at this point. He told me that I wasn't attracted to him. I almost dropped my stuff on the floor. I did not believe he was some homosexual....

In a final example of the stigma of the commuter student, Rip Hayes reflects upon an interaction he had with two of his peers. According to Rip:

I met a few people in my chemistry lab, though I had a hard time getting into at least a formal sort of conversation with them. The guy and girl seemed to have an easier time of it since both live on campus. I felt ignorant of much of campus life and said very little.

### UNIVERSITY CLASSES

For a new first year commuter student, the classroom many be one of the few places on campus where he/she can meet his/her peers as well as get-to-know faculty (Jacoby, 1989, p. 52). This opportunity is enhanced when classes are small in size and/or students are engaged in class assignments or projects that promote interaction. The researcher visited many classes on campus (see Table 2) to observe the commuter students in the study.

The actual number of students in each class on campus varied considerably. The writing as well as honor level courses were small. By contrast, most of the introductory level courses were very large. These large classes were held in lecture halls that seated hundreds of students. In most of these classes, the instructor used an overhead projector and microphone to teach the course material.

Kelly Reed's experience in ICS 121 is very typical of the experience of the other commuter students in the sample who have one or more of these large lecture hall classes. Kelly got to class early and sat in the third row in the center of the lecture hall. She did not talk to any of the other students in the class even though they had been in the course for several weeks. The lecture hall filled up, but no one sat on either side of Kelly.

The instructor used an overhead projector to display

Table 2

## List of Classes Visited

	Course Name	Number	Size
1.	College Algebra with Trigonometry	MTH 111	300*
2.	Oral Communication	COMM 115	200
3.	Integrated Studies in Contemporary Science	ICS 121	200
4.	College Algebra & Trigonometry I	MTH 108	300
5.	Geography of Culture	GEO 201	70
6.	Culture, Environment & Adaptation	ANP 250	250
7.	Principles of Chemistry I	CEM 151	250
8.	Writing: American Expression	ATL 121	25
9.	Developmental Writing I	ATL 1144	19
10.	Calculus & Analytic Geometry I	MTH 112	12
11.	Introduction to the Study of Policy	MC 200	300
	Problems		
12.	Writing: Women in America	ATL 181	24
13.	Americans & Their Values	SS 201	56
14.	Identity & Community in American:	MC 111	17

## An Approach to Writing

\* Figures represent the approximate number of college students in the course indicated.

written information. He used a microphone so his voice could be heard by students in the back of the large hall. Several

times during his lecture he asked the class a question, waited a minute, and when no one responded, he gave the students the answer.

After only a few minutes into the lecture, several students who were sitting in the back rows were observed sleeping by the researcher. Others in the back were observed passing notes to each other.

This class was scheduled from 8:00 - 9:50 a.m. By about 9:00 a.m., most of the students, including Kelly, were showing signs of fatigue and boredom. Many students were yawning and displaying negative body language (like moving uncomfortably in their chairs).

In an attempt to get back the attention of the class, the instructor said, "We still have 20 minutes to cover the rest of the world." No one in the class laughed at the instructor's joke. He then said, "you students have no sense of humor. Maybe it's too early in the morning."

Throughout this almost two hour lecture, students were not involved in any class discussion. The instructor lectured the entire time.

About 5-10 minutes before the class was over, students started closing their notebooks, putting on their coats, and preparing to leave. Once they started preparing to leave, the instructor ended his lecture. Kelly Reed then walked out of the class without talking to anyone.

This scenario was very different in the small classes. In every class with under 30 students, the commuter students

in the sample talked to their peers and at times faculty members before and after class. Joe Trinity's experience in ATL 121 would be representative of the experiences of most of the participants in small classes.

Joe's writing class was from 9:10 - 10:00 a.m. on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday. As students entered the classroom, they took seats toward the front of the class. When Joe entered the room, he sat next to two students and started talking to them. All of the freshmen in this class were talking to their peers before the class began.

When the instructor entered the room, he said hello to the students and asked them to turn in an assignment that was due. Joe collected the papers of several other students and brought them to the instructor.

The instructor then explained the class assignment. He called students by their first names when he wanted them to contribute to the discussion. The instructor then put the students into groups of four to work on the class assignment. While the students were working, the instructor moved around the room, going from group to group, helping the students complete the task.

Once the instructor left Joe's group and moved to another, the students he was working with started talking about their majors and the classes they wanted to take during the next term. The students shared information with each other about "good" and "bad" professors as well as "hard" and "easy" classes. All of the students listened attentively to

the advice of their peers about course options.

The classroom was filled with dialogue. Some of it about the class assignment and some of it personal. When the class assignment was finished, the instructor passed back some of the students' work. He knew the names of all of the students in the class, so he was able to place each student's paper on his/her desk.

When the class ended, several students went up to talk to the professor. Moreover, many students stayed in the classroom talking to their peers and sharing the grades they had received on the assignment that was just handed back.

Comments from other students in the sample suggest they are more satisfied with classes that are small. For instance, Ariel Howe said, "Calculus is getting better. I usually get to class 1 1/2 hours before it starts. Another guy is there too so we sit and do homework and talk. I'm getting to know a few people." This example shows that Ariel is claiming calculus is getting better. The reason it is getting better, according to Ariel, is that she is "getting to know a few people." There are twelve students in her calculus class.

Kelly Reed made similar comments about her writing class. According to Kelly:

My writing class was the best thing though. I really felt like part of the class! Some of the groups kind of split up and I ended up having a nice conversation with some people. It was definitely the best class so far!

Kelly felt that her writing class was the "best so far" because she had a chance to have "a nice conversation with

some people." There are seventeen students in Kelly's writing class. It is interesting to note that course content or instruction was not mentioned by these students only having opportunities to interact with their peers.

Finally, speaking of his writing class, Victor Robins said, "...that's where I know more people in that class than I do in the other classes because we have discussions all the time with each other." Victor also felt comfortable and enjoyed his experience in his writing class. Again, the size of Victor's writing class was important because it was small enough for class discussion.

#### **TIME BETWEEN CLASSES**

The amount of time the students in the study had between classes varied considerably. But, all of the commuter students in the sample did have at least some time off. These gaps of time ranged from one to several hours.

This time off between classes was sometimes frustrating for the students in the study because most felt they had no where to go and no one to do anything with. Many of the participants did what Ariel Howe usually did between classes. According to Ariel, "I just go to my next class, to the building and just sit like in the lobby or hall or what ever." So she would usually sit alone in the lobby or hallway for hours until her next class.

Three days a week, Julia Winslow had a five hour block of free time between classes. So she would go home between her

classes on those days.

Other students like Victor Robins wished he could go home between his classes, but felt like he lived too far away. As Victor put it:

Well, I don't leave. I live 20 miles away so I can't leave or I can't go to my room or anything. So I mainly just find a place to sit down and I study which is basically about 95 percent of what I do.

Victor says that he usually is alone between classes. When asked where he goes between classes Victor said, "Well, it all depends on which is most convenient for me." When he has relatively short breaks, he would spend them in the lobby or hallway of the building his next class was in. When he had longer breaks between classes, he would go to the Union and sit over there and study.

#### **THE RESULT OF TOO MUCH TIME WITH NO WHERE TO GO**

Tom Morrison started college as a commuter student but after a couple of weeks into the term decided to move into the residence halls. Tom described his first couple of weeks in this way:

In my 2 1/2 weeks of commuting, I haven't really accomplished much. One of my reasons for moving to the dorm is the time I have been wasting traveling back and forth. On everyday besides Friday, I made two trips to (campus) and back, a total of 40 miles. I would come home after my morning class, try to study, eat, watch T.V. and go for my afternoon class. I only stayed on campus twice all day, which I found tiring. Also, it was very hard to concentrate on my afternoon class.

Tom felt as though he would not do well in his classes if



he continued his status as a commuter. The main reason he made the rather drastic decision to move into the residence halls during the term was that he had too much time off between classes and nowhere to go that was convenient and comfortable. Consequently, it was tiring for him to stay on campus between classes and just as tiring to go home.

Some of the students in the sample were more positive about their free time between classes. Kelly Reed described her time off by saying:

I usually go to the study lounge in Case Hall (residence hall and classroom building). It's really nice and I have a lot of my classes there so it's really convenient. And it's quiet and I can just study and get caught up on my reading and stuff.

None of the commuter students in the sample spent much of their free time exploring the campus. The places they tended to go were places they experienced in the course of their regular day. So some students, like Kelly, found a comfortable lounge to go to between classes only because she happened to be in that building anyway for class. Other students weren't as lucky and maybe had their classes in building with less comfortable facilities.

#### **CONTACT WITH PEERS**

For the commuter students in the study, meeting and being accepted by their peers was probably one of the most important aspects of their college experience. All of the participants had some kind of informal conversations with students in their

classes. However, making the transition from the small talk in classes to out of the classroom friendships was difficult.

Not feeling connected to a peer group can be very disappointing. Julia Winslow described her experience regarding friendships this way:

I feel like I'm watching school through a shatter-proof picture window. I can see but can't participate. The academics are challenging, once you sift through all the work. I guess the part that I feel I'm missing is the social aspects. I've mastered my class work or at least I know how to attack one thing at a time. Now I'm reaching for the emotional/social aspects that college offers.

Rip Hayes expressed a similar sentiment in his journal. He said that he wanted to come to campus and party, but he didn't know anything about parties or people who would know about them. According to Rip, "I want to have fun! Hell, isn't that part of what college is about?"

For commuter students who have made some kind of a break through in meeting new friends, the experience can be very exciting. Kelly Reed describes her feelings:

I really think things are starting to change for the better. I now have a "group" of friends that I sit with at lecture and talk to in class. Finally, I am making some new friends. One of them even called and talked to me today. I was really surprised. Instead of walking next door or down the hall she called me!

A few weeks later, Kelly was even happier about the major strides she had been making socially. As she said:

I was in my policy lecture (MC 200) and it was the worst lecture in the history of lectures. There was a guest speaker and he didn't say anything important at all. So, I was just sitting there "talking" through notes with my friends. One of

them asked me what I was doing after work on Friday. Then she asked me to go with her to a party! I am so excited! It will be the first social thing of my college career with someone I met at school! And, she initiated it! Finally, I am being included...

Another student in the study, Bill Hipp, had an easier time making friends because one of his best friends in high school moved into the residence halls. So Bill purchased meal tickets so that he could eat with his former high school friend three days a week. By eating several times a week in the residence halls, Bill has gotten to know many new friends through his former high school buddy.

Former high school friends, who are also commuting to college, can sometimes help commuter students with the transition to the new college environment. As an example, even though Boris Allyn has not made any significant new friends since he has been in college, it didn't matter to him because he had many commuter friends at the university who went to high school with him. According to Boris, "I have a lot of friends that go here. ...I also see other friends of mine around all the time that I went to high school with...." So Boris spends time between classes with these old friends.

Generally speaking, the type and amount of contact with one's new college peers depended on each participant's desire to meet people, their schedules, available time, and personality. It was easier for a gregarious person like Kelly Reed to make friends than for a quiet, rather shy person like Rip Hayes.

### CONTACT WITH FACULTY

Outside of a few exceptions, the commuter students in this study had little or no contact with faculty. In fact, this was probably the weakest aspect of the student's college experience.

As mentioned earlier, many of the classes taken by first year students, like those in this sample, are very large. The number of students in each class makes it almost impossible for some faculty to know a student by name - never mind have any real personal contact. As a result, little to no actual faculty-student interaction took place. As Victor Robins said, "It's hard to know, get to know a faculty member when you know there's 800 people in your class."

This is not to say that this type of interaction is even desired by the students in the sample. Ariel Howe said in her journal, "As a freshman, I am almost intimidated to go and talk to my professor. I feel he is looking at me like some lower class human."

Julia Winslow shared her feelings about faculty-student interaction this way:

I don't know what I would say to them. I mean, it would be nicer if the classes were smaller and we could all contribute to the class. You know, instead of lecture, lecture, lecture.

Julia went on to say that, "I don't think they care one way or another if I'm there, but that's just because I'm a funky freshman so it will get better I imagine."

For other students in the sample, different barriers kept

them from interacting with faculty. Several students in the study complained about not understanding faculty for whom English is a second language. As Victor Robins describes it:

I don't even like talking to them because a lot of times I'll ask them a question and they will think it's something different. A lot of them are foreign, they don't understand what I'm saying.

Boris Allyn expressed a similar concern when he said:

Not understanding 'foreign' profs is beginning to be a big problem. They begin to tell you something and they stop midway to tell you that they got something wrong way back in the lecture. Though they may be hard to understand they still know the material well.

Several students in the sample said that the only personal contact they had with faculty was during required office visits. Many of the writing professors required students to come to their offices so they could talk to them about their writing on an individual basis.

Rip Hayes described his pre-arranged visit to his writing professor's office this way, "I was so nervous at first but then he didn't really talk down to me or anything like that."

Bill Hipp also had to go visit his writing professor in his office. Bill said the following about that visit:

We talked a total of 15 minutes and then I was out of there. Um, I don't usually find the need to go talk to anybody in the faculty because I like to learn things on my own.

Kelly Reed, on the other hand, had a much more positive visit to her writing professor's office. Kelly explains:

Well, I went to her office hours for help on a paper that we were writing. We just started talking and the whole paper was about relating your own personal ideas and feelings to some of the

authors that we've been reading. And so we were talking and she was feeling out trying to give me some ideas of what I could write about. And so we were talking about my life and she was talking about hers and it was kind of nice because I got to know her pretty well and she got to know me. And I went to see her a couple of time now.

Access to faculty with limited office hours is sometimes a problem for commuter students. Due to his tight schedule, Joe Trinity only interacts with faculty after class in the classroom. Joe said that even this few minutes of interaction with his professors following class was helpful. Joe did, however, say that he could have talked longer if he had even "five minutes to sit down and talk about he paper."

#### **ACADEMIC ADVISING**

Academic advising is usually very important for commuter students, particularly freshmen commuters who may not be aware of the campus resources which are available to them (Jacoby, 1989, p. 53). Thus, an academic advisor can serve as a primary resource to these students.

The amount of time and the quality of time the students in the study spent with their academic advisors varied. But on the whole, the commuter students in the sample spent very little time talking to or receiving any advice from their academic advisors. Moreover, these students only went to see their academic advisors before early enrollment.

The student newspaper printed information about early enrollment for the next term about mid-way through the fall term. In the student newspaper it said that students should

make an appointment with their academic advisor to plan their schedule before they early enroll for the following term. Also, depending on a student's major, he or she may have received a letter in the mail telling him/her to make an appointment with an academic advisor before early enrolling for the next term.

As a result of these strategies, Bill Hipp went to see his academic advisor. This is how Bill described his experience:

I read in the \_\_\_\_\_ News that we had to make an appointment to see an advisor. Well, then I got a letter in the mail saying that I had to make an appointment with my advisor. So then I went down there to make an appointment and then they told me I didn't need an appointment. They just do that so it doesn't get flooded. Then one lady came out and asked me if I had time right then. I said yeah. It took 7 minutes and then we were out.

Bill did not find this meeting helpful because "...she was just reciting from a book." His advisor just checked the classes Bill planned on taking.

The university where the study was conducted is planning to switch from quarter system to the semester system in the fall on 1992. Bill's academic advisor did not mention this major change to him.

Boris Allyn first met his academic advisor at orientation. He too received a letter in the mail which told him to go to a specific hall for advising. When he got to the location specified in the letter, he was told to meet with another advisor whom he had never seen before. That advisor spent only a few minutes with him telling him what he should

take the next term. Again, this advisor did not mention the transition to the semester system.

Depending on a student's major, he or she could have a professional staff member or a faculty member for an academic advisor. When faculty members are also academic advisors, problems sometimes occur because of limited office hours. This was the case for Julia Winslow. Julia described the difficulty she had even seeing her academic advisor:

It was a pain because he's got spastic office hours... I mean he says he's going to be in the office at this time but he never is and so after trying to track him down for a couple of days, I finally got a hold of him.

When Julia finally got to see her advisor, she found that the meeting was not very helpful because her advisor did not have her file. Therefore, he did not know which classes she had waived when she was admitted to the university. According to Julia:

And that's when I discovered my files were gone so I had to bring in my paperwork and I even had to call my sister over the phone to see what ATL's (writing courses) I got credit for which was on the paper I had at home. ...he's got this office and it's like scary because he's kind of heavy, heavier than most. Which is o.k., except it's a very small office and he's very big and it's got stuff everywhere. So it's like oh my God, no wonder my file is lost.

Even with all of these complications, Julia's appointment lasted only twenty minutes because the advisor had his office door open and as Julia said, "There was somebody hovering in the hall so I felt inwardly rushed."

Another student in the study, Rip Hayes, never met with



his academic advisor. As Rip explained, "I plan on doing that, but I don't know, I keep forgetting about it." Rip did not participate in early enrollment. As he said, "Stupid, but I don't know I guess I was in a hurry."

Even Kelly Reed who is usually very positive about most of the college experiences she had was not too happy with the academic advising she received. As Kelly explains:

I had no idea who she was so I kind of felt weird about going to see her but she was ok. She wasn't very helpful. She basically said you need to take this at some point and that you know. She wasn't very helpful.

Kelly's whole meeting with her academic advisor lasted ten minutes.

#### **CAMPUS SERVICES AND PROGRAMS**

Campus services and programs are supposed to be for all students on campus. Yet, generally speaking the freshmen commuter students in this study did not use or attend any of them.

Victor Robins summed it up this way, "I haven't had time and I don't believe I've had the need for anything. I haven't been informed of what I can use."

Bill Hayes also seemed confused about what services and/or programs were available to him. According to Bill:

There are some things that I don't understand like how the I.M. West or the I.M. East (recreational facilities) work. Like everyday I drive by this tennis facility and I don't know if it is open to \_\_\_\_\_ students, if they can go there, or if it's just for the tennis players on a team. ...The only service I actually use is the bus system.

Another student in the study, Boris Allyn, said that the only service he has used is the library. According to Boris, "It's not that I don't want to, it's just that I haven't been able to yet."

Ariel Howe said, "I went to a football game, but is there anything else? I haven't really gone to anything else."

The food services facilities on campus are usually utilized by commuter students, but even these services were not frequented by the students in the sample. Victor Robins said that "when I don't bring something to eat with me from home, I usually go to the vending machines or go to Burger King to get something to eat which is, you know, kind of expensive." When Victor does bring his lunch to campus, he feels he has no where to eat it. According to Victor:

I eat my lunch in my car. I mean there's no where I can take it. I have to go all the way back to the commuter lot and get my lunch and by the time I'm done eating it, the bus comes rolling back in and I just go back to school.

Julia Winslow ate lunch in one of the cafeterias on campus and was not happy with the quality of the food she paid for. Julia wrote in her journal, "I wasted my money on lunch in the International Center on a mutant grilled cheese and lemonade that tasted like water." Consequently, Julia had not returned to that campus cafeteria. Luckily, according to Julia, she has enough time in her schedule to go home for lunch several days a week.

As mentioned earlier, Bill Hayes eats lunch a few times a week with his former high school friend who now lives in a

residence hall on campus. Bill describes how he went about buying meal tickets for lunch in the residence halls:

I had read about buying meal tickets to eat in the residence halls. So, I went to the front desk at Case Hall and asked to buy a book of 10 (lunch) meal tickets. I did this because it would be cheaper than buying individual meal tickets.

Bill was happy with his decision to eat in the residence halls because the food is good and he has friends to eat with.

#### DEVELOPING A SENSE OF BELONGING

By the end of their first term of college, most of the commuter students in the study felt as though they had developed some sort of a sense of belonging to the university. Most of them, however, felt this sense of belonging was with a class or a small group of peers. As a result, the sense of belonging was not to the university as a whole but rather to a piece of it.

For instance, Ariel Howe said that she felt a sense of belonging in some of her classes. As she put it, "Like in some of my classes I do, but as in the whole university, not really." Ariel went on to explain, "Because there are people in there that I know. I mean that I bonded with them or whatever you want to call it, that are friends or whatever. But they're just in that class, we're friends. I don't call them up or anything."

Bill Hipp felt about the same way as Ariel. He said, "I do feel a part of the group that I'm in right now." But he did not feel a sense of belonging to the university as a

whole. Bill explained:

I mean if you were friends with everyone then you could probably say you belong because nobody's going to reject you and kick you out. But since you only know so many people, they accept you and you can't say that those small group of people are the \_\_\_\_\_ State University as a whole.

Kelly Reed also said that she felt a sense of belonging because of the people she met. As Kelly describes it, "I guess it's the people that make me feel really comfortable here. Because I've met so many wonderful people."

Other commuter students in the sample felt like they belonged because they were raised so close to it. Rip Hayes described his feelings by saying:

I don't know most of the people, but I know the attitudes, the way they do things. It's like I listen to what they say. I say most of the things that they say some of the time. I just feel I'm kind of like them but separate, different. But, still a Spartan, I guess.

Even though Julia Winslow was raised close to the university, she didn't feel officially a part of it until she became a student. According to Julia:

I guess I kind of belong to \_\_\_\_\_. I wear their shirt now where as I never wore it before when I've had it for years. And I cheer when the fight song comes on the radio where I didn't use to. ...I dress like a college student now where I didn't use to. ...I guess they're somewhat surface, but they all contribute to this overall sense of I'm here and I'm part of this.

Another participant in the study, Boris Allyn, said that he felt a sense of belonging even if that was hard to believe. The researcher asked him why that was hard to believe. He said, "Well, since I'm never here except for classes you know.

I come here and then leave. I never have any other ties here besides class."

Only two of the commuter students in this study said that they did not feel a sense of belonging with the university at the end of their first term. Victor Robins explains why he does not feel a sense of belonging this way:

I feel a bit out of place in this school because there's not really anything for me to experience with the school and for people to experience with me. Kind of like a factory piece. I go in like the school's just manufacturing me. Just like the school's a factory and I'm something being built. You know what I mean? It's basically that there are no inner feelings or anything.

Joe Trinity also said that he did not feel a sense of belonging to the university. Joe explained his feelings this way:

Because basically nobody knows you and there are so many people there. And you haven't really done anything so you don't have any press or nobody knows what you are or what you can do.

**CHAPTER 5**  
**SUMMARY, FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS,**  
**AND REFLECTIONS**

**INTRODUCTION**

This chapter contains a summary of the purpose of this study as well as a review of the data collection methods that were used. In addition, the major findings which were drawn from the study are outlined. Finally, a conclusion and recommendations for higher education are offered

**SUMMARY**

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to describe and explain the first term collegiate experience of traditional age commuter students at a large mid-western university. This was done by analyzing the major events, activities, behaviors, and interactions that were a part of the university experience for the students in the sample.

**Field Methods Used**

Ethnography or field methods of participant observation, observation, and interviewing were used. In addition, the

researcher's observations were supplemented by the accounts and interpretations received by the commuter students in the study through taped interviews and personal journals.

## **FINDINGS**

### **Review of the Literature**

A review of the literature on commuter students revealed the neglect this majority population has received in higher education. Commuter students are often neglected in services, programs, advocacy, budget allocations, and institutional research.

Professional preparation programs for student affairs/development administrators have also been unresponsive to commuter students (Stamatakis, 1980, p. 1). As a result, commuter students in American higher education are sometimes faced with negative attitudes because they do not fit in the residential model which has dominated higher education in this country since its beginnings. All of these factors lead to a general misunderstanding of the needs and concerns which are common to this majority population.

### **Major Findings and Conclusions**

1. On the campus where the study was conducted, commuter student programming was not a priority, and at times, there seemed to be a general indifference to the needs of these students.

The Job Description for the Assistant Vice President for Student Affairs and Services/Director of Student Life (see Appendix G) clearly lists commuter programs under duties and responsibilities. Yet, outside of the few efforts that were made this year during Welcome Week, no real commuter program exists. Furthermore, there is not even an agreed upon definition of the term commuter within the Division. This neglect of the commuter population is happening at a time within the Division when many, much smaller subpopulations of students have received staff time, attention, advocacy, programs, and institutional research. It took almost two weeks for the researcher to receive from the Division an actual count of the number of first year traditional age commuter students. The reason for this delay was that this was not a number the Division calculates on a regular basis.

Moreover, major administrators in the Division of Student Affairs and Services did not seem to be held accountable for the lack of services, programs, and support for this population. To begin with, the staff in the Division did not find the Commuter Orientation Meeting important enough to attend. The only full time professional who did attend arrived late, said a few words, and left after his welcome. The address that he gave did not seem prepared in advance, but rather he appeared to be speaking spontaneously with little regard for the population he was supposed to be welcoming.

Very little time, money, and professional staff effort was put into the planning of the commuter student orientation



program. Instead, the small effort that was made was coordinated by a group of three undergraduate students, one of whom (the Chair) had come from a residential experience.

2. The few small efforts that were made to orient new commuter students to the university campus were not very well planned, coordinated, or supported.

This second major finding is really a consequence of the first major finding. The direction, purpose, and support for new initiatives within a student affairs division usually come from those who hold major administrative positions.

The Commuter Student Orientation Meeting was not comprehensive enough to help new traditional age commuter students make the full transition to the university environment. None of the six essential components to an orientation program, as outlined by Perigo and UpCraft, were followed. These orientation components include:

1. Orientation must be a sustained and coordinated effort.
2. Orientation must have the support and involvement of the entire campus community, including faculty, staff, students, and especially the central administration.
3. Orientation must be based on sound concepts of student development and what is known about the influence of the collegiate environment.
4. Orientation planners must use every effective means available to meet freshmen needs, including media approaches, group programming, academic courses, and individual tutoring, advising, and counseling.
5. Orientation must be appropriately timed and sequenced from the pre-enrollment period through the entering period, to the post-entering period.
6. Orientation must be evaluated to determine if it is effective.

(1990, pp. 85-85)

When this one hour and fifteen minute orientation meeting is contrasted with the efforts made to orient new resident students to campus, the neglect commuters face is obvious. Resident students were oriented through numerous vehicles including: hall programs, floor activities, hall governments, and hall caucuses. These activities and programs for resident students were planned by professional staff, resident assistants, minority aids, and other resident student leaders.

The Commuter Resource Fair would have been a wonderful program if it were planned for at a different time (rather than during registration) and if it were supported by administrators on campus. Because it apparently was not viewed as important, few offices provided information or personnel.

Lastly, the Commuter Student Meetings were another great idea conceptually. But because no research was done first (commuter student profile and needs assessment), the program was planned at a poor time and the topics were not really of concern to commuter students on campus.

**3. Commuter students were forced to deal with limited parking, located far from the main campus and separated from the campus by railroad tracks.**

Commuter students must park in a lot which is on the edge of campus, far from most of the classroom buildings. This lot fills up early in the day, so commuter students must waste time trying to get to campus early enough to find a parking

space. Once they do find a spot to park in, they can either walk to the main campus or take the commuter bus (which they must pay for). The commuter parking lot is separated from the main campus by railroad tracks. Consequently, commuter students must always worry about a train crossing those tracks and preventing them from getting to their classes on time.

**4. Most of the students in the sample felt a stigma about being a commuter student.**

Even though almost half of all of the students who attend the university where this study was conducted commute to campus, many of the freshmen in the sample were almost embarrassed about their status as commuters. These feelings may stem, in part, from the great focus on residence life at this university. Also, because there is no significant commuter student program for them to participate in, many of the participants felt somewhat isolated from the social life on campus. They did not have a commuter group to identify with.

**5. The students in the sample were happier in their classes which had under thirty students because the discussions and class involvement made them feel more connected to the others in the class.**

The classroom is one of the few places on campus where first term commuter freshmen can interact with and get-to-know peers and faculty (Jacoby, 1989, p. 52). The size of the class can make this easier or more difficult. For instance, in the writing courses and the honor level courses the class

size was kept small. As a result, the students in the sample felt connected to the individuals in these classes.

By contrast, many of the introductory level courses are very large. Little if any discussion or student interaction takes place in these classes. Consequently, the students in the sample felt less connected and less a part of these classes.

6. The commuter students in the sample did not utilize the time they had free between classes very well. On the other hand, most did not feel that they had a convenient and comfortable place on campus to spend their free time.

The commuter students in the sample had between one and four hours off between classes. Most of them spent this free time in the hallway or the lounge area of the building where their next class was going to be. Consequently, the actual place where they would go varied depending on the location of the student's class.

Several of the students who had longer blocks of time went home during the day and then had to drive back to campus for their afternoon class(es).

None of the new first term commuter students in the sample used their free time between classes to explore the campus or to get involved in any extra curricular activities. Rather, most seemed to develop a routine early in the term and stayed with that pattern throughout the term.

The time off between classes was usually very lonely for the commuter students in the study. Almost all of them spent

this time alone.

**7. There were few organized opportunities for new first term commuter students to meet their peers outside of the classroom, yet this seemed to be one of the most important aspects of the college experience for these students.**

This was a very significant finding because all of the commuter students in the sample based so many of their likes and dislikes about their college experience on the quality and quantity of the new friendships they made. For instance, several of the students in the sample said that they really liked a course because they felt connected to their peers in a particular course. Similarly, many of the participants based their feelings of belonging or not belonging to the university on the friendships they had made.

After the Commuter Student Meetings were canceled early in the term, no other programs existed which brought commuter students together. Also, no programs existed which brought resident and commuter students together. As a result, new commuter students had to rely on meeting new friends in classes, which was difficult in some cases because of class size, classroom assignments, and/or the curriculum.

**8. The first term commuter students in the sample had almost no interaction with faculty.**

The small amount of faculty-student interaction that did take place usually occurred during office visits, most of which were required. There seemed to be three substantial reasons for this lack of faculty-student interaction. First,

most of the students in the sample did not want to interact with faculty. Many of them felt intimidated by the faculty and didn't know what they would say to them if they had the opportunity. Second, most of the introductory courses typically taken by first year students are very large and impersonal, thus not allowing for much faculty-student contact in the classroom. Third, the faculty who taught the commuter students in this sample did not seem to make sustained effort to connect personally with the students in the study.

**9. The frequency and quality of academic advising received by the commuter students in this study were extremely poor.**

Not one of the freshmen commuter students in the sample spent more than twenty minutes during their entire first term with an academic advisor. When they did meet with academic advisors, the meetings were usually rushed and extremely focused. Advisors seemed only to want to make sure students knew which classes to take the following term.

Generally speaking, the academic advisors did not ask these new commuter students about their first term, the grades they were receiving, or how they liked their classes so far. Consequently, they did not use the opportunity that they had to interact individually with these new students and help them developmentally with their continuing transition to the university community. None of the academic advisors of the students in the sample acted as a resource to campus programs and service.

**10. The vast majority of campus programs and services were**

not utilized by the first term commuter students in the sample.

Most of the commuter students in the sample were not even aware of the programs and services that they had access to as a college student. This occurs because no systematic process was in place to inform these students of the possibilities available to them. Likewise, no attempt was made by any campus faculty or staff to involve any of the students in the sample in any kind of extra curricular activities or programs.

In addition, not one of the students in the study was aware of the variety of different places where meals could be eaten on campus. This lack of information resulted in commuter students leaving campus and not supporting the facilities which are open for them.

11. By the end of the first term, most of the commuter students in the sample did develop some sense of belonging to a part of the university.

Most of the students who did claim to feel a sense of belonging with the university did, however, make it very clear that they felt some belonging to a class or a specific group of students and not with the university as a whole. These statements make clear the importance of peer interaction for new students, particularly new commuter students.

Feeling some sense of belonging to the university can be a significant factor in the retention of commuter students. According to Jacoby, "For commuter students, feeling a part of a campus community that appreciates their individuality is an

intangible yet significant determinant of persistence and satisfaction with the college experience" (1989, 54).

The two students in the sample who did not feel a sense of belonging with the university had little opportunity to interact with their peers. Consequently, they felt little connection with the university.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

The following recommendations are offered for the university where this study was conducted.

#### **General Recommendations**

1. The university should appoint a Director of Commuter Student Affairs to coordinate the advocacy, programs, services, and institutional research for commuter students.
2. The university should agree upon the definition of commuter and share it with the campus community so everyone is aware of the numbers of students in this category.
3. A commuter student profile and a commuter student needs assessment should be conducted regularly so the campus community can be aware of the changing characteristics of this large student group.
4. Goals and objectives, both long and short term, need to be developed for the commuter student program.
5. After the commuter student program is implemented, it should be evaluated regularly and adjustments should be made to the program where needed.



### **Specific Recommendations**

6. A study should be conducted of parking alternatives for commuter students.
7. Specific programs should be established to give commuter students more contact with faculty and staff.
8. Various social programs should be put into place which help commuter students meet their peers, both resident and other commuter students.
9. The number of students assigned to academic advisors should be lessened and advisors should be trained so that they use a more personal developmental approach with students.
10. Efforts must be made, on a regular basis, which encourage commuter students to get involved in the campus community in some way.

### **REFLECTIONS**

Like other subgroups of college students, commuters should be offered the same opportunities to feel integrated and satisfied with their educational experience. Most commuter students want only an equal chance to be successful and meet their educational goals. This equality is only a part of the fairness and justice which is supposed to be the foundation of our higher education system in the United States.

Why should commuters who because of personal choices, financial resources, or life situations be denied a great part of the college experience that is available to their resident

counterparts? Commuters are currently 80-83 percent of all college students in the United States (Jacoby, 1989, p. A44). Consequently, the tuition dollars they put into financing colleges and universities are substantial. Shouldn't some of the money they put into the system be used to meet their needs and concerns?

The results of this study support other research which claims that commuter students are still neglected. They lack programs, services, and professional staff. Through this study the researcher had the opportunity to know nine commuter students who were all trying to beat the odds and get a college degree. It was sad to see such human potential go untapped by the university community. It has taken college and university faculty and administrators too long to realize the magnitude and promise of commuter students. Hopefully, this study will bring some attention to a student population that is often overlooked.

#### **RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY**

A longitudinal study of a group of commuter students would test the findings presented in this study over time. Moreover, the impact of these findings on the retention of commuter students could be examined.

## **APPENDICES**

**Appendix A**  
**Information Sheet**

## COMMUTER STUDENTS

\*\*\*\*\*

MAJOR MALE OR FEMALE

NAME OF PERSON(S) YOU LIVE WITH AND INDICATE THEIR  
RELATIONSHIP TO YOU.

## RELATIONSHIP

---

---

---

---

---

**Appendix B**  
**Letter of Consent**

THE COLLEGIATE EXPERIENCE OF FIRST TERM,  
TRADITIONAL AGE COMMUTER STUDENTS

LETTER OF CONSENT

The purpose of this study is to describe and explain the first term collegiate experience of traditional age commuter students at a large mid-western university. The study will contain detailed analysis of classes, events, activities, and behaviors of first term traditional age commuter students and the interactions they encounter as part of their university experience. These observations will be supplemented by the accounts and interpretations received through interviews with the students who participate in the study.

Students who volunteer as participants in this study will be observed for about 11 weeks during the fall term 1990 (Sept. 17 - Dec. 7). The researcher will observe each participant between one and three times per week. The hours of each observation will vary depending on the student's schedule and planned activity. The researcher does, however, anticipate that most observations will be between one and three hours. All observations will be of public behavior that takes place on campus. Consequently, the researcher may observe participants during day or evening campus activities. All observation times will be arranged between the researcher and each student participant in advance. To protect the individual privacy of participants, the names of students who participate will not be used in reports or publications that result from this research project.

An alias will be used in place of each student's real name. Students' real identities will be known only by the researcher.

It is hoped that this research study will, in some way, help educators understand what it is like to be a commuter student on a large mid-western university campus. A detailed description and analysis of a piece of the commuter student experience might broaden the perspective, as well as sensitize individuals who themselves have not experienced college as a commuter.

\*\*\*\*\*

If you would like to participate in this study and contribute to the knowledge and understanding of the commuter student experience, please sign your name on the line below. Individuals who participate in this study are free to decline participation or to withdraw from the research at any time.

Yes, I would like to participate in this study of first term traditional age commuter students. I have read this letter of consent and understand my role as a participant in this study.

SIGNATURE \_\_\_\_\_

DATE \_\_\_\_\_



**Appendix C**  
**UCRIHS Approval Letter**

## MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY

UNIVERSITY COMMITTEE ON RESEARCH INVOLVING  
HUMAN SUBJECTS (UCRIHS)  
206 BERKELEY HALL  
(517) 353-9738

EAST LANSING • MICHIGAN • 48824-1111

August 31, 1990

IRB# 90-334

Lisa M. Johnson  
1530 Woodbrook Drive, Apt. 17  
East Lansing, MI 48823

Dear Ms. Johnson:

Re: "THE COLLEGIATE EXPERIENCE OF FIRST TERM TRADITIONAL AGE  
COMMUTER STUDENTS IRB# 90-334"

UCRIHS' review of the above referenced project has now been completed. I am pleased to advise that since reviewer comments have been satisfactorily addressed, the conditional approval given by the Committee at its August 6, 1990 meeting has been now changed to full approval.

You are reminded that UCRIHS approval is valid for one calendar year. If you plan to continue this project beyond one year, please make provisions for obtaining appropriate UCRIHS approval one month prior to August 6, 1991.

Any changes in procedures involving human subjects must be reviewed by UCRIHS prior to initiation of the change. UCRIHS must also be notified promptly of any problems (unexpected side effects, complaints, etc.) involving human subjects during the course of the work.

Thank you for bringing this project to our attention. If we can be of any future help, please do not hesitate to let us know.

Sincerely,



John K. Hudzik, Ph.D.  
Chair, UCRIHS

JKH/sar

cc: E. Nonnamaker

**Appendix D**

**Commuter Resource Fair  
Participation Letter**

---

OFFICE OF THE VICE PRESIDENT  
FOR STUDENT AFFAIRS AND SERVICES  
STUDENT SERVICES BUILDING

August 30, 1990

Dear

We are writing to invite your participation in the Commuter Resource Fair on Monday, September 17, and Tuesday, September 18, in the Commuter Student Parking Lot, at the corner of Mt. Hope and Farm Lane. The Fair will run from 9:00 a.m. until 5:00 p.m. each day. We will provide chairs and table space in a tent adjacent to the bus shelter.

The purpose of this Resource Fair is to anticipate questions and difficulties that commuter students have each year. By providing resource information and personnel in this high-traffic location, we are hoping to better serve this student population which constitutes over half of the student body.

One of the most common difficulties for commuter students is finding information about campus resources and activities. There is an established communication structure within the MSU residence hall system, but for students outside that system, gaining information can be difficult. We hope that the Resource Fair will begin bridging that gap.

If you would like to provide materials (or personnel) for this Fair, please contact us at 353-3860. Materials should be delivered to our office by Thursday, September 13, or you may bring them directly to the Fair site on Monday, September 17. UGuides (student orientation volunteers) will be on hand at the Commuter Resource Fair to assist you and to respond to general student questions.

Thank you in advance for your contribution to this new event. It is through the active participation of organizations such as yours that we will be able to accomplish our goal of better serving our commuter students. Please feel free to contact us if you have any questions.

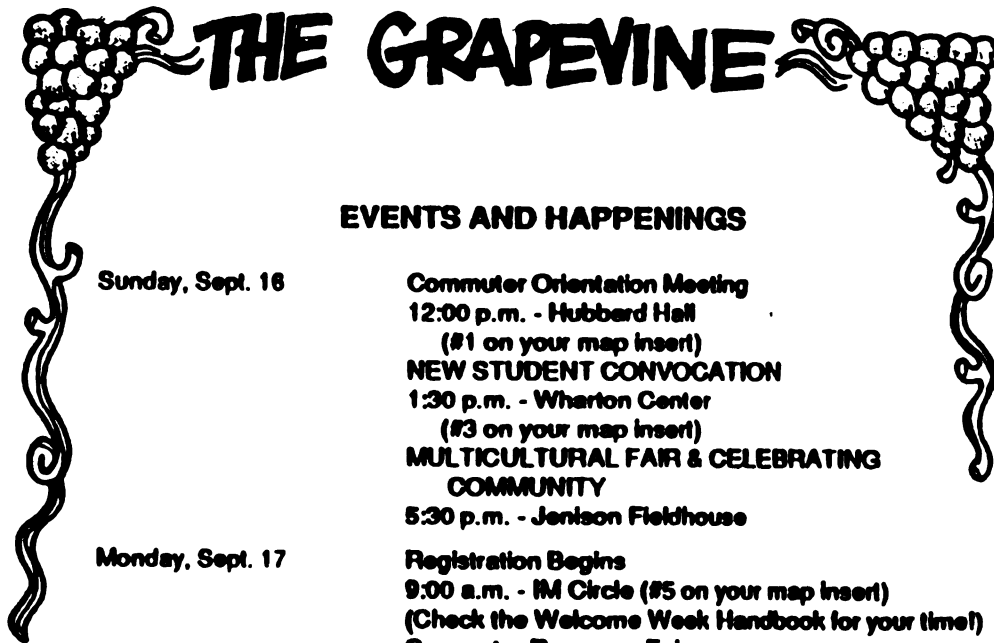
Sincerely,

UGuides Executive Board  
Commuter Program Committee Chair

Assistant Director of Student Life  
Campus Life Orientation

jw

**Appendix E**  
**Events & Happenings**



## EVENTS AND HAPPENINGS

**Sunday, Sept. 16**

**Commuter Orientation Meeting**  
 12:00 p.m. - Hubbard Hall  
 (#1 on your map insert)  
**NEW STUDENT CONVOCATION**  
 1:30 p.m. - Wharton Center  
 (#3 on your map insert)  
**MULTICULTURAL FAIR & CELEBRATING  
 COMMUNITY**  
 5:30 p.m. - Jenlson Fieldhouse

**Monday, Sept. 17**

**Registration Begins**  
 9:00 a.m. - IM Circle (#5 on your map insert)  
 (Check the Welcome Week Handbook for your time!)  
**Commuter Resource Fair**  
 9:00 a.m. - Commuter Parking Lot  
 (#4 on your map insert)

**Tuesday, Sept. 18**

**Commuter Resource Fair**  
 9:00 a.m. - Commuter Parking Lot  
 (#4 on your map insert)  
**New Student registration ends**  
 5:00 p.m. - IM Circle (#5 on your map insert)

**Wednesday, Sept. 19**

**MSU Union Open House & Organizations Fair**  
 7:00 p.m. - MSU Union (#11 on your map insert)  
 (Commuters meet at 8:45 p.m., lobby of Human  
 Ecology, next to Union)

**Thursday, Sept. 20**

**Classes Begin - 8:00 a.m.**

**Saturday, Sept. 22**

**MSU vs Notre Dame (Spartan Stadium)**

**Monday, Sept. 24**

**First Weekly Meeting for Commuters**  
 2:00 p.m. - IM West/Drops and Adds Q & A

**Monday, Oct. 1**

**Weekly Meeting - Breslin Tour; Q & A**  
 2:00 p.m. - Brody Multi Purpose Rooms

**Monday, Oct. 8**

**Weekly Meeting - Student Organization  
 and Involvement**  
 2:00 p.m. - MSU Union  
 Dr. Patricia Enos, Student Life Department

**Monday, Oct. 15**

**Weekly Meeting - Transitions for Commuters**  
 2:00 p.m. - MSU Union  
 Dr. David Novicki, Counseling Center

**Appendix F**  
**Commuter Student Weekly Meetings**

**COMMUTERS!!!**

**KEEP IN TOUCH**

Join your fellow commuters during Fall Term  
and stay informed and get your questions answered.  
Here's the schedule, SEE YOU THERE!

September 19, 7 p.m. - Union Open House  
Meet in the Main Lounge (Look for UGUIDES)  
-games -information  
-meet people -food

**EVERY MONDAY AT 2:00 p.m.**

September 24 -- IM West, Room 205  
We'll try to answer your questions regarding classes,  
drops and adds, etc.? You can find out about the  
Intramural facilities and stay and play afterward.

October 1 -- Brody Multi Purpose Rooms  
Again, we'll answer your questions and give you a  
chance to share your new-found information with one  
another. AND, we'll take a tour of the Breslin Center.

October 8 -- MSU Union  
Find out about student organizations and opportunities  
for involvement on the campus. AND, of course, we'll  
answer any other questions you have.

October 15 -- MSU Union  
Now that you've been a commuter for a while, come and hear  
about your transition from a psychologists point of view.  
Dr. Dave Novicki, MSU Counseling Center, will be there to  
answer your questions and discuss your commuter life with you.  
AND, we'll answer other questions you might have.

The remainder of the programs on Mondays will be determined  
based on your interests. Keep in touch and let us know  
what you want to know.

UGUIDES, Campus Life Orientation  
Division of Student Affairs and Services  
Patricia Enos, 353-3860



## **Appendix G**

### **Assistant VP Job Description**

**DIVISION OF STUDENT AFFAIRS AND SERVICES**

**Job Description**

**ASSISTANT VICE PRESIDENT FOR STUDENT AFFAIRS AND SERVICES  
AND  
DIRECTOR OF STUDENT LIFE**

**I. Duties and Responsibilities:**

Responsible for providing leadership and coordination for the following Student Life programs consistent with University and Student Affairs philosophy:

Campus Life Orientation Programs  
Health and Alcohol Education Programs  
Internationalizing Student Life  
Judicial Affairs  
Off-Campus Housing and Commuter Programs  
Service-Learning Center  
Student Organization Advising and Consulting  
Student Government Advising  
Student Leadership Development Programs  
Student Records and Withdrawals

**II. Specific Duties Include:**

- A. Serve as deputy to the Vice President for Student Affairs and Services.
- B. Consult regularly with the Vice President for Student Affairs and Services on matters of concern to the Student Life units as well as the Division of Student Affairs and Services.
- C. Effectively manage the financial, human, and physical resources available for Student Life Department activities.
- D. Provide leadership in the development and administration of judicial policies and procedures.
- E. Provide leadership for organizing faculty, staff, and students to participate in planning for and addressing Student Life concerns.
- F. Work closely with the student association and other student organizations on matters of interest to them and to the University.
- G. Formulate and implement objectives, policies, and procedures for evaluating organization effectiveness.
- H. Review and monitor personnel practices to ensure consistency with the University personnel policies.

**Job Description**  
**Asst. Vice President for Student Affairs and Services**  
**Page 2**

J-2

- I. Serve on Student Affairs and University-wide committees as assigned by the Vice President.
- J. Promote cohesiveness among Student Life offices.
- K. Serve as Associate Program Director of the Kellogg Health Promotion Project.
- L. Carry out other duties as assigned by the Vice President for Student Affairs and Services.

**August, 1990**

## **BIBLIOGRAPHY**

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Allmendinger, David F. "New England Students and the Revolution in Higher Education, 1800-1900." in McClellan, B. Edward and William J. Reese (Eds.). The Social History of American Education. Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1988.
- Anderson, Gary L. "Critical Ethnography in Education: Origins, Current Status, and New Direction." Review of Educational Research. Vol. 59, No. 3, Fall 1989, pp. 249-270.
- Andreas, Rosalind, Castro, Diane E., Escamilla, Manuel, and Vasquez, Socorro C. "Meeting the Needs of Commuter Students from Under-Represented Groups: The Success of Early Outreach and Intervention." The Commuter. Vol 13, No. 3, March 1988, pp. 1-4.
- Andreas, Rosalind E. "Institutional Self-Study: Serving Commuter Students." in Stewart, Sylvia S. (Ed.). Commuter Students Enhancing Their Educational Experiences. No. 24, San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, Pub., December 1983, pp. 9-24.
- Annual Report, 1990-91, Commuter Committee, Michigan State University, East Lansing, MI.
- Astin, Alexander W. Four Critical Years: Effects of College on Beliefs, Attitudes, and Knowledge. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, Pub., 1979.
- Astin, Alexander W. Preventing Students from Dropping Out. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, Pub., 1975.
- Astin, Alexander W. "Student Involvement: A Developmental Theory for Higher Education." Journal of College Student Personnel. July, 1984, pp. 297-308.
- Becker, Howard S. "Problems of Inference and Proof in Participant Observation." American Sociological Review. Vol. 23, December 1958, pp. 652-660.



- Blumer, Herbert. "Society As Symbolic Interaction." in Rose, Arnold M. (Ed.) Human Behavior and Social Processes. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1962.
- Bogan, Robert C., Biklen, Sari Knopp. Qualitative Research for Education: An Introduction to theory and Methods. Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1982.
- Bogan, Robert C. Participant Observation In Organizational Settings. Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1972.
- Boyer, Ernest. College: The Undergraduate Experience In America. The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching. New York: Harper and Row, Pub., 1987.
- Burgess, Robert (Ed.). Field Methods in the Study of Education. Philadelphia: The Falmer Press, 1985.
- Burnett, Dana. "Excellence for a Diverse Student Clientele: An Analysis From the Commuter Perspective of the Report of Conditions of Excellence in American Higher Education." The Commuter. Vol. 10, No. 3, April 1985, pp. 5-7.
- CAS Standard and Guidelines for Student Services/Development Programs. Council for the Advancement of Standards for Student Services/Development Programs, April 1986.
- Chickering, Arthur W. Commuting Versus Resident Students: Overcoming the Educational Inequities of Living Off-Campus. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, Pub., 1974.
- Chickering, Arthur W. and Havighurst, Robert J. "The Life Cycle." in Chickering, Arthur W. and Associates. The Modern American College. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, Pub., 1985.
- Cohen, Arthur M. and Brawer, Florence B. The American Community College. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, Pub., 1982.
- Cusick, Philip A. Classnotes-EAD 951H Field Research Methods in Education, Spring 1990.
- Cusick, Philip A. Inside High School. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc., 1973.
- Cusick, Philip A. The Egalitarian Ideal and the American High School: Studies of Three Schools. New York: Longman, 1983.

- Demos, George D. "Problems of Integrating the Commuter College Student to the College Campus." in Fitzgerald, Laurine E., Johnson, Walter F., and Norris, Willa (Eds.). College Student Personnel. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1970.
- Eble, Kenneth E. The Craft of Teaching. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, Pub., 1988.
- Educational Facilities Laboratories. The Neglected Majority: Facilities for Commuting Students. New York: Educational Facilities Laboratories, 1977.
- Ender, Steven C., Winston, Roger B., and Miller, Theodore K. "Academic Advising Reconsidered." in Winston, Roger B., Miller, Theodore K., Ender, Steven C., Grites, T. J. and Associates. Developmental Academic Advising: Addressing Students' Educational, Career, and Personal Needs. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, Pub., 1984.
- Enrollment Highlights Fall 1990, Office of the Registrar, Michigan State University, East Lansing, MI.
- Feldman, Kenneth A. and Newcomb, Theodore M. The Impact of College on Students. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, Pub., 1973.
- Fenshe, Robert H. "Historical Foundations of Student Services." in Delworth, Ursula, Hanson, Gary R., and Associates. Student Services: A Handbook for the Profession. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, Pub., 1989.
- Foster, Margaret, Sedlacek, William, Hardwick, Mark W., and Silver, Anne E. "Student Affairs Staff Attitudes Towards Students Living Off Campus." Journal of College student Personnel. Vol. 18, No. 4, July 1977, pp. 291-297.
- Glaser, Barney G. and Strauss, Anselm. "Theoretical Sampling." in N.K. Densin (Ed.). Sociological Methods. Chicago: Aldine, 1970. pp. 106-114.
- Gorden, Raymond L. Interviewing: Strategy, Techniques, and Tactics. Homewood, Illinois: The Dorsey Press, 1975.
- Hammersley, Martyn and Atkinson, Paul. Ethnography: Principles In Practice. New York: Routledge, 1990.
- Harpel, Richard I. "Evaluating from Management Perspective." in Evaluating Program Effectiveness. New Directions for Student Services, No. 1, San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, Pub., 1978.



- Hetherington, Cherly, and Davis, June. "An Entering Year Program: Assisting with University Retention." Journal of College Student Personnel. Vol. 25, No. 6, November 1984, pp. 551-552.
- Jacoby, Barbara. "Colleges Must Do More to Enhance the Education of Commuter Students." The Chronicle of Higher Education. January 18, 1989, p. A44.
- Jacoby, Barbara and Girrell, Kristen W. "A Model for Improving Services and Programs for Commuter Students." NASPA Journal. Vol. 18, No. 3, 1981, pp. 36-41.
- Jacoby, Barbara. The Student As Commuter: Developing A Comprehensive Institutional Response. ASHE-ERIC Higher Educational Report 7, Washington, DC: School of Education and Human Development, The George Washington University, 1989.
- Johnson, Norris. Westhaven: Classroom Culture and Society in a Rural Elementary School. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1985.
- Knefelkamp, L. Lee, and Stewart, Sylvia S. "Toward a New Conceptualization of Commuter Students: The Developmental Perspective." in Stewart, Sylvia S. (Ed.). Commuter Students: Enhancing Their Educational Experiences. New Directions for Student Services, No. 24, San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, Pub., December 1983.
- Kramer, Gary L. and Spencer, Robert W. "Academic Advising." in Upcraft, M. Lee, Gardner, John N. and Associates. The Freshmen Year Experience. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, Pub., 1990.
- Kuh, George D. "Purposes and Principles for Needs Assessment in Student Affairs." Journal of College Student Personnel. Vol. 23, No. 3, May 1982, pp. 202-209.
- Lenning, Oscar T. "Assessment and Evaluation." in Delworth, Ursula, Hanson, Gary R., and Associates. Student Services: A Handbook for the Profession. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, Pub., 1989.
- Levine, Arthur. "Who Are Today's Freshmen?" in Upcraft, M. Lee, Gardner, John N., and Associates. The Freshmen Year Experience. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1990.
- Levitz, Randi, and Noel, Lee. "Connecting Students to Institutions Keys to Retention and Success." in Upcraft, M. Lee, Gardner, John N., and Associates. The Freshmen Year Experience. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, Pub., 1990.

- Linkins, Jeanne M. "Developing the Commuter Perspective: The Art of Advocacy." NASPA Journal. Vol. 24, No. 1, Summer 1986, pp. 10-16.
- McCall, George J., and Simmons, J. L. Issues in Participant Observation. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley Pub., Company, 1969.
- Olson, Keith W. The G.I. Bill, the Veterans, and the Colleges. Lexington, Kentucky: The University Press of Kentucky, 1974.
- Pascarella, Ernest T., Terenzini, Patrick T., and Wolfle, Lee M. "Orientation to College and Freshmen Year Persistence/Withdrawal Decisions." Journal of Higher Education. Vol. 57, No. 2, March/April 1986, pp. 155-175.
- Pascarella, Ernest T., and Terenzini, Patrick T. "Patterns of Student-Faculty Informal Interaction Beyond the Classroom and Voluntary Freshmen Attrition." Journal of Higher Education. Vol. 48, No. 5, September/October 1977, pp. 540-552.
- Peshkin, Allen. God's Choice. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984.
- Preusz, Gerald C. "College Student Personnel Preparation Programs in Commuter Institutions." College Student Journal. Vol. 20, No. 4, Winter 1986, pp. 370-373.
- Rhatigan, James J. "Developing A Campus Profile of Commuting Students." NASPA Journal. Vol. 24, No. 1, Summer 1986, pp. 4-10.
- Rice, Robert L. "Commuter Students." in UpCraft, M. Lee, Gardner, John N., and Associates. The Freshmen Year Experience. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1990.
- Rudolph, Frederick. The American College and University. New York: Vintage Books, 1962.
- Rue, Penny, and Ludt, Jeanne. "Organizing for Commuter Student Services." in Stewart, Sylvia S. (Ed.). Commuter Students: Enhancing Their Educational Experience. New Directions for Student Services, No. 24, San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, Pub., December 1983.
- Rue, Penny, and Stewart, Sylvia. "Toward a Definition of the Commuter Student Population in Higher Education." NASPA Forum. Vol. 2, No. 6, March/April 1982, pp. 8-9.

- Slade, Irving L., and Jarmul, Lore. "Commuting College Students: The Neglected Majority." The College Board Review. No. 95, Spring 1975, pp. 16-19.
- Sloan, DeVillo. "Prophets in Their Own Country." The Commuter. Vol. 13, No. 3, March 1988, pp. 1.
- Spartan Life: Student Resource Guide and Handbook. Michigan State University, Educational and Support Services, Division of Student Affairs and Services, 1990-91.
- Stamatakis, Louis C. "Commuter Students: Theory and Reality from the Professional Practitioner Perspective." Paper Presented at the American College Personnel Association National Conference, Boston, April 28, 1980.
- Spradley, James P. The Ethnographic Interview. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1979.
- Stewart, Sylvia S., and Rue, Penny. "Commuter Students: Definition and Distribution." in Stewart, Sylvia S. (Ed.). Commuter Students: Enhancing Their Educational Experiences. New Directions for Student Services, No. 24, San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, Pub., December 1983.
- Stewart, Sylvia S., (Ed.). Commuter Students: Enhancing Their Educational Experiences. New Directions for Student Services, No. 24, San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, Pub., December 1983.
- Taub, Deborah J., and Ellis, Michael. "Building Community Through Effective Orientation Programming for Commuter Students." The Commuter. Vol. 16, No. 1, September 1990.
- The Chronicle of Higher Education Almanac. September 5, 1990.
- Upcraft, M. Lee. Orienting Students to College. New Directions for Student Services. No. 25, San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, Pub., March 1984.
- Wilmes, Martha Baer, and Quade, Stephanie L. "Perspectives on Programming for Commuters: Examples of Good Practice." NASPA Journal. Vol. 24, No. 1, Summer 1986, pp. 25-26.
- Winston, Roger B. "Counseling and Advising." in Delworth, Ursula, Hanson, Gary R., and Associates. Student Services: A Handbook for the Profession. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, Pub., 1989.

MICHIGAN STATE UNIV. LIBRARIES



31293008853446