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FACTORS RELATED TO PREDICTING GRADE POINT AVERAGES OF  
DISLOCATED WORKERS AT A RURAL COMMUNITY COLLEGE

By

James Brent Gregory

A Dissertation  
Submitted to the Faculty of  
Mississippi State University  
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements  
for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy  
in Community College Leadership  
in the Department of Leadership and Foundations

Mississippi State, Mississippi

May 2010

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2010

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OF DISLOCATED WORKERS AT A RURAL COMMUNITY  
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The purpose of the study was to examine relationships which existed between selected demographics and college grade point averages “GPAs” for dislocated workers and non dislocated workers enrolled in career-technical courses at a rural community college. The variables included in the study are age, gender, and marital status. The study also reports identified educational goals of dislocated workers as well as the perceived enhancements and barriers to achieving the goals. This study was conducted to assist workforce investment network “WIN” personnel and college counselors in the advisement of dislocated workers interested in the pursuit of career-technical training.

A survey research design was used to collect data from first semester career-technical students within a program at East Central Community College in Decatur, MS.

An instrument designed by the researcher utilized three demographic items and three open-ended questions to collect the data within a two-week period. A total of 274 surveys were collected.

The data were analyzed through the use of descriptive and inferential statistics. The findings of the study indicated the variables of age and gender were shown to have significant relationships with college GPA. Dislocated workers were found to be older, female, and to maintain a higher GPA than non-dislocated worker students. Responses to the open-ended questions revealed that the majority of dislocated workers stated graduation to be a primary goal. Enhancements included support from family and financial aid, most commonly in the form of Workforce Investment Act “WIA” funding. Dislocated workers responded that personal finances and time management skills were the most difficult barriers to overcome in regards to meeting educational goals.

## DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this research project to my wife, Christi, and my two children, McKinley and Mary Lee. I understand that this journey was not taken alone and words cannot express my appreciation for your support and sacrifices. It is your love and support that has sustained me through this process we have undertaken together.

Thank you for being such an amazing family and for your belief in me.

To my parents, Larry and Glenda, thank you for being there for me and giving me the confidence to undertake this goal. Words cannot express my love and appreciation for you. Finally to my brother, Bart, thank you for pushing me to be the best I can be.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

DEDICATION .....	ii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS .....	iii
LIST OF TABLES .....	vi
LIST OF FIGURES .....	vii
CHAPTER	
I. INTRODUCTION .....	1
Statement of the Problem.....	3
Research Questions.....	5
Purpose of the Study .....	5
Delimitations and Limitations of the Study .....	6
Key Terms .....	7
Significance of the Study .....	9
II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE .....	10
The Dislocated Worker .....	10
Category A .....	11
Category B .....	12
Category C .....	13
Category D .....	13
Grief Theory.....	13
History and Mission of Community Colleges .....	16
Workforce Investment Act of 1998 .....	18
Delta Workforce Investment Area .....	20
Mississippi Partnership Workforce Investment Area .....	21
South-central Mississippi Works Workforce Investment Area .....	21
Twin Districts Workforce Investment Area .....	21
American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009.....	25
Predictors of Academic Success .....	28
Age.....	29

	Gender.....	29
	Marital Status .....	30
	Chapter Summary .....	30
III.	METHODOLOGY .....	31
	Research Design.....	31
	Population .....	33
	Selection of Subjects.....	34
	Instrumentation .....	35
	Data Collection .....	36
	Data Analysis .....	38
IV.	FINDINGS .....	39
	Research Question 1 .....	40
	Research Question 2 .....	42
	Research Question 3 .....	46
	Chapter Summary .....	50
V.	SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS.....	51
	Introduction .....	51
	Results and Implications .....	52
	Conclusion .....	56
	Recommendations for Future Research .....	57
	REFERENCES .....	60
	APPENDIX	
	A. REQUEST FOR DATA COLLECTION AND APPROVAL LETTERS.....	64
	B. SURVEY INSTRUMENT.....	69
	C. IRB APPROVAL.....	73

## LIST OF TABLES

4.1	Number of Surveys Submitted and Returned .....	40
4.2	Model Summary of Multiple Regression .....	40
4.3	Relationship of GPA in regards to Age, Gender, and Marital Status .....	41
4.4	T-Test Comparison of the Variables of GPA and Age .....	42
4.5	Summary Table Regarding the Gender Variable of Dislocated and Non-Dislocated Workers.....	43
4.6	Chi-Square Analysis Regarding the Gender Variable of Dislocated and Non-Dislocated Workers .....	44
4.7	Summary Table Regarding the Marital Status Variable of Dislocated and Non-Dislocated Workers .....	45
4.8	Chi-Square Analysis Regarding the Marital Status Variable of Dislocated and Non-Dislocated Workers.....	46
4.9	Frequency Statistics on Dislocated Worker Perceived Educational Goals.....	47
4.10	Factors that Enhance Academic Success of Dislocated Workers.....	48
4.11	Factors that are Barriers to Academic Success of Dislocated Workers.....	49

## LIST OF FIGURES

1.1	Map of Mississippi Community and Junior Colleges.....	18
1.2	Map of Mississippi Workforce Districts.....	22
1.3	Mississippi Workforce Map.....	25

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

Community colleges have long been a provider of both programs and services to a widely diverse student population (Cohen & Brawer, 2003). This role includes being one of the leaders in the training of the nation's workforce. This is due in part to relationships that were fostered through such federal programs as the Wagner-Peyser Act, the Comprehensive Employment and Training Act Amendment (CETA), Job Training Partnership Act (JPTA), the Workforce Investment Act (WIA), and most recently the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA). This relationship has become even more important due to volatile economic conditions that have led to many individuals being laid off and struggling to find sustainable employment.

The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (2009) states that over eight million people were unemployed in March of 2009 which resulted in an unemployment rate of 8.5%. This is the highest March rate of unemployment the United States has faced since 1983 (10.3%). This downward spiral began in December of 2007 and since that time 5.1 million jobs have been lost with the period of December 2008 through April 2009 having accounted for almost two-thirds of this total (3.3 million). The unemployment rates for adult men (8.8%), adult women (7%), teenagers (21.7%), Caucasians (7.9%), African-Americans (13.3%), and Hispanics (11.4%) continue to trend upward. Job losers who have completed temporary jobs increased to 8.2 million in March 2009 and almost

doubled over the last twelve months. The number of long-term unemployed workers rose to 3.2 million and has increased by almost two million since December 2007 (U.S. Department of Labor Statistics, 2009). When these workers are unemployed, the effects are not just felt by them alone but also their families and the country as a whole (Baumohl, 2007). McEachern (2009) noted these effects occur when the workers and their families lose wages and the country loses the goods and services that would have otherwise been produced. Also, unemployment for more workers can occur due to the loss of purchasing power by those unemployed. It is, therefore, important for these individuals to obtain the necessary skill-set to re-enter the workforce in the least amount of time (McEachern, 2009).

The primary mission of the community college is “to provide access to programs and services that will allow for more vital communities” (Vaughn, 2006). Therefore it is critical that advocates articulate their concerns about programs and services offered by the college (Cohen & Brawer, 2003). The community college is a comprehensive institution in that it strives to provide services to all individuals within the community (Vaughn). Liberal arts, developmental education, career education, and community education are major facets which define this idea of a comprehensive institution (Cohen & Brawer). All students who enter a community college will not enroll in a higher institution; thus, it is critical that they be provided with programs and opportunities that will allow them to be successful. This allows the community college to become more functional and integrated into the community (Cohen & Brawer).

The Workforce Investment Act (WIA) of 1998 was created to replace the Job Partnership Training Act (JPTA) of 1982 and provides training services and funding for

dislocated workers. This act changed federal job training and led to the creation of a new and comprehensive workforce investment system. Title I of WIA authorizes services which include employment and training services for dislocated workers as well as adults and youth (U.S. Department of Labor, 1998). The Workforce Investment Network “WIN” is the primary delivery provider for WIA services in Mississippi (WIN in Mississippi, n. d.). The WIN Job Centers, which are located throughout the state, offer services for these individuals as well as identify those who qualify for the Dislocated Worker Program. The Dislocated Worker Program is designed to provide support and job skills to those individuals who have lost jobs through no fault of their own (WIN in Mississippi, n. d.). The WIN Job Centers provide such services as Individual Training Accounts (ITA’s) which give the dislocated worker financial assistance to be used with an eligible training provider (Mississippi Department of Employment Security, 2009).

In addition to WIA, additional funding has been made available through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act. The WIA funds that are located within the Recovery Act are to be considered fiscal year 2008 monies and thus must be expended by the end of fiscal year 2010 with the majority of these monies being expended during the first year of availability (Recovery.gov. , 2009).

### **Statement of the Problem**

Dislocated workers are entering career-technical education at local community and junior colleges in order to acquire the necessary skills to become more employable in today’s job market (Davis, 2008). The ITA specialist at the local WIN Center and dislocated worker coordinator located at the local community/junior college do not

currently have access to predictors of success that might assist in the guidance of dislocated workers (WIN in Mississippi, n. d.). There is not currently a large body of research devoted to factors that affect academic success in dislocated workers enrolled in career-technical education. This information could be used to identify potential barriers to the goals of the dislocated worker and assist the ITA specialist and dislocated worker coordinator in developing a plan to assist the dislocated worker in reaching said goals.

Dislocated workers have been through a traumatic experience which is in some ways unique from what a non-dislocated worker student has experienced. Dislocated workers experienced a loss which can create a grieving process not unlike the loss of a loved one (Dahlstrom, 2002; Kubler-Ross, 1969). The Workforce Investment Act (1998) provided services and funding in the form of Individual Training Accounts (ITA). The ARRA (2009) provided a level of financial assistance for Dislocated Workers led to a high level of accountability from both state agencies as well as training providers. The current level of accountability for a program to retain WIA approval is a WIA student completion rate of 60% (Mississippi Department of Employment Security, 2009). If the community college does not provide necessary measures to assist students in program completion, they risk losing funding for their programs (Mississippi Department of Employment Security, 2009). The importance of returning these individuals to the workforce cannot be understated. The employment situation is the most important of the U.S. economic indicators; thus, any information which could lead to determining if dislocated workers are being successful in training is vital (Baumohl, 2007).



## **Research Questions**

In order to determine if there are differences between non-dislocated worker students and dislocated workers in terms of predictors of success at a rural community college, the answers to the following questions were sought:

1. What are the predictors of academic success (GPA) among students in a career technical program?
2. Are there significant differences in GPA, age, gender, and marital status between non-dislocated worker students and dislocated workers?
3. What are the perceived barriers and enhancements to academic success among dislocated workers?

## **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to compare responses of non-dislocated worker students and dislocated workers on a survey that identified specific areas as possible predictors of academic success at a rural community college. The college used for this study is East Central Community College in Decatur, MS. Specifically, the researcher was concerned with the variables of age, gender, and marital status. The researcher also sought to determine if there were specific barriers and/or enhancements to college success among dislocated workers. This study may be utilized in assisting dislocated worker coordinators, ITA specialists, and college counselors in interview sessions with dislocated workers as they determine a plan of study. By identifying potential

enhancements and barriers, the dislocated workers will better be able to plan a course of action as they prepare for training.

### **Delimitations and Limitations of the Study**

The following delimitations were observed in this study.

1. The study consisted of career-technical students enrolled in courses at East Central Community College, a member of the Mississippi Community and Junior College System.
2. The study examined the variables included on the survey instrument.
3. The time during which the survey was administered was limited to a 2-week period due to scheduling constraints with faculty.

The following limitations were observed in this study.

1. The small sample size of participants from only career-technical students within the first semester of a program at East Central Community College.
2. The study was limited by the fact that the perceptions of the dislocated workers were categorized solely through the survey instrument.
3. The researcher did not compare or contrast the educational goals of dislocated workers and non-dislocated worker students.
4. The researcher did not compare or contrast the self-perceived enhancements or barriers of dislocated workers and non-dislocated worker students.

## Key Terms

The following terms are provided to assist in making clear the terminology used within the research.

*Age* is the student's chronological age at the time he/she participated in this research study.

*A Community College* is an institution of higher education that is regionally accredited to award associate of arts degree, associate of science degree, and vocational certificates. Also know as junior colleges and two-year schools (Cohen & Brawer, 2003).

*Customer* refers to an individual who directly benefits from services provided (Mississippi Department of Employment Security, 2009).

*A Dislocated Worker* is an individual who has lost a job through no fault of their own. The four categories of dislocated worker are: General Dislocated Worker, Plant Closure Dislocated Worker, Self-Employed or Unemployed Dislocated Worker, and Displaced Homemaker (Mississippi Department of Employment Security, 2009).

*Gender* refers to the biological characteristics of the male/female sex.

*An ITA (Individual Training Account)* is the amount of money designated to cover approved expenses in an eligible training program for an individual (Mississippi Department of Employment Security, 2009).

*The ITA Specialist* is a MDES employee who is responsible for interviewing, assessing, certifying, and assisting individuals in choosing a career-track (Mississippi Department of Employment Security, 2009).

*A Non-dislocated worker* is considered to be any first semester within program career-technical student determined not to be a dislocated worker.

*Marital Status* refers to the classifications of single, married, divorced, or separated.

*The SWIB (State Workforce Investment Board)* is the workforce board which facilitates federal monies within the state of Mississippi (Mississippi Department of Employment Security, 2009).

*A TEGL (Training and Employment Guidance Letter)* is Federal documentation which provides policy guidance in regards to government ACTs and plans (U.S. Department of Labor, n. d.).

*Unemployed* refers to all persons who had no employment during the reference week, were available for work, except for temporary illness, and had made specific efforts to find employment during the 4-week period ending with the reference week. Persons who were waiting to be recalled to a job from which they had been laid off need not have been looking for work to be classified as unemployed. Persons that are classified as unemployed have not necessarily filed or would be eligible for unemployment benefits (Mississippi Department of Employment Security, 2009).

*The Unemployment Rate* represents the number of unemployed as a percent of the civilian labor force (McEachern, 2009).

*The WIA Coordinator* is an employee of a junior or community college, funded by local workforce area, whose primary responsibility is to assist the ITA specialist and student in regards to the school's financial, administrative, and curriculum requirements (Mississippi Department of Employment Security, 2009).

*A WIN Job Center* provides WIA funded services at both comprehensive and affiliate centers; also known as One-Stop Career Center (Mississippi Department of Employment Security, 2009).

*The Workforce Investment Act (WIA)* is a Federal act created in 1998 which authorizes state and local communities to develop a new workforce delivery system which provides core services, intensive services, and training services (U.S. Department of Labor, 1998).

*The Workforce Investment Network (WIN)* is a system of WIN Job Centers that provides federal, state, and community services in the state of Mississippi (Mississippi Department of Employment Security, 2009).

### **Significance of the Study**

This study hoped to provide data on dislocated workers to the WIN Job Center and their partners at the community college. The focus of the study was to administer the survey instrument to the participants, analyze the findings, and provide further recommendations. These findings and recommendations will be made available to dislocated worker coordinators, career-technical counselors, and ITA specialists for the development of strategies to assist dislocated workers. The goal of this study was to provide data to WIN Job Centers and community colleges that will contribute to the development of successful educational plans for dislocated workers.

CHAPTER II  
REVIEW OF LITERATURE

**The Dislocated Worker**

The labor force is comprised of civilians (non-military) who are 16 years of age and older with the exception of those in prison or mental institutions (McEachern, 2009). Further, McEachern noted the unemployment rate in turn is the percentage of the labor force that is currently unemployed. The Bureau of Labor Statistics (2009) gathers these statistics through interviews with 60,000 households on a monthly basis. Individuals who are not counted among the labor force are those who may have retired, are students, care for children at home, have a long-term illness or disability, or simply do not seek work (McEachern). A final category that is not counted as unemployed is that of the discouraged worker. These individuals are those who drop out of the labor force due to frustration because they cannot find work (McEachern).

According to the Mississippi Department of Employment Security (2009), the unemployment rate in Mississippi was 9.4 percent compared to a nationwide unemployment rate of 9 percent. For the month of March 2009, approximately 123,000 Mississippians were unemployed, with the construction and manufacturing industries being the hardest hit. The range of unemployment was 6 percent in Lamar and Rankin counties compared to 19.3 percent in Holmes County. The unemployment rate in the East

Central Community College district was 9.8 percent. In all, 233,676 individuals applied for unemployment insurance for the month of March 2009, with benefits paid exceeding \$33 million dollars (Mississippi Department of Employment Security, 2009). These numbers demonstrate the desperate situation of many Mississippians in need of jobs and/or training.

In order for an individual to qualify as Adult WIA, individuals must meet the basic requirements of adult service by being at least 18 years of age, a United States citizen or eligible non-citizen, and registered according to the provisions of the Military Selective Service Act. In order for an individual to meet the qualifications for a dislocated worker, they must meet the same standards as that of Adult WIA (WIN in Mississippi, n. d.). After meeting these basic requirements, an individual may be identified as a dislocated worker in one of four categories that have been created through the ARRA (2009). The four categories are General Dislocated Worker (Category A); Plant Closure (Category B); Self-Employed or Unemployed (Category C); or Displaced Homemaker (Category D). An individual is identified as a General Dislocated Worker if they meet the following criteria per TEGL 14.08 (U.S. Department of Labor, 2009):

#### Category A

- (1) Individual has been laid off from a job or has received notification of termination or layoff,
- (2) Individual is either eligible for or has exhausted unemployment compensation; or has been employed for a duration sufficient to demonstrate to the appropriate entity at the One-Stop Career Center

referred to in WIA section 134, but is not eligible for unemployment compensation due to insufficient earnings or having performed services for an employer that was not covered under a state unemployment compensation law,

- (3) Individual is unlikely to return to a previous industry or occupation. (p. 13)

An individual can be identified as a Plant Closure Dislocated Worker if they meet one of the following criteria:

#### Category B

- (1) Individual has been terminated or laid off, or has received notification of termination or layoff, due to a permanent or substantial layoff from a plant, facility or enterprise
- (2) Individual is employed at a facility at which the employer makes an announcement that the facility will close within 180 days
- (3) Individual is employed at a facility in which the employer makes a general announcement that the facility will close. (p. 13)

An individual can qualify as a Self-employed or Unemployed Dislocated Worker if they meet the following criteria:



### Category C

- (1) Individual was self-employed but is now unemployed as a result of general economic conditions in the community in which the individual resides or the unemployment is due to natural disaster. (p. 14)

The final category to which an individual can qualify as a dislocated worker is that of Displaced Homemaker Dislocated Worker. In order to be placed in this category the individual must meet the following criteria:

### Category D

- (1) Individual has been providing unpaid services to family members in the home
- (2) Individual has been dependent on the income of another family member and is no longer supported by said income
- (3) Individual is unemployed or underemployed and is experiencing difficulty in either obtaining or upgrading employment. (p. 14)

### **Grief Theory**

Dislocated workers have been through a loss as a group that other groups of students re-entering post-secondary education have not experienced as a whole (Dahlstrom, 2002). This view of loss has led MDES to view dislocated workers as going through a grieving process not unlike that of the death of a loved one (Mississippi Department of Employment Security, 2009). The loss of one's job is not just limited to

the payment that is received for one's services. A job in societal terms can also be linked to how an individual perceives oneself in society and within the structure of one's own home. An individual's profession can confer on one a sense of self worth and place within the world. When this is taken away, it can lead to feelings of anxiety, worthlessness, and shame (Dahlstrom, 2002). Grief theory has been associated with this phenomenon as the stages of grief have been found to be similar between the two groups. The Mississippi Department of Employment Services has utilized the Kubler-Ross Five Stage Model of Grief to illustrate what is happening with dislocated workers.

Kubler-Ross wrote her book *On Death and Dying* in 1969 to describe the stages of grief that terminally ill patients experience. In this regard, the Kubler-Ross method is different from other models in that it applies to the grief cycle of the individual experiencing the situation and not to those grieving another person. The Kubler-Ross method has become one of the most widely utilized grief models in the field of psychology and applied to other forms of grief such as the loss of one's profession. The five stages of her model are (1) denial, (2) anger, (3) bargaining, (4) depression, and (5) acceptance. When describing the model, Kubler-Ross explained that these reactions were normal defense mechanisms that individuals used to deal with grief. These stages of grief are not meant to be moved through in a linear manner as an individual can occupy different stages at different times. This can also include a regression within the method which is not uncommon in nature.

Denial is the first stage of the Kubler-Ross (1969) method and is determined to be a temporary defense to the news of change. In this stage, the individual does not want to believe that the change is taking place. One pretends that the change is not happening by

making such statements as, “This can’t be happening to me.” The individual tends to keep a distance from the problem in hopes that it will simply go away.

The second phase in this method is that of anger occurring when the individual comes to accept that the change is real. This anger is then directed outward to either someone or something that the individual feels is responsible for the change. In the workforce, this can be co-workers, supervisors, or the company itself. The economy can also be blamed for the loss of one’s job. This can lead to feelings of irritability which can affect the relationship between the dislocated worker, family, and friends (Kubler-Ross, 1969).

In the third stage, the dislocated worker has moved past feelings of anger and has moved on to bargaining. The dislocated worker begins to bargain with the individual with whom he/she feels is responsible in order to not lose his/her job. This is a natural reaction of one who is facing change in seeking to put off the inevitable. The person might ask to take a cut in pay, change schedule, or work part-time in order to keep a job. The individual might increase work performance by doing such things as working overtime (without pay) in order to be invaluable to the organization (Kubler-Ross, 1969).

Depression is the fourth stage and sets in after the bargaining phase has been realized to be futile. It is at this stage that the reality of change sets in. The dislocated worker becomes aware of the change as well as the losses associated with the change. These losses can include financial, friendships, and overall stability. The depression that ensues can lead to strong feelings in terms of self worth and also an overall lack of energy and responsiveness (Kubler-Ross, 1969).

The final stage occurs when the dislocated worker accepts that the change is not going away and moves to acceptance. When discussing acceptance, this is not to mean that the individual is happy with the change but rather the individual has become resigned to the change. Acceptance is the period when the individual begins to explore options and look for new possibilities in his/her life. The Kubler-Ross method fails to mention the stage of hope, but the author addressed this by stating that hope was a positive thread which runs throughout the cycles. This hope is that there will be a positive end to the change and that the lessons learned from the experience can be used throughout life (Kubler-Ross, 1969).

### **History and Mission of Community Colleges**

Community colleges are recognized by industry as the primary provider of career-technical education (Davis, 2008). This role has been developed and strengthened by the strong ties that have developed due to the responsiveness of community/junior colleges to workforce needs (Davis, 2008). The role of the community college in higher education has expanded dramatically since its humble beginnings at Joliet Junior College in 1901 with six students (Joliet Junior College, 2009). In 2006-07, there were 1,045 community colleges in the United States with an enrollment of 6.2 million students (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2009). Community college enrollment accounted for 35 percent of all postsecondary students during that year (National Center for Educational Statistics). A major reason for the increase in enrollment at community colleges is due in large part to the affordability of the education. The average annual community college tuition is less than half that of public four-year colleges and

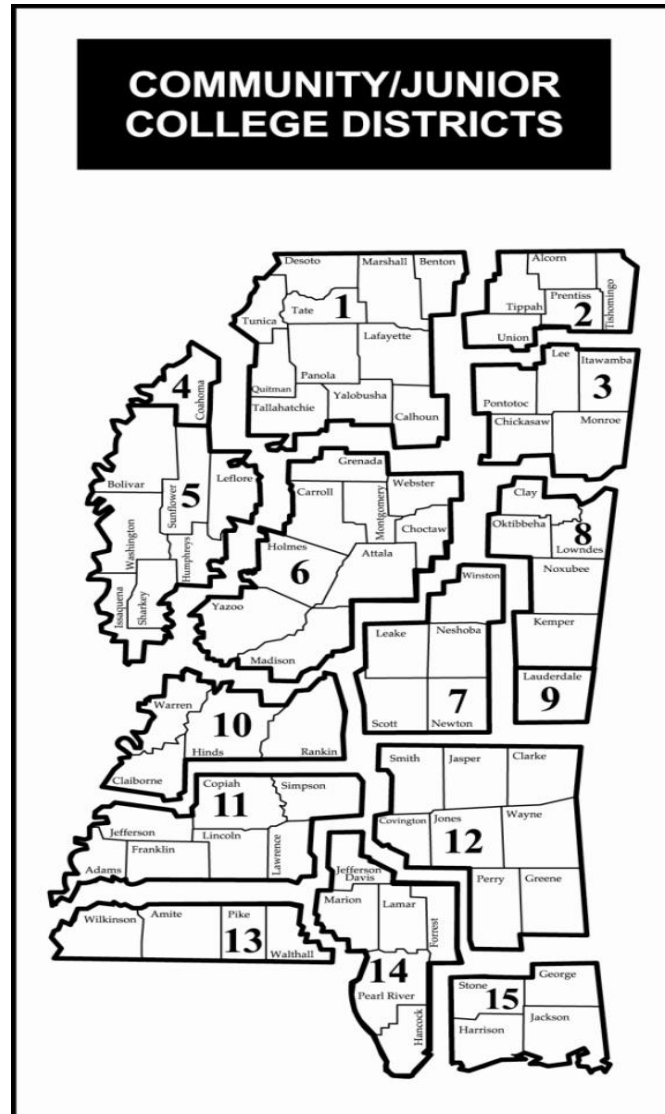
universities and one-tenth that of private four-year institutions (National Center for Educational Statistics).

The community college has made major changes since its inception. Originally created as a fifth and sixth year of high school, community colleges began to provide job and workforce training as a result of the Great Depression (Kasper, 2003). In its modern form, the community college's mission is defined by its career education, community education, developmental education, general education, student services, and transfer/liberal arts education (Cohen & Brawer, 2003). Career-technical education has received a number of individuals in recent years that are not considered "traditional age" students (Kasper, 2003). Reasons for this return to school can range from retraining to starting a second career (Gordon, 2003). In recent months, the focus of returning students has been those dislocated workers within the area seeking a skill by which to re-enter the workforce. This change in demographics is cause for many to evaluate how instruction is being delivered within the classroom (Gordon).

A major mark of distinction between community colleges and other forms of higher education is the commitment to open access and community building (Vaughn, 2006). Community colleges strive towards their mission by providing (1) open access, (2) lifelong learning, (3) community services, (4) comprehensive education and, (5) teaching/learning (Vaughn, 2006).

The state of Mississippi was first in the establishment of a public system of community colleges. There are currently fifteen comprehensive community college districts around the state which are accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools and the Mississippi Commission on College Accreditation. This network of

community colleges has been strategically placed throughout the state in order to best serve its constituents. East Central Community College is located in district 7 (Figure 1.1) of Mississippi Community College System (State Board for Community and Junior Colleges, 2009).



Source: Mississippi Community and Junior Colleges, 2009.

Figure 1.1

Map of Mississippi Community and Junior Colleges

## **Workforce Investment Act of 1998**

The Workforce Investment Act “WIA” of 1998 was the first major reform in federal legislation concerning training since the Job Training Partnership Act in 1983. WIA reformed federal job training legislation and created a comprehensive workforce investment system. Title I of WIA authorizes a number of services including employment and training for adults, dislocated workers, and youth. WIA also uses funding for rapid response assistance to workers affected by mass layoffs and plant closures. The funding is distributed in such a way as that eighty percent of funding is distributed by formula to the states, with the remaining twenty percent being available to the Secretary of Labor. The money that is allotted to the Secretary of Labor is to be used to respond to mass layoffs, plant and/or military closings, and natural disasters which could not be anticipated, as well as technical assistance and training demonstration projects. The major difference between JPTA and WIA is the eligibility requirement. JPTA based its eligibility on income while WIA states that all individuals have the right to core services (U.S. Department of Labor, 1998).

The basis for the WIA workforce system is the “one-stop” delivery method. This led to the creation of one-stop centers in which the primary focus is on job placement. If the individual is in need of additional training or other services, then these are also provided. These services include assistance in filing an unemployment claim, job referrals, and job placements (Mississippi Department of Employment Security, 2009).

In Mississippi, the federal funding is directed to the Mississippi Employment Security Department where it is overseen by the Governor and the State Workforce Investment Board (SWIB). Governor Haley Barbour stated:

Our goal in Mississippi is to use WIA and the State Workforce Board to align resources to provide employers with well-trained workers and individuals with the opportunities to get their first job, their next job, or a better job. (WIN in Mississippi, n. d., p. 16)

The SWIB serves as an advisory committee to the Governor and is comprised of members of large and small businesses as well as representatives of labor, education, local government, and community leaders. The focus of the SWIB is to assist the Governor in meeting all federal mandates under the WIA and to ensure that the workforce development system is being overseen in an effective manner. The SWIB also is responsible for the development of a state WIA plan, developing improvement strategies on statewide WIA activities, and coordinating with local workforce areas. These local workforce boards are responsible for developing a local workforce system with procedures that are customized to local one-stops (Pantazis, 1998). The state of Mississippi is broken into four local workforce areas: Delta, Mississippi Partnership, South Central Mississippi Works, and Twin Districts (Figure 1.2). The local workforce areas are broken down by the following counties (WIN Delivery, 2009):

#### Delta Workforce Investment Area

Bolivar, Carroll, Coahoma, Holmes, Humphreys, Issaquena, Leflore, Panola, Quitman, Sharkey, Sunflower, Tallahatchie, Tunica, Washington



### Mississippi Partnership Workforce Investment Area

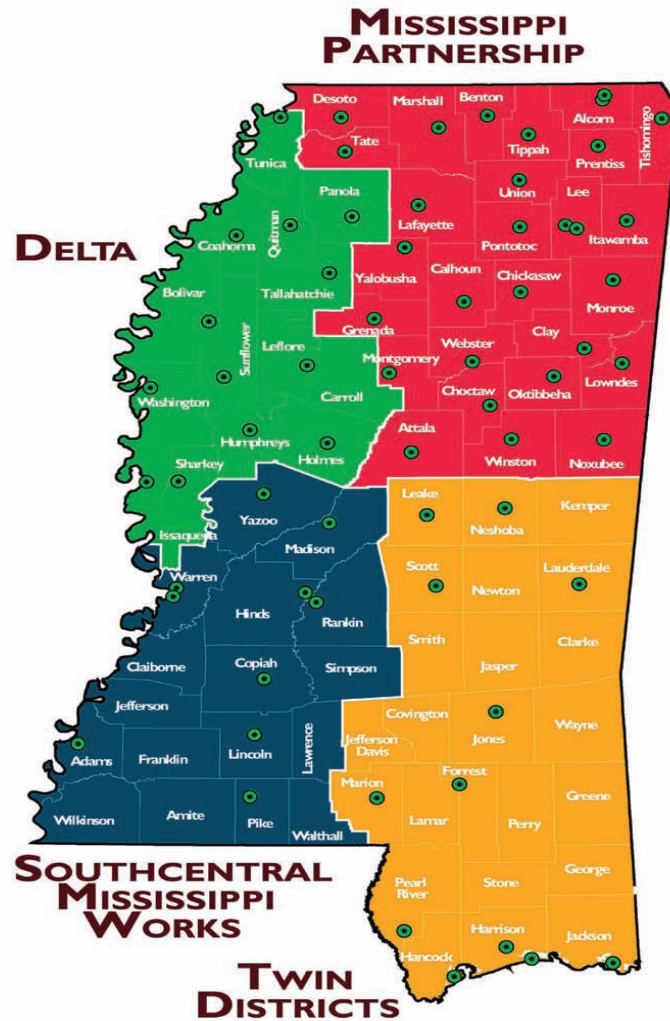
Alcorn, Attala, Benton, Calhoun, Chickasaw, Choctaw, Clay, DeSoto, Grenada,  
Itawamba, Lafayette, Lee, Lowndes, Marshall, Monroe, Montgomery, Noxubee,  
Oktibbeha, Pontotoc, Prentiss, Tate, Tippah, Tishomingo, Union, Webster, Winston,  
Yalobusha

### South-central Mississippi Works Workforce Investment Area

Adams, Amite, Claiborne, Copiah, Franklin, Hinds, Jefferson, Lawrence, Lincoln,  
Madison, Pike, Rankin, Simpson, Walthall, Warren, Wilkinson, Yazoo

### Twin Districts Workforce Investment Area

Clarke, Covington, Forrest, George, Greene, Hancock, Harrison, Jackson, Jasper,  
Jefferson Davis, Jones, Kemper, Lamar, Lauderdale, Leake, Marion, Neshoba, Newton,  
Pearl River, Perry, Scott, Smith, Stone, Wayne. (WIN Delivery, 2009, p. 2)



Source: Win Delivery, 2009

Figure 1.2

Map of Mississippi Workforce Districts

According to WIN in Mississippi (n. d.), the Workforce Investment Network (WIN) is the primary delivery method of WIA services in Mississippi. The basis for this system was the creation of WIN Job Centers located throughout the state. These WIN Job Centers are comprised of “comprehensive” centers which offer co-located staff such

as employees of the Department of Employment Security, Department of Rehabilitation Services, and local community colleges. Smaller, “affiliate,” centers offer services by the Department of Employment Securities and provide referrals to other partners. These partners include the Mississippi Department of Employment Security, local workforce investment areas, local elected officials, State Board for Community and Junior Colleges, Mississippi Department of Corrections, Mississippi Department of Human Services, Mississippi Department of Rehabilitation Services, Mississippi Development Authority, and the U S Department of Housing and Urban Development. WIA funded services are provided in three levels with one service being a prerequisite of moving to the next. The first level is core services which are the basic services that are offered to all customers. Core services involve activities such as outreach, intake and eligibility determination, as well as information of all services available through the WIN Job Center. Services that are provided include basic assessment of skill levels, aptitudes, and abilities, as well as support services and job search/placement. These core services serve as the foundation for intensive services that are provided through the WIN Job Center. Intensive services include skill assessments, counseling services, and pre-vocational services. In order to be eligible for intensive services, an individual must have received at least one core service, and it has been determined that intensive services are needed in order for the customer to become job ready. The third and final level of WIA service is that of training services. In order to receive training services, an individual must have received at least one core and one intensive service (WIN in Mississippi, n. d.). Training services include:

- occupational skills training,
- on-the-job training (OJT),

- workforce training programs with instruction which may include cooperative education programs,
- private sector training programs,
- skill upgrade and retraining,
- entrepreneurial training,
- job readiness training,
- adult education and literacy training (in conjunction with other services),
- and customized training. (Mississippi Department of Employment Security n. d. p. 1)

WIN in Mississippi notes (n. d.) the Win Job Center Model stresses choice when an individual selects the eligible provider of these services. This is done by giving the customer financial freedom through the use of an Individual Training Account (ITA) at qualified institutions. The training programs are listed on the Eligible Training Provider List which contains training options which are eligible for ITA assistance. A dislocated worker must go to the training provider of their choice and apply for an eligible program of study. After enrolling in a program, the dislocated worker can apply for an ITA with the ITA specialist at the WIN Center. The dislocated worker must provide a schedule from an approved training course as well as proof of application for federal financial aid. A dislocated worker's receipt of federal financial aid is not necessary for ITA approval, but there must be an application on file. Upon establishment of the ITA, the Dislocated Worker Coordinator/WIA at the community college is notified and makes any adjustments that might be necessary to the ITA. The ITA specialist releases an invoice at the beginning of each semester which is completed by the Dislocated Worker Coordinator/WIA who then lists all college expenses which relate to WIA. The invoice is

then sent to the state MDES office where, upon review, payment is wired to the training provider. Figure 1.3 demonstrates these steps that are in place to assist the dislocated worker in completing his/her training goals (WIN in Mississippi).



Figure 1.3

### Mississippi Workforce Map

### **American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009**

Signed into law by President Barack Obama on February 17<sup>th</sup>, 2009, the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) contains measures to modernize infrastructure, increase energy independence, enhance educational opportunities, create affordable health care, provide tax relief, and protect those in greatest need. To meet

these goals, the ARRA contains both provisions and fiscal aid to train a modern and productive workforce (Recovery.gov. , 2009). The total cost of the bill is stated to be \$787 billion dollars with Mississippi directly receiving approximately \$2.23 billion. Education and training have been allotted \$53 billion nationwide. A major goal for the ARRA is that of job creation and also the saving of current jobs. Job creation/saving over the next two years are targeted to be at 3.675 million with 30,000 of those being in Mississippi (Bernstein & Romer, 2009; Recovery.gov. , 2009). The President has made it clear that unprecedented transparency and accountability are expected on every dollar spent on economic recovery. President Obama has identified five crucial objectives for federal agencies to ensure:

- Recovery funds are awarded and distributed in a prompt, fair, and reasonable manner.
- Recipients and uses of all recovery funds are transparent to the public, and the public benefits of these funds are reported in a clear, accurate, and timely manner.
- Recovery funds are to be used for authorized purposes, and every step is to be taken to prevent instances of fraud, waste, error, and abuse.
- Projects funded under the recovery legislation avoid unnecessary delays and cost overruns.
- Programs meet specific goals and targets, and contribute to improved performance on broad economic indicators. (Recovery.gov. , 2009, p. 5)

As part of the ARRA, an investment of \$3,514,500,000 has been made in core employment and training programs as they pertain to WIA (U.S. Department of Labor, n. d.). This investment in the nation's workforce system and One-Stop Career Centers was made with the intended effect of helping unemployed Americans upgrade their skills and get back to work. Secretary of Labor Hilda L. Solis stated:

One –Stop Career Centers have a wide array of services and resources to help workers and you who are unemployed or underemployed. Through the One-Stops, the workforce system will play a vital role in America's economic recovery by assisting workers who are facing unprecedented challenges to retool their skills and re-establish themselves in viable career paths. (U.S. Department of Labor, n. d., p. 1)

The ARRA has made these monies available for WIA funding with the breakdown being:

- \$500 million – Adult employment and training activities also to include support services and needs related payments,
- \$1.2 billion – Youth activities to include Summer Youth Programs (ages 14 – 24),
- \$1.25 billion – Dislocated Worker employment and training activities,
- \$200 million – Dislocated Worker assistance national reserve,
- \$50 million – Youth Build Activities,

- \$750 million – Worker training and placement in high growth and emerging industry sectors. (Recovery.gov., 2009, p. 58)

Local workforce areas have until the end of fiscal year 2010 (June 30, 2011) to expend all WIA Adult Dislocated Worker Recovery Act Funds due to the allotment date falling within fiscal year 2008. In a typical year, all unobligated funds are recaptured from the local workforce areas and reallocated by the Governor. The Employment and Training Administration division of the U.S. Department of Labor has established that due to the fact that these funds are only available for three months in fiscal year 2008 it would go against the purpose of the ARRA to recapture funding so soon. In this instance, the governors will not be able to recapture fiscal year 2008 ARRA monies allotted for WIA but will be able to begin doing so with fiscal year 2009. In the past, it has been permitted by WIA Section 133 for local workforce areas, with approval from the Governor, to transfer up to 20% of Adult Activities funding to Dislocated Worker Activities. It is also allowable for up to 20% of Dislocated Worker Activities funding to be transferred to Adult Activities. These numbers have been raised to 30% between the funds but cannot be raised above this level for the life of the ARRA funding (U.S. Department of Labor, 2009).

### **Predictors of Academic Success**

This study focused on the factors of age, gender, and marital status. The factors were chosen due to prior research that had been performed in order to give a baseline to the current research. There is a lack of research in regards to academic success for career-technical students. The variables of age, gender, and marital status in particular



were not found to have a high correlation to predictors of success and retention (Braunstein & McGrath, 1997).

### Age

A typical community college classroom cannot be designated in terms of age (Cohen & Brawer, 2003). A modern classroom can contain individuals who have just completed high school to others who have retired from the workforce and are seeking a secondary life occupation. Age was found to vary as a predictor of success from study to study. Varied results were found when researching the age variable with no certain consensus on its significance (Braunstein & McGrath, 1997; Owen, 2003). Owen (2003) did perform a study in which GPA can be shown to increase in direct relation to the age of the student and conversely decline as student age declines.

### Gender

Gender can be termed as a dividing marker in career-technical education. Programs such as electrical technology, heating and air conditioning, and welding are generally dominated by male students. In turn, female students make up a larger percentage of the classroom in such programs as business office technology, cosmetology, and the nursing field (R.W. Eason, personal communication, April 21, 2009). Gender was found to be an inconsistent measure of academic success as male and female students can vary in academic success according to the course of study (Adelman, 1999; Bryson, Smith, & Vineyard, 2002). Schram (1996) noted that males tend to outperform females in some classes while females outperform in others. The review

showed that males significantly outscored females when the outcome was a series of exams. Conversely, females significantly surpassed males when the outcome was total course performance.

### Marital Status

Santos (2004) noted that marital status can be seen as a predictor of success due to families providing encouragement and support. This support can be critical to success and has been shown in some cases to increase GPA and influence motivation. In many cases, the prior research focused on the marital status of the student's parents but due to the nature of the study only the marital status of the student is required. There seems to be a gap in the literature on the variable of marital status.

### **Chapter Summary**

The review of literature in Chapter II included the effect that losing one's job can have on the individual. The history and mission of the community college in regards to training the workforce were noted. An overview of the Workforce Investment Act and American Recovery and Reinvestment Act were presented in addition to the structure of the workforce system. Related literature was also presented which focused on the variables of age, gender, and marital status in regards to predictors of academic success.

## CHAPTER III

### METHODOLOGY

The purpose of the research was to identify factors which affect dislocated worker and non-dislocated worker students' GPAs at East Central Community College (ECCC) and determine if there were significant differences between the two. The researcher sought to determine what factors dislocated workers perceived as self-identified barriers and enhancements to academic success. A survey was created by the researcher for this study.

This chapter describes the methods and procedures used in this study. The chapter is broken into six areas: (1) research design, (2) population, (3) selection of subjects, (4) instrumentation, (5) data collection, and (6) data analysis.

#### **Research Design**

The research study utilized a mixed methods study as it combined both quantitative and qualitative aspects. Mixed method is a type of research design in which quantitative and qualitative approaches are used in types of questions, research methods, data collection, and analysis inferences (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2009). Quantitative data includes closed-ended information and was used in questions 1-3 of the questionnaire

(Appendix B) in order to measure the variables of age, gender, marital status. Qualitative data, in turn, consist of the use of open-ended questions that are developed to provide depth to the study and are found in questions 4-6 of the questionnaire (Appendix B). Qualitative data allow for respondents to answer questions freely and thus can allow for a wider array of responses. The responses must then be categorized by the researcher in order to be further studied (Clark & Creswell, 2007).

This study utilized a survey designed to be useful in surveying a large sample population. Surveys are widely considered to be a useful and acceptable form of data collection. Survey research involves soliciting self-reported information from respondents in order to make meaningful conclusions (Parker & Rea, 2005). The major characteristics of surveys as a research instrument include (1) information is drawn from a group of people in order to describe some aspects or characteristics, (2) the collection is accomplished by asking questions and gathering the answers given by the respondent, which constitute the data for the study, and (3) the information is collected from a sample in lieu of gathering responses from every member of the population (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2006).

In order to achieve 75% power to detect a moderate relationship ( $R^2 = .10$ ) with five predictors, at least 110 respondents is necessary (Sample Power Version, 1.0, SPSS, 1997). A survey does possess some advantages over other forms of research. A survey allows one to collect detailed factual information about a population that describes an existing phenomenon. It can identify problems or current conditions and practices within a population. Finally, a survey can make comparisons and evaluations in regards to a population as well as determine what others might be doing with similar problems or

situations. This is beneficial to researchers in that one can benefit from previous experience in making future decisions (Sellitz, Wrightsman, & Cook, 1996). Kerlinger (1986) pointed out that one of the major weaknesses of surveys is that they do not always provide sufficient depth to the research. For this reason, three open-ended questions were added to the survey so that it is both quantitative and qualitative in nature.

### **Population**

The population for this study was beginning dislocated workers and non-dislocated worker students currently enrolled in career technical courses at East Central Community College. East Central Community College (ECCC) is located in Decatur, MS and serves the counties of Leake, Neshoba, Newton, Scott, and Winston. ECCC is a single campus community college but does provide a limited number of classes at the career-technical centers located within its service district. The Career-Technical Center is located on the Decatur Campus. Career-Technical can be broken down into career, technical, and healthcare programs at the community college as follows:

Career Programs: Cosmetology, Residential Carpentry, and Welding

Technical Programs: Automotive Mechanics, Collision Repair, Computer Network Support, Computer Programming, Culinary Arts, Drafting & Design, Early Childhood Education, Electrical, Electronics, Heating & Air Conditioning, Hotel & Restaurant Management, Machine Shop, Medical Office, and Office Systems

Healthcare Education: Associate Degree Nursing (RN), Practical Nursing (LPN), LPN to ADN Bridge, Paramedic Technology, and Surgical Technology

The group was further broken down to include only students within their first semester of a career-technical program. A total of 275 career-technical surveys were administered with 274 completed and returned to the researcher. Since all students in career technical programs were available to participate in the survey in the classroom, the entire population was contacted. The research was conducted during the fall 2009 semester in order to include the largest number of first semester students as possible. The population is African-American and Caucasian in nature with an age range 18 to 57. The researcher received prior approval for this study from Mississippi State University's Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects. The letters from the college president and the dean of career-technical education granting the researcher permission to conduct this study are found in Appendix A.

### **Selection of Subjects**

East Central Community College is the site that was selected for this study. The individuals that were chosen to participate were first semester students within their program of study. Once the researcher received approval from the college president and dean of career-technical education, a request was made to the career-technical counselor to provide a list of classes that were comprised of students enrolled in their first semester within a career-technical program. The Dean set up times with each instructor during which the survey could be administered. The WIA program was used as an identifier of dislocated workers who are currently enrolled in career-technical courses at ECCC. All students not determined to be identified as dislocated workers were termed as non-

dislocated workers for the purpose of this study. This study did not require a sample to be utilized as the total population was available.

### **Instrumentation**

The researcher created the instrument by conducting interviews with counselors at East Central Community College to determine what demographic variables were deemed necessary for the counseling/interview process. The results of the variables would then be used to guide the interviewer through the counseling session with the dislocated worker. The instrument was constructed to be one page in length. The survey contained three questions which gathered specific demographic data which was then compared to existing data on factors that influence college GPA. The survey also contained three open-ended questions designed to provide information on goals and on factors which dislocated workers perceived may have enhanced their educational experience or create a barrier to success. The survey is located in Appendix B.

The survey is a mixed methods instrument which can be broken down into three quantitative and three qualitative questions. The quantitative section was used to determine if the predictors of success were relevant to this research. The first question was used to obtain the chronological age of each participant. The second question was used to determine the gender of the participant and was broken down into the groups of male and female. This was done to eliminate outliers as gender can be associated with physiological and psychological characteristics separate from those of specific sex. The third quantitative question was utilized to determine the marital status of the participant.

As before, the students were given specific choices (i.e., single, married, divorced, and separated) in order to eliminate any potential outliers.

Questions 3-6 were qualitative in nature as to provide additional depth to the study by gathering responses from non-dislocated worker and dislocated workers in regards to educational goals, enhancements, and barriers to success. The first question sought to determine what goals dislocated workers self-identified as being important in their pursuit of a certificate/degree at East Central Community College. The second question was used to determine if there were enhancements or more specifically things which assisted the dislocated workers in their pursuit of a certificate/degree. The third and final question was used to determine what perceived barriers dislocated workers felt were detrimental to their educational achievement.

After developing the survey, the researcher had a panel of college counselors to review the content and format of the survey. The panel suggested revisions to the qualitative section in order to clarify the questions, and the researcher made said changes to the survey.

### **Data Collection**

Prior to beginning the research, the researcher received the required approval from Mississippi State University's Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects (see Appendix C). All forms and approvals were completed and in the researcher's possession before any surveys were conducted. The survey was implemented within a two week period in September 2009. The method for collecting data in this study was to request assistance from the Dean of Career-Technical Education at East Central



Community College in scheduling the survey in regards to instructors' schedules. The dean of career-technical education set up a schedule with the instructors within a two week time frame to administer the survey. The survey was administered to each class, at which time the participants were read the consent letter and received a copy of said letter. The letter indicated why the study was being conducted, what the data were being used for, and the storage method of the data. A copy of this letter was given to the career-technical counselor as well as the dean of career-technical education at East Central Community College. The surveys were then collected upon completion and stored until the student's GPAs could be determined at the completion of the fall 2009 semester. The researcher obtained a list of dislocated workers enrolled in career-technical courses that were identified through the WIA program. The researcher is the dislocated worker coordinator/WIA at East Central Community College and is thus the contact for this information. The students were identified in this survey by their college identification number and not their name in order to remain anonymous. The student identification number was replaced with a random number when the survey and GPA were linked.

At the completion of the survey, the data were stored in a computer with no connection to the Internet until such time as college GPA's could be established. At this time, the data were entered into the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 17. After the data were entered into the SPSS program for review, the surveys were destroyed. Dislocated workers and non-dislocated workers were compared to each in terms of relationship with the variables of age, gender, and marital status. An analysis was performed on the open ended questions section of the survey, and a descriptive list of

factors was obtained. This was done to produce meaningful conclusions to address the research questions and to provide areas for future research.

### **Data Analysis**

Descriptive and inferential statistics were utilized to analyze the research questions. Question 1 was calculated using forced entry multiple regression to determine predictors of success of dislocated workers and non-dislocated workers. In forced entry, the variables of age, gender, and marital status were entered into the model simultaneously. This approach was chosen because of the exploratory nature of the study and lack of research on the relationship between the variables utilized in the study. Question 2 utilized t-tests and Chi-Square analysis in order to determine if there was a significant difference in predictors of success between the dislocated workers and non-dislocated workers. A .05 level of significance was used to test the hypothesis. Question 3 was designed to gather responses in order to group and analyze the perceived goals, barriers to success, and enhancements among dislocated workers.

## CHAPTER IV

### FINDINGS

The purpose of the study was to determine if the variables of age, gender, and marital status had an effect on the college GPA of dislocated workers enrolled in career-technical programs at a rural community college. The differences in relation to the variables of age, gender, and marital status between dislocated workers and non-dislocated workers were also determined. The perceptions of both non-dislocated worker and dislocated worker students were gathered in relation of goals, enhancement, and barriers. This chapter presents the data analysis of the data collected using the instrument described in Chapter Three, existing data, and the following research questions presented previously in Chapter One.

1. What are the predictors of academic success (GPA) among students in a career technical program?
2. Are there significant differences in GPA, age, gender, and marital status between non-dislocated worker students and dislocated workers?
3. What are the self-identified barriers and enhancements to academic success among dislocated workers?

The total number of career-technical students receiving the survey was 275 with one student abstaining from participation. The student completed the survey and asked if it would be possible for the survey to be used without access to college GPA. After the

procedure for the survey was explained again, the student decided not to participate. The completion rate for the survey is listed within Table 4.1.

Table 4.1 Number of Surveys Submitted and Returned

Participating College	Number of Surveys Administered	Number of Surveys Returned	% of Surveys Returned
East Central CC	275	274	99.64%

As shown in Table 4.1, the survey response rate was 99.64%. The rate was considered adequate for data analysis.

### Research Question 1

The first research question addressed the predictors of academic success among students in the career technical program. Reported in Table 4.2 is the model regression for the variables of age, gender, and marital status.

Table 4.2 Model Summary of Multiple Regressions

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	St. Error of the Estimate
1	.39 <sup>a</sup>	.15	.13	.89

The category of marital status is dummy coded and measures four things: (1) single, (2) married, (3) divorced, or (4) separated, and thus, each category must be treated

as a separate variable. In this study the variables of married, divorced, and separated are compared to the variable of single for statistical purposes. The  $R^2$  value was found to be .15 which is statistically significant ( $p < .05$ ).

Table 4.3 shows the finding for the relationships between the variables of age, gender, and marital status in relation to college GPA. This was performed in order to determine if the variables of age, gender, and marital status were shown to have a significant relationship with GPA at  $p < .05$ .

Table 4.3 Relationship of GPA in regards to Age, Gender, and Marital Status

	B	Std. Error	Beta	T	Sig.
(Constant)	1.50	.23		6.54	.000*
Age	.02	.01	.22	3.20	.002*
Gender	.42	.11	.21	3.64	.000*
Married	.21	.16	.09	1.35	.179
Divorced	-.27	.28	-.06	-.98	.330
Separated	.34	.46	.04	.75	.456

\*  $p < .05$

The results indicate that of the individual variables that age ( $p = .002$ ) and gender ( $p < .001$ ) are shown to have a significant relationship in regards to GPA at the .05 level. The status of married ( $p = .179$ ), divorced ( $p = .330$ ) and separated ( $p = .456$ ) are shown to hold no significant difference with the dependent variable of GPA.

## Research Question 2

The second research question addressed differences in the predictors of success between non-dislocated worker and dislocated workers. The variables of age and gender were compared within the groups of dislocated worker and non-dislocated worker through the use of a t-test.

Table 4.4 T-Test Comparison of the Variables of GPA and Age

	F	Sig.	T	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Diff.	Std. Diff
GPA	17.02	0.00	4.45	273	0.00*	.63	0.14
Age	3.45	0.06	5.78	273	0.00*	7.69	1.33

\*  $p < .05$

Table 4.4 indicates that there is a significant difference between dislocated and non-dislocated workers in both terms of age and GPA. Dislocated workers maintained a higher college GPA ( $M = 3.29$ ) [ $t(273) = 4.45, p < .001$ ] compared to the non-dislocated worker students ( $M = 2.66$ ). Dislocated workers are also older on average ( $M = 31.36$ ) than their non-dislocated worker counterparts ( $M = 23.67$ ) [ $t(273) = 5.99, p < .001$ ].

Table 4.5 shows the demographics of the variable gender with the non-dislocated worker and dislocated worker groups. Dislocated workers ( $n = 53$ ) and non-dislocated workers ( $n = 221$ ) were compared to determine gender percentages within each group.

Table 4.5 Summary Table Regarding the Gender Variable of Dislocated and Non-Dislocated Workers

Gender	Non-dislocated worker (n=221)	% Non-dislocated worker Student	Dislocated Worker (n=53)	% Dislocated Workers	Total	Total %
Male	91	41.18%	19	35.85%	110	40.15%
Female	130	58.82%	34	64.15%	164	59.85%
Total	221	100.00%	53	100.00%	274	100.00%

Non-dislocated worker students are more typically female ( $n = 130$ ) than male ( $n = 91$ ). Dislocated workers are similar to this in that females ( $n = 34$ ) outnumber their male counterparts ( $n = 19$ ).

In Table 4.6, a chi-square analysis was utilized between the dislocated and non-dislocated worker groups in regards to gender. As gender is a categorical variable, the chi-square was used to determine if male/female differed between dislocated and non-dislocated workers.

Table 4.6 Chi-Square Analysis Regarding the Gender Variable of Dislocated and Non-Dislocated Workers

	Value	Df	Asymp.Sig.(2-sided)	Exact Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (1-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	.505 <sup>a</sup>	1	.48		
Continuity Correction <sup>b</sup>	.308	1	.58		
Likelihood Ratio	.51	1	.48		
Fisher's Exact Test				.53	.29
Linear-by-Linear Association	.50	1	.48		
N of Valid Cases	274				

The results of the chi-square indicated there was no significant relationship between gender of dislocated/non-dislocated worker students [chi square ( $N=274$ ,  $df=1$ ) =.505,  $p=.48$ ].

Table 4.7 shows the demographics of the variable marital status with the dislocated and non-dislocated worker groups. Marital status was compared to determine the tendencies of the variable in dislocated and non-dislocated workers.



Table 4.7 Summary Table Regarding the Marital Status Variable of Dislocated and Non-Dislocated Workers

Mar Stat	Non-dislocated worker (n=221)	% Non-dislocated worker Student	Dislocated Worker (n=53)	% Dislocated Workers	Total	Total %
Single	178	80.54%	25	47.17%	203	74.09%
Married	29	13.12%	25	47.17%	54	19.71%
Divorced	12	5.43%	1	1.89%	13	4.74%
Separated	2	.90%	2	3.77%	4	1.46%
Total	221	99.99%	53	100.00%	274	100.00%

*Note.* Percentage totals may not equal 100.00 due to round off error

The group as a whole tends to be single ( $n=203$ ). The marital status of non-dislocated worker students tends to be single ( $n=178$ ) while dislocated workers tend to be equally single ( $n=25$ ) and married ( $n=25$ ).

Table 4.8 shows chi-square analysis was utilized between the dislocated and non-dislocated worker groups in regards to marital status. As marital status is a categorical variable, the chi-square was used to determine if marital status differed between dislocated and non-dislocated workers.

Table 4.8 Chi-Square Analysis Regarding the Marital Status Variable of Dislocated and Non-Dislocated Workers

	Value	Df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	35.35 <sup>a</sup>	3	.00*
Likelihood Ratio	30.66	3	.00*
Linear-by-Linear Association	13.42	1	.00*
N of Valid Cases	274		

\*  $p < .05$

There is a significant difference in marital status between non-dislocated worker and displaced worker students [chi square ( $N=274$ ,  $df=3$ ) 35.35,  $p < .001$ ]. The non-dislocated worker students are mostly single, whereas dislocated workers have a higher percentage of being married.

### Research Question 3

The third research question sought to quantify barriers and enhancements to academic success identified by dislocated workers. To facilitate the interpretation of the data, the responses were grouped into categories. The respondents were first asked to identify the goals they had set for themselves in regards to education at East Central Community College. The dislocated workers identified seven educational goals with 103 total responses. Table 4.9 provides a breakdown of responses ( $n=546$ ) to this question.

Table 4.9 Frequency Statistics on Dislocated Worker Perceived Educational Goals

Goals	# Responses	% of Dislocated Workers
Graduate	47	88.69%
Employment	14	26.42%
Quality of Life	14	26.42%
High Achiever	8	15.09%
Personal Business	7	13.21%
Personal Satisfaction	7	13.21%
Increase Education	6	11.32%

The highest response for both dislocated workers (88.69%) and non-dislocated worker students (78.28%) was to graduate with a diploma or certificate. A little more than 25% of the dislocated workers responded that employment (26.42%) and quality of life (26.42%) were goals they had set for themselves.

The respondents were then asked to identify factors which they felt helped in the accomplishment of these goals. The dislocated workers identified 10 factors with 93 total responses. Table 4.10 provides a display of the dislocated worker's identified factors and responses.

Table 4.10 Factors that Enhance Academic Success of Dislocated Workers

Enhancements	# Responses	% of Dislocated Workers
Family	28	52.83%
Financial Aid	24	45.28%
Self Discipline	16	30.19%
Instructors	11	20.75%
Economy	7	13.21%
Faith	3	5.66%
Age	1	1.89%
College Proximity	1	1.89%
Financial Security	1	1.89%
Friends	1	1.89%

Table 4.10 shows that dislocated workers identified family (52.83%) and financial aid (45.28%) as the two most frequent categories. While more than half reported that family was important to their academic success, the number of dislocated workers reporting that friends assisted them in obtaining their goals was relatively low (1.89%).

The final question of the survey sought to determine what perceived barriers the respondents saw to their academic goals. The dislocated workers identified 12 perceived barriers with 64 total responses. Table 4.11 provides shows the dislocated workers identified factors and responses.

Table 4.11 Factors that are Barriers to Academic Success of Dislocated Workers

Barriers	# Responses	% of Dislocated Workers
Finances	15	28.30%
Time Management	13	24.53%
No Barriers	12	22.64%
Family	7	13.21%
Transportation	4	7.55%
College Proximity	3	5.66%
Job	3	5.66%
Age	2	3.77%
No Response	2	3.77%
Instructors	1	1.89%
Medical	1	1.89%
Stress	1	1.89%

Table 4.11 showed that 28.30% of dislocated workers felt that finances were the largest barrier to their academic achievement with time management not far behind (24.53%). In addition, 22.64% of dislocated workers felt that no barriers were present in regards to the accomplishing of their educational goals. Dislocated workers reported ninety-four responses for items which were perceived to assist in the obtaining of the

reported educational goals. The number of responses dropped to sixty-four in regards to self-perceived barriers to the achievement of the self-stated goals.

### **Chapter Summary**

The findings in Chapter IV sought to determine if the variables of age, gender, marital status had an effect on the college GPA of dislocated workers enrolled in career-technical programs at a rural community college. In addition, the perceptions of both non-dislocated worker and dislocated worker students were gathered in relation of goals, enhancement, and barriers. Research question 1 utilized multiple regressions in order to determine if a relationship existed between the variables of age, gender, and marital status with the variable of GPA. Research question 2 used t-tests and chi-square analysis to determine if significant differences in GPA, age, gender, and marital status exist between non-dislocated worker students and dislocated workers. Research question 3 gathered responses from dislocated workers to identify perceived goals, enhancements, and barriers to academic success.

CHAPTER V  
SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

**Introduction**

In this chapter, the researcher reported the findings from the data collected and analyzed in this study. The response rate of the survey was provided and the results from the data analysis of three research questions were reported.

The purpose of this study was to examine the relationships between the variables of age, gender, and marital status in relation and college GPA of participants at a rural community college. The participants were dislocated workers and non dislocated workers enrolled in career-technical programs. Data collection was achieved through a survey distributed to first-semester students within a career-technical program at East Central Community College which is located in Decatur, MS. This college was chosen due to its membership in the Mississippi community college system and its willingness to implement measures to utilize the research to further enhance counseling of dislocated workers. Permission to use the instrument was granted by Dr. Phil A. Sutphin, President of ECCC, and Mr. Wayne Eason, Dean of Career-Technical Education.

A total of 275 questionnaires were administered to first semester students within twenty-one career-technical programs in a classroom setting as arranged by the career technical counselor with the instructors. Each program was administered the survey separately within a two week period in September 2009. The survey consisted of six

questions that were divided into three demographic questions and three open-ended questions. The survey was designed to answer the following research questions.

1. What are the predictors of academic success (GPA) among students in a career technical program?
2. Are there significant differences in GPA, age, gender, and marital status between non-dislocated worker students and dislocated workers?
3. What are the perceived barriers and enhancements to academic success among dislocated workers?

Of the 275 students administered a survey, only one respondent deferred participation in the study for a response rate of 99.64 %. A forced entry method was performed on the variables of age, gender, and marital status in order to determine if there existed a significant relationship between these and college GPAs. A t-test and chi-square analysis were performed on the variables to determine if there were significant differences in predictors between dislocated workers and non-dislocated worker students. The third research question was answered using descriptive frequencies to group and analyze dislocated workers perceived enhancements and barriers to success.

### **Results and Implications**

The researcher conducted the research by looking at the variables of age, gender, and marital status. A statistically significant difference was found with the variables of age, gender, and marital status ( $R^2 = .15$ ). Of the variables, age ( $p = .002$ ) and gender ( $p < .001$ ) were shown to have a significant relationship in regards to GPA at the .05 level.



Marital status itself was found to have an insignificant relationship with GPA as the status of married ( $p = .179$ ), divorced ( $p = .330$ ), and separated ( $p = .456$ ) were above the .05 level.

A t-test was performed to address the differences in the variables of age, gender, and marital status between non-dislocated worker and dislocated workers. Dislocated workers held a higher GPA (3.29) than non-dislocated worker students (2.66) and were also older, (31.36 to 23.67). Chi-square analysis identified that in terms of gender, females made up a larger percentage of both non-dislocated worker students and dislocated workers, but there was no significant difference found between the two groups ( $p = .48$ ). There was also determined to be a significant difference in marital status ( $p < .001$ ) between the groups. Non-dislocated worker students tended to be single whereas a higher percentage of dislocated workers are married.

By evaluating the frequencies of the categories developed for the qualitative questions, it was determined that graduation was the primary goal of dislocated workers. The categories of employment and quality of life were discussed by the dislocated worker usually in conjunction to the goal of graduation. A typical response from a dislocated worker read: "I want to graduate from ECCC so I can get a good job so I can better support my family." The self-perceived factors which dislocated workers felt assisted in the accomplishment of these goals were family and financial aid. Dislocated workers stated that the relationships with spouses, children, and parents were a positive influence in their pursuit of educational goals. Financial aid was credited mainly in the form of WIA assistance as an enabler to the completion of one's program. The primary barriers to success among dislocated workers came in the form of finances and time management.

Finances were discussed in terms of making house and car payments and monthly expenses while attending school. Dislocated workers stated that a lack of a steady income made it difficult to continue their studies. Dislocated workers also found that time management was an obstacle because in addition to the stress of home life and job insecurity, the balancing required of a full-time student can be difficult. No barriers were perceived by almost 25% of dislocated workers, which led the researcher to believe that many in this group have made the decision that they will complete their education no matter what barriers are faced.

The dislocated worker coordinator, ITA specialist, and career-technical counselor all have the initial encounter with the dislocated worker in an informal interview session. The quantitative data derived from the study provides the interviewer with data of the demographic predictors of success (age and gender) which can be analyzed prior to the actual interview being conducted. The age relationship can be related to expanded life experiences as well as an increased responsibility factor. This responsibility can come in the form of children, extended family, and financial obligations. These are factors which generally increase with age. Female students many times had more experience in juggling the responsibilities that have been put before them in terms of family and work. The programs that have a higher percentage of female students (e.g., Business Office Technology and Medical Office Technology) also offer more scheduling flexibility than some male dominated programs, allowing for the female student to create a class schedule which also fits within their family/life schedule. Per the survey, an individual who is older and female tends to have a higher college GPA. This data should not be used to suggest that success relies solely on these factors, only that dislocated workers

who fall into these categories tend to have a higher GPA. The factors of life responsibility and class flexibility should especially be looked at by the interviewer to determine if these variables hold any significance to the particular student.

In many situations, the dislocated worker arrives for the initial interview with little knowledge of the college experience. The dislocated worker has just been through the traumatic experience of job loss and arrives with the understanding that to become more employable, they must acquire a new skill set. The goals that they have set for themselves at this stage might only consist of returning to the workforce as soon as possible. The goals, barriers, and enhancements which were identified by the dislocated workers can be further developed into a mining narrative by which the interviewer may guide the dislocated worker in regards to educational goals. This narrative can begin by determining from the dislocated worker what his/her goals are for entering career-technical education. After learning these goals, the interviewer can then present additional goals that were determined from this study to assist the dislocated worker in determining if these goals apply to his/her situation. The dislocated worker might not have identified factors such as quality of life before they were presented, but this can be important when developing a personal educational plan for the dislocated worker. The field of study that the individual had first thought would be the best for his/her situation could change upon this possible expansion of goals. The previously desired profession might not have led to the salary desired by the dislocated worker and thus not to meeting the requirement of an increase in quality of life. In a similar fashion, potential enhancements and barriers may be explored by the interviewer in order to develop an intervention plan in regards to potential barriers to success. This holds true in many

respects in how goals can be applied to designing one's educational plan. The dislocated worker might not initially identify a lack of finances as a barrier but this should be a focal point in determining a plan of study. A person who is not financially stable would probably benefit from a one year certificate option instead of a two year degree in that this would allow the person to reenter the workforce in a more timely manner. The goals, barriers, and enhancements may be developed further into a survey to be administered to the dislocated worker. By presenting the dislocated worker with these factors, the dislocated worker will be able to identify factors which are pertinent to his/her personal situation. The primary objective behind each of these methods is to assist the dislocated worker in developing a plan that will create a successful learning environment.

### **Conclusion**

The findings from the study should prove beneficial to dislocated workers, dislocated worker coordinators, ITA specialists, and career-technical counselors. The research showed that while the variables of age and gender were determined to have a significant relationship with GPA; the variable of marital status did not. Dislocated workers as a group were found to be older, female, and possess a higher GPA than non dislocated workers. The primary goal of dislocated workers was to graduate from a particular field of study in order to gain employment and enhance their quality of life. Dislocated workers perceived assistance from family and financial aid as enhancements to reaching educational goals. They also faced barriers to their education in terms of financial stress and time management issues. With that said, 22.64% of this group did not feel that there were any barriers to their eventual success.

The variables of age and/or gender should be used to encourage those who fall within the success range and in no way to discourage those who do not. The self-perceived goals, enhancements, and barriers will provide the interviewer a reference to guide the session in order to cover any potential pitfalls before they occur. This survey provides a tool by which to assist dislocated workers and the individuals who assist in creating a successful learning environment. As a result of this study, it is determined that further research should be utilized to investigate the dislocated worker in regards to re-training at the community college.

### **Recommendations for Future Research**

There are several recommendations to be made for future research in regards to dislocated workers returning to the community college and enrolling in career-technical education. First, due to the small size of the study, the study should be expanded to include all Mississippi community and junior colleges. The findings from this study could thus be compared to those from a larger sample to create a more comprehensive list of goals, enhancements, and barriers to dislocated workers. The study itself could also be enlarged to cover other community college systems around the nation to determine if significant differences occur within systems and/or regions of the country. The justification for this is that there are many variances to be accounted for such as ethnicity, job clusters, and social norms that vary from region to region. Having this data would provide the ITA specialist, dislocated worker coordinator, and career-technical counselors with additional information by which to guide the dislocated worker in the development of an educational plan.

The study should furthermore address additional demographic and educational variables. These variables include number of children within household, previous educational experience, and program of study. This could be accomplished through the development of a Likert-scale survey which would enable the researcher to test multiple variables in terms of relationship to dislocated workers and college GPA. This information would be used to identify potential variables which might affect the educational outcome of dislocated workers.

In much the same way, further qualitative research should be done with dislocated workers to identify additional goals, enhancements, and barriers in regards to educational outcomes. This study should use open-ended interview questions by which the interviewer can further explore the responses with the dislocated worker in order to gain a greater understanding of the educational views of this group. Questions such as, “What are your feelings of being a dislocated worker entering into an educational setting” should provide information which would enhance our understanding of the dislocated worker as a student. This data would enhance the knowledge base of the interviewer in developing an educational plan for the dislocated worker.

Finally, an exit survey should be developed for dislocated workers upon the completion of his/her career-technical education. This survey would determine if there is any variance between the initial perceived enhancements/barriers of dislocated workers and those perceived upon completion. This would be done by developing the post-test in similar fashion to the initial survey and comparing the results of the dislocated worker. This study should also determine if there is a relationship with the identified variables and graduation/completion rates. This research would require the consent of the

dislocated worker in order to access college grades. This further research should enhance the knowledge base in regards to dislocated workers and give WIA and community college personnel data which can be used to assist the dislocated worker.

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APPENDIX A

REQUEST FOR DATA COLLECTION AND APPROVAL LETTER

April 17, 2009

Wayne Eason, Dean  
Career-Technical Instruction  
P.O. Box 129  
Decatur, MS 39327

Dear Mr. Eason,

I am currently a doctoral candidate of the Community College Leadership Doctoral Program at Mississippi State University. My dissertation research interest will examine the relationships of certain factors on student GPA and how they affect Dislocated Workers enrolled in Career-Technical programs. I will be surveying both Dislocated Workers and non-dislocated worker students enrolled in Career-Technical Programs at East Central Community College.

This letter is to respectfully ask your permission to conduct this research at East Central Community College. I will need a confirmation letter from you giving me permission to survey the Dislocated Workers and non-dislocated worker students. I assure you that the responses of all participants will remain anonymous.

If you have any further questions concerning this survey, please contact me at 601-635-6282 (office) or 601-416-3015 (cell) or by email at [bgregory@eccc.edu](mailto:bgregory@eccc.edu).

Sincerely,

J. Brent Gregory  
Dislocated Worker Coordinator/WIA  
P.O. Box 129  
Decatur, MS 39327  
Phone: 601-635-6282

April 17, 2009

Dr. Phil A. Sutphin, President  
East Central Community College  
P.O. Box 129  
Decatur, MS 39327

Dr. Sutphin,

I am currently a doctoral candidate of the Community College Leadership Doctoral Program at Mississippi State University. My dissertation research interest will examine the relationships of certain factors on student GPA and how they affect Dislocated Workers enrolled in Career-Technical programs. I will be surveying both Dislocated Workers and non-dislocated worker students enrolled in Career-Technical Programs at East Central Community College.

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Sincerely,

J. Brent Gregory  
Dislocated Worker Coordinator/WIA  
P.O. Box 129  
Decatur, MS 39327  
Phone: 601-635-6282

**EAST CENTRAL COMMUNITY COLLEGE**

**P.O. Box 129 Decatur, MS 39327**

**TELEPHONE 601-635-2111 EXT.210**

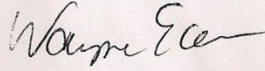
**TOLL FREE 1-877-GO-2-ECCC**

**Wayne Eason  
Dean of Career-Technical Instruction**

**Fax: (601-635-4022  
Email: weason@eccc.edu**

Mr. Gregory:

This letter is in response to your request to survey dislocated worker and traditional career-technical students at East Central Community College. I feel that this information would be very helpful to the career-technical department and extend permission to go forward with your research. If the counselor or myself can be of any assistance please let me know. Thank you.



Wayne Eason  
Dean of Career-Technical Instruction

## **EAST CENTRAL COMMUNITY COLLEGE**

P. O. BOX 129  
DECATUR, MISSISSIPPI 39327-0129  
Telephone: 601-635-6200

Fax: 601-635-4011  
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E-mail: psutphin@eccc.edu

OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT

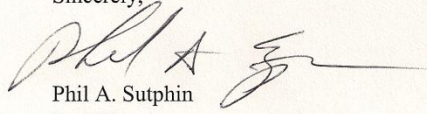
September 2, 2009

Mr. J. Brent Gregory  
Dislocated Worker Coordinator/WIA  
East Central Community College  
P.O. Box 129  
Decatur, MS, 39327

Dear Mr. Gregory:

You have the College's permission to conduct surveys of EC students in partial fulfillment of your dissertation requirements. This permission is granted based on the information contained in your letter of request to me dated, April 17, 2009.  
Good luck with your project.

Sincerely,



Phil A. Sutphin  
President

PAS/cg





APPENDIX B  
SURVEY INSTRUMENT

## Consent Form

**Title of Study:** Analysis of Factors Influencing Academic Success of Dislocated Workers at a Rural Community College

**Study Site:** East Central Community College

**Name of Researcher(s) & University affiliation:** James Brent Gregory  
(Mississippi State University)  
Dr. Ed Davis  
(Mississippi State University)

**What is the purpose of this research project?** The purpose of this study is to compare responses of non-dislocated worker students and dislocated workers in order to determine specific areas as predictors of academic success at East Central Community College.

**How will the research be conducted?**

The participant will complete a questionnaire which will take approximately 10 minutes to complete. The researcher requests your permission to access student records for the purpose of obtaining high school GPA, college GPA, and ACT score.

**Are there any risks or discomforts to me because of my participation?** None anticipated

**Does participation in this research provide any benefits to others or myself?** This research may benefit the college and future students by determining factors that might assist or hinder students in community colleges.

**Will this information be kept confidential?** The information gathered from this study will be kept confidential and will be destroyed at the completion of the research. Also, please note that these records will be held by a state entity and therefore are subject to disclosure if required by law.

**Who do I contact with research questions?** If you should have any questions about this research project, please feel free to contact James B. Gregory at 601-635-6282 or Dr. James Davis at 662-325-0944. For additional information regarding your rights as a research subject, please feel free to contact the MSU Regulatory Compliance Office at 662-325-3994.

**What if I do not want to participate?**

Please understand that your **participation is voluntary**, your **refusal to participate will involve no penalty or loss** of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled, and you **may discontinue your participation** at any time without penalty or loss of benefits.

By signing this form you are consenting to participate and allow the researcher to access your school records.

You will be given a copy of this form for your records.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Participant Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Investigator Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

## Demographic Questionnaire

1. What is your current age? \_\_\_\_\_
2. **Gender**  
Male \_\_\_\_\_  
Female \_\_\_\_\_
3. **Marital Status**  
Single \_\_\_\_\_  
Married \_\_\_\_\_  
Divorced \_\_\_\_\_  
Separated \_\_\_\_\_
4. **List any goals that you have set for yourself in regards to your education at East Central Community College.**
5. **List below any factors which you believe have helped you in accomplishing your goals as a student?**
6. **List below any factors which you believe have been a barrier in accomplishing your goals as a student?**

APPENDIX C  
IRB APPROVAL



# Mississippi State UNIVERSITY

Office of Regulatory Compliance  
Post Office Box 6223  
Mississippi State, MS 39762

Compliance Division  
Administrative Offices  
Animal Care and Use (IACUC)  
Human Research Protection  
Program (IRB)  
1207 Hwy 182 West  
Starkville, MS 39759  
(662) 325-3496 - fax

Safety Division  
Biosafety (IBC)  
Radiation Safety  
Hazardous Waste  
Chemical & Lab Safety  
70 Morgan Avenue  
Mississippi State, MS 39762  
(662) 325-8776 - fax

<http://www.orc.msstate.edu>  
[compliance@research.msstate.edu](mailto:compliance@research.msstate.edu)  
(662) 325-3294

May 29, 2009

J. Brent Gregory  
P. O. Box 851  
Decatur, MS 39327

RE: IRB Study #09-124: Analysis of Factors Influencing Academic Success of  
Dislocated Workers at a Rural Community College

Dear Mr. Gregory:

The above referenced project was reviewed and approved via administrative review on 5/29/2009 in accordance with 45 CFR 46.101(b)(2). Continuing review is not necessary for this project. However, any modification to the project must be reviewed and approved by the IRB prior to implementation. Any failure to adhere to the approved protocol could result in suspension or termination of your project. The IRB reserves the right, at anytime during the project period, to observe you and the additional researchers on this project.

**Please note that the MSU IRB is in the process of seeking accreditation for our human subjects protection program. As a result of these efforts, you will likely notice many changes in the IRB's policies and procedures in the coming months. These changes will be posted online at <http://www.orc.msstate.edu/human/aahrpp.php>. The first of these changes is the implementation of an approval stamp for consent forms. The approval stamp will assist in ensuring the IRB approved version of the consent form is used in the actual conduct of research. You must use copies of the stamped consent form for obtaining consent from participants.**

Please refer to your IRB number (#09-124) when contacting our office regarding this application.

Thank you for your cooperation and good luck to you in conducting this research project. If you have questions or concerns, please contact me at [cwilliams@research.msstate.edu](mailto:cwilliams@research.msstate.edu) or call 662-325-5220.

Sincerely,

Christine Williams  
IRB Compliance Administrator

cc: James Ed Davis