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## Postsecondary Transitions Of Mississippi Band Of Choctaw Indians Tribal Scholarship Program Students

Greg A. Carlyle

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POSTSECONDARY TRANSITIONS OF MISSISSIPPI BAND OF CHOCTAW  
INDIANS TRIBAL SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM STUDENTS

By

Gregory Alexander Carlyle

A Dissertation  
Submitted to the Faculty of  
Mississippi State University  
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements  
for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy  
in Educational Administration  
in the Department of Instructional Systems, Leadership, and Workforce Development

Mississippi State, Mississippi

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2007

POSTSECONDARY TRANSITIONS OF MISSISSIPPI BAND OF CHOCTAW  
INDIANS TRIBAL SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM STUDENTS

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CHOCTAW INDIANS TRIBAL SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM  
STUDENTS

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Candidate for Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

The purpose of this study was to explore the postsecondary education transition experiences of graduates of Choctaw Central High School (CCHS) who received support from the Tribal Scholarship Program (TSP) to better understand the barriers to successful postsecondary completion and the means to overcoming those barriers. Successful transitions are key for students to persist to academic completion. Studies show that American Indian students have low rates of college completion and experience a variety of factors attributed to withdrawal from college. This study provided insight into college success experienced by American Indian students and an understanding of the opportunities for a college education their scholarship program provides. Suggestions for improving the preparation of students and operation of the scholarship program are offered.

The participants in this study were CCHS graduates who received support from the TSP for postsecondary education. A case study with a survey component research design was used in this study. Data from a cross-sectional survey, interviews, and observations were collected. A total of 87 past and present TSP supported students participated as survey respondents. Purposeful sampling in the form of maximum variation was used to select 6 respondents for researcher conducted interviews.

The findings of this study documented four themes that characterized the transition experience of respondents to postsecondary education. Additionally, within these themes three general barriers to successful postsecondary completion were revealed. The general barriers included: (a) racial conflict with peers or faculty, (b) being overwhelmed academically, and (c) having to care for a legal dependent. The themes and barriers are discussed in the context of three primary factors related to postsecondary completion for American Indian students: sociocultural, academic, and personal factors.

Recommendations included: (a) assessing and addressing the unique needs of nontraditional students in the Tribal Scholarship program, (b) arranging for an after hour study and tutoring facility for Tribal Scholarship Program students who commute from the reservation to college, (c) beginning orientation to the Tribal Scholarship Program with 9<sup>th</sup> graders, (d) providing on-campus mentoring opportunities for Tribal Scholarship Program participants, and (e) expanding this research to public school graduates who participate in the Tribal Scholarship Program.

## DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this research to the memory of Herman Hall Carlyle and Edward Avery Buckner, Sr. The examples of each of these men have had a profound impact on my life choices. Although he passed away prior to my birth, my paternal grandfather Hall Carlyle inspired my desire to be an educator as he served with distinction in the province of Ontario, Canada both as a teacher and principal. Ed Buckner and I first met in Costa Rica, Central America and during that encounter he invited me to consider enrolling at Mississippi State University. Ed later welcomed me to Mississippi and into his family through marriage to his granddaughter.

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I wish to acknowledge the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians and the Tribal Scholarship Program for the opportunity to explore the experiences of Choctaw college students. Your support of education and those who pursue it is to be commended.

The author expresses his sincere gratitude and acknowledges the many people whose steadfast support helped make this dissertation a reality. I wish to thank Dr. R. Dwight Hare and Dr. Nicole Thompson for advice, constructive criticism, and support above and beyond the call of duty while co-directing my dissertation. They believed in the project and my ability to persist to completion. Expressed appreciation is also due to the other members of my dissertation committee, namely, Dr. Jerry Mathews, Dr. Vince McGrath, and Dr. Dan Stumpf for their direction and guidance. Nan Stamper and Morgan Ben offered invaluable insights and patience entertaining my questions. Terry Ben helped make possible my entry into the Ph.D. program. My wife Ann Marie gave much for this endeavor to materialize. My children, Alex, Andrew, and Emma Grace, your unyielding support is treasured. Bob and Sally Carlyle took thoughtful interest in this effort helping me to press on. And my wife's parents, Donald and Marybob Buckner's timely prayers and faithful encouragement are appreciated.



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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION AND LITERATURE REVIEW

Successful transitions to postsecondary education are key for students to persist to academic completion. However, studies show that American Indian (AI) students continue to have low rates of college completion (Benjamin, Chambers, & Reiterman, 1993; Jackson, Smith, & Hill, 2003). An extensive literature review report, standard documents, and national evaluations indicate that AI students experienced a variety of factors attributed to withdrawal from college (Demmert, 2001; Freeman & Fox, 2005; U.S. General Accounting Office, 2003). Meaningful support for AI students preparing for, and making the transition to postsecondary education are critical. The purpose of this study is to explore the postsecondary education transition experiences of graduates of the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians (MBCI) Choctaw Central High School (CCHS) who have received support from the Tribal Scholarship Program (TSP) to better understand the barriers to successful postsecondary completion and the means to overcoming those barriers.

The following chapter is presented in four sections; these are (a) literature review, (b) purpose of research, (c) research questions, and (d) justification of the study. The review of the literature will develop the rationale for this study.

## Literature Review

The National Center of Educational Statistics (NCES) recorded that in 2003 there were 4.4 million American Indian/Alaska Native (AI/AN) living in the United States, comprising 1.5% of the entire population (Freeman & Fox, 2005). This population is divided into more than 560 federally recognized tribes. As of the 2000 census, 25% of the AI/AN population lived on federal reservations and off-reservation trust lands (Freeman & Fox, 2005). In 2003, the national poverty rate for AI/AN families with children under 18 was 27%. This almost doubles the national average of 15% in this category. Freeman and Fox further documented that the 2003 AI/AN unemployment rate of 15% was 2.5 times greater than the general population's 6% unemployment rate. The median household income in 1990 was \$21,750 [or \$27,800 when expressed in constant 2003 dollars, Freeman & Fox] and 31% of all AI/AN lived below poverty level (Thomason, 1999). By 2003 the median household income for AI/AN increased to \$34,700. However, the median household income of the total population was \$43,500. Only Black and Hispanic households posted lower median household incomes, \$30,100 and \$33,900 respectively.

In 2002, 1% of the total college and university enrollment in the United States was AI/AN. This was an increase from the 1976 level of 0.7%. For AI/AN aged 25 and above in 2003, 22.8% had dropped out of high school, a high school diploma was the highest educational attainment for 35.2%, and 42% had pursued a college education. When compared with the total population, approximately 20% less AI/AN students went to college (Freeman & Fox, 2005).



Increasing the postsecondary academic achievement of AI/AN is a primary need for tribes to reach an effective level of economic self-determination. An indicator of the success of a group in transitioning to postsecondary education is college completion rates or persistence. Freeman and Fox (2005) explained that college completion rates are the measure used by the NCES to determine postsecondary academic achievement. The college completion rates of the total population, subdivided into the major race/ethnicity groups, are measured by degrees earned at the associate's, bachelors, masters, and doctoral levels. The five major race/ethnicity groups considered are: White, non-Hispanic; Black, non-Hispanic; Hispanic; Asian/Pacific Islander; and AI/AN. According to the NCES, Hispanic was the only group qualifying as an ethnicity.

For AI/AN who were 12<sup>th</sup> graders in 1992, the college completion rate in 2000 was lower than all other major race/ethnicity groups in the United States in almost every category. The exception being that a higher percentage (6.1%) of AI/AN students graduated with associate's degrees than Black, non-Hispanic students (4.9%). In 2000, 11% AI/AN students who were 12<sup>th</sup> graders in 1992 had a bachelor's degree as their highest degree and a further 2% had a graduate degree, whereas in the total population 31% had bachelor's degrees and 6% had graduate degrees as highest level of postsecondary attainment (Freeman & Fox, 2005). Therefore, in the context of the data analyzed, AI/AN students had a considerable achievement gap with the rest of the population being almost three times less likely to complete a bachelor's degree and three times less likely to earn a graduate degree.

As of 2003, Freeman and Fox (2005) found that "42% of American Indians/Alaska Natives [aged 25 and over] had attended at least some college" (p. 120).

Of this group the highest level of educational attainment was (refer to Table 1): 7% associate's degrees, 9% bachelor's degrees, and 4% graduate degrees. All educational attainment levels were lower than the total population results for each of the categories: 9% associate's degrees, 18% bachelor's degrees, and 9% graduate degrees. Again, an academic achievement gap was found to exist.

Table 1 College Attainment of American Indian/Alaskan Native Population Who Attended College Compared to Total Population for Persons 25 and Over as of 2003

Highest Attained Degree	American Indian/Alaskan Native	Total Population
Associate's of Arts	7%	9%
Bachelors	9%	18%
Graduate	16%	9%
Total	20%	36%

The total population earned 22% more associate's degrees, 50% more bachelors' degrees, and more than double the graduate degrees than AI/AN. Furthermore, when compared to the other major races and ethnic groups, AI/AN aged 25 and over, possessed more associate's degrees as highest education level than Hispanics (5.2%) and Asians/Pacific Islanders (6.8%). The AI/AN students earned the lowest percentage of bachelor and graduate degrees compared to the other major races and were marginally ahead of Hispanic postsecondary attainment in these categories. Additionally, in 2003 AI/AN aged 25 and over posted the lowest rates of postsecondary persistence with 52% not

completing college. This is 29% higher rate than was found for the total population. Thus, of the 42% AI/AN aged 25 and over who pursued postsecondary education at a college or university, over half of those did not graduate. However, Freeman and Fox noted that college and university graduation rates of AI/AN students more than doubled in each degree level from 1976-77 to 2002-03 school years.

Academic persistence of AI/AN students has increased markedly over the past 25 years, yet a gap remains when compared to the total population. With over 50% of AI/AN postsecondary students dropping out of college, it can be argued that this high level is related to difficulty transitioning to postsecondary education. This argument is further supported through the results of a longitudinal study of AI students. Benjamin et al. (1993) conducted a six year study of a cohort of 166 AI freshmen at a state university. They found that less than half (49%) returned to college for a second year. By the end of two years of college only 28% remained, and 25% continued after three years. The authors stated that 9% of the original cohort re-enrolled after stopping for at least one semester. Only 16% of the cohort persisted to graduation during the study period. In the total population (all ethnic groups) at the time, 40% of entering freshmen persisted to graduation. The findings of Benjamin et al. identified the first two years of college as the period of greatest drop out for the study cohort. Thus, a large majority of the study participants had difficulty transitioning to postsecondary education.

Like Benjamin et al. (1993) and Freeman and Fox (2005), Jackson et al. (2003) found a large disparity between the college completion rates of AI students and the total student population. Jackson et al. stated that AI students persist in postsecondary education

at significantly lower rates than the rest of the population. For example, in NCAA Division I schools the persistence rate for Native American students is about 54% after the first year. For the general population the persistence rate into the second year is 68% ... Accordingly, only 36% of Native American students graduated within 6 years of initial enrollment. Fifty-six percent of the total population graduates (*sic*) in the same period. (p. 548)

### **Factors related to college completion**

Academic persistence of AI students to complete a postsecondary education degree appears to be grounded in a number of factors. Three primary categories of factors identified by Jackson et al. (2003) were sociocultural, academic, and personal. Within each category there were tangible predictors of the academic success an AI student experienced at the postsecondary level.

In terms of sociocultural factors, Jackson et al. (2003) described a potential for AI students to feel isolated when they arrived on campus because of their perceptions that the dominant culture(s) represented were hostile to them. Those students, succumbing to that perception, allowed themselves to become marginalized within the general student population. Marginality can be considered “a disconnection or exclusion from mainstream groups/associations” (McGaha & Fitzpatrick, 2005, p. 289). Once marginalized, McGaha and Fitzpatrick found that students became disengaged with the education process, refused to seek campus support services, and often resolved to dropout. Willetto (1999) suggested factors that counter the onset of marginalization to include family influences such as parental education, the quality of a student’s relationship with their mother, and family adherence to traditional cultural practices. These factors indicated a student’s self-confidence, self-esteem, self-efficacy and cultural

identity which contributed to the AI student's commitment to academics and subsequent persistence to college completion (Demmert, 2001; Huffman, 2001; Willetto, 1999).

From the perspective of academic factors, postsecondary academic performance is positively linked to the rigor of the curriculum students were exposed to in high school. As the rigor of high school courses increased it led to an increased persistence in attaining a college degree (Demmert, 2001; Jackson et al. 2003; Larimore & McClellan, 2005; U.S. Department of Education, 2005; U.S. General Accounting Office, 2003).

According to Choy (2001),

the variable 'academic rigor' was created to reflect the following: the number of courses a student has completed in academic subjects in mathematics, science, English, social studies, and foreign language; the level or intensity of courses that students had taken in mathematics and science; and whether students had taken any honors or AP courses. (p. 32)

Benjamin et al. (1993) contended that 18 year-olds persisted better in college than mature students. Continuous full-time enrollment of high school graduates at the same postsecondary educational institution yielded a high rate of college completion for AI students (Demmert, 2001; Freeman & Fox, 2005; Huffman, 2001). Thus, mature students who earned a General Equivalency Degree (GED), transferred postsecondary schools, attended part-time and worked 20 or more hours a week were more likely not to persist to college completion.

Within the category of personal factors, personal determination, goal setting and academic aspirations were strongly associated with college completion of AI students (Demmert, 2001; Jackson et al., 2003). It was articulated by Benjamin et al. (1993) that "competency may be enhanced by a student's early personal commitment to schooling" and could be improved through early intervention. Hoover and Jacobs (1992) linked

successful goal setting and the development of realistic academic aspirations with effective career and guidance counseling at both the high school and college levels. They were concerned that AI students were not receiving appropriate access to such counseling. Once at college, the performance of tribal students was improved through relationships with approachable faculty advisors and mentors (McGaha & Fitzpatrick, 2005; Wilson, 1997). Seeking out mentors through local organizations, such as AISES (American Indian Science and Engineering Society) was advocated by Hoover and Jacobs. Students were encouraged in a caring manner and exposed to valuable study skills help (Demmert, 2001). In addition to the above, a considerable personal factor correlated to college was financial resources. Inadequate financial support was identified as a reason for AI students to withdraw from college (Huffman, 2001; Jackson & Smith, 2001; Jackson et al., 2003; Prescott & Simpson, 2004; Wilson, 1983; Yorke, 2000). Prescott and Simpson stated that student finances were one of Maslow's low level needs and must be met in order for higher order needs to emerge and be attended to. However, assuming reasonable financial support, Willetto (1999) learned in her analysis of 451 Navajo high school students that "socioeconomic origins do not affect school commitment" (p. 18). The U.S. General Accounting Office (2003) concurred with Willetto's finding and stated that, "After controlling for other factors, we [GAO] found that disadvantaged students were no less likely to complete a bachelor's degree than other students" (p. 3).

Tato (2006) conducted a dissertation of postsecondary experiences at Southwestern University involving a group of predominantly Navajo students. "Participants in this study had common experiences prior to entering college and used

similar strategies in overcoming obstacles as they transitioned from high school to college” (p. 185). Each of the students participated in the university’s Native American Success Program (NASP) and thus, had access to a similar resource network while at college. From her observations and interviews Tato developed a concept model of successful college experiences. The model suggests that successful AI college students know and do the following: (a) obtain prior knowledge of college, (b) know their purpose, (c) overcome institutional barriers, (d) use campus services, (e) use personal support mechanisms, (f) apply what was learned from past experiences, (g) share what they learned with peers. Thus, aspects from each of the three primary categories of factor referenced by Jackson et al. (2003) appear to be weaved together and interrelated for AI students who were successful and persisted in postsecondary education.

### **Bureau of Indian Affairs Schools**

In the 2002-03 school year, approximately 624,000 AI/AN students attended public elementary and secondary schools in the United States, and 46,785 more AI/AN students were enrolled in schools administered by or affiliated with the U.S. Department of Interior, Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) schools (U.S. Department of the Interior, 2003). BIA schools are operated either directly by the BIA or by tribes under a grant or contract with the BIA. The Office of Indian Education Programs (OIEP) has responsibility for the BIA schools.

The OIEP website indicated the 2006 responsibility of the office encompassed 130 elementary schools, 45 secondary schools, 10 dormitories and 27 tribal colleges. Of the 185 pre-Kindergarten through grade 12 programs, the BIA operated 63 and the

remaining 122 were contract or grant schools under the direction of local tribal governments. Overall organization of the schools was in the form of 24 regional Areas/Agencies each headed by an Education Line Officer (ELO). An ELO had line authority and supervised BIA-operated schools and provided technical assistance to the other schools. The majority of the schools (60%) enrolled 250 or less students. Funding for school operation was secured primarily through the Indian Student Equalization Program (ISEP). ISEP funds are assigned in accordance with the Code of Federal Regulations, Title 25, Chapter I, Part 39. The standard ISEP allotment per student was just under \$4,000 in the 2004-05 school year. Additional dollars were provided for students based on need eligibility such as special education, dormitory, and transportation (U.S. National Archives and Records Administration, 2005). Further, OIEP operated two colleges and provided grants to 25 tribally controlled colleges. Most of the colleges were located on remote reservations providing surrounding communities access to accredited two-year postsecondary educational programs. Thus, postsecondary educational advancement was made available to AI populations that previously had scant access to similar opportunities. The schools, dormitories and colleges are dispersed among 63 tribal reservations and 23 states. Some 238 tribes are represented in the OIEP served population.

According to the 2004-2005 OIEP, Bureau-Wide Annual Report Card, there were 185 elementary and secondary schools associated with the program with 47, 917 students being ISEP eligible. Approximately 55% of those students were Limited English Proficient (LEP) and 17% received Special Education (SPED) services. The overall high school graduation rate was 57% and the calculated high school dropout rate was just over



11%. Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP), under the federal No Child Left Behind Act, was attained by 51 of the schools. The remaining 134 schools were listed on varying degrees of school improvement status (U.S. Department of the Interior, 2005).

### **Choctaw Tribal School System**

Associated with the Southern and Eastern States Agency of the OIEP, the Choctaw Tribal Schools (CTS) System is spread over a four-county area in east central Mississippi. The CTS became a tribally operated BIA grant school system on July 1, 1989 following the negotiation by the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians (MBCI) government with the BIA to take local control of the six elementary schools, one middle school, and the high school. These schools served the six most populated tribal communities: Bogue Chitto, Conehatta, Pearl River, Red Water, Standing Pine, and Tucker. Whereas, the other two smaller and more remote communities, Bogue Homma and Crystal Ridge, generally sent their children to public schools. The high school and middle school, as well as one of the elementary schools, are located in the Pearl River community. Pearl River is the largest of the tribal communities, and high school eligible students from the other communities are sent there. Middle school and high school students can elect to reside during the week in the dormitory located on the high school campus. Ferrara (1998) noted that the total CTS enrollment of over 1700 students made the CTS the largest BIA contract school system in the country.

During the 2004-2005 school year, Choctaw Central High School (CCHS) of the CTS had an enrollment of 549 ISEP eligible students. Just over 81% (447) of the students were LEP and 23% received SPED services. The graduation rate was 96% and

the high school dropout rate listed as 1.23%. Thus, the graduation rate was 75% higher when compared to all BIA high schools and the dropout rate was 1/9 of the national BIA rate. In the 2004-2005 the six elementary schools met the AYP requirement whereas the middle school and high school did not.

Choctaws in Mississippi opened their first schools in 1819 with the assistance of Presbyterian church affiliated American Board of Commissioners to Foreign Missions. There were 30 schools in the Choctaw system by 1830. In 1825 the Mississippi Choctaw established a higher education school in Scott County, Kentucky. By 1830 many considered the Choctaws to possess the best education system in the South (Ferrara, 1998; Fortune, 1985). However, the Treaty of Dancing Rabbit Creek of 1830 deferred the education of Mississippi Choctaws to the federal government. According to Ferrara, this Treaty resulted in drastic decline in the education process for Choctaws,

by 1971, after 140 years of dependence on the Federal government, Choctaw educational accomplishment was dismal. At that point, there had been only 290 high school graduates and 22 college graduates in the tribe's history. About one fourth of the tribe's adults had less than three years of schooling, and many adults were unable to speak, read or write English. (p. 92)

Fortune (1986, 1990, 1997) conducted a series of demographic surveys of the MBCI over the past three decades, they serve as the source of the following data. The MBCI has grown from a tribal reservation based population of 4361 in 1981 to 5790 in 1997. The unemployment rate was reduced from 34.6% in 1981 to 14.6% in 1997. Per capita income of tribal members living on reservation has increased from \$1,826 to \$8,141 from 1981 to 1997. The average household income has increased from the 1981 level of \$9,680 to the \$23,720 in 1997. The overall education level was at an all-time high in 1997. In 1981 the median education level of the reservation population was the

6<sup>th</sup> grade. By 1990 the median education level had risen to 11<sup>th</sup> grade. Less than 22% of the total Tribal population had less than an 8<sup>th</sup> grade population by 1997 compared to 30% in 1990. Ferrara (1998) indicated that as of 1998 the tribe had 122 college graduates and 300 members attending college or university.

### **The Tribal Scholarship Program**

The Choctaw Tribal Scholarship Program (TSP) was established in the fall of 1994. It was designed to provide enrolled members of the MBCI improved access to and support during a postsecondary education at an accredited higher educational institution of their choosing and essentially extinguish the financial factor associated with lower college completion rates. In the November, 2002 issue of the Choctaw Community News, the MBCI Tribal Chief said, “high school graduates from the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians can attend any college [or university] they choose, and the tribe pays for everything not covered by financial aid” (“USM, Choctaws sign enrollment agreement,” 2002). The data contained here-in-after about the TSP were obtained through a series of personal communications in the winter of 2006 with the TSP Scholarship Officer.

Through the fall of 2005, from 1845 applications, 1519 enrolled tribal members had been awarded funding for one or more postsecondary courses since the creation of the TSP. Of the 1519 funded tribal members, 897 were funded for at least one semester as full-time students and 622 received funding as part-time students only. Of the 880 CCHS graduates who have applied to the TSP since its inception, 756 obtained funding. CCHS graduates represent 49.8% of the students funded and supported by the TSP. In the first 11 years of the TSP’s existence, 376 individuals had earned a certificate or a

degree and another 90 students earned multiple certificates or degrees. Thus, a total of 466 students have completed postsecondary programs with the support of the TSP.

In the fall of 2000, the TSP supported 324 students. These students attended postsecondary educational institutions in Mississippi and 16 other states. Of these 324 students, 198 were enrolled full-time and 126 were part-time. TSP documents show enrollment numbers to be 325 for spring 2001 (191 full-time and 134 part-time) and 105 in the 2001 Summer session. During the 2000-2001 school year, 47 students completed an educational program: 21 Associate of Arts/ Associate of Applied Science, 20 Bachelor of Science/Bachelor of Arts, 3 graduate (including 1 law degree), and 3 certificates.

Enrollment in the TSP has increased, peaking at 517 (337 full-time and 180 part-time) students for the fall semester 2004. In the spring of 2005, 482 students participated. Data from the TSP indicate that the total enrollment for the 2004-2005 school year was 621 students. For fall semester 2005, enrollment decreased to 409 (269 full-time and 140 part-time). TSP staff attributes the decrease to the strict adherence by staff to policy deadline dates. That is, some applications were not submitted until after the deadline, which means they cannot be considered until the next academic semester.

Currently the TSP consists of five staff members. The TSP is under the direction of the Scholarship Officer and the services of a Scholarship Assistant (education counselor), a data entry specialist, a receptionist and, a secretary. The staff is actively involved in each aspect of an applicant's enrollment process and the subsequent needs of a Tribal Scholarship recipient.

Prior to the TSP, members of the MBCI pursuing a postsecondary education were dependent on supplemental grant funding. The Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) Higher

ED grants were a primary source. These grants continue to be available to American Indian students who are at least a 25% Indian blood descendent of a member of an eligible federally recognized American Indian tribe and have been accepted at a nationally accredited postsecondary institution that confers Associate of Arts or Bachelors degrees (Office of Indian Education Programs, Higher Ed, n.d.). Higher ED grant funding is based on strict financial guidelines and allows access to out-of-state colleges and universities only when the degreeed program is not available in the student's state of residence (N. Stamper, personal communication, February, 2006).

Unlike the BIA Higher ED supplemental grants, MBCI tribal scholarships are not income based. Instead, access to the TSP is available to all enrolled members of the MBCI who complete the program's application process, apply for financial aid, provide a letter of acceptance from an accredited postsecondary educational institution, and maintain a Grade Point Average (GPA) of 2.0 or above. Students have the option to seek enrollment either on a full-time or part-time basis. According to the TSP Scholarship Officer, the Financial Aid Office at the postsecondary school of the student's choice provides the TSP with documentation regarding the student's expenses, the available financial resources of the student and their family, and financial aid. The student's expenses are calculated by the Financial Aid Office in the form of the school's Title IV Cost of Attendance (COA) statement.

The Title IV program includes the federal financial aid budget used to award all federal loans, grants, and scholarships. Established by each individual postsecondary educational institution by following federal law and guidelines, the Title IV COA is the total amount it should cost a student to attend a specific institution and it is expressed as

an academic year figure (includes fall, winter, and spring). The U.S. Department of Education (2006) explained the scope of COA as follows:

The COA covers tuition and fees; on-campus room and board (or a housing and food allowance for off-campus students), books, supplies, transportation, loan fees, and, if applicable, dependent care. It also includes miscellaneous and personal expenses, including an allowance for the rental or purchase of a personal computer. Costs related to disability are also covered. The COA includes reasonable costs for eligible study-abroad programs as well. For students attending less than half-time, the COA includes only tuition and fees and an allowance for books, supplies, transportation and dependent care expenses. (p. 35)

This budget is the maximum that the Financial Aid Office at a specific school uses to award all types of financial aid. Additionally, most schools establish a different COA for students who reside 'On-Campus', 'Off-Campus' (self-supporting), and 'With-Parents,' which means that budgets may vary for students at the same institution (N. Stamper, personal communication, March 22, 2006).

To calculate the Tribal Scholarship to be awarded, the TSP office finds the difference between the amount of financial aid received and the Title IV COA. To make these determinations, the TSP office requests that the financial aid office of the postsecondary educational institution that a MBCI student has applied to complete the MBCI Scholarship Office Financial Aid Package Form. This form contains three sections used for determining student financial need: Title IV COA, EFC (Expected Family Contribution), and Financial Aid. For example, at a particular Mississippi university, the university's Financial Aid Office calculated the Title IV COA for the 2005 – 2006 school year for a certain MBCI dependent, off-campus, full-time student as \$13,929. The itemized breakdown was as follows: Tuition = \$4,312; Books and fees = \$900; Room = \$ 2,824; Meals = \$3,035; Travel = \$1030; Miscellaneous and Other = \$1,828. In

the EFC section, no parent or spouse contributions were registered and a student contribution of \$617 was listed. The financial aid section noted a Pell Grant for \$3400. Therefore, \$9,912 in COA expenses was eligible for coverage by the TSP. Furthermore, the General Information Sheet of the TSP office indicates that a student pursuing TSP sponsorship must apply for assistance with other tribal programs such as the Higher Education Program, Employment Assistance Program, Vocational Education Program, Vocational Rehabilitation Program, and the Employment and Training Program. The TSP staff refers students eligible for these alternate tribal funding sources to the appropriate program. The programs listed above are primarily for prospective students interested in pursuing a Vocational or Technical degree or certificate. Any funding secured from these sources is considered in the final calculation of the TSP award.

Once enrolled in the TSP, the student continues to receive support from the TSP staff. Besides monetary assistance, the TSP provides students with pre-college counseling, help in selecting a college and major, information about campus life, and guidance in completing admission, housing, and financial aid applications. The TSP staff interacts with financial aid offices to maximize the financial aid package available to a student. Staff also coordinate campus tours, visit enrolled students on campus, arrange for tutoring services as needed, and monitor student progress through college administrators and faculty.

Continued enrollment in the TSP is dependent on the maintenance of a GPA of 2.0 or higher. A student falling short of this standard is placed on probation for a semester. The cumulative GPA at the end of the next semester needs to return to 2.0 or above, otherwise the student is suspended from the TSP until a 2.0 is regained. Thus,

once suspended, the student becomes reliant on funding sources outside the TSP to continue in school.

### **Purpose of Research**

A higher percentage of American Indian students do not persist to postsecondary graduation when compared to each of the other major racial groups in the United States. More than half of the American Indian students dropped out of their programs of study in post-secondary institutions and the vast majority of those within the first two years of study. These first two years of study represent the transition period to a postsecondary education. Financial resource related concerns were one of the major barriers identified in the research. The TSP should extinguish the financial barrier for enrolled members of the MBCI. The purpose of this case study with a survey component is to explore the postsecondary education transition experiences of graduates of CCHS who have received support from the TSP to understand better the barriers to successful postsecondary completion and the means of overcoming those barriers.

### **Research Questions**

The following research questions were addressed in this study.

1. How do Choctaw Central High School (CCHS) graduates who participate in the Tribal Scholarship Program describe their transition to postsecondary education?
2. Why are some CCHS graduates more successful in completing postsecondary educational goals?



## Justification of the Study

While several barriers to postsecondary success for AI students were identified and some solutions to overcoming those barriers put forward, the researcher discovered few qualitative studies have been conducted on the phenomenon. Of the qualitative research done in the area, most of that research focused on AI students that successfully transitioned to postsecondary education. In addition, there has been no qualitative research discovered that was conducted on students participating in the TSP of the MBCI. Results of this study may assist MBCI administrators, educators, and TSP employees to more effectively support students that participate in the TSP.

Researchers have recognized that much of the prior research on AI student transition to and success in postsecondary education was limited by the use of existing models, instruments, and surveys (Benjamin, Chambers, & Reiterman, 1993; Brown & Kurpius, 1997; Jackson & Smith, 2001; McClellan & Tippeconnic Fox, 2005). Jackson and Smith (2001) observed that the understanding of American Indian transition experience to postsecondary education would benefit from future research that used qualitative interviews. Watson (2006) concurred and added that future qualitative studies “should focus on understanding the unique, personal experiences of Native American students” (p. 20). This study seeks to add to the existing literature regarding how and why American Indian students successfully transition to postsecondary education. In particular, this study is needed to determine the nature of a TSP student’s transition experience and identify strategies that could more effectively prepare future TSP students for successful transition to postsecondary education. And it is hoped the findings regarding the TSP student’s transition experiences may provide beneficial insights for

AI/AN students of other tribal heritage in their college transition as well as help postsecondary institutions enhance the support they provide AI/AN students in successfully transitioning to their campus.

### **Definition of Terms**

For the purpose of this study, the following operational definitions will be used:

Academic rigor: The operational definition for this term will be in accordance with Choy (2001),

the variable ‘academic rigor’ was created to reflect the following: the number of courses a student has completed in academic subjects in mathematics, science, English, social studies, and foreign language; the level or intensity of courses that students had taken in mathematics and science; and whether students had taken any honors or AP courses. (p. 32)

American Indian/Alaska Native: Will be considered following the operational definition used by the U.S. Department of the Interior (1999), Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA), which reads as anyone who is an enrolled member of a federally recognized tribe. Through the BIA’s acknowledgment process, tribal groups may be given federal recognition as Indian tribes, making their members eligible to receive services provided to Indians. Members of federally recognized Tribes, therefore, do not include all persons who may self-identify themselves as an American Indian or Alaska Native.

Enrolled member of the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians: The membership of the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians (MBCI), as stated under Article III of the MBCI’s Tribal Constitution & Bylaws (n.d.),

shall consist of:

(a)

All Choctaw Indians of one-half or more Choctaw blood, resident in Mississippi, January 1, 1940, as shown by the census roll maintained by the Bureau of Indian Affairs at the Choctaw Agency, provided that the tribal council shall have the power to revise said rolls, with the approval of the Secretary of the Interior at any time.

(b)

Any child of one-half or more Choctaw blood born to any enrolled member of the band after January 1, 1940, shall be entitled to membership. (p.2)

An officially enrolled member of the MBCI has a Certificate of Degree of Indian Blood (CDIB) indicating degree of Mississippi Choctaw Indian blood and census roll number.

## CHAPTER II

### METHOD

#### **Research Design**

This case study with a survey component described the transition experience to postsecondary education of CCHS graduates who received support from the TSP. Creswell (2003) observed that all research methods have limitations and thus, the use of multiple methods could provide convergence whereby each method validates and enhances the findings of the other method. Yin (1994) stated that studies may benefit by integrating case study and survey evidence as “the case study sites can allow some insight into the causal processes, whereas the survey sites can provide some indication of prevalence of the phenomenon” (p. 86).

A case study allows for a phenomenon to be studied in which the researcher has limited or no control over a set of events or program (Merriam, 1998). The researcher is enabled to examine “how” and “why” questions (Yin, 1994) to discern “context characteristics that will shed light on an issue or object” (Sanders, 1981, p. 44). In a single case study, multiple sources of information are used, including observations, interviewing and document analysis. Patton (1990) and Yin (1994) indicated that using multiple sources of data allows for the validation of findings. This data triangulation enhances both the validity of the study and convergence of evidence supporting the

emerging reality. According to Yin (1994) a survey of the study population provides a data source for determining convergence with data from interviews, as well as potential interview participants. Therefore, to more fully understand the transition of CCHS graduates receiving support from the TSP, a case study design with a survey component was selected for this study.

A preliminary survey was developed and administered as a pilot study. Then, in following a technique described by Erlandson, Harris, Skipper, and Allen (1993), the survey of the TPS study population was conducted. Based on the survey responses, the participants to be interviewed were selected. The selection of interview participants involved a consistent process that ensured maximum variation. The interviews were then performed.

### **Research Participants**

An attempt to survey the entire population was made for this study. The population was defined as CCHS graduates who received support from the TSP for postsecondary education pursuits, as a full-time or part-time student, for a minimum of two consecutive semesters from the fall semester of 1994 to the spring semester of 2005. According to the TSP office, approximately 800 individuals composed this population. Addresses were provided for 780 individuals that met the definition and a survey was mailed to each address.

Purposeful sampling was applied to the respondents of the survey to determine who was interviewed. Merriam (1998) described purposeful sampling as a non-probability sampling type that is used in qualitative research methods and case studies in

particular. Purposeful sampling, as stated by Patton (1990), is used “to select information-rich cases whose study will illuminate the questions under study” (p. 169).

Merriam (1998) identified six types of purposeful sampling: typical case sampling, extreme or deviant case sampling, homogeneous sampling, maximum variation sampling, snowball sampling, and convenience sampling. Maximum variation sampling was used to select interview participants from the survey respondents because it allows the diversity of the population to be reflected. Glesne (1999) indicated that with maximum variation sampling the researcher looks for common patterns that exist in the variations identified in participants. There were 9 survey respondents selected to be interviewed. Candidates for the interview were respondents that represented a maximum variation in responses. Thus, the interviewed respondents allowed for “the effective collection of rich data that generate alternative hypotheses and provide the basis for shared constructions of reality” (Erlandson et al., 1993, p. 114).

### **Data Collection Procedures**

To conduct this case study with a survey component, several data collection techniques were used. Prior to any data collection, written consent to access the site was obtained from the Office of the Chief of the MBCI. A brief proposal providing an overview of the study was submitted for approval by the Chief. Bogdan and Biklen (1992) suggested that answers to the following questions should be advanced in such a proposal:

- Why was the site chosen for the study?
- What activities will occur at the site during the research study?

- Will the study be disruptive?
- How will the results be reported?
- What will the “gatekeeper” gain from the study?

Details explaining the provision of necessary confidentiality of participants were included. Next, an application for conducting this research study was submitted to the Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects in Research (IRB) of Mississippi State University for approval. Upon IRB approval (refer to Appendix B) a preliminary survey was administered as a pilot study.

Several changes to the preliminary survey instrument were made as a result of feedback from the pilot study participants. These changes were submitted to the IRB in the form of a Procedural Modification/Addendum Request and subsequently approved (see Appendix C). The modified preliminary survey became the survey instrument used for this study (see Appendix D).

Yin (1994) asserted that a survey instrument can actually be considered a type of interview and can be part of the data collection resources in a case study. While the survey provided demographic information, it also served two other functions. First, the survey illuminated various perspectives on how CCHS graduates who participate in the TSP describe their transition to postsecondary education and thus, informed the researcher of some items to be included in the interview protocol. Second, responses to the survey identified potential interview candidates with maximum variation.

A cross-sectional survey was developed for this research and mailed to the population of CCHS graduates who have received support from the TSP. Cross-sectional surveys are designed to collect data “at one point in time” as opposed to longitudinal

surveys that collect data “over time” (Creswell, 2003, p. 155). A cover letter served as the opening section of the survey. This letter summarized the purpose of the study and provided an area for the participant to indicate informed consent to participate in the survey and interview components of this study. Items dealing with demographics, attitudes, behavior, and facts related to the research questions made up the body of the survey (refer to Appendix D).

The content of the items included in the survey were determined by the researcher with insight gained through personal communications with the following: members of the TSP staff, the Principal of CCHS, a Tribal education planner, the Director of Schools (the Choctaw Tribal Schools equivalent to a public school district superintendent), the Assistant Director of Schools, and the CCHS UB staff as well as through feedback from the pilot study participants. An interview protocol was developed by the researcher and used to guide the interviews. Members of the TSP were consulted informally after the participant surveys and interviews were completed to clarify some issues raised by the respondents who were interviewed.

A limited multi-step administration of the mailed survey was employed to yield an enhanced response rate. Salant and Dillman (1994) advocated a four-phase process. This four phase process was used as a model and adaptations were made to it due to a combination of limited financial resources and to respect the decision of the TSP not to reveal the names and addresses of the target population and to assist with one mail out. Phase one of Salant and Dillman’s model advocated a brief advance-notice letter to the case study population. Being limited to one mail out it was decided by the researcher to forego this first phase. Thus, the process was started at the second phase. A mail out was



prepared. The mail out included: two letters of consent (one to be completed and returned with the survey and one as a file copy for the respondent), the IRB approved survey, and a pre-posted & addressed return envelope. Respondents were asked to complete and return the survey within two weeks. In lieu of an additional mail out, the TSP staff and the researcher contacted members of the research population by phone and in person to request participation in the survey. The original deadline for the return of the mail out materials was extended to accommodate this follow-up process. A second set, and in several cases a third set, of the mail out materials were hand issued to those who indicated through these contacts that they were interested in participating in the research study yet had misplaced the research materials. Multiple follow-up contacts were made as necessary to secure the completed mail out materials from these participants. These multiple-contacts served as a substitute for Salant and Dillman's fourth phase of mailing the survey instrument to non-respondents. Four additional weeks were allowed for collection of surveys from the phone and personal contact follow-up and any residual returns from the original survey mailing. Thus, the target population was given more than six weeks to submit responses to the survey.

The returned surveys were analyzed for common patterns that existed in the variations identified by participants. Nine survey respondents who reflected maximum variation were selected to be interviewed. Patterns in the variations identified by participants were used to generate the interview protocol.

Of the nine, 2 respondents requested not to be interviewed and a third had to cancel interview appointments on several occasions and an interview was not conducted. An interview with each of the remaining 6 selected survey respondents was conducted.

All of the respondents interviewed were in general proximity of Choctaw, MS at the time of the interviews allowing for all the interviews to be conducted in person.

All of the post-survey interviews were audiotaped and transcribed. Patton (1990) stated that, “because the raw data of interviews are quotations, the most desirable data to obtain would be full transcription of interviews” (p. 349). The transcriptions were numbered by page for reference. The resulting transcribed documents were saved on a computer hard drive, a back-up placed on a jump drive, and a hard copy printed. Each transcribed interview was reviewed, evaluated for clarity, and analyzed to determine topics requiring further probing in other respondent interviews. No follow up interviews were determined necessary to be conducted. The exception was a clarification phone call to respondent #37 to verify the meaning of some information shared in the interview. All respondents were referred to by a respondent number and all names stated by them were given pseudonyms to keep their identities confidential.

Multiple observations of the TSP staff were conducted. Three separate observations, lasting about an hour, were conducted with TSP staff as they interacted with groups of students about the TSP program on different work days. In addition, offsite observations of TSP staff interacting with current high school students were conducted. The researcher took the role of a complete observer. This allowed the researcher to “record information as it is revealed” (Creswell, 2003, p. 186). Written descriptive and reflective field notes were recorded. Personal communications with members of the TSP office staff were conducted offering the opportunity to probe further into revealed realities and verify the face and content validity of observations through

informal questioning. In particular detailed questions to verify policy and procedure regarding the implementation of the program were posed.

Relevant documents were collected throughout the course of the research study. A variety of public and private documents were sought. Such documents included, official TSP reports, *TSP Policies and Procedures Handbook*, *TSP Student Handbooks* (old and the April 11, 2006 Tribal Council approved revision) and newspaper clippings. The process of document collection and subsequent analysis was used to reveal further constructs about the transition to postsecondary education of CCHS graduates who participated in the TSP.

The research processes of surveying, interviews, observations, and document analysis were ongoing and interconnected. All data was analyzed.

### **The Researcher**

As noted by Merriam (1998), the researcher is an instrument of the research. The quality of the research is determined by the quality of the researcher. In case study research, the quality of the researcher is enhanced by ongoing and close contact with the participants.

My association with the MBCI, and the Choctaw Tribal Schools in particular, began in August 1995 when I started teaching General Science and Biology classes at Choctaw Central High School (CCHS) (see Researcher's Vitae in Appendix A). For the following three years, I continued my teaching duties, adding Spanish instruction in the 1996-97 school year, and then increased responsibilities further for the 1997-1999 school years by coordinating the Tribe's NASA (National Aeronautic and Space Administration)

Educator Resource Center (ERC). The MBCI houses the ERC in the CCHS library complex. As the NASA ERC Coordinator, I made presentations about outer space and related science and technology to student and community groups throughout the Choctaw Tribal School District and surrounding areas. The combination of teaching and community outreach has helped me to establish a professional relationship with students who are now graduates of CCHS and with a number of Tribal community members. Several members of each of these groups have received funding from the TSP.

I became Assistant Principal of Pearl River Elementary School in August 1999. The following school year, 2000-2001, I assumed the position of Principal and remained in that capacity until August, 2006. Pearl River Elementary School, one of the eight schools of the MBCI, is a pre-K through sixth grade school that serves more than 440 students. A number of parents and guardians of Pearl River Elementary students are graduates of CCHS and have received funding from the TSP.

At the beginning of the 2006-2007 school year and following the approval of my dissertation proposal, I became the Principal of CCHS and remain in that position. Four of the Tribal elementary schools along with Choctaw Central Middle School (CCMS) house 8<sup>th</sup> grade programs and act as feeder schools for CCHS. The student population at CCHS at the end of the 2006-07 school year was 460 with a graduation class of 75.

Further enhancing my professional relationship with CCHS students, with CCHS graduates and with other participants in the TSP, has been my experience serving as an Upward Bound (UB) program tutor, an ACT workshop presenter, and an academic tutor for individual TSP students over the past 11 years. The UB program is a high school grant based program designed to help qualifying students achieve a postsecondary

education. Academic tutoring is one of the services available to TSP participants. Thus, for nearly 11 years I have developed quality professional relationships with numerous CCHS graduates who are TSP participants and with the TSP staff.

### **Data Analysis**

Merriam (1998) suggested that “the right way to analyze data in a qualitative study is to do it simultaneously with data collection” (p.162). She contended that data analyzed during the collection process is “both parsimonious and illuminating” (p. 162). Thus, analyzing the data as it is collected guides the direction of the study and will help in narrowing the focus. Further, “conveying an understanding of the case is the paramount consideration in analyzing the data” (p.193).

Data analysis was conducted according to methods described by Creswell (2003), Patton (1990) and Yin (1994). Creswell (2003) stated that “the process of data analysis involves making sense out of text and image data” (p. 190). To make sense out of the data, Patton (1990) offered a general three step process for framing data analysis. Step one consists of assembling the raw data. Step two seeks to establish a case record and will involve a coding approach. And step three is the writing of the study narrative. Creswell (2003) and Yin (1994) followed similar descriptive processes that allow the steps to be broken down into the following:

- Organize and prepare data
- Read through all data and get a general sense of overall meaning
- Begin detailed analysis with coding process to sort data
- Identify patterns

- Use coding and patterning processes to generate a description of program, people, and categories
- Make inferences in the form of a narrative
- Interpretation of the data/development of a theory

As data became available through each phase of data collection (surveys, interviews, observations and document analysis), I organized and prepared the raw data for use. This included the grouping of responses from the survey, transcribing the interviews, typing field notes, and sorting data into different types (Creswell, 2003). Yin (1994) called this organized material the case study database.

To develop the case study database of the survey respondents, a detailed descriptive rendering of each respondent was developed and inputted into an Excel spreadsheet. This allowed for the identification and grouping of common patterns that exist in the variations identified by respondents. A coding process was applied to identify those existing patterns. Nine survey respondents that represented maximum variation of the identified response patterns were selected as interview participants. Of those 9, 6 respondents were interviewed. In addition, information about the numbers and percentages describing the respondents and non-respondents was presented in a series of tables (Creswell, 2003). The case study database was added to during subsequent phases of data collection.

This case study database was read through and I developed a general sense of the information attempting to derive its overall meaning. Margin notes and recording my thoughts about these meanings were part of the process. Next, a detailed analysis using a coding process was conducted. Color coded key words or coding abbreviations in the

margins of printed survey data and transcribed interviews was used. Creswell (2003) described coding as organizing material into “chunks” prior to giving meaning to those “chunks”. Thus, the data is put into categories. The categories were organized in a list allowing me to effectively track the categories and identify any other emerging categories. I used these categories to illuminate patterns and themes that were found in the postsecondary education transition experiences of CCHS graduates who participated in the TSP.

Yin (1994) suggested the use of three types of pattern matching logic: nonequivalent dependent variable as a pattern, rival explanations as patterns, and simple patterns. I used a combination of types of pattern matching logic to organize the coded data into patterns. Dependent on the nature of the data, one type of pattern matching logic was found to dominate components of the data analysis process. As a result, I was enabled to establish a small number of main categories that addressed my research questions. These main categories became the major findings of my study. The categories reflected the diversity of the population studied.

In addition, the interconnection of these categories was analyzed (Creswell, 2003). A detailed description of these categories and interconnections were recorded in a descriptive narrative. Finally, I concluded the data analysis with an interpretation of the data. Here a theory regarding the transition to postsecondary education of the CCHS graduates in the TSP developed. Questions to be considered in future research were suggested.

## CHAPTER III

### FINDINGS

This chapter presents the findings of the research. First, descriptive statistics from the returned surveys are presented and then each research question is addressed. The chapter concludes with a summary of the findings.

#### **Descriptive Statistics of Demographic Variables**

The survey was completed and returned by 89 individuals. Two of the 89 respondents indicated they did not graduate from Choctaw Central High School (CCHS). The two guiding research questions focused on graduates from CCHS, thus the data for the respondents who did not graduate from CCHS were not included in the descriptive statistics discussed in this chapter. Therefore, only the responses of the 87 respondents who graduated from CCHS are presented in the descriptive statistics.

At the beginning of the survey, respondents were asked to indicate gender and age. Of the 87 respondents, 27 (31%) were male and 60 (69%) were female. The ages of respondents are presented in Table 2. More than one quarter of the respondents were 25 years old and younger and some 44% of respondents indicated they were between the ages of 26 and 35.



Table 2 Gender Distribution of Respondents by Age

Gender	Age by ranges of years				
	18-25	26-35	36-45	46-55	56+
Male	6	16	2	1	2
Female	17	22	14	6	1
Total	23	38	16	7	3

Following is a presentation of the responses to each numbered item of the demographics section on the survey. Generally, a table presenting the responses to each numbered demographic item on the survey (see Appendix D) is presented first, and then each table is followed by a discussion of that survey item.

1. High school you graduated from:

All participants with exception of two graduated from Choctaw Central High School (CCHS). Those individuals are graduates of a public high school near the Choctaw Reservation. The data related to the non-CCHS graduates have not been included in the data summaries. Thus, all data are related only to CCHS graduates.

## 2. ACT scores:

Table 3 Frequency Distribution of Respondent ACT Scores

Descriptors	Distribution of ACT scores													
ACT														
scores	7	11	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	21	22	23	24	29
Frequency														
of scores	1	5	6	4	4	6	9	7	7	3	4	2	1	1

Of the 87 participants who responded to the survey, 60 presented their ACT score. The range of ACT scores as displayed in Table 3 was 7-29 and the average ACT score of respondents was 16.9.

The average ACT composite score in Mississippi in 2007 was 18.9. Nationally the average ACT composite score was 21.2 (ACT, Inc., 2007). The average ACT composite score of the study respondents was 2.0 below the Mississippi average and 4.3 below the National average. This would indicate that preparation for ACT success and subsequent success in college is lower (16.9 to 18.9) than the average student taking the ACT in the state of Mississippi and considerably lower (16.89 to 21.2) than that of an average student who took the ACT nationally.

3. Number of years between high school graduation and when you began your college or post-secondary education:

Table 4 Length of Time Between High School Graduation and Post-Secondary Enrollment

Years:	< 1 year	1 year	2 years	3 years	4 years	5 years	>5 years	NA
	54	4	8	3	1	0	13	4

*Note.* NA = does not apply or do not know.

Benjamin et al. (1993) contended that 18 year olds persisted better in college than mature students. Table 4 indicates that the majority (54 of 83) of those responding started post-secondary education within one year of graduating from high school. Thus, by enrolling directly into a post-secondary institution, 65% of respondents made a decision that supports persistence in post-secondary education (Demmert, 2001; Freeman & Fox, 2005; Huffman, 2001). It is important to note nearly 1 in 6 respondents (16%) waited over 5 years to start.

4. Initial student enrollment status upon entering college:

Table 5 Initial Student Enrollment Status by Age and Gender

Age in years when surveyed:	Full-time student		Part-time student	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
18-25	5	16	1	1
26-35	14	19	2	3
36-45	1	9	1	4
46-55	1	4	0	2
56 +	2	1	0	0
<b>Total:</b>	23	49	4	10

A total of 72 respondents reported initial college enrollment status as a full-time student. Of these full-time students 67% were female. Further, as shown in Table 5, 14 respondents reported initial enrollment in college on a part-time basis. Ten (71%) of the part-time students were female. A total of 61 respondents were 35 years old or younger when surveyed.

5. Did your student enrollment status change during first 2 years of college?

To explore the continuity of a student's enrollment status over the first two year transition period into college, item 5 was posed. From the 85 participants who responded to this item, 50 reported that their student enrollment status remained the same. Of the 35

respondents indicating a change in their student enrollment status, 32 provided a written reason for the change in enrollment status. The reasons expressed, along with the number of the respondent who made the expression, follow:

- “Dropped out first semester (in the fall of 1993) to attain employment to assist with family financial needs” (Respondent #2).
- “I took a break from school for about a year. During this time I visited family in South Dakota” (Respondent #8).
- “After 1 year at community college, [I] went part-time to be employed by MBCI and take care of my young child” (Respondent #10).
- “I withdrew all my classes. I was lost. I didn't think I could keep up at the college level” (Respondent #11).
- “First year of entering college, I started taking only 2 evening courses, then went on to taking 4 courses (evening courses). I then entered full time during 2 summer sessions at ECCC and continued as a full time day student that fall” (Respondent #13).
- “3 children” (Respondent #18).
- “Dropped out during the 1st year” (Respondent #19).
- “I went one semester and started working, so I quit and went part-time” (Respondent #21).
- “Stayed home with my kids” (Respondent #23).
- “Due to health” (Respondent #27).
- “Started full-time but withdrew from college when daughter got sick” (Respondent #31).

- “Money & family problems arose. Family came first” (Respondent #34).
- “1st year I went full-time but I was a single parent to a 1 year old child. I couldn't be on campus in class all the time due to daycare calls to inform me of my sick child” (Respondent #42).
- “I started working full-time and to college only part-time” (Respondent #44).
- “Did not go back until the teacher aide development program was introduced in 1992” (Respondent #46).
- “After 1st year dropped out to work” (Respondent #48).
- “My father was the only one working and provided for the family and he became ill during my first year in college and I had to come home, find employment and help with the family” (Respondent #51).
- “Didn't go back after the first year - had other responsibilities. Had to get a full-time job to provide for my family” (Respondent #53).
- “Went full-time to part-time. I did not concentrate as much as I would have liked” (Respondent #54).
- “Quit after 1st year. Returned several years later” (Respondent #57).
- “I withdrew after one year of college” (Respondent #58).
- “Academic probation” (Respondent #60).
- “Dropped out of college by the end of fall semester” (Respondent #61).
- “Having children and job change” (Respondent #64).
- “I became pregnant and had complications” (Respondent #66).
- “I joined the military” (Respondent #67).

- “I dropped out of college during my second semester” (Respondent #76).
- “Had to repeat classes” (Respondent #77).
- “Dropped out, I was 3 months pregnant” (Respondent #79).
- “Had to go to work” (Respondent #82).
- “I quit due to financial hardship” (Respondent #86).
- “I had new freedom during first college years and I took full advantage of it. My grades reflected my neglect of school work” (Respondent #87).

It appears the responsibility of having children is a factor determining college persistence by members of the study group. Eight respondents who gave a reason for a change in enrollment status during the first two years of college stated they left college to care for their children (respondent #: 10, 18, 23, 31, 42, 64, 66, and 79). Nine respondents wrote that they dropped out completely before the end of their 1<sup>st</sup> school year (#’s: 8, 11, 19, 48, 57, 58, 61, 76, and 87), whereas, respondents 21, 44, and 54 changed their enrollment status from full-time to part-time. Another 3 respondents (#’s: 34, 51, 53) listed other family responsibilities as reasons for adjusting college enrollment. Other reasons given for a change in enrollment were: academic probation, enlisting in the military, general financial hardship, health, and to increase course load.

6. Father's highest education level:

Ed level	Age by ranges of years											
	Male					Total	Female					Total
	18/25	26/35	36/45	46/55	56+		18/25	26/35	36/45	46/55	56+	
NA			1			1	3		3	1		7
Elem	1	1			1	2		2	5	1	1	9
MS		1				1				1		1
Some HS	1	2				3	2	5				7
HS Grad	1	3		1	1	6	7	8	3	1		19
GED		2				2		3	1			4
Some Coll	3	5				8		2	2	2		6
Coll grad		2				2	4 (1 AA)	3				7
Grad/prof level			1			1	1					1
<b>Total</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>60</b>

Figure 1 Respondent Distribution of Father's Highest Educational Level by Age & Gender

*Note.* NA = does not apply or do not know; Elem = elementary school; MS = middle school; Some HS = some high school; HS grad = high school graduate; GED = certificate of General Educational Development; Some Coll = some college; Coll grad = college graduate; Grad/prof level = graduate level and/or professional degree.

Females had a higher proportion of fathers who graduated from high school. Of male respondents, 36% reported their father went to college whereas 22% of fathers of



females went to college. Out of 11 respondents who indicated their father had at least one college degree, 5 were aged 18 to 25 and 5 others were 26 to 35 years old.

7. Mother's highest education level:

Ed level	Age by ranges of years												
	Male						Total	Female					Total
	18/25	26/35	36/45	46/55	56+	18/25		26/35	36/45	46/55	56+		
NA							1		2			3	
Elem		1			1	2		1	3	2	1	7	
MS		1				1	1		4	2		7	
Some HS		1		1		2		2				2	
HS grad	1	3			1	5	2	4	1			7	
GED	1	2				3	1	3	1	1		6	
Some Coll	3	5	1			9	8	6	1	1		16	
Coll grad	1	3				4	3 (1 AA)	5	1			9	
Grad/prof level				1		1	1	1	1			3	
Total	6	16	2	1	2	27	17	22	14	6	1	60	

Figure 2 Respondent Distribution of Mother's Highest Education Level by Gender and Age

Note. NA = does not apply or do not know; Elem = elementary school; MS = middle school; Some HS = some high school; HS grad = high school graduate; GED = certificate of General Educational Development; Some Coll = some college; Coll grad = college graduate; Grad/prof level = graduate level and/or professional degree.

There are similar proportions between the education levels of mother's of males and females - with the exception of elementary, middle school, and some HS (a higher proportion of females mother's received below a HS education). Thus, when this information is considered in conjunction with the information from question 6, it could be concluded that a higher percentage of the female study participants grew up in homes of lower educated single mothers. Conversely, 17 respondents had mothers holding at least one college degree. Of those 17, 14 (82% of this group) were 35 years old or younger: further evidence of an increasing education level within the MBCI.

8. Your highest level of post-secondary education completed (indicate all that apply):

Table 6 Respondent Distribution of Highest Completed Education Level by Gender

Highest Ed level	Male	Female	Total
Currently pursuing certificate or undergraduate degree	8	14	22
AA degree	7	22	29
Bachelor degree	7	16	23
Master's degree	1	0	1
Professional degree	2	1	3
Other	1 (EMT)	4 (1 has bach., Master's, & specialist; 1 LPN; 2 dropouts)	5
NA	1	3	4
<b>Total</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>87</b>

*Note.* AA degree = Associate of Arts degree; NA = does not apply or do not know.

It should be explained that several of the respondents expressed multiple levels of post-secondary attainment since this item invited them to indicate all completed educational levels that apply to them. In each of these cases only the highest degree completed was shown in Table 6. Eight respondents shared both their highest degree completed and that they were currently pursuing another degree. Likewise, in each of these cases only the highest degree actually completed was reported in Table 6.

One third of respondents (33%) indicated an AA degree as the highest level of postsecondary education. An additional 28 (32%) of respondents achieved a bachelors or higher degree. More than 3 times as many females as males completed AA degrees as the highest level of education. Even when considered as a percentage of number of respondents by gender, it is found that for 37% of the females an AA degree is the highest level of education and for 26% of males in this study an AA degree is the highest level of education.

Of the 8 respondents who shared both their highest degree completed and that they were currently pursuing another degree, 4 were male and 4 female. Respondent #28, a male, earned an AA degree and was pursuing a bachelor's degree. Of the 22 females with an AA degree, 4 stated they were currently pursuing bachelor degrees (respondents #16, #19, #20, & #83). Respondent #19 also noted that she had 2 AA degrees. Two males with bachelor degrees (respondent #'s 8 and 26) indicated they were currently pursuing Master's degrees. A male respondent (#17) who had completed a professional degree (law) stated that he was in the process of finishing a Master's in Business Administration (MBA).

9. Your marital status while attending college for your first certificate or degree:

Table 7 Initial Marital Status of Respondents During Pursuit of First Certificate or Degree

Marital status	Male	Female	Total
Single	22	42	64
Married	5	13	18
Separated	0	1	1
Divorced	0	2	2
NA	0	2	2
Total	27	60	87

*Note.* NA = does not apply or do not know.

A high percentage of respondents (74%) were single when they began college. The results indicate that the percentage of married respondents is closely proportioned between males and females: 19% of males and 22% of females are married.

10. Did/do you have any dependents for whom you were legally responsible, such as children or an elderly relative, during the pursuit of your first college certificate or degree?

Table 8 Gender Distribution of Respondents Legally Responsible for Dependent(s) While Pursuing First Certificate or Degree

Response	Male	Female	Total
No	20	18	38
Yes	7	40	47
NA	0	2	2
Total	27	60	87

*Note.* NA = does not apply or do not know.

Almost 75% of the male respondents had no legal dependents while they pursued their first college certificate or degree, whereas, 67% of females had legal dependents while they pursued their first college certificate or degree. Thus, more females than males reported responsibilities associated with dependents in addition to educational responsibilities.

Upon examining the data by gender, degree earned, marital status, and dependents it was found that 15 (68%) of the 22 AA earning females (refer to Table 6) had legal dependents: 11 (50%) of these females were single. In contrast, of the 7 males having an AA as the highest degree earned, 2 (28%) had dependents and 1 (14%) of these males was single. Thus, a disproportionate percentage of single females with legal dependents

attained an AA degree as their highest degree. Further , it is interesting to point out that of the 16 females that earned a bachelors degree 6 (38%) were single with dependents and 3 (19%) were married and had dependents while of the 7 male respondents that earned a bachelors degree 5 (71%) were single without dependents and the remaining 2 were married with dependents.

11. Distance traveled to campus during the pursuit of first certificate or degree:

Table 9 Gender Distribution of Distance Respondents Lived From Campus During First Certificate or Degree

Distance from Campus	Male	Female	Total
Lived on campus	11	12	23
1 – 10 miles	2	2	4
11 – 20 miles	2	5	7
21 – 30 miles	3	14	17
> 30 miles	9	25	34
NA	0	2	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>87</b>

*Note.* NA = does not apply or do not know.

Almost 30% of respondents lived on-campus during the pursuit of first certificate or degree. Another 13% of respondents lived 20 miles or less from campus. Fifty-one respondents (60% of group), lived more than 20 miles from campus. This would indicate that those respondents commuted from home. Of these 51 respondents that are believed

to have commuted from home to school, 39 were female. Thus, 65% of the females traveled greater than 20 miles to campus compared to 48% of the males. It should be noted that the TSP provided help with on-campus living expenses enabling respondents to live on-campus if they choose.

When data for items 10 and 11 were analyzed together, it was found that 12 of the 14 females who lived 21-30 miles from campus had dependents and 17 of 25 of female respondents who lived more than 30 miles from campus also had dependents. Thus, 29 of the 39 female respondents (74%) living more than 20 miles from campus had the added responsibility of caring for legal dependents which had to be balanced with academic responsibilities.

12. Did you attend more than one college while pursuing your first certificate or degree?

Table 10 Gender Distribution Indicating Whether Respondents Attended More Than One College During Pursuit of First Certificate or Degree

Responses	Male	Female	Total
No	12	41	53
Yes	15	18	33
NA	0	1	1
Total	27	60	87

*Note.* NA = does not apply or do not know.

A higher proportion of male respondents than female respondents attended more than one college while pursuing their first certificate or degree. A higher percentage of

males attended more than one college during pursuit of first college degree. The majority of respondents (60%) remained at same college during pursuit of first certificate or degree. When this majority is considered proportionately by gender it is found that 1.5 times more females than males remained at the same college during the pursuit of their first certificate or degree.

13. Did you attend a college outside the state of Mississippi while pursuing your first certificate or degree?

Table 11 Gender Distribution Indicating Whether Respondents Attended College in Mississippi or Out of State During First Certificate or Degree

Responses	Male	Female	Total
No (In-state)	18	49	67
Yes (out of state)	9	10	19
NA	0	1	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>87</b>

*Note.* NA = does not apply or do not know.

The ratio of respondents attending college while pursuing their first certificate or degree in-state to out-of-state was more than 3 to 1. It is important to note that one third (33%) of males attended college out-of-state while only one sixth (17%) of females attended an out-of-state college. Overall, 77% of the total respondents remained in-state as they pursued their first certificate or college degree.



14. Employment level during first year of college:

Table 12 Gender Distribution of Respondents' Employment Level During First Year of College

Employment level	Male	Female	Total
Did not work	21	36	57
Part-time (1-20 h/w)	2	2	4
Part-time(21-39h/w)	1	2	3
Full time	3	20	23
NA	0	0	0
Total	27	60	87

*Note.* h/w = hours per week; NA = does not apply or do not know.

Sixty-six percent of respondents did not work during the first year of college. A higher number of females did not work. However, a higher percentage of males (78%) did not work than females (60%). Virtually all the respondents who worked fulltime during their first year of college (90%) were female. This could be explained by the finding in item 10 that more than two-thirds of the female respondents were responsible for legal dependents while pursuing their first college certificate or degree.

15. Employment level during second year of college:

Table 13 Gender Distribution of Respondents' Employment Level During Second Year of College

Employment level	Male	Female	Total
Did not work	15	27	42
Part-time (1-20 h/w)	2	4	6
Part-time(21-39h/w)	3	2	5
Full time	7	26	33
NA	0	1	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>87</b>

*Note.* NA = does not apply or do not know.

The percentage of total respondents not working decreased from 66% during the first year of college to 48% during the second year of college. Even with the help of the TSP, a significant percent (38%) of respondents worked full time. Twelve more respondents worked during the second year of college than did during the first year of college, 9 of those taking on full time jobs. There were 2 respondents (#3 and #57), both female, who worked the first year but did not work the second year. Of the 33 respondents a higher proportion of females than males indicated they worked fulltime. Out of 59 females 26 (44%) worked full time while just 7 of 27 (26%) males reported working full time. As found in responses to item 10, 67% of female respondents had legal dependents while they pursued their first college certificate or degree. The higher

proportion of working female students could be directly related to the indication of their responsibility for supporting dependents.

16. Number of semesters you received funding from the Tribal Scholarship Program:

Table 14 Gender Distribution of Number Semesters Respondent Received Tribal Scholarship Program Funding

# of semesters of TSP funding	Male	Female	Total
2	4	8	12
3	3	2	5
4	3	18	21
>4	17	30	47
NA	0	2	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>87</b>

*Note.* NA = does not apply or do not know.

More than half (54%) of the respondents received funding from the TSP for more than 4 semesters. The number of consecutive semesters attended and the total number of semesters attended by each of these respondents is not evident since the respondent may have stopped and started again or attended college for a period of time without TSP funding. Yet, 38 (44%) of respondents pursued a postsecondary education with the support of the TSP for only 4 semesters or less.

17. Grade point average after first school year of college education:

Table 15 Gender Distribution of Respondents' First Year College Grade Point Average (GPA)

GPA range	Male	Female	Total
0 – 0.99	1	1	2
1 – 1.99	6	7	13
2 – 2.99	10	36	46
3 – 4.00	10	11	21
NA	0	5	5
Total	27	60	87

*Note.* NA = does not apply or do not know.

Sixty-seven (77%) of the respondents met the TSP requirement of a 2.0 GPA. Thus, a majority of the respondents were academically successful based on TSP GPA standards in the first school year of college education. The significance of these GPAs would need to be determined by evaluating the course level, the type of course and the course load of the respondent. In a future study, respondent courses and associated GPAs would need to be evaluated by their academic program of study. Otherwise, even though a significant percentage of students met the GPA requirement for the TSP, the academic preparedness of the respondents for college cannot be accurately determined from Table 15.

18. Grade point average after first two years of college education:

Table 16 Gender Distribution of Respondents' College GPA Following First Two Years

GPA range	Male	Female	Total
0 – 0.99	0	1	1
1 – 1.99	5	6	11
2 – 2.99	14	33	47
3 – 4.00	7	14	21
NA	1	6	7
Total	27	60	87

*Note.* NA = does not apply or do not know.

As found in Table 16, 68 (78%) of the respondents reported a two year cumulative GPA of 2.00 or higher. This is a slight increase over the GPAs reported by the respondents following the first year of college education. Likewise there was a slight increase in the NA response found in Table 16 from Table 15 (7 up from 5). However, the general trend was for GPAs to either remain relatively constant or increase to the next highest GPA range indicated on Table 16.

When the GPA data in Table 16 is considered with respect to the number of semesters a respondent was supported by the TSP (refer to Table 14), 21 out of the 68 who were eligible to continue a postsecondary education after two years of enrollment did not. This could be explained by the large number of respondents who noted an AA degree as the highest attained degree. As found in responses to item 10, 67% of female

respondents claimed dependents while pursuing their first college certificate or degree. This could account for a need for them to remain close to home and get the degree most available to them which was the two year associates degree.

Table 17 Cross Tabulation by Gender of Respondents' Cumulative GPA Change From First to Second Year

GPA change	Male	Female	Total
GPA increased	6	10	16
GPA was same	15	37	52
GPA decreased	5	6	11
NA	1	7	8
Total	27	60	87

*Note.* NA = does not apply or do not know.

The cross tabulation in Table 17 shows that cumulative GPAs remained constant from first year to second year for 15 males and 37 females. Of these respondents 4 males and 3 females indicated GPAs remained at the 1 – 1.99 GPA range. There was an increase in GPA from first year to second year for 6 males and 10 females. The cumulative GPAs of another 5 males and 6 females decreased by 1 GPA range from the first to the second year. Of these 1 male and 2 females decreased from above the 2 – 2.99 GPA range to the 1 – 1.99 range. The decrease below a 2.0 cumulative GPA is significant in that, as stated in chapter I, continued enrollment in the TSP is dependent on the maintenance of a GPA of 2.0 or higher. TSP participants falling below a cumulative GPA of 2.0 are placed on probation for the next semester. Students unable to return to a

cumulative GPA of 2.0 the next semester are suspended from the TSP. Thus, a minimum of 11 (13%) of the respondents were eligible to have been placed on at least probation by the TSP.

19. Would you have attended college if you did not receive financial support from the Tribal Scholarship Program?

Table 18 Gender Distribution Indicating Whether a Respondent Would Have Attended College Without TSP Funding

Responses	Male	Female	Total
No	14	32	46
Yes	13	27	40
NA	0	1	1
Total	27	60	87

*Note.* NA = does not apply or do not know.

More than half (53%) of the respondents indicated that they would not have attended college without the support of the TSP. Thus, from this data it is suggested that the TSP is doubling the number of Choctaw Central High School graduates who decide to pursue a postsecondary education.

20. Extracurricular involvement while pursuing first 2 years of first college certificate or degree:

Table 19 Gender Distribution of Respondent Participation in College Extracurricular Activities During First Two Years of College

Responses	Male	Female	Total
Not involved in any	11	34	45
Active in 1-3 act.	15	24	39
Active in 4 or >	1	1	2
NA	0	1	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>87</b>

*Note.* Active in 1-3 act. = active in 1-3 activities; Active in 4 or > = active in 4 or more activities; NA = does not apply or do not know.

Over half of the respondents (52%) were not involved in extra curricular activities. Table 19 shows that 57% of the female respondents were not involved in extracurricular activities, while 59% of male respondents participated in extracurricular activities during the first two years of college. It was rare for respondents who were involved in extracurricular activities to participate in more than three.



## 21. Native American Student Clubs:

Table 20 Gender Distribution of Respondent Awareness and Subsequent Participation in Native American Student Clubs

Responses	Male	Female	Total
Not aware of any	14	33	47
Aware of club not member	8	12	20
Aware of club and member	5	15	20
Total	27	60	87

Just over half of the respondents (54%) were unaware of a Native American Student Club on campus. Possible reasons a student was unaware of a Native American Student Club on campus include that there was not a Native American Student Club on the campus or it could indicate that the student did not seek out such a club.

Another 23% of the respondents indicated they were aware of a NA student club but were not members and 23% were aware of an NA student club and were members. Thus, of those that were aware of a NA student club there was a 50/50 distribution of those choosing to join and those not. However, there is no information about number of NA student clubs on the same campus or the reputation of the club(s).

Table 21 Cross Tabulation of Respondents' Cumulative GPA Change Over Two Years and Involvement in a Native American Student Club

GPA change over first two years	Native American student club status		
	Member	Aware - not member	Not aware of club
GPA increased	2	6	8
GPA was same	14	9	29
GPA decreased	3	3	5
NA	0	3	5
<b>Total</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>47</b>

*Note.* GPA = grade point average; NA = does not apply or do not know.

According to Table 21, membership in a Native American student club had a less positive effect on respondent GPA than did non-members of such a club. There were 14 (21%) of the 68 non-members who posted an increase in their GPAs over the first two years of college. In contrast, only 2 (11%) of the 19 members showed an increase in GPA. Also, a higher proportion of members experienced a decrease in GPA over the initial two years of college compared to non-members.

Two general themes have emerged from the demographic data and the related descriptive statistics. First, it appears that younger respondents typically have more educated parents than older respondents lending evidence to an increasing education level within the MBCI. A majority of the respondents are obtaining college GPAs necessary to continue with their college education. Second, it appears there are more barriers to

postsecondary persistence for MBCI females than for males. The barriers are related to the responsibilities a large proportion of the female respondents have to legal dependents. As a result females have a limited choice of schools due to need to remain close to home, seem to settle for an AA degree, often must work while attending college, and lack spare time to get involved with campus activities. Therefore, although educational opportunities are available, additional modes of support need to be implemented to maintain the educational advancement of MBCI members and overcome barriers that impede persistence in college.

### **Factors Affecting Postsecondary Transition Experiences**

Following is a presentation of responses to survey items related to three categories of factors associated with college persistence: sociocultural factors, academic factors, and personal factors. The findings are presented in Table 22 and will be discussed in the context of each category. A heading for each category of factors will divide the findings and will relate to the items associated with the specific factor.

Table 22 Responses to Statements Regarding Factors Affecting Postsecondary Transition Experiences

<b>Sociocultural Factors</b>	<b>SA</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>SD</b>	<b>NA</b>
22. A college education is important to my parents.	43%	31%	17%	1%	1%	7%
23. My parents wanted me to go to college.	47%	28%	16%	1%	1%	7%
24. My cultural heritage is very important to me.	75%	24%	0%	1%	0%	0%
25. I felt free to express my cultural background on campus.	32%	26%	26%	11%	1%	2%
26. I am comfortable interacting with students of other races or ethnicities.	49%	39%	9%	1%	1%	0%
27. I met many people and made many friends at college.	33%	44%	18%	2%	1%	1%
28. I had a clear purpose for going to college and what I wanted to gain from it.	34%	39%	22%	2%	1%	1%
29. I adjusted well to college.	20%	48%	21%	7%	5%	0%
30. I used guidance counseling services offered on campus.	9%	18%	32%	25%	6%	9%
31. I used tutoring services when I needed academic help.	8%	16%	30%	25%	10%	10%
32. I had informal, personal contacts with college professors.	17%	38%	23%	11%	5%	6%
<b>Academic Factors</b>						
33. I felt prepared academically to pursue a postsecondary education.	8%	37%	17%	23%	14%	1%
34. Keeping up to date on academic work is/was important to me.	37%	40%	22%	0%	1%	0%
35. High school courses prepared me well for college courses.	8%	26%	22%	21%	21%	2%
36. The study habits I learned in high school helped me achieve academic success at college.	2%	30%	31%	17%	18%	1%
37. I enrolled in college classes that matched my abilities and interests.	15%	46%	24%	13%	2%	0%
38. Meeting college course assignment deadlines was important to me.	38%	48%	13%	0%	1%	0%
<b>Personal Factors</b>						
39. Going home to visit family and friends at least once a month during college was important to me.	31%	30%	17%	3%	0%	18%
40. I decided to go to college because of pressure from family members.	7%	14%	18%	31%	22%	8%
41. I asked instructors for help when I had questions.	24%	37%	29%	8%	1%	1%
42. I was more comfortable e-mailing or using other forms of technology to communicate with instructors to request help than meeting with them in person.	11%	17%	26%	21%	9%	15%
43. A person served as a mentor for me while at college.	8%	20%	14%	34%	11%	13%

Note. SA = strongly agree; A = agree; N = neutral; D = disagree; SD = strongly disagree; NA = does not apply or do not know.

### **Sociocultural Factors (items 22 to 32)**

Referring to Table 22 regarding sociocultural factors that influenced college experience, item 24 was the most strongly agreed upon. With 75% of respondents strongly agreeing that cultural heritage is very important to them and another 24% agreeing with that statement, it can be interpreted that graduates of Choctaw Central High School (CCHS) place importance in their cultural heritage. However, only 58% strongly agreed or agreed that they could freely express their cultural background. This suggests that many CCHS graduates had a level of cultural insecurity while transitioning to college.

In order to better understand the significance of the responses to item 24 and item 25, they were cross tabulated with the responses to item 21. Item 21 dealt with respondent participation in an on campus Native American (NA) student club. Participation in a NA student club could be indicative of the respondent feeling that their cultural heritage is very important to them as well as be a measure of the freedom they felt to express their cultural background on campus.

Through the cross tabulation of the data from item 21 and item 24, it was found that of the 19 respondents who were members of a NA student club, 14 (74%) strongly agreed and 5 (26%) agreed that their cultural heritage was very important to them. Similarly, of the 21 respondents who were aware but not a member of a NA student club on campus, 14 (67%) strongly agreed and 7 (33%) agreed that their cultural heritage was very important to them. There were 47 respondents who were unaware of any NA student clubs on campus. From these 47 respondents it was found that 37 (78%) strongly agreed and 9 (19%) agreed that their cultural heritage was very important to them. It is

interesting to note that the respondents who were unaware of a NA student club indicated an overall higher percentage of strong agreement on the importance of their cultural heritage. Therefore, the level of importance a respondent placed on cultural heritage may be a factor but is not the sole determining factor of involvement in a NA student club.

From the cross tabulation of item 21 and item 25 (refer to Table 23 below), it was found that of the 19 respondents that indicated being a member of a NA student club, 10 (53%) strongly agreed and 6 (32%) agreed they felt free to express their cultural background on campus. For the 21 respondents who were aware but not a member of a NA student club, only 5 (24%) strongly agreed and 4 (19%) agreed they felt free to express their cultural background on campus. In reference to the other respondents in this category, 9 were neutral and 3 (14%) disagreed. Of the 47 respondents without an awareness of a NA student club, 13 (28%) strongly agreed, 13 (28%) agreed, and 6 (13%) disagreed that they felt free to express their cultural background on campus. Thus, this cross tabulation shows that those not involved in a NA student organization were significantly less likely to feel free to express their cultural background on campus than those who were involved in a NA student club.

Table 23 Cross Tabulation of Respondent Participation in a Native American Student Club and the Freedom They Felt to Express Their Cultural Background on Campus

Felt Free to Express Cultural Background	Native American student club status		
	Member	Aware - not member	Not aware of club
Strongly Agree	10	5	13
Agree	6	4	13
Neutral	2	9	12
Disagree	1	3	6
Strongly Disagree	0	0	1
NA	0	0	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>47</b>

*Note.* NA = does not apply or do not know.

A majority (88%) indicated they were comfortable interacting with students of other races. This finding could suggest that many of these respondents sought acceptance through assimilation into the campus culture. Further, 74% of respondents strongly agreed or agreed that education was important to their parents and thus influenced their enrollment in college. This sentiment was reinforced by 75% of respondents strongly agreeing or agreeing that their parents wanted them to go to college. Some 73% shared they had a clear purpose for attending college, whereas a low percentage took advantage of guidance counseling services (27%) and tutoring services (24%) offered on campus. This could indicate that they initially felt insecure in the college environment and did not

actively seek assistance to avoid or overcome academic struggles. Overall, just under half of the respondents reported they had informal, personal contacts with their professors.

### **Academic Factors (items 33 to 38)**

According to the results in Table 22, 39 respondents to item 33 indicated they agreed they were academically prepared for college while 32 disagreed. Further, responses to items 35 and 36 indicate that more respondents disagreed than agreed that they felt adequately prepared for college and felt they did not possess sufficient study skills from high school to be successful at the postsecondary level. However, a majority of respondents to items 34 (77%) and 38 (86%) expressed a commitment to meeting academic deadlines. Thus, although respondents believed the academic rigor at CCHS may be deficient, they apparently possessed the desire to fulfill their academic responsibilities.

Some 61% of respondents indicated they enrolled in college classes that matched their abilities and interests, 24% were neutral on this item, while 15% felt they were not enrolled in classes that reflected their abilities and interests. Thus, this finding provides support that the grade point averages in responses to items 17 and 18 may have been in courses that matched student abilities and/or courses related to their college majors.

### **Personal Factors (items 39 to 43)**

The response rates for item 39 displayed in Table 22 support the finding in item 13. In item 39, 61% of respondents strongly agreed or agreed that going home to visit family and friends at least once a month during college was important to them. In responses to item 13 it was found that 77% of students pursued their first certificate or



degree in Mississippi while 22% of respondents elected to attend college outside Mississippi. By remaining close to home during postsecondary education students are better enabled to return home more often.

Only a fifth of respondents indicated through their response to item 40 that they went to college due to family pressure. When the educational background of the parents of these 18 respondents was analyzed, no significant pattern was found. The postsecondary educational attainment of the 18 respondents is as follows: 6 obtained AA degrees, 5 earned a bachelors degree, 1 has a masters degree, 1 is an LPN, 4 were currently pursuing certificate or undergraduate degree and 1 respondent had dropped out. The degree attainment in these 18 respondents was close to equal distribution between males and females and across all age groups.

Further, from responses to item 41, 61% of respondents reported they asked instructors for help when they had questions. As explored through item 42, the use of e-mail or other technology for communicating with instructors was utilized by only 28% of respondents. In responses to item 43 it was found that only 28% of the respondents had a person serving as an academic mentor. From the responses to items 41, 42, and 43 it can be established that even though a majority of respondents felt they were able to obtain help with coursework from instructors, mentoring relationships with them were seldom developed.

In summary, there are several themes emerging from the responses to the survey items associated with the factors affecting postsecondary transition experiences. These themes will be reviewed in the context of the three categories of factors: sociocultural, academic, and personal. With respect to sociocultural factors, the primary theme

emerging is that membership in an NA student club and thus, interaction with others of similar backgrounds appears to help encourage respondents to be more expressive of their cultural heritage on campus. However, although a two-third majority of respondents indicated a clear purpose for attending college, there was a reluctance to interact within the campus environment to access campus services. Responses to items in the category of academic factors showed a majority belief in a deficiency of academic rigor and college preparation at CCHS, yet there was a desire to fulfill college academic responsibilities. Further, in the personal factors category a majority of respondents sought help from instructors yet, few had a person they considered an academic mentor. Thus, a pattern of themes are emerging whereby respondents are in need of effective mechanisms for gaining sustained support in all aspects of campus life.

### **Open-Ended Questions**

Following is a presentation of responses to survey items dealing with general questions in an open ended format. The responses to each of the items are organized into strands, patterns, categories and/or themes and discussed in a narrative format.

Item 44: Are there ways you believe high school could have better prepared you for college? Explain.

There were three primary strands of information shared in the responses to this question. The first strand is related to positive instances of how CCHS prepared the respondents for college. The second strand consisted of a disclosure of experiences that the respondents believed did not properly prepare them for a successful transition to college, and the third strand involved suggestions to help remedy the perceived situations

for future CCHS students. The responses will be listed and divided by the primary strands. The responses will appear in ascending numerical order by assigned respondent number. Some responses included content that is applicable to each strand so only the content from a respondent that applies to a particular strand is included. Thus, responses from the same respondent could appear more than once in the listing. In addition, the second and third primary strands will be categorized by sub-strands. A narrative discussion will follow each list of responses.

**Primary Strand 1: Responses related to positive instance of how CCHS prepared the respondents for college:**

- “... high school prepared me pretty good because of the AP level classes and having the Choctaw Upward Bound Program was very helpful because it prepared me for what college would be like” (respondent #7).
- “I admit I was fortunate enough to have an English teacher who cared about her students and encouraged us to do well and if we missed class, she asked why we were not in school. I remember coming back to school because I didn’t want to answer her questions about my whereabouts” (respondent #31).
- “Just those trips to colleges during my junior & senior year really got me thinking” (respondent #34).
- “All was good but if there were any problems I had it was my fault” (respondent #35).

- “It doesn’t matter what school you go to. It’s up to the student if they want to better themselves” (respondent #36).
- “The quality of teaching has improved drastically since 1994; there are more college prep courses taught now that was [*sic*] not then” (respondent #37).
- “No, I do not think that high school could have better prepared me. As a small child, I made choices that prevented me from going to school. I missed out on the basics of education” (respondent #61).
- “Yes, the high school resources are there, it all depends on the individual who wants to learn from these resources – it’s a self-commitment” (respondent #63).
- “I believe the knowledge and understanding I received at my high school prepared me well for college” (respondent #71).
- “It was well explained by my teachers on how it was going to be like when going to college” (respondent #73).
- “Letting Upward Bound take public school kids during the summer helped keep my head in the books during summer” (Respondent #87).

With regard to the strand of positive instances, 10 (13%) respondents contributed. Respondent #7 stated, “high school prepared me pretty good because of the AP level classes and having the Choctaw Upward Bound Program was very helpful because it prepared me for what college would be like.” This statement would suggest that the AP level classes challenged the respondent and provided the necessary academic rigor to be successful at college. The support of the Upward Bound Program (UBP) was influential.

One component of the program is to provide the participants with a summer residential experience at a community college (Meridian Community College presently). Thus, this respondent, and Choctaw UBP students in particular, felt that pre-exposure to realities of college life were beneficial. Respondent #87 expressed a level of competition was inherent in the summer component of the UBP as students from other schools were included. It should be noted that the Choctaw UBP has an after-school tutoring component four days a week in the regular school which could have helped respondent #7 develop effective study skills and a sense of comfortableness seeking help from a tutor when academic struggles were encountered. Pre-exposure to the college experience was cited by respondent #34 as beneficial, “Just those trips to colleges during my junior & senior year really got me thinking.” Respondent #37 further supported the statement of respondent #7 when they wrote, “the quality of teaching has improved drastically since 1994; there are more college prep courses taught now, that was not [true] then.”

The positive influence of a teacher was reflected in respondent #31’s anecdotal story:

I admit I was fortunate enough to have an English teacher who cared about her students and encouraged us to [do] well and if we missed classes, she asked why we were not in school. I remember coming back to school because I didn’t want to answer her questions about my whereabouts.

Five respondents (#11, #35, #36, #61, and #63) took a similar stance and suggested that preparation at the high school level was the attitudinal and behavioral responsibility of the student. A sense of self-blame was expressed by respondent #11, “Let me first say that I am part to blame for not taking all the advantages that were out

there for me in high school.” Respondent #35 wrote, “All was good but if there were any problems I had it was my fault.” And respondent #36 stated, “It’s up to the student if they want to better themselves.” Further, respondent #61 took the sense of personal responsibility to a higher level, “No, I do not think that high school could have better prepared me. As a small child, I made choices that prevented me from going to school. I missed out on the basics of education.” Respondent #63 followed this line of thinking and noted, “Yes, the high school resources are there, it all depends on the individual who wants to learn from these resources – it’s a self-commitment.” Thus, these respondents believed that success in school was mainly based on individual effort and responsibility. It can be interpreted that these respondents felt that struggles in school were their fault, irreversible, and no help could be sought since it was their fault. Therefore, these respondents could be susceptible to marginalizing themselves at college and not seeking available tutoring, guidance counseling, peer, and instructor support.

Before presenting the next list of responses, it should be noted that the 2<sup>nd</sup> strand consisted of a disclosure of experiences the respondents believed did not properly prepare them for a successful transition to college. This 2<sup>nd</sup> strand can be divided into 4 sub-strands: make CCHS more challenging, teach in greater depth, be stricter especially in terms of deadlines, and provide college academic survival skills.

**Primary Strand 2: Responses related to a disclosure of experiences the respondents believed did not properly prepare them for a successful transition to college:**

**Sub-strand 1: Make CCHS more challenging**

- “The classes were not challenging enough” (Respondent #1).
- “For me high school was not very challenging” (Respondent #8).
- “I could have done more for myself in school if I had some boost from the faculty. In my high school years I remember my peers just doing what needed to be done to graduate. That wasn’t a whole lot” (Respondent #11).
- “I believe Choctaw Central prepared me to be a manual laborer” (Respondent #17).
- “While in high school we weren’t really prepared to enter college” (Respondent #20).
- “Choctaw Central is at least 2 grades behind the public school system” (Respondent #26).
- “We didn’t have that many teachers to teach extra curriculum” (Respondent #41).
- “Yes, especially in the English department. It is a struggle to be able to write a report, essay, or any other writing project, on the college level, because of the lack of teaching I received at CCHS” (Respondent #43).
- “When I was in high school, the highest math class was geometry and highest science was basic chemistry” (Respondent #46).

- “The students at CCHS have more special classes and special students. No learning handicaps in college (Respondent #59).
- “We were required to take minimal classes. Example: I only had one science class during the summer. I struggled in College Biology” (Respondent #67).
- “In my high school I was given about 6-7 tests a semester in each course. In college there were only three or two before finals. I think most students think they can make up one bad grade like in high school but find it tougher in college” (Respondent #71).
- “I made straight A’s through High School not because I’m smart but because I feel the Choctaw Tribal School System is/was not set up to realistically prepare Tribal students for college” (Respondent #86).
- “I would have done better if I stayed in the public school setting. I believe I had more competition in my freshman & sophomore year than CCHS. I admit I only went to CCHS to see a boyfriend” (Respondent #87).

With respect to the first sub-strand, 14 respondents imparted an experience that inferred classes at CCHS were not challenging enough. Six respondents generalized that academic challenge was lacking at CCHS (respondent #: 1, 8, 26, 41, 86, and 87). A further 5 responses referred to the curriculum needing greater depth (respondent #: 11, 17, 43, 46, and 67) and college academic survival skills were mentioned by 2 respondents (#20 and #71).



In the first sub-strand, make CCHS more challenging, respondents called for student performance expectations to be higher. This contention was related in statements such as:

- “The classes were not challenging enough” (Respondent #1).
- “I believe Choctaw Central prepared me to be a manual laborer” (Respondent #17).
- “... while in high school, we weren’t really prepared to enter college” (Respondent #20).
- “Choctaw Central is at least 2 grades behind the public school system. I transferred from [a public] High School during my 11<sup>th</sup> grade year. I didn’t learn a thing at Choctaw Central” (Respondent #26).
- “It is a struggle to be able to write a report, essay, or any other writing project, on the college level, because of the lack of teaching I received at CCHS” (Respondent #43).
- “Offer more challenging course at that time” (Respondent #69).

Thus, the respondents’ experiences at college reflected a need to be better prepared in high school through greater academic challenge. However, as reported in item 18, a significant percentage (78%) of respondents reported cumulative GPA of 2.0 or greater after first 2 years of college. This contradiction could be resolved if the specific courses taken were weighted in terms of relevance to the selected academic program, academic level, respondent course load, and degree track. As a result a better connection could be established between high school preparation and college academic performance.

## **Sub-strand 2: Teach in greater depth**

- “Most of the time I learned on my own, because teachers focused on kids that misbehaved, rather than kids who had potential” (Respondent #16).
- “Now they have practice ACTs that could be given online to students. I think that’s more beneficial these days. They didn’t have those when I was in high school so we absorbed learning materials from teachers” (Respondent #42).
- “It is a struggle to be able to write a report, essay, or any other writing project on the college level, because of the lack of teaching I received at CCHS” (Respondent # 43).

The 2<sup>nd</sup> sub-strand, to teach in greater depth, seemed to be inter-related with the above call for greater academic performance expectations. Each of the 3 respondent’s whose experience is listed in this sub-strand, believed that there was more that teachers could have imparted in the classrooms. They suggested that the focus of teachers appeared to be on attending to student misbehavior (#16), that test prep resources were lacking (#42) and too little writing instruction and practice were provided (#43). As a result, they seemed to feel they were not adequately prepared to meet the academic demands of college coursework. The respondents implied that the resolution of classroom management issues, utilization of effective diagnostic evaluation tools, and a re-focus on practical writing assignments could alleviate similar high school and college experiences for future CCHS graduates. These respondents believed that instructional depth at the high school level is important in determining college readiness and success.

### Sub-strand 3: Be stricter especially in terms of deadlines

- “I had envisioned college to be strict with no room for excuse and so at CCHS we were always given ‘chances’ or ‘makeup work’ that I felt did not truly prepare me [for] college work. I felt that we were doing just the minimum and it was good enough for some teachers not all & knew some students in my class that graduated that were questionable” (Respondent #2).
- “We were given many chances to turn in our work & do our work to get a grade it ruined us for college.
- “In this school [CCHS] we were really babied, we can show up to school without a pencil and paper and it will be provided to us. But why is when we transfer from here to a public school we know to bring paper and pencil to school?”
- “When I attended school I could miss so many days and be tardy in the morning and if I was passing that class I didn’t see what the problem was. I knew that I was allowed to miss only a certain max amount of days per school year, but know one [*sic*] ever did anything about [*sic*], so it just continued....”
- “When I was in school when a teacher gave an assignment and told you when it was due some students turned it in on that date while others turned it in later. We were given several opportunities (chances) to complete it and still didn’t do it.... I wish the school was strict on us then”  
(Respondent #11).

- “I should not have been allowed to sleep in algebra class” (Respondent #31).
- “The teachers were lenient. At least, the ones I had. If I didn’t do my homework, they gave me an extra day.... I may have had a couple strict teachers during my entire high school education. If all had been like them, I would have been better prepared” (Respondent #52).
- “Because I was HS varsity (basketball team member). I believe I had things paved out for me in HS. Had I not had favoritism, maybe I would have been more self-disciplined” (Respondent #54).
- “CCHS was very lenient to students in many ways whether it be work or behavior” (Respondent #59).
- “Too much playing in classroom. Not enough discipline and not many teachers would enforce the rules” (Respondent #84).

All of respondents quoted in this sub-strand implied that CCHS was too lenient on deadlines, completion standards for assignments and tests, and student classroom behavior. A culture of low expectations seemed to be encouraged by some of the teaching staff and applied to academics, student attendance, and behavioral expectations. The comments made by respondents #2 and #11, dealing with lack of adherence to deadlines obviously came from a strict adherence to deadlines in college. From these comments, it can be argued that respondents were looking for more structure from their high school environment in order to acquire a higher level of self-discipline for college. By reflecting on their college experience, these respondents apparently realized that success on the college level required a certain measure of self-discipline.

#### **Sub-strand 4: Provide college academic survival skills**

- “Choctaw Central High School was not fully prepared in providing guidance counseling” (Respondent #13).
- “Our guidance counselor had her selected few that she pushed while others were left out to do for themselves” (Respondent #20).
- “I remember only being assigned to do one research paper during high school” (Respondent #25).
- “One thing many Choctaw college students don’t realize is why they are in college. To many, they are there for the college experience, not to further their education for a career that would better their life” (Respondent #59).

The 4<sup>th</sup> sub-strand was that of the provision of college academic survival skills.

Respondents denoted a number of practical skills they believe may have better equipped them for college success. Some of these skills included:

- Essay and term paper writing skills (respondent #: 25)
- Career awareness (respondents #: 13, 20, 59)
- College life skills (respondents #: 25)

Thus, the respondents recognized practical academic skills and support that they believed would have positively impacted their college academic experience. Responses in the career awareness category often related to high school guidance counseling support.

These respondents had hoped for more career guidance and appeared to receive it in varying degrees. Respondent #20’s comments were suggestive of resentment towards the counselor. Whether the observation was accurate and hence, there was any justification

for the resentment can not be ascertained. Yet, the respondent seems to have a sense of being isolated from support for postsecondary pursuits --- self-imposed or otherwise.

The college life skills category contained respondents who indicated a need to have been better taught self-discipline, responsibility and oral communication skills (see quotes above of Respondents #25, and #56). Respondent #77 felt that enhanced exposure and development of communication skills in high school would be beneficial for CCHS students at the college level. Thus, each of these respondents expressed lacking the responsibility and communication abilities necessary for a successful transition to college.

Before presenting the next list of responses, it should be noted that primary strand 3 consisted of suggestions to help remedy the perceived situations for future CCHS students. This strand also has been divided into 4 sub-strands: make CCHS more challenging, teach in greater depth, be stricter especially in terms of deadlines, and provide college academic survival skills.

**Primary Strand 3: Responses that provided suggestions to help remedy the perceived situations for future CCHS students:**

**Sub-strand 1: Make CCHS more challenging**

- “Academically should have been more challenging” (Respondent #2)
- “Make classwork as hard as college courses” (Respondent #4).
- “Offer higher level science and math” (Respondent #6).
- “I believe high school students need to be challenged more ...”  
(Respondent #9).

- “I should’ve taken more advance courses in high school ...” (Respondent #10).
- “In school I remember teachers being a little scared of doing their jobs because they were worried about which kid’s parent ran to Tribal Council telling on them because of something that the teacher asked of them or corrected them on.... I think on some occasion we were just passed with a good grade, and by next semester that teacher had left for another school” (Respondent #11).
- More challenging courses with knowledgeable instructors to teach these challenging courses is needed especially in absence of parental guidance about going to college and what to do after college” (Respondent #17).
- “More advanced classes in each subject” (Respondent #18).
- “Having advanced placement courses for students” (Respondent #22).
- “By providing more advanced or college prep courses” (Respondent #27).
- “Secondly, the classes could have been harder” (Respondent #31).
- “Offer more advanced classes” (Respondent #32).
- “Stronger academics were needed” (Respondent #33).
- “More literature/short story class and writing class (need a lot of writing) learn research & public speaking” (Respondent #39).
- “Questions on test should be more challenging and the type that would be given at a college level” (Respondent #45).
- “Choctaw Central needs to have more college prep courses” (Respondent #46).

- “A bit more harder [*sic*] on students as far as work and responsibility” (Respondent # 49).
- “Offer pre-college courses” (Respondent #50).
- “More advanced courses” (Respondent #51).
- “... more advance classes” (Respondent #53).
- “... more helpful as well as college prep courses” (Respondent #68).
- “Offer more challenging course at that time” (Respondent #69).
- “The area that I think could better help future college students is the amount of tests that are given between the two schools” (Respondent #71).
- “There should have been AP/college classes offered” (Respondent #72).
- “I feel that I would have benefited from more advanced classes” (Respondent # 74).
- “Yes, in math, algebra and English” (Respondent #77).
- “I wish they offered AP courses” (Respondent #78).
- “As for courses like English, I wished we wrote more essays because that’s what I had trouble with” (Respondent #80).
- “More English classes. I have always struggled with the language” (Respondent #81).
- “Not enough homework and classwork [*sic*]” (Respondent #84).
- “Maybe more hands on experience of what to expect at a college” (Respondent #88).

The suggestions in this sub-strand correspond closely to the experiences shared by respondents quoted in the 1<sup>st</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> sub-strand of primary strand 2. There were 7



respondents (#s: 2, 9, 33, 34, 80, 81, and 84) who suggested a need for increased academic challenge at CCHS. Another 6 respondents (#s: 4, 31, 45, 49, 71, and 88) requested that high school work be made as difficult as college. And 17 respondents (#s: 6, 10, 17, 18, 22, 27, 32, 46, 50, 51, 53, 68, 69, 72, 74, 77 and 78) specifically called for higher level course offerings at CCHS. Each of these areas again point to a realization by CCHS graduates from their college experiences that an increased academic rigor at the high school level is necessary to adequately prepare a student for college academic success. It is interesting to point out that respondents 34, 80 and 81 specifically noted a need for further preparation in writing essays and public speaking skills. The underlying issue of some CCHS students speaking English as a Second Language needs to be explored in greater depth in future research.

### **Sub-strand 2: Teach in greater depth**

- “Courses should have been more in depth on information. The majority of courses taught (science & math) were taught from a ‘general’ angle and not complete & in depth” (Respondent #1).
- “Today, CCHS lacks projects, project papers, research papers, etc.” (Respondent #9).
- “I feel that high school teachers could have helped me out more if they understood each students [*sic*] weakness and try to better it by going over more similar materials” (Respondent #12).
- “... have teachers that want to teach not there just for the money” (Respondent #27).

- “Going the distance in what we would learn more instead of just the surface” (Respondent #38).
- “Exam [*sic*] the students strength & weakness and work upon that” (Respondent #48).

One respondent (#1) stated, “Courses should have been more in depth on information.” Respondent #12 thought, “... teachers could have helped me out more if they understood each students [*sic*] weakness,” and respondent #48 concurred writing, “Exam[*ine*] the students strength & weakness and work upon that.” Respondent #27 interjected a specific reason for students not being taught in greater depth, “... have teachers that want to teach not there just for the money.” There is a suggestion through these responses that course curriculum was simply being taught to be completed. The expectation for and determination of genuine student learning appears to have been overlooked in high school based on these respondents suggestions. A level of resentment and even blame towards teachers is apparent in the statements by each of the respondents with the exception of respondent #9. With the abilities and motivations of teachers being questioned, whether there is any validity to the statements or not, is indicative of a lack of confidence in the quality of teaching and preparation these respondents received in high school. Respondent #9 shies from direct teacher criticism revisiting the reoccurring theme that an increased level of instruction and practice in the writing process would have been beneficial prior to college.

### Sub-strand 3: Be stricter especially in terms of deadlines

- “It should have been more strict with everything! Especially deadlines!... As school officials we need to put our foot down and say what we mean ... Deadlines is [*sic*] a thing that all students need to be prepared for in college as well as the work society” (Respondent #11).
- “I strongly believe high school could have better prepared me for college by teachers not catering to my needs and being firm with deadlines set with assignments” (Respondent #30).
- “I believe it would have only if the GUIDANCE COUNSELORS AND TEACHERS cared enough to push the students harder to do well in school/class rather than going for the pay check. As well as explaining to the student that life is more complicated and people are more harsher other than the school principal” (Respondent #40).
- “To be more strict, and have strict standards. For instance when a paper is due it is due. You get a zero if it is not turned in on time” (Respondent #55).
- “Strict deadline for project such as term paper (topics, outline, note cards, paper etc.). Attendance and how important it is as well as tardiness” (Respondent #57).

There were 4 respondents (#s: 11, 40, 55, 57) who felt assignment deadlines in high school were lax and that translated to a low level of self-discipline. Each of these respondents seemed to realize from their college academic experiences the necessity for meeting deadlines and how the development of such a habit in high school would have

been beneficial. Respondent #57 also recognized that prompt and regular attendance to class are important traits leading to academic success at the college level and should be enforced in high school. Further, respondent #40 suggested that focused guidance and encouragement are desired by students from high school personnel. The respondents in this sub-strand convey the belief that high school is a training and development arena for the establishment of practical habits of conduct that will lead to academic success both in high school and college. And these habits are not acquired without the guidance and direction of qualified instructional and support staff at the high school level.

#### **Sub-strand 4: Provide college academic survival skills**

- “...the lacking of informed college life skills made it very stressful & became discouraging when all other students seemed to know more than you (how to choose classes, where to go for what, etc.)” (Respondent #2).
- “CCHS lacks projects, project papers, research papers, etc. These are things college already expects you to know” (Respondent #9).
- “... better writing term papers while in high school” (Respondent # 10).
- “How important GPA is & what employers are looking for. How much you can make in your field or major” (Respondent # 14).
- “Study habits.... And career planning” (Respondent #16).
- “I believe that high school curriculum should include writing papers using MLA or APA style. Research papers and projects to build innovative individual and team building” (Respondent # 19).
- “I could have used more writing lessons” (Respondent #24).

- “I wish I had been better prepared to write research papers.... Knowing how to write research papers properly is vital to a student’s success in college.... I think students need to also be taught about responsibility and self-discipline. I feel that too many students expect other people to do things for them and I have seen too many students wait until the last minute to prepare themselves for college” (Respondent #25).
- “The high school needs to teach kids how to take short hand notes, better study habits and have them write a page on something everyday to help with writing skills” (Respondent #28).
- “I think it would have been easier for me if I had had more essay questions in high school” (Respondent # 29).
- “Informing students (me) on how to take short hand notes instead of giving us hand-outs would have helped as well” (Respondent #30).
- “Offer study skills type classes as an elective to help better take notes, etc.” (Respondent #32).
- “Do an actual research paper more than once” (Respondent #39).
- “... I realized that college was all about (majority) study!! It wasn’t as hard but I also believe that teachers should teach students STUDY SKILLS – it matters” (Respondent #40).
- “It is a struggle to be able to write a report, essay, or any other writing project, on the college level, because of the lack of teaching I received at CCHS” (Respondent #43).

- “Help improve study habits and better prepare students for college” (Respondent #44).
- “I believe with the increase of writing and reading keeping me occupied would have helped me better prepare for college” (Respondent #45).
- “CCHS needs to separate the ones that will not attend college and steer them into technical fields” (Respondent #46).
- “I believe the students at CCHS needs [sic] to be informed that they will be treated all equally and no special treatment will be given to them and they will be responsible for (achieving) the education” (Respondent #56).
- “Note taking class instead of just handing out study sheets” (Respondent #57).
- “Have more tutoring sessions” (Respondent #58).
- “I think a career education course with programs, procedures, process, etc. to obtain a certain job would have been more helpful ...” (Respondent #68).
- “Acquiring better and more study skills would have helped me” (Respondent #70).
- “There should be a resource program dedicated to students (middle school to high school) to better prepare students for college” (Respondent #72).
- “Maybe have more tutors. And let students make more speeches per speech class” (Respondent #77).
- “I wish I pushed myself harder, study habits” (Respondent #79).
- “Diversity, mentors, life lessons, financial budgeting” (Respondent #85).

Sub-strand 4 found in the strand that CCHS could have better prepared respondents for college was that of the provision of college academic survival skills. Respondents denoted a number of practical skills they believe may have equipped them better for college success. The comments of respondents #'s 16, and 28 fell into multiple categories and appear in the following more than once. Some of these skills included:

- Essay and term paper writing skills (respondents #: 9,10, 19, 24, 25, 28, 29, 39, 43, 45)
- Study habits/skills (respondents #: 16, 28, 32, 40, 44, 57, 58, 70, 79)
- Career awareness (respondents #: 2, 14, 16, 46, 68, 72, 85)
- College life skills (respondents #: 56, 77)
- Taking short-hand (respondents #: 28, 30)

The transition experience to college revealed to 21 respondents (24%) the importance of learning effective writing skills, study habits/skills and college life skills in high school. The value of time was recognized by respondents #28 and #30 through their suggestion for training in short-hand. And 1 in 12 respondents (8%) felt that help in developing career awareness in high school would have proven beneficial in the transition experience to college. Therefore, a belief in the acquisition of effective writing skills, study habits, time saving techniques, and an understanding of how their interests can translate into future careers were shown to be important by respondent categorized in this sub-strand.

In addition to the 3 primary strands found in the responses to question #44, two other issues were raised. Respondent #36 felt there is a need in high school to effectively address teen pregnancy and substance abuse. Thus, respondent #36 may believe teen

pregnancy levels to have a significant impact on the college persistence levels on members of the study group. Further, only 1 respondent (#17) indicated more parental involvement was needed, “Not a lot of guidance from parents.” The majority of respondents did not indicate that they were lacking from the guidance support of at least one parent or guardian.

Item 45: Why did you choose to attend college?

Two main themes for choosing to attend college were revealed. These themes are better life for person and family, and outside pressure/influence. The first theme emphasizes the desire of respondents to enhance the well being of their own life and the life of their dependents through education. The second theme documents external motivations that seem to encourage the respondents to pursue a post-secondary education. The responses will be divided and listed according to the two main themes. The main themes will be used as the heading for their respective list of responses. A narrative discussion will follow the lists of responses.

#### **Better life for person and family**

- “For better life opportunities (job, opportunities” (Respondent #1).
- “I wanted to make more money and not to work at a dead end job for the rest of my life. I was not happy working at American Greetings” (Respondent #4).
- “To help MBCI when I return home” (Respondent #6).
- To better myself as an individual for the future. Having a college education opens a lot of opportunities and I want to take that chance” (Respondent #7).



- “Better job opportunities, higher salary, get off from the reservation for a while and meet new people” (Respondent #10).
- “I wanted something better for myself especially to do better than what my parents did for me! I did without things while others had and I always told myself that I can be just like them or just as good as them in society, with an education no one can take that away from me” (Respondent #11).
- “I wanted to further my education because higher pay rates increase with more education. I am part of my future generation leaders and really hope to influence more people like me” (Respondent #12).
- “I had three minimum wage jobs & decided I need to get out of poverty so I thought getting an education, and that piece of paper would help me” (Respondent #14).
- “A better life and job. I love college because I learned and interacted with other people” (Respondent #16).
- “Coming from a background with no family financial support, no encouragement from family members to attend college, and a strong belief in working for improving my situation, college was an easy choice to make” (Respondent #17).
- “To accomplish my goal to get my AA, and then BS to become a Director at a Child Care” (Respondent #18).
- “I am the type of person who always has to have a goal (big or small). I enjoy learning about global activities and finding out about news that is going on outside my local community. Politics, religion, etc.” (Respondent #19).

- “Due to being fired from a job. I never finished my AA degree so I decided to go back and finish” (Respondent #21).
- “I knew that if I wanted to live comfortably and that to be able to afford the things I wanted (house, car, land ...), I needed a college education. (Something my mother always told me)” (Respondent #22).
- “To better my education, I wanted to get my A.A.” (Respondent #23).
- “Because I wanted my children to go to college” (Respondent #24).
- “Even as a child, I knew that I would have a better life if I got a college education. I have always loved learning and meeting new people – college was the best place for that. Several people told me that I would not make it in college. The negative criticism I received from others gave me more motivation to work hard and get my degree” (Respondent #25).
- “I wanted to better myself, I wanted to grow as a person. I knew I could open a lot of doors for certain jobs I was interested in with a college degree” (Respondent #26).
- “To get educated more and to figure out what I wanted to do in life. I also did not want minimum pay job, and I felt with my abilities I could do something better for me and the tribe” (Respondent #28).
- “I chose to attend college because of sports. I figured I didn't have anything else to do, but attend college. I wish I could turn back time and chose to go to college because of education. I have had a long break from attending college and I must admit, had I known back then what I know now, I would have a B.S. degree by now” (Respondent #29).

- “I chose to attend college because I wanted to better myself and so that I would have a better paying job than what others around me had at the time” (Respondent #30).
- “I chose to attend college because I wanted to become a teacher and help students with English classes. In high school, English was a dreaded subject” (Respondent #31).
- “To further my education. When graduated from high school, next was the post secondary (until you finish)” (Respondent #32).
- “To influence my children” (Respondent #33).
- “Because that was the next logical and right step after high school” (Respondent #34).
- “I believe the word self-determination. Our Tribal motto. I wanted to get an education and I believe in myself that I can do it” (Respondent #36).
- “It was one of my goals in life and I realized early on that it would have been difficult to pursue any interests in a career without an education” (Respondent #37).
- “I wanted to go in the health field” (Respondent #38).
- “To get away from MS [Mississippi] and better myself and get ready to meet the challenges of life” (Respondent #39).
- “I needed to upgrade my living standards” (Respondent #41).
- “To have a good career for myself as an adult. To give my kids a good, healthy lifestyle. These days jobs are open almost in any field but education is needed to make it rewarding” (Respondent #42).

- “My first priority is my family” (Respondent #43).
- “To better myself” (Respondent #44).
- “I chose to attend college to further my education and pursue my degree in nursing” (Respondent #45).
- “To get a raise” (Respondent #46).
- “I wanted a better life for me & my daughter” (Respondent #47).
- “Education and basketball” (Respondent #49).
- “It was something I always wanted to accomplish” (Respondent #53).
- “I wanted to see what I was capable of. I really wanted to get off the reservation, people believed in me. (I lack that self-confidence for education)” (Respondent #54).
- “There was nothing else to look forward to except college or a Vocational School. I first went to a Vocational School. And as I came back to Mississippi to work, in my work area college classes was offered and that’s what sparked my interest” (Respondent #55).
- “I wanted more out of life than what I saw in the community. I had dreams and goal both personal and education to achieve” (Respondent #56).
- “The first time, it was what I felt I wanted to do. Later in years I realized it was something I needed to do for myself” (Respondent #57).
- “To learn more in Broadcasting” (Respondent #59).
- “I wanted a computer” (Respondent #61). Note: TSP provides computers in 2<sup>nd</sup> year when a certain GPA is achieved and maintained.
- “To better myself” (Respondent #62).

- “Number of reasons – travel to different places and meet different Native culture [sic], Tribal Scholarship paid for the tuition, and further my education” (Respondent #63).
- “To have a better life for my kids” (Respondent #64).
- “To better myself for my children to have a role model” (Respondent #65).
- “To make myself have a better life” (Respondent #66).
- “I attended college because I like challenges and to meet people outside the reservation” (Respondent #67).
- “I knew having a college degree would allow me to obtain a good job and increase my earnings” (Respondent #68).
- “I am a single mother of a special needs child and I wanted a better life for both of us. My daughter inspired me to be more and achieve more” (Respondent #70).
- “Attending college was a choice I made to better benefit my future in an ever changing world. I took classes I needed to prepare me for the career path I chose” (Respondent #71).
- “I wanted to further educate myself to the best ability possible. So I can come back & help my people” (Respondent #72).
- “I wanted to better myself by challenging myself into a different environment” (Respondent #73).
- “I wanted to better myself by challenging myself into a different environment” (Respondent #74).
- “To better my chances to obtain a job I enjoy” (Respondent #78).

- “My family, I would like to finish college so they can further their education when they get older, so they can have better jobs” (Respondent #79).
- “I went because I believed it was the next step to take. Also because jobs now are requiring a higher education background” (Respondent #80).
- “To better myself so that I would better serve Native American students” (Respondent #81).
- “To better myself for my child whom I had in 12<sup>th</sup> grade” (Respondent #83).
- “When I came from [unnamed location], at that time not many jobs, or opportunities, 10 year goal to meet to succeed” (Respondent #85).
- “To improve my standard of living and find a career that I would enjoy that would benefit the Tribe as well as my family” (Respondent #86).
- “After high school I worked at [a local company] but it closed down. I couldn’t find any other job but at poultry plants and I couldn’t work in that kind of environment. I couldn’t work at the casino because of the hours and babysitting problems on these hours. I decided the best thing for my family was to go to college and get a good job with a better environment” (Respondent #88).

#### **Outside pressure/influence**

- “I chose to attend college to play basketball & pressure from community. I knew I would drop out because I was not academically ready but I also knew I had to try” (Respondent #2).
- “To make friends and meet my working habits” (Respondent #3).

- “I was given a (choice of) a Job or College, and my mom pick College. I had no say so in it” (Respondent #5).
- “I always saw myself going to college, my mother and grandmother (other family members), talked (discussed) the importance of getting an education as I was growing up” (Respondent #8).
- “People (friends, family) said that college and college degree will serve a better future and job. They encouraged me to go” (Respondent #9).
- “My grandmother always told us there will be jobs in the future but you will need college education to get into those jobs. I believed in her; she was right” (Respondent #13).
- “I want to follow in my mother’s footsteps” (Respondent #20).
- “I was told that I needed to get a higher education because my parents/sister weren’t able to so that I could live a better life than they did” (Respondent #27).
- “I didn’t want to work full time” (Respondent #35).
- “I wanted to do more than my parents” (Respondent #48).
- “My family pressured me to go to college or at least get a degree” (Respondent #50).
- “Because my friends were going ...” (Respondent #51).
- “My mother encouraged me to attend college. I was not that enthusiastic about it though. I wanted to get a job to support my daughter, who was two at the time, and not depend on my mom” (Respondent #52).
- “Because of the band/music program” (Respondent #58).
- “Family pressure and I wanted to go get a higher education” (Respondent #60).

- “My parents encouraged me to attend college” (Respondent #69).
- “Closer to home having family and small class. If I was single I would have gone further” (Respondent #77).
- “The reason I choose to further my education after HS [high school] was because I would be the first child in a family of nine children to go to college” (Respondent #82).
- “Parents wanted me to go. Undecided of what to do after high school” (Respondent #84).
- “No options, I received a [major] Scholarship from a local college and other influences [family members, TSP staff] helped me make my choices” (Respondent #87).

Out of the 87 survey respondents, 84 addressed why they choose to attend college. There were 64 respondents, 19 males and 45 females, who made reference to wanting a better life for self and family. The other 20 respondents who addressed this item, 8 males and 12 females, indicated they decided to attend college because of outside pressure/influence. Of those respondents wanting a better life for self and family, 30% were male and 70% female. While respondents attending college because of outside pressure/influence some 40% were male and 60% female. A variation in gender proportion is detected between the two sets of respondents. Thus, the female respondents appear to be more inclined to attend college for the purpose of benefiting self and family than do male respondents.

A variety of reasons for improving life for person and family were articulated in responses to this survey item. Overcoming a “dead end job” and the unhappiness



associated with the low wages and nature of the labor were reasons cited by respondent #4 and agreed with by respondents #14, #78, and #88. Respondent #88 described a bleak predicament, “I couldn’t find any other work but at poultry plants and I couldn’t work in that kind of environment. I couldn’t work at the casino because of the hours and babysitting problems on these hours.” Twenty-three respondents (#s: 7, 8, 12, 16, 17, 21, 22, 25, 26, 28, 30, 36, 37, 42, 44, 46, 56, 62, 66, 68, 74, 80, and 85) alluded to their educational pursuits based in creating better job opportunities and gaining higher salary for themselves. The words of respondent #26 captured the sentiments of the other 22, “I wanted to better myself, I wanted to grow as a person. I knew I could open a lot of doors for certain jobs I was interested in with a college degree.” A general interest in learning and being challenged were the factors leading respondents #19, #23, #53, #57 and #67 towards a higher education. Continuing along this theme, respondents #18, #31, #38, #45, #49, #55, #59, and #71, specified their career of choice and indicated that an educational credential was required to attain the goal. Making a better life for their children was the focus of respondents #47, #64, and #83. In addition, to enhancing job opportunities, respondents #6, #28, #72, and #81 wanted to become educationally equipped to better help the tribe (MBCI). Further, the sub-themes of using education as a means to leave the reservation (respondent #s: 39, 54, 56, 63, and 74) and meeting new people (respondent #s: 16, 25, 63 and 67) emerged in the context of achieving a better life for person and family.

Varying degrees of pressure to attend college were placed on 11 respondents (#5, #8, #13, #20, #27, #50, #52, #60, #69, #82, #84) by family members. For respondent #5 there was no choice as “my mom pick college. I had no say in it.” In contrast,

respondent #20 simply wanted to “follow in my mother’s footsteps.” A sense of duty to family seemed to guide respondents #27 and #82 to college. The parents and sister of respondent #27 were unable to attend college and respondent # 82 “would be the first child in a family of nine children to go to college.” Although family pressure did not determine her decision to attend college, respondent #77 was influenced by family members to remain close to home. Respondent #48 placed a family related pressure on his self by wanting to “do more than my parents.” In the case of respondents #2, #9, #51 and #87, friends and community were the motivating factor to attend college. Thus, family, friends and the community provided external motivation to these respondents to attempt a higher education.

Item 46: What are your academic and vocational goals?

The responses to the inquiry on academic and vocational goals included specific academic degree goals, statements of achievement and some general academic aspirations. The responses that included both statements of achievement and future goals were kept together being placed in the same category (respondent academic achievements & goals). The responses have been divided into three categories: respondent academic degree goals, respondent academic achievements & goals, and general academic aspirations. Each category name will be used as the heading for their respective list of responses. Responses will be listed in one of the three categories in ascending numerical order by respondent number. A narrative discussion will follow the lists of responses.

### **Respondent academic degree goals**

- “To continue my education and obtain a Master’s” (Respondent #1).

- “My academic goal is to attain my Bachelor Degree in Psychology” (Respondent #2).
- “My goal is to pursue (a [AA] degree) in child development tech as soon as I can get up with money wise” (Respondent #3).
- “I would like to get my AA in Business Administration. Hopefully continue to a major four year university” (Respondent #4).
- “My academic goals are "priceless" ... I have set a lot; I want to graduate college, receive my B.S. degree with cum laude honors. After I receive my undergraduate degree I want to continue to the next level, a Master's degree” (Respondent #7).
- “My academic goals now has [sic] changed since the start of my academic career. When I started I just wanted to survive and make passing grades. Now I want to obtain a Doctorate Degree b/c I know now what I want to do” (Respondent #8).
- “To obtain my B.A. degree from a 4 year university” (Respondent #10).
- “I am currently working on a degree in Psychology. I want to be a counselor and help our students with the everyday problems they face on the reservation or home life that effects them with their abilities to succeed in everyday life” (Respondent #11).
- “I will be receiving my Bachelor's degree in Business Administration in May of 2007. I plan to continue to Graduate school in hopes of becoming a teacher” (Respondent #16).
- “I want to obtain my bachelor’s degree in Business Administration with concentration in accounting” (Respondent #20).

- “My goal is to receive an AAS degree in Business and office technology. Also when I finish I still want to get a degree in Medical Office Technology (AAS degree)” (Respondent #21).
- “I plan on receiving my bachelors in August [2007]. I also plan on working toward my Master’s degree” (Respondent #22).
- “To get a good job by getting an AA in Business” (Respondent #24).
- “My goal is to achieve a Master’s degree in education” (Respondent #26).
- “Right now, I want to get a degree in education and coaching” (Respondent #28).
- “Academic goals: read more pages, set time to study more. Obtain a B.S. degree by next May (2008)” (Respondent #29).
- “Pursue is my goal [*sic*]. Secondary Education is a high possibility. History and my coaching license in football and some other sports” (Respondent #34).
- “Eventually obtain Master’s” (Respondent #35).
- “I would like to get AA and finish up on my EMT and move into paramedic” (Respondent #38).
- “To get a Master’s in Business or CA in audit” (Respondent #39).
- “Attend four year university branch and continue to pursue in Business Administration” (Respondent #42).
- “Right now, I have four more semesters to complete, in order, to receive a BS degree. I hope to eventually use this degree and my work experience to, one day, be a program director for the Tribe” (Respondent #43).
- “The time I was attending college, I wanted to pursue a degree in nursing however, I didn’t get that degree” (Respondent #44).

- “I want the highest level of degree in Social Work” (Respondent #47).
- “Get my Master’s” (Respondent #48).
- “4 [*sic*] year degree” (Respondent #51).
- “I am taking night courses now. I am at 50 + credits. I want to get my liberal arts degree, then pursue into a health degree (physical therapy)” (Respondent #54).
- “To complete my Senior year [of a bachelor’s degree]” (Respondent #55).
- “I am currently working on my CPA” (Respondent #56).
- “To obtain a technology degree [AA]” (Respondent #59).
- “Get a liberal arts degree” (Respondent #60).
- “Major in auditing” (Respondent #61).
- “I’m trying to get my AA in child care” (Respondent #62).
- “To get my AA degree” (Respondent #65).
- “My academic goals are to have a degree in Business Administration. Vocational goals, is to pursue [*sic*] in Administration” (Respondent #66).
- “One day I want to obtain a Masters degree. I’m not sure in what yet but right now my children are my life. I’ll wait until they’re older” (Respondent #67).
- “I would like to obtain a Master's degree in education and continue working in the Choctaw Tribal School system” (Respondent #68).
- “I wish to graduate at a major university with a degree in Journalism and Photography” (Respondent #71).
- “I want to earn a Master’s degree in elementary education” (Respondent #74).
- “To attend and earn 1 more college degree and vocational to upgrade the new technology systems” (Respondent #77).

- “My goal is to continue my education and earn a degree” (Respondent #81).
- “One day return and finish with a degree in business/accounting” (Respondent #84).
- “I would like to finish school with a degree in Economics so I could help with the planning of the Tribe's financial future” (Respondent #86).
- “Go back and complete Nursing [AA degree] to help other tribal members get into the medical field. We need to help our own people take care of themselves and families” (Respondent #87).
- “I want to pursue in getting a BA degree in Business Administration, but this is on hold for now” (Respondent #88).

#### **Respondent academic achievements & goals**

- “I wanted to complete a terminal degree and obtain a degree in business management” (Respondent #6).
- “Since I already have a BS degree, possibly go for a Master’s or a 2<sup>nd</sup> Bachelor’s degree” (Respondent #9).
- “I have my BS degree, but would like to continue on to earn a Master’s degree. I’m at a pay grade that financial aid will not help me with college so I’m back to square 1 when I had to do work -- study to get me thru the 1st 2 yrs” (Respondent #13).
- “My dream was to pursue a Master’s degree in social work, but unfortunately the closest school that offers this program is two hours away. I work full time and

have a young child so traveling two hours each way is not feasible right now. I hope to attend graduate school in the near future” (Respondent #25).

- “I’ve attained a bachelor’s degree which was my goal. Maybe I’ll take some classes in the future” (Respondent #27).
- “I’m continuing my education in Administration in Educational Leadership in the fall of 2007” (Respondent #30).
- “I’ve obtained my academic goal, a specialist degree, but people are encouraging me to get a doctorate degree” (Respondent #31).
- “After I received my AA degree, I went on to obtain my Bachelor's Degree. It felt great to know that I was the first in my family to obtain a 4-year degree on my father's side and the third on my mother's side” (Respondent #52).
- “I’ve already received my bachelor’s degree, I’m in the process in getting my Masters degree, and then I plan on to Law School afterwards” (Respondent #72).
- “Right now I'm working towards a bachelor degree in business administration and before that it was an Associate's degree in Physical education. My goal is to be a coach and a business person” (Respondent #73).

#### **General academic aspirations**

- “I basically just want to learn to succeed in the pre-medical field and to do medical research & hopefully one day make a break through or just a difference” (Respondent #12).
- “Achieved them” (Respondent #17).
- “My goal is to complete college and let my kids do the same” (Respondent #18).

- “Finally, I have chosen to complete my academic goal in social work” (Respondent #19).
- “Attain a degree, any degree” (Respondent #33).
- “Try to have an ‘A’ in every class. I studied hard” (Respondent #36).
- “My academic career is over with the exception of ministerial education” (Respondent #37).
- “My academic goals are to learn and gain knowledge in each subject area and apply that knowledge in pursuit of a better future for myself” (Respondent #40).
- “To try to achieve as much as I can before I get too old” (Respondent #41).
- “To understand the courses I take by dissecting its context to enhance my knowledge” (Respondent #45).
- “Graduate before my oldest starts college” (Respondent #46).
- “I want to pursue a career in counseling” (Respondent #50).
- “I hope to one day obtain a degree” (Respondent #53).
- “Anything to do with communications” (Respondent #63).
- ““My academic goals were to succeed in pursuing my degree with a good GPA” (Respondent #70).
- “To always challenge my mind with classes or other means of obtaining information” (Respondent #78).
- “Try to maintain a decent grade” (Respondent #79).
- “My goal is to continue my education and earn a degree” (Respondent #80).
- “To become a teacher at a Tribal elementary school” (Respondent #82).



- “Not much there days because I have children that keep me too busy” (Respondent #83).
- “Not very smart but good with my hands so vocational was the way” (Respondent #85).

From the 87 survey respondents, 77 addressed their academic and vocational goals. There were 46 respondents, 12 males and 34 females, who stated an academic degree goal (respondent #: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 8, 10, 11, 16, 20, 21, 22, 24, 26, 28, 29, 34, 35, 38, 39, 42, 43, 47, 48, 51, 54, 55, 56, 59, 60, 61, 62, 65, 66, 67, 68, 70, 71, 74, 77, 81, 84, 86, 87, and 88). Five different type of degrees were referenced: associate’s (2 males; 7 female), bachelor’s (7 male; 20 female), master’s (2 male; 6 female), doctor of philosophy (1 male), and professional (1 female). A similar proportion was found between female and male interest in associate, bachelors, and master’s degrees. Associate degrees had the highest proportion. Further, there were 11 respondents indicating they had earned a degree (respondent #: 6, 9, 13, 25, 27, 30, 31, 52, 72, and 73). According to the responses a male earned an associate’s degree, 1 female a specialist, a male a doctor of philosophy, and 8 respondents a bachelor degree (2 males; 6 females). An additional 21 respondents (7 males; 14 females) shared general academic aspirations (respondent #: 12, 17, 18, 19, 33, 36, 37, 40, 41, 45, 46, 50, 53, 63, 70, 78, 79, 80, 82, 83, and 85).

Responses to this item revealed academic majors respondents had either completed a degree in or are interested in. Specific academic majors listed by those respondents who stated they had completed a degree were: business management (respondent #6), educational leadership (respondent #30), law (respondent #72) and

physical education (respondent #73). Several academic majors were listed in the context of goal statements. These include: auditing (respondent #: 56 and 61), business administration (respondent #: 4, 16, 20, 21, 24, 39, 42, 66, 82, and 88), child care (respondent #62), economics (respondent #86), education (respondents #: 26, 28, 34, 68, and 74), Emergency Medical Technology (EMT) (respondent #38), journalism and photography (respondent #71), liberal arts (respondent #: 54 and 60), nursing (respondent #: 44, and 87), physical therapy (respondent #54), and social work (respondent #47). Also, respondents who made general comments referenced academic majors of interest. Communications (respondent #63), counseling (respondent #50), education (respondent #82), medical research (respondent #12), and social work (respondent #19) were mentioned. Thus, business administration and education were the two most noted fields of interest for postsecondary study.

In comparing the number and type of degrees stated as being earned in the context of this item with the results from item 8 (refer to Table 5), it was found that 10 less females claimed to have earned a bachelors degree in this item. This can be expected since item 8 specifically inquired into highest degree earned and this item was addressing academic goals. No females mentioned having had completed an AA degree in responses to this item. However, 20 female respondents noted a bachelor's as their degree goal. Assuming the accuracy of the results of item 8 and this item, the number of female respondents who have a bachelor's degree has the potential of more than doubling for this respondent group in the future. There were 6 more respondents that answered NA to this item than item 8.

Item 47: While preparing for college, were you aided in the preparation process and how

soon did you begin the process?

This survey item deals with the preparation process for college. In the context of this item the preparation process was meant to refer to the selection of and application to a college. This survey item addressed whether the respondent was aided in the preparation process and when the respondent began the process. The responses for this item will be divided into those who received aide in the college preparation process and those who did not receive aide in the college preparation process. These designations will be used as the heading for their respective list of responses. The responses will be listed in ascending numerical order for each list. A discussion will follow the lists of responses.

#### **Respondents aided in the college preparation process**

- “Yes, as soon as I got everything situated” (Respondent #3).
- “Yes. As soon as possible” (Respondent #4).
- “The school counselor assisted in preparation for paper work” (Respondent #6).
- “Yes, I received assistance & I began as soon I decided to attend” (Respondent #10).
- “Yes, I was aided in the preparation process for college. I started a month upon my high school graduation” (Respondent #12).
- “Yes. Scholarship program helped, but now I'm involved with my children to prepare them” (Respondent #16).

- “Begin preparing myself for college in my junior year by taking some advanced classes” (Respondent #18).
- “Nan Stamper was here to offer her services as I was getting ready for college. Not sure as to how soon I started” (Respondent #20).
- “I knew there was a deadline for scholarship & I went by the checklist they provided. I began preparing in April” (Respondent #22).
- “I was aided occasionally. I began making my preparation late - my senior year” (Respondent #30).
- “When I began my college career, there was a program for teacher aides to attend classes in the afternoon, while being paid their salary. The director of this program helped us enroll in classes. She had an agreement with ECCC; the professors came to the reservation and taught. She was very helpful and so were the staff” (Respondent #31).
- “Yes. Before the end of my senior year” (Respondent #34).
- “Yes my teachers were really good at preparing me for college. They started in my Freshman year” (Respondent #35).
- “TSP was good about getting all of your information sooner and quicker. So, school would begin I was already prepared for the financial side and other stuff” (Respondent #36).
- “There was some help from family but not until late in the process” (Respondent #37).
- “There were students that were enrolled in college that helped me fill out paperwork” (Respondent #39).

- “I was enrolled in Upward Bound in high school - Ms. Fuller, Ms. Joe and Mrs. Hilda Nickey encouraged and supported us in preparation when I was a freshmen at Choctaw Central” (Respondent #42).
- “As a tribal employee ... I asked people if there was a scholarship program for Native Americans. In which, I was told of the Tribal Scholarship program. I immediately went over to the program’s office and spoke to the director. Although I missed the program’s deadline, the director did not hesitate to help me register and obtain the necessary funding for the upcoming semester” (Respondent #43).
- “Yes, as soon as I let [*sic*] decided” (Respondent #49).
- “I took college prep courses throughout high school. It was during my senior year when I started looking at colleges. I was not really interested as I stated before because I had a baby girl to think about. My counselor, Julia Cole, encouraged me to apply to George Mason University. So I did, as a joke. As it turned out, I was accepted. During spring break, Darlene Willis, scholarship assistant at the time, took my mother & me to visit the campus. Although it was a beautiful campus, I decided that if I were to go to college, it would have to be in the state of Mississippi. I missed my daughter and it was scary at night even with my mother close by” (Respondent #52).
- “Yes - TSP came to the high school a month before we graduated” (Respondent #53).

- “I started April before my graduation. Yes, guidance counselor pushed me to get paper work done” (Respondent #54).
- I was aided by my family right about a month out of high school which was in May” (Respondent #58).
- “I began the process while I was a Senior in school. I was aided by TSP” (Respondent #59).
- “Yes, Senior year” (Respondent #60).
- “Yes, the staff at TSP helped with the process and it didn't take too long” (Respondent #62).
- “Yes, I started to ask questions about college when I was in 9th grade --- I started to have dreams about going to college --- and visited the local colleges every chance I had” (Respondent #63).
- “Yes, I was provided with preparation for college by a career education course. I did not choose teaching as an interest then but when I began working in the Adult Education program I became interested” (Respondent #68).
- “Yes. Everything was begun in an expedient manner” (Respondent #70).
- “Yes, the TSP visited the school on several occasions to inform the students about their program and aid in the processing of applying to school and applying for financial programs as well” (Respondent #71).
- “With my parents constant motivation, encouragement, guidance & [sic]” (Respondent #72).

- “A scholarship assistant with TSP helped me with the beginning process during my senior year of high school” (Respondent #74).
- “I ask around and person who already experienced in college and I asked them. What needed to do, I then took one night class in 96. I went to full-time with Choctaw Vocational Education and graduated office technology then went for 2 years” (Respondent #77).
- “Yes, my college coach was my mentor it was done quickly” (Respondent #79).
- “I had help with what needs to be turned in and I did all that last minute” (Respondent #84).
- “First years in college, I did not have financial help from scholarship program due to parents not filing taxes. I paid for some classes and twice my worksite paid for a class (CHC & Finance Dept). Only after I started filling my own taxes did I know I could get help from the TSP” (Respondent #87).

**Respondents who did not receive aide in the college preparation process**

- “Junior year in high school and I had to do everything on my own. Some information was provided by the guidance counselor” (Respondent #1).
- “I don't believe there was a process set up at that time, if so, I don't remember taking part” (Respondent #2).
- “I don't believe so, I'm more of an independent person and like to do things myself” (Respondent #7).

- “I did not receive any preparation as far as paper work (scholarships, admissions etc.) but, had several college visits during my Senior Year in H.S. My preparation for college started late. Before my H.S. graduation ceremony” (Respondent #8).
- “Not really. I literally had to visit the school and did the things that had to be done to get admitted” (Respondent # 9).
- “Not really! All I heard at first was if you didn't know what you wanted to do just take Liberal Arts its your basic! (The higher Education Program)” (Respondent #11).
- “Not in the first 2 years of college. Only in the last 2 years of college. I initiated the application by requesting for the applications for transcripts, application to the college etc., then TSP stepped in on the financial portion” (Respondent #13).
- “No, I decided to attend college at 23 years old” (Respondent #14).
- “No, I was not sent to school away from home before I was ready which cause me to drop out, but I was determined to reach my goal” (Respondent #19).
- “No” (Respondent #24).
- “No, not really” (Respondent #26).
- “No, I was not aided and I did not know about how to apply to college and at that time the TSP only took few applications and I was unaware of the deadline. I also did not know that a program like TSP existed” (Respondent #28).



- “Not really. I didn't plan to attend college until beginning of my senior year. When I decided to attend college, my guidance counselor and my basketball coach and his wife helped begin the process” (Respondent #29).
- “No, I did not have any aided preparation. I didn't start working on anything till in May” (Respondent #32).
- “In the late 80's here at CCHS there wasn't a whole lot of college preparation concerns” (Respondent #33).
- “I forced myself and prepared only that month's [*sic*] before I went to college” (Respondent #38).
- “No, I was not aided in the preparation process for college” (Respondent #40).
- “No” (Respondent #41).
- “No” (Respondent #44).
- “I was not aided in the preparation process for college” (Respondent #45).
- “No, April 1988 and month before graduation” (Respondent #46).
- “No” (Respondent #48).
- “I was never aided in any preparation process” (Respondent #50).
- “No, I received no assistance in the preparation process. In my day there was no TSP where you could receive assistance financial or otherwise. While still in HS about to graduate, it was suggested to us to fill out application for the vocational school early in which I did 6 months prior to make sure to get in” (Respondent #55).

- “I was informed what I needed to complete to enroll in college and learned the rest on my own” (Respondent #56).
- “None. I actually didn't know what the ACT was for and actually just colored in the test sheet without reading the question. I felt it was just some test to pass HS” (Respondent #57).
- “No preparation for college” (Respondent #61).
- “No” (Respondent #65).
- “No” (Respondent #66).
- “I didn't know the first thing about preparing for college. I vaguely remember people talking to me about preparing but I wasn't mature enough to listen” (Respondent #67).
- “All I took before starting college was ACT” (Respondent #69).
- “I was not involved in a preparation process. I just did what I had to do” (Respondent #73).
- “No, I didn't have help preparing for college. So the process was done late” (Respondent #80).
- “No, I didn't have anyone telling me the other different choices there” (Respondent #81).
- “No none [sic]” (Respondent #82).
- “No, ONE to ONE guidance was not really there 2 years later” (Respondent #85).
- “No. I completed my schedule the week before classes began” (Respondent #86).

Of the 87 survey respondents, 72 addressed whether they were aided in the college preparation process. There were 35 respondents, 11 males and 24 females, who indicated that they were aided in the preparation process for college. Another 37 respondents, 15 males and 22 females, wrote they did not receive any aide in the preparation process for college. Rather they conducted the preparation process on their own. In comparison, of respondents who received aide 31% were male and 69% female while 41% of the respondents who did not receive aide were male and 59% female. Thus, a greater proportion of females received aide than did not and a greater proportion of males did not receive aide than did. Sources of the aide that were noted included coaches, family/friends, the school guidance counselor, teachers, the TSP, the Upward Bound program or a combination. The remaining 15 respondents (1 male and 14 females) either did not address this survey item, stated they did not know or could not remember if they received preparation aide.

Similarities in college preparation experiences of various respondents were found. Four respondents (#'s: 31 – female; 33 – male; 46 – male; and 55 – female) stated they began their college career prior to the inception of the TSP. Respondents #57 and #69 related the taking of the ACT test as a form of preparation for college although they did not fully understand the purpose of the test. Respondents #18, #35 and #52 equated academic work as preparation for college. Another 7 respondents (#s: 9, 11, 26, 29, 56, 67, and 85) suggested they did “not really” receive any aide in the college preparation process and as a result were categorized with the respondents who did not receive aide in the college preparation process. These 7 respondents projected a feeling of abandonment,

a sense of being overwhelmed and left to figure the process out for themselves even though they hinted at receiving limited direction from others.

There were unique experiences presented by individual respondents to this survey item that provide novel information. By going through the college preparation process respondent #16 shared that she better understands how to support her children in education. Respondent #43 revealed that some Tribal businesses encourage educational advancement of employees who are tribal members by allowing them up to 20 paid hours a week to attend college. Also, respondent #43, made mention of the fact that the TSP has application deadlines that participants must meet to receive funding for a particular semester. An opportunity to attend an out of state 4 year university approximately 900 miles from home was declined by respondent #52 because she had a young child to care for and found it “scary at night” to be away from home. A college coach from a perspective college served as a mentor for respondent #79 and the college preparation process was completed quickly. Respondent #87 shared that neglecting to file taxes by a TSP applicant or their parents, if they are a dependent, will make them ineligible for acceptance for funding by the TSP.

Item 48: How did the Tribal Scholarship Program (TSP) benefit you?

This survey item addresses how the survey respondents perceived the TSP to be beneficial to them. The benefit of the TSP was not limited to financial assistance, instead encompasses several services provided by the TSP. The responses for this item will be divided into three categories and listed within those categories. The categories are: expenses were paid by the TSP, support services, and provided access to college education. The ‘expenses paid by the TSP’ category includes references to funding the

respondent received from the TSP. While the ‘support services’ category was comprised of responses describing non-funding help respondents were given. And the ‘provided access to college’ category contained quotes regarding how the TSP made college a viable option for those who otherwise would have been unable to attend. Several respondents included comments that fall into more than one category, thus quotes from a particular respondent may be listed in more than one category. The responses for each category are listed in ascending numerical order. A discussion will follow the lists of responses.

#### **Expenses were paid by the TSP**

- “The (staff) helped me financially...” (Respondent #1).
- “By paying for tuition and books” (Respondent #4).
- “When I started the TSP it helped because it paid for everything – books, tuition, even school supplies. It even provided additional money to spend while at college” (Respondent #8).
- “TSP paid for tuition, meals, and room” (Respondent #9).
- “Everything, financial assistance ...” (Respondent #10).
- “My college education (paid for) – this program really helped me a lot” (Respondent #11).
- “The Tribal Scholarship Program provided me with very good benefits such as: food expenses, transportation expenses ...” (Respondent #12).

- “By paying my tuition in a timely manner, unlike financial aid students who acts [*sic*] overwhelmed about the possibilities of not having their tuitions paid timely” (Respondent #13).
- “Paid for college and financial needs” (Respondent #14).
- “... financially” (Respondent #16).
- “Right now, Tribal Scholarship only pays for my books and tuition which I am thankful” (Respondent #19).
- “TSP was here to help cover my college expenses when my Pell grant wasn’t able to fully fund me” (Respondent # 20).
- “It has helped me a lot with paying my tuition, books, give me allowances for gas, lunch, and my bills” (Respondent #21).
- “I didn’t want to make student loans. I was able to stay on campus” (Respondent #22).
- “First of all, having all my tuition, fees, and books paid for and on top of that being able to receive living expenses was truly a great blessing!” (Respondent #25).
- “It allowed me to go full time and concentrate on school. I didn’t have to worry about work” (Respondent #26).
- “By providing my books and paying for my tuition” (Respondent #27).
- “... I could get an education without spending so much from my pocketbook” (Respondent #28).
- “They took care of all of my financial needs and I had nothing to worry with” (Respondent #30).

- “The TSP benefited me by paying my tuition, books, meals, materials and supplies, and gas” (Respondent #31).
- “Help with tuition and other expenses” (Respondent #32).
- “Paid for my classes” (Respondent #33).
- “Also, they provided me supplies and instruments I needed for my classes” (Respondent #35).
- “It helped me to get an education easier because they paid the whole way” (Respondent #36).
- “It kept my parents from taking care of all the expenses associated with college and kept me from having a part-time job” (Respondent #37).
- “TSP helped me, financially, to attend college” (Respondent #40).
- “It helped out with books & tuition” (Respondent #41).
- “Between the Pell grant and TSP, these two sources pay for my tuition and books. In the past, the TSP has tremendously helped with commuter (gasoline) and meal ticket expenses. Yet, because of budget cuts, they are unable to provide this help to me and others” (Respondent #43).
- “Money to compensate loss of hours @ work” (Respondent #46).
- “In every way. Tuition, books, extra financial help” (Respondent #49).
- “Housing, tools, books, meals, stipend” (Respondent #50).
- “In my latter years of attending college classes I had received tuition for my classes” (Respondent #55).
- “The first year it was financial aid help” (Respondent #57).
- “It helped pay my books and classes” (Respondent #58).

- “They allowed me to attend college and payed [*sic*] for housing, books, classes” (Respondent #59).
- “Paid tuition and stipends” (Respondent #60).
- “Support financially ...” (Respondent #61).
- “TSP is paying for my classes” (Respondent #62).
- “The TSP paid for my tuition ...” (Respondent #63).
- “They paid for my books & tuition” (Respondent #65).
- “They paid for my books and classes. They also helped in funding for my way to class, eating and a weekly stipend” (Respondent #66).
- “They helped me obtain a degree financially” (Respondent #67).
- “It provided me with a scholarship to help pay tuition and books” (Respondent #68).
- “The program assist [*sic*] me with the tuition and books” (Respondent #69).
- “They aided with many of the funds that I would not have been able to pay for myself” (Respondent #71).
- “Yes, the scholarship program helped me out (still helping me out) tremendously with financial assistance” (Respondent #72).
- “It helped me out really well with the expenses for tuition and also for myself” (Respondent #73).
- “I know without their help it would be hard to continue my education because college is expensive” (Respondent #74).



- “While attending college the Tribal Scholarship program helped me with assistance. Pay the tuition and other fees” (Respondent #77).
- “Financial [*sic*] for school” (Respondent #79).
- “Nothing other than paying for my books and tuition” (Respondent #81).
- “By paying for my tuition” (Respondent #83).
- “They paid for tuition, books, etc.” (Respondent #84).
- “TSP help [*sic*] me pay my way through books, tuitions, and stipends” (Respondent #85).
- “They paid for my tuition and books and a small stipend” (Respondent #86).
- “You get all your classes & books paid for” (Respondent #87).

#### **Support services**

- “...another benefit is that the program helped me to maintain good grades. The program & staff helped my life @ college a whole lot easier” (Respondent #1).
- “...filled in the gap of what college life skills needed after 2 years” (Respondent #2).
- “The benefits in education and jobs” (Respondent #3).
- “It helped me with everything I would need to get through college” (Respondent #5).
- “TSP helped me obtain a second Master’s degree” (Respondent #6).

- “Words cannot describe what all the Tribal Scholarship has done”  
(Respondent #7).
- “...helping me with information on where & what I needed to do to attend college” (Respondent #10).
- “I remember one staff from the program saying to me you like to help people & talking – counseling would be a good program that I would like. The staff are always writing to help with questions and solutions”  
(Respondent #11).
- “Information ...” (Respondent #16).
- “Even though I gave TSP enough reason to drop me from their program, they continued to believe in me. Eventually, my efforts began to show positive results” (Respondent #17).
- “Help me getting into college” (Respondent #18).
- “They have even offered the best advice they know when I didn’t know what to do” (Respondent #20).
- “A counselor spoke with one of my instructors when I was failing a class (half of the class was failing). After that my grades increased dramatically. My instructor assigned more work to help us” (Respondent #22).
- “The staff never gave up on me” (Respondent #24).
- “The Tribal Scholarship Program provided me with a lot of guidance, support, and encouragement. It was great to see a friendly face on campus every two weeks and be able to have someone to talk to about my worries

about school – someone who understood what I was going through”  
(Respondent #25).

- “I benefited from it greatly, because it taught me that I need to keep my grades up” (Respondent #28).
- “Provided with options on what I would like to do and also counseled me what I wanted to do at school” (Respondent #35).
- “They stayed on top of things and visited us and wanted to help in any way we had problems from our studies to dorm life” (Respondent #38).
- “All the benefits offered thru TSP helped out” (Respondent #39).
- “When I was a full time student a counselor use to check on students at a local college every two weeks on our academic status. If I had any questions relating to school or financial aide, she was reliable”  
(Respondent #42).
- “They pretty much did everything for you as a student” (Respondent #53).
- “They helped a lot” (Respondent #54).
- “It helped me focus on my education so I did not have to work like other students enrolled in college” (Respondent #56).
- “... provided tutor at times” (Respondent #61).
- “TSP would contact me or I’d call a counselor once every week or so – like an update at school or just ask questions – that helped out”  
(Respondent #63).

- “All the employees at TSP were all wonderful. They made an awkward transition in my life easier. The program provided me more than just financial help, they encouraged me” (Respondent #70).
- “They helped me in so many ways” (Respondent #74).
- “And help to give advice, what to do and take more courses” (Respondent #77).
- “They have been great lately. As long as you ask for help and are on time for application” (Respondent #87).

#### **Provided access to a college education**

- “TSP has allowed me to get my degree” (Respondent #2).
- “There’s too much stress about financial aid when I believe there should be a strong concentration on each student’s academic goals which is stressful enough already” (Respondent #13).
- “TSP allowed me to attend the college of my choice” (Respondent #29).
- “Without them, college would not have been an option” (Respondent #34).
- “By giving me an opportunity to attend college and becoming what I wish to be” (Respondent #45).
- “If it wasn’t for them I would have not gone to school” (Respondent #47).
- “It allowed me to attain my degree” (Respondent #48).
- “Having the opportunity to go to college” (Respondent #51).

- “Without their assistance, I would never have obtained my degrees” (Respondent #52).
- “I met students who wished they had a program like ours, & I took it for granted!!” (Respondent #54).
- “I could not have paid for my college education otherwise” (Respondent #68).
- “... I wouldn’t have attended college” (Respondent #69).
- “The TSP benefited me by allowing me to obtain a college degree” (Respondent #78).
- “They gave me a chance to continue my education” (Respondent #84).
- “No excuses for not getting an education. You have to want it” (Respondent #87).

Of the 87 survey respondents, 79 presented a response describing how the TSP benefited them. Out of these, 19 respondents included responses that were relevant to more than one category. As a result, a total of 102 quotes are listed in the 3 categories. There were 57 respondents, 21 males and 36 females, who mentioned that the TSP assisted in covering college expenses. In the category of support services, 31 respondents, 7 males and 24 females, explained that the TSP offered them various types of support in addition to funding. The 15 respondents in the ‘access to college’ category, 3 male and 12 female, related that the TSP made a college education a viable option for them. There were 8 respondents, all female, who did not address this survey item. A greater proportion of males (78%) than females (70%) made a response that fell into the

‘paid expenses’ category. Responses related to the ‘paid expenses’ category were noted by the majority of male and female respondents to this item.

Similarities and discrepancies in the type of funding respondents received were found. Tuition and textbooks were the main items mentioned as having been funded. Respondent #8 stated, “it [TSP] paid for everything – books, tuition, even school supplies” and a stipend. Fourteen respondents (#10, #11, #25, #30, #31, #35, #43, #46, #49, #59, #66, #73, #85, and #86) named other funded expenses such as housing, meals, transportation and stipends to help with other living expenses. Although, respondent #43 stated, “because of budget cuts, they [TSP] are unable to provide this help to me and others.” Testimonials of how the funding benefited them and their families were shared by 3 respondents: “I didn’t have to worry about work” (Respondent #26); “It helped me to get an education easier because they paid the whole way” (Respondent #36); “It kept my parents from taking care of all the expenses ... and kept me from having a part time job” (Respondent #37). When questioned regarding covered expenses, the TSP staff reiterated what was explained under the heading The Tribal Scholarship Program in chapter I. TSP funding is based on the difference between the financial aid award plus the EFC and the COA calculated by the university the student attends. Calculations of covered expenses are also based on the enrollment status of the student, full-time or part-time, and whether they live with their parents, live on-campus or live off-campus. This funding calculation formula may account for the discrepancy and variety in the responses regarding TSP funding.

References to support services revealed that respondents received mentoring and counseling support. Respondent #17 shared, “they continued to believe in me.”

Respondent #24 concurred by stating, “the staff never gave up on me.” Likewise, respondent #25 wrote that the TSP staff “understood what I was going through” and supported her accordingly. Practical examples of the mentoring and counseling support provided by the TSP staff include: “... helping me with information on where & what I needed to do to attend college” (Respondent #10); “the staff ... writing to help with questions and solutions” (Respondent #11); “a [TSP] counselor spoke with one of my instructors when I was failing a class.... My instructor assigned more work to help us” (Respondent #22); “It was good to see a friendly face on campus every two weeks and be able to have someone to talk to about my worries about school” (Respondent #25); “provided tutors at times” (Respondent #61); “They [TSP staff] encouraged me” (Respondent #70).

The TSP was credited by a number of respondents for providing access to a college education. They spoke of a college becoming a viable option for them due to the funding and other support of the TSP. The sentiments of these respondents can be summed up by the following quotes: “Without them, college would not have been an option” (Respondent #34); “Without their assistance, I would never have obtained my degrees” (Respondent #52); “I could not have paid for my college education otherwise” (Respondent #68); “TSP allowed me to attend the college of my choice” (Respondent #29).

In summary, the TSP program benefited respondents through funding, targeted counseling and mentoring services, and making a postsecondary education a viable option for those who otherwise would be unable to attend. There was some discrepancy regarding funding amounts, however, it was learned that a standard format is used for

calculating TSP funding. The TSP funding process, the eligibility requirements, and policies and procedures are detailed in the TSP *Student Handbook* (2007) and *Policies & Procedures* (2006) handbook.

Item 49: Are there ways you believe the TSP could better serve students?

This survey item seeks insights from survey respondent on how to improve the way the TSP supports students. The responses for this item were divided into four categories and listed within those categories. The categories are: satisfied with TSP services, ensure equity in the provision of benefits, provide more effective orientation and follow-up, and offer additional services. Responses indicating respondent's satisfaction with the services offered by the TSP were placed in the first category. Concern was relayed through responses in the second category for the fair disbursement of TSP benefits. In the third category are listed responses requesting enhanced orientation and follow-up by the TSP. The fourth category contains responses conveying suggestions for additional services they would like the TSP to address. Several respondents included comments that fall into more than one category, thus quotes from a particular respondent may be listed in more than one category. The responses for each category are listed in ascending numerical order. A discussion will follow the lists of responses.

#### **Satisfied with TSP services**

- “I believe TSP is doing an absolutely wonderful job now” (Respondent #1).
- “No not really! Just keep up the good advices [*sic*]” (Respondent #3).



- “This program provides a lot! Asking for more I think is getting a little greedy! They pay for your education, help fill out forms, answer questions, have open office door as well as ears, and solutions” (Respondent #11).
- “I feel the Tribal Scholarship Program covered everything I needed help with. Everyone was very helpful and trustworthy with keeping things confidential” (Respondent #12).
- “Support from TSP gave me confidence and later a strong demand of myself to finish my academic program” (Respondent #17).
- “I believe they are doing a good job. Paying for books and tuition should be the only assistance as I believe some students abuse other privileges” (Respondent #19).
- “To my knowledge TSP offered me the services I needed. It is also up to the student to make sure and follow up on going to college and getting enrolled” (Respondent #20).
- “Right now they are doing a great job for students. What could you ask for more” (Respondent #21).
- “I think that the TSP does enough to serve students. They provide funding, disbursements, and computers. Going to school is an individual effort. They can’t do the work for me” (Respondent #22).
- “I haven’t been to school in a while and I don’t know how things work but when I was still using their services, everything was satisfying” (Respondent #29).

- “No” (Respondent #35).
- “I think they are doing the best that they can” (Respondent #36).
- “A counselor from TSP visited me twice on campus and discussed any needs or problems I was having” (Respondent #37).
- “While I was attending classes the TSP did everything they could for me. They were doing all they could” (Respondent #39).
- “No, I think they are doing a good job. I hope they keep it up for the future student” (Respondent #41).
- “Most students like myself rather converse with Ms. Stamper because she’s more knowledgeable in the program, but she’s always overwhelmed with appointments” (Respondent #42).
- “In the past, the TSP has tremendously helped with commuter (gasoline) and meal ticket expenses” (Respondent #43).
- “I think they are doing a good job. They answered all of my questions and was willing [*sic*] to help me” (Respondent #47).
- “I think they are serving to the best of their abilities. Every year, they add new requirements and such. To be able to serve so many students today is incredible” (Respondent #52).
- “I believe they did the best they could do” (Respondent #53).
- “They helped me to the best of their abilities, it was me who did not take advantage” (Respondent #54).
- “I think the program is doing the best they can in serving students” (Respondent #55).

- “The student receives more benefit from the program now” (Respondent #56).
- “I think the program is doing what they can possibly do. Students just need to meet the program halfway” (Respondent #58).
- “No. The students should be happy with what aid they get. At that time in life, they should start trying to help themselves” (Respondent #59).
- “They do a good job” (Respondent #60).
- “No, we are adults and we all know what we are undertaking” (Respondent #61).
- “I think they are doing a good job” (Respondent #62).
- “No. Because it is really up to the student to decide what he/she really wants” (Respondent #65).
- “No everything was OK” (Respondent #66).
- “Today, I think they do too much for the students” (Respondent #67).
- “I believe the TSP served me well. I was always provided with support and assistance when I needed it” (Respondent #68).
- “No” (Respondent #69).
- “No” (Respondent #70).
- “In my opinion I think the Program already helps in many ways I can not think of any way to improve” (Respondent #71).
- “I was satisfied with the way they help students to exceed [succeed] in the next level. I am well-pleased with the TSP that [they kept] me up to date every semester and every year” (Respondent #73).

- “I feel they offer so much already to me as well as the other students” (Respondent #74).
- “No” (Respondent #82).
- “They are doing all right just need to be more strict with policy so children can take seriously” (Respondent #83).
- They are doing fine. I realize that it is up to the student to help themselves” (Respondent #84).

### **Ensure equity in the provision of benefits**

- “I only have issues with the policy that limits a students’ award with the working hours they have. I don’t feel anyone that is able to handle a full time job and go to college full time and still have passing grades should be penalized for excelling & cut out of stipend” (Respondent #2).
- “Give our Pell grant money back to us” (Respondent #4).
- “I understand the program pays for everything and gives the students a disbursement, but this past semester has been really hard because it’s not enough as it was before” (Respondent #7).
- “As a graduate student it is more expensive than being an undergrad student, because we are required to attend conferences, having membership with professional organizations” (Respondent #8).
- “None other than paying for the tuitions @ 100% instead of relying on financial aid to pay for them. Because some of the children will not qualify for financial aid” (Respondent #13).

- “Financial support is not enough.... Expenses does not include car payments, insurance, vet bills, and other miscellaneous (varies)” (Respondent #14).
- “Yes, they can give us more money! We also need an upgrade on our computer software. They need to pay the full 100% scholarship” (Respondent #26).
- “First off – treat all students fairly with financial assistance according to part-time/full-time requirements” (Respondent #30).
- “Yes, I believe it can better serve students by not having favorite students. All students should be paid the same amount” (Respondent #31).
- “Funding was always an issue” (Respondent #34).
- “Students living off campus need more financial help. I think freshmen/sophomore students should live in dorms and only allow Junior/Senior students to live off-campus” (Respondent #57).
- “It may have changed since I was a college freshman but the money for books and stipend was given at the end of the semester and I struggled to make ends meet. My mother couldn’t afford to give me very much so I found part-time work but that interfered with classes” (Respondent #86).

**Provide more effective orientation and follow-up**

- “Better orientation for students and follow-up of student activities” (Respondent #6).

- “TSP needs personnel (maybe more) that will be more active with students; whether by visitation, meeting, etc. at the student’s college” (Respondent #9).
- “More qualified counselors to interact with students at college” (Respondent #17).
- “To help students with their schedule and help them or tutoring them with their works [*sic*]” (Respondent #18).
- “The TSP, in my opinion, can better serve students by making more on campus visits with students. I think that orientation sessions or workshops giving students more information about college life, financial aid deadlines, etc. would benefit the students so much” (Respondent #25).
- “They need to come to the school and explain what prospective students need to do in order to attend a college of their choice ... ie. Filling out college/scholarships application, FAFSA, going over scholarship handbook” (Respondent #28).
- “The TSP could also better serve students by setting requirements in order to meet assistance needs from the TSP beginning in their freshmen year of high school” (Respondent 30).
- “Staff needs to visit the colleges more often and meet the instructors. They should monitor student progress and attendance” (Respondent #31).
- “Provide some type of session for freshman to be aware of when entering college” (Respondent #32).

- “A group meeting on campus or at the end of the semester might help” (Respondent #37).
- “More visits and more one on one with the student’s on what they [are] really lacking in” (Respondent #38).
- “I hope the other staff could make themselves more available to use at the director’s level” (Respondent #42).
- “I believe the TSP could help students by having campus visits before enrolling them” (Respondent #45).
- “Start a pre-college program around Junior year of high school” (Respondent #48).
- “There are always ways to better serve students” (Respondents #50).
- “If they had more staff they could visit and see how the students are doing with their classes, particularly the freshmen. This may already have been established” (Respondents #55).
- “Yes, be more sensitive to needs. Understanding that most students experience a cultural shock because they have attended an all Indian school ... TSP needs more counselors ... counselor who really work with student and not just contact them for sake of filling out forms and paper work” (Respondent #57).
- “Stipends arrive on time” (Respondent #63).
- “TSP could have courses/workshops for students to help with budgeting” (Respondent #72).

- “A strict screening process to allow those who are serious about their academics to get the attention they need” (Respondent #78).
- “They need more scholarship officers” (Respondent #79).
- “Yes, the main thing is in reference to their expectations and guidelines, I wish someone would explain it to the student. I suggest having orientations would solve this need. Example: If a student fails to make the 2.00 GPA, then the consequences would be...” (Respondent #80).
- “Yes, to find out what students want and what they need to know about. The different careers that would best suit the students” (Respondent #81).

#### **Offer additional services**

- “Yes, there should be a center where TSP students can go and have access to computers, internet, a copy machine, tutoring service, etc. here on the reservation (sort of like a mini library) ... mentoring TSP students ... I believe it would be utilized after hours” (Respondent #8).
- “Per diem checks for those of us who have to travel for school” (Respondent #16).
- “Offer tutorial class” (Respondent #24).
- “By providing a van or ride to those who don’t have vehicles and assisting with finding caregivers to those who need it” (Respondent #27).
- “Provide more mentors/tutorial during weekends or evenings” (Respondent #32).



- “Have classes on test taking, study habits and helping students with a major” (Respondent #44).
- “Offer other incentives for full time employees to go back to school” (Respondent #46).
- “Open lab for tutoring service also at the reservation for all students who travel back & forth to school. Also transportation, TSP should have to drive students back & forth those who might not want to stay in dorm” (Respondent #77).
- “Now days, everyone needs better access to computers for classes. They may work full-time and not able [*sic*] to get to computers during work hours” (Respondent #87).

Of the 87 survey respondents, 75 addressed ways they believe the TSP could better serve students. Out of these, 10 respondents included responses that were relevant to more than one category. As a result, a total of 85 quotes are listed in the 4 categories. There were 40 respondents, 9 males and 31 females, who indicated they were ‘satisfied with TSP services.’ Thirteen respondents felt the TSP should ‘better ensure equity in the provision of benefits’ to participants. A need for ‘more effective orientation and follow-up’ was expressed by the 23 respondents assigned to that category. And finally, 9 respondents believed the TSP should ‘offer additional services.’ The category with the greatest difference in gender representation was ‘satisfied with the TSP’ category (9 males to 31 females). In addition, the category showing the highest proportion of males to females responding was ‘provide more effective orientation and follow-up.’

More than half the respondents (53%) who addressed this item expressed a level of satisfaction with the TSP. Respondent #11 summed up several aspects of the practical support the TSP provides students, “They pay for your education, help fill out forms, answer questions, have open office door as well as ears, and solutions.” Respondent #12 collaborated with the analysis of #11 adding that, “Everyone was very helpful and trustworthy with keeping things confidential.” Further, respondent #22 shared, “They provide funding, disbursements, and computers.” Thus, the staff was professional, approachable, supportive and the program provided reasonable funding to cover educational expenses.

A sub-category of 10 respondents (#s: 20, 22, 54, 58, 59, 61, 65, 67, 83, and 85) emerged within the ‘satisfied’ respondents. These respondents focused in on the responsibility students have in earning their education and that some TSP participants are too dependent on the TSP and tend to blame the TSP if something doesn’t work out for them. In fact, there was a call for the TSP to “be more strict with policy so children [immature TSP participants] can take seriously” (Respondent #83). Respondent #67 thought “they [TSP] do too much for the students” and “offer so much already” (Respondent #74). While in a reflective tone respondent #84 realized “that it is up to the student to help themselves.” And respondent #22 concurred, “Going to school is an individual effort. They can’t do the work for me.” Thus, it was suggested that with the funding and support of the TSP students still have the responsibility to take advantage of the postsecondary opportunity and persist to completion.

Respondent classified in the ‘ensure equity in provision of benefits’ category made a variety of practical suggestions. These included subsidies for necessary upgrades

on computer software (Respondent #26), place graduate students on higher funding level to compensate for higher costs such as conference requirements and memberships with professional organizations (Respondent #8), increase funding for off-campus students to cover additional expenses like internet access fees and daily travel costs (Respondent #57 and #8). Also, respondent #57 made the recommendation that all TSP funded freshman and sophomore students be required to live on campus.

Apart from the practical suggestions respondents in the 'ensure equity in provision of benefits' category focused on perceived shortcomings of the TSP funding policy. Having an award limited by working fulltime was a point of contention for respondent #2. Respondent #14 felt expenses such as "car payments, insurance, vet bills" should be considered in the funding formula. Respondent #30 requested fair treatment "with financial assistance according to part-time/full-time requirements" which was concurred by respondent #31 who stated, "I believe it (TSP) can better serve students by not having favorite students. All students should be paid the same amount." The statements in this category suggest several disparities in treatment of TSP students, however they may also reveal a misunderstanding of the TSP funding calculation policy and procedure.

In the category 'provide more effective orientation and follow-up' respondents indicated they wanted enhanced provision of the services already offered. Responses listed in this category suggested orientation of CCHS students to the TSP as early as 9<sup>th</sup> grade, intensifying in the 11<sup>th</sup> grade, and culminating in the 12<sup>th</sup> grade with counseling sessions (Respondents #28, #30, and #48). The orientation in the 12<sup>th</sup> grade would involve review of TSP handbook and assistance in "filling out college/scholarships

application, FAFSA [Free Application for Federal Student Aid].” Respondents further suggested a college freshman orientation prior to the first semester of school (Respondents #: 25, 32, 45, 57, 72, 80 and 81). This freshman orientation was envisioned to include practical information “about college life, financial aid deadlines” (Respondent #25), dealing with “cultural shock because they have attended an all Indian school”(Respondent #57), “workshops to help with budgeting” (Respondent #72), review of TSP consequences when students fail to make requirements like “the 2.00 GPA” (Respondent #80) and conduct student needs survey and career interest inventories. Further, responses in this category requested more help from TSP personnel. Specifically a perceived need for more visits of students on the college campus to address “what they [students are] really lacking in” (Respondent #38), “help them [students] with their schedule ... or tutoring” (Respondent #18), “monitor student progress and attendance”(Respondent #31) was shared (Respondents #: 9, 18, 31, 38, and 55). To accommodate this need increased staffing (Respondents #42, #55, #79) and more training of TSP staff was suggested to help staff be “more qualified” (Respondent #17). Respondent #78 felt “a stricter screening process to allow those who are serious about their academics to get the attention they need” would help increase access to TSP personnel. Thus, respondents wanted on-going support as they prepared to and transitioned to postsecondary education. It should be noted the TSP staff formally met with CCHS Juniors and Seniors on the CCHS campus 4 times during the 2006-07 school year: twice in the fall and twice in the spring semester. The researcher observed each of these meetings. Following the 4<sup>th</sup> session, seniors were scheduled for individual meetings at the TSP offices to help them in the various application processes.

The 'other assistance services' category revolved around meeting perceived needs for computer access, focused tutorials and mentoring for off-campus students. Respondent #8 offered a comprehensive solution to these needs, "there should be a center where TSP students can go and have access to computers, internet, a copy machine, tutoring service ... here on the reservation." The center would provide for the tutoring, study skills development and after hours computer access referenced by respondents #24, #32, #44, #77 and #87. In addition, respondent #27 requested transportation options and help "finding caregivers." Assistance in securing appropriate childcare services is an issue single mothers in the TSP contend with (see Interview Summary of Respondent #42). Thus, practical obstacles TSP students who live off-campus face are evidenced through these requests for further services.

Item 50: What was the greatest stress you experienced while attending college? Explain.

Other than four respondents (56, 64, 75, and 76) indicating an NA response to this question and respondent #53 writing "None!" (no stresses), the remaining responses can be classified within the three primary factors affecting transition to a postsecondary education: sociocultural, academic, and personal. Responses will be listed in the primary factor category or categories they are associated with in ascending numerical order by respondent number. The name of the primary factor the stress is related to will be used as the heading for each list of responses. A narrative discussion will follow the lists of responses.

### Stresses related to sociocultural factors

- “Learning and accepting that my reservation upbringing did not prepare me for the individualistic, wealth maximizing practices off-reservation. I have taken my entire life to form the opinion that my Choctaw culture is not to be discarded, the world off-reservation has a lot to offer, but is not more important than my Choctaw culture - I struggled trying my best not to make a judgment on which is better, my Indian culture or dominant society culture. If I would have made this decision, my life as an honest person would have ended. I make both cultures work in my life today” (Respondent #17).
- “Gaining the acceptance and respect of my peers as an individual rather than as an Indian. Once they realized that I could do things as good or better than they could they began to respect me” (Respondent #37).
- “Adjustment away from the reservation. You become a minority again in what is considered to most Choctaws as an outside world compared to the reservation” (Respondent #57).
- “English, since English is my second language I have always struggled with it” (Respondent #81).

“Diversity! Choosing between or getting stuck in the middle of 2 rocks” (Respondent #85).

### Stresses related to academic factors

- “I had to study long hours and long periods of time because I did not have any set study routine/schedule. I also lacked the skills to make better use of my time & the skills to develop a good strategy on ‘how to’ study” (Respondent #1).
- “The greatest was having to come to class and there was class [*sic*] canceled” (Respondent #3).
- “Making good grades so I could keep going to school” (Respondent #4).
- “Major assignments ... such as research papers, etc. I don't know how many times I've pulled an "all-nighter" doing my assignment. Studying has stressed me out too because I would have two (2) or three (3) tests to study for that would be on the same day. Although , we all can manage stress by taking things one step at a time. I have had "me" time to relieve some of the stress I have encountered with” (Respondent #7).
- “The greatest stress of attending college was completing homework and class assignments. Not knowing how to get started with my school work was sometimes frustrating (ex. Doing research for a paper) during my first two years of college” (Respondent #8).
- “Exams, exams, exams. It helps a lot when instructors provide study guides” (Respondent #19).
- “Trying to complete homework and working 40 hours a week” (Respondent #24).

- “Trying to keep my grades up and not get distracted by going out and hanging with friends” (Respondent #28).
- “The greatest stress I experienced while attending college was trying to finish college in a timely manner with a good GPA; however, overloading myself with 22hours, in one semester, and trying to maintain a high GPA was the most stressful” (Respondent #30).
- “The greatest stress was Senior Block in the summertime! There were deadlines to meet, essays to write, research to compile, and books to read. Everyone cried in class one day. The class consisted of women. The instructor said Senior Block should not be given during the summer” (Respondent #31).
- “Meeting deadlines with your assignment/projects. At HS, we were given chances to get the assignment in whenever we can” (Respondent #32).
- “Juggling work, school, and family” (Respondent #33).
- “When I wanted to get an ‘A’ in all classes but there were a couple of classes that were hard” (Respondent #36).
- “I put stress on my self by procrastinating too much until it was almost time for my work to be done. But I did that to myself” (Respondent #38).
- “My greatest stress was THE FINALS (test)!! You have memorize everything that you have learned for the certain course and try to maintain a grade point average of 2.0 or higher” (Respondent #40).
- “I felt and knew that I was not prepared for college material” (Respondent #44).



- “My test grades being low although I have experienced better habits” (Respondent #45).
- “Meeting the deadlines” (Respondent #47).
- “Midterms and finals were probably the greatest stress I experienced in college” (Respondent #50).
- “Working full-time and trying to meet the deadline on some papers in classes” (Respondent #55).
- “Trying to keep myself in line with studying and being to practices on time” (Respondent #58).
- “The work. But I knew what I was getting myself into. My major and related occupation are stressful” (Respondent #59).
- “Not meeting academic standards” (Respondent #60).
- “Financial stress was first and then writing reports for honor classes was the most difficult. Since, English is a second language it was very hard to put proper wording on to paper and try to be explanatory at the same time” (Respondent #61).
- “Trying to make good grades, because I didn't learn good study habits in high school” (Respondent #69).
- “My greatest stress was trying to pass each semester being able to be prepared for each final exam. At times I will feel the stress but what I have been through in the past I try to be well-prepared and study more” (Respondent #73).

- “It was difficult to handle my on line classes and my lecture classes at the same time. It was so easy to forget about my online classes because I did not have to be there at specific times. I eventually learned to keep up with the class better” (Respondent #74).
- “Studying ... there weren’t enough hours in the day to study all I needed to. Materials (amount/subject) were very challenging” (Respondent #78).
- “Testing!!” (Respondent #82).
- “... not being prepared with college study work habits. Main one was failing because I didn’t know how to ask for help” (Respondent #84).
- Financial hardships aside, I found myself having to learn on the fly English/Writing and Algebra and study skills that other students had learned in high school” (Respondent #86).

### **Stresses related to personal factors**

- “The greatest was having to come to class and there was class canceled” (Respondent #3).
- “For me it was getting into buildings that had no wheelchair access. Try to find someone to open doors for me. Or needing help when I would drop something. As for financing there was never a problem” (Respondent #5).
- “The greatest stress was not having higher level students as mentors. Most non-Indian students were not helpful in college or university. It is my recommendation to start our own Choctaw College as a land grant

college funded by the U.S. Government like the rest of the American higher education institutions” (Respondent #6).

- “Finance. Although TSP paid for college classes, stipends were scarce. If a student has limited finance, it was difficult to actually attend college activities. Sometimes a student had to get a part-time job to meet those needs. Not all students get family support or even financing” (Respondent #9).
- “While away from home, missing my family and friends especially my son was my greatest stress, & financial problems also when the stipend wasn’t in time, but that was when TSP had no control over it” (Respondent #10).
- “Gaining weight! From working 40 hours a week taking 9 hrs, traveling to school and making time for family and a 3 year old toddler besides finding time to do homework. I find myself snacking on junk food a lot more to keep myself going!” (Respondent #11).
- “Well, there was plenty, but the most was just the fact that I was trying to be a mother, an employee, and a full-time student at the same time. This being the root cause of my GPA dropping, but I hope to pull it up during the summer” (Respondent #12).
- “In the last 2 years, I traveled to Jackson 2 times a week and it created a lot of stress for me physically. Mentally, my father was very ill and it caused me undue mental stress” (Respondent #13).

- “1. August 1995 to February 2006 - Extreme stomach pains lasted for years. Visited many doctors. Last visit Feb. 2006, pain treatment center.  
2. Also having to worry about money” (Respondent #14).
- “Baby sitter for my children” (Respondent #16).
- “Attending college full-time [through] night classes and working full-time during the day and going home to 3 kids” (Respondent #18).
- “Having already started a family at a young age. Then trying to study, take care of her, and keep income to support myself and daughter. I am a single parent” (Respondent #20).
- “My kids stress me out most of the time when I have a 8:00 class in the morning. They would not wake up for me so I barely made it to my 8:00 class. And gas prices” (Respondent #21).
- “My greatest stress is working and going to school at night time” (Respondent #23).
- “Trying to do homework complete [sic] and work 40 hours a week” (Respondent #24).
- “Waiting to receive my scholarship check from TSP” (Respondent #26).
- “Money first, transportation second. Could not find a job because of transportation, and could not find anything other than full-time” (Respondent #34).
- “Thru TSP, to earn my Bachelor’s while working, taking care of family was at times difficult but I had fun” (Respondent #39).

- “Having a whole family and trying to work a fulltime job. Attending school is hard work and also meticulous” (Respondent #41).
- “That I had to change my full-time status to part-time due to being a single parent. Also, we only had one vehicle where my mother & I were sharing. She co-signed a car of my own but that also meant I had to work full time to make payments” (Respondent #42).
- “Missing my children’s extra curricular activities and not being able to make it up to them” (Respondent #46).
- “Trying to provide for my family with work while attending school” (Respondent #48).
- “Being away from family and friends” (Respondent #49).
- “Home sick, and not getting to know my advisor, and not sure of what I wanted to major in” (Respondent #51).
- “I had three children, working full-time, and attending part-time. I was expecting twins when I graduated. If that isn’t stressful, what is? I hope to further my education after the twins get a little bit older” (Respondent #52).
- “I never got over losing (the death of) my mom & [other relative]. I think I left the reservation to get away from the pain. I found myself drinking and experimenting with drugs. My stress would have been trying to cope on my own in an unknown world” (Respondent #54).
- “Working full-time and trying to meet the deadline on some papers in classes” (Respondent #55).

- “Going to college, and working during the day. And tending to the family at home” (Respondent #62).
- “Trying to maintain a job, my children and just everyday things that has [*sic*] to be done” (Respondent #65).
- “The greatest stress I experienced was in having to work and attend school at the same time” (Respondent #68).
- “I myself am working while attending school and I have the added pressure of work along with the time and deadline of school. I barely manage the two but I find ways around it. I would go to school full time but I have to help my mom and my household. I need the full time job to maintain the bills I have but I never want to give up on my education” (Respondent #71).
- “Being away from home because I went to school out of state (& still going to school out of state). I had some financial situations with personal (car, emergency, etc.) situations, but other than that I've been very fortunate & blessed. I'm extremely thankful and grateful for TSP, because if it wasn't for TSP, I'd be working 2 to 3 jobs & have to pay for loans for the rest of my life” (Respondent #72).
- “Working and going to school and trying to take care of the family. And to make sure homeworks [*sic*] are ready and hope to be correct. Also, the financial needs” (Respondent #77).
- “I was on basketball scholarship, I had no time for family/friends” (Respondent #79).

- “The greatest stress I experience was personal reasons back home” (Respondent #80).
- “Being a mom and really not sure of what my life was going to be in the future” (Respondent #83).
- Not knowing what to major in, having a child to support ...” (Respondent #84).
- “You have responsibilities to your child and that takes precedence over anything I do. At times, my studies had to be done after he went to sleep...” (Respondent #87).
- “It was college itself that was stressful but having no transportation. I didn’t live no more than 20 minutes away from college campus but still had transportation problems. Most of the time I didn’t have a way to get my baby to Day Care and then to college” (Respondent #88).

Respondents 17, 37, 57, 81 and 85 expressed stress related to sociocultural factors. They stated stress associated with cultural background as a primary issue. Respondent 17 stated, “I have taken my entire life to form the opinion that my Choctaw culture is not to be discarded, the world off-reservation has a lot to offer, but is not more important than my Choctaw culture – I struggled trying my best not to make a judgment on which is better, my Indian culture or dominant society culture ... I make both cultures work in my life today.” Respondent #37 experienced identity stress, “Gaining the acceptance and respect of my peers as an individual rather than as an Indian. Once they realized that I could do things as good or better than they could they began to respect me.” And respondent #57 felt the stress of being a minority in the college environment,

“Adjustment away from the reservation. You become a minority again in what is considered to most Choctaws as an outside world compared to the reservation.” These sociocultural stresses support Jackson et al. (2003) contentions that American Indian students feel isolated when they arrived on campus because of their perceptions that the dominant culture(s) represented were hostile to them. Native American students who do not reconcile these perceptions tend to become marginalized and thus, isolate themselves from the mainstream and thus, eventually dropout. However, as Willetto (1999) suggested, the students who come to terms with their cultural identity and self-confidence related issues tend to counter the marginalization impulse. And in the context of the college experience tend to develop a commitment to academic success and subsequent persistence to college completion (Demmert, 2001; and Huffman, 2001). The three respondents cited above provide examples of individuals who recognized the cultural differences, worked through them, developed a commitment to academic success, and came to terms with their cultural identity and thus the productive role they could play in the postsecondary environment.

Thirty-one respondents indicated stress related to academic factors. The academic stresses ranged from:

- lacking adequate study skills – 6 respondents (#s1, 7, 44 – stated inadequate high school preparation -, 69, 84, and 86)
- GPA stress – 7 respondents (#s 4, 28, 30, 33, 36, 45 and 60)
- the amount of studying – 2 respondents (#s 59 and 78)
- the completion of major projects/assignments – 4 respondents (#s 7, 8, 24, 61 (cited ESL as barrier for writing reports))



- exams – 5 respondents (#s 19, 40, 50, 73, and 82)
- meeting academic deadlines – 4 respondents (#s 31, 32, 47, and 55)
- overcoming procrastination – 1 respondent (#38)
- being overwhelmed by college material – 1 respondent (#44)
- balancing academic responsibilities with athletic responsibilities (was on scholarship) - 1 respondent (#58)
- handling on-line classes – 1 respondent (#74)
- class being canceled – 1 respondent (#3)

All of the items listed above can be linked to rigor at the high school level. Demmert (2001) and the U. S. Department of Education (2005) provide support for postsecondary academic performance being positively linked to the rigor of the curriculum students were exposed to in high school. There seemed to be a direct correlation between the level of high school course rigor and persistence in attaining a college degree. However, the postsecondary academic success of the respondents listed above needs to be evaluated in terms of relevance to the selected academic program, academic level, course load, and degree track to determine the level of rigor experienced in high school.

Some 50 responses reflected stress related to personal factors, however, they only represent 37 respondents as 10 of the respondents expressed multiple stresses (#s: 10, 12, 18, 41, 51, 52, 62, 65, and 77 noted 2 stresses, and respondent 11 noted 3 stresses).

- Childrearing responsibilities – 18 respondents (#s: 11, 12, 16, 18, 20, 21, 39, 41, 42, 46, 48, 52, 62, 65, 77, 83, 84 and 87). Respondent 20

specifically mentioned having a child at a young age as being stressful and respondent 42 noted being a single parent

- Working – 13 respondents (#s: 11, 12, 18, 23, 24, 41, 52, 55, 62, 65, 68, 71, 77)
- Being homesick – 6 respondents (#s: 10, 49, 51, 72, 79, and 80)
- Finances – 5 respondents (#s: 9, 10, 34 & 88 – linked finances to not having transportation - and 26)
- Not being able to help family at home financially – 1 respondent (#3)
- Being physically handicapped (some buildings had no wheelchair access) – 1 respondent (#5)
- Not having a higher level student as a mentor – 1 respondent (#6)
- Gaining weight – 1 respondent (#11)
- Father ill – 1 respondent (#13)
- Extreme stomach pains – 1 respondent (#14)
- “... not getting to know my advisor ...” – 1 respondent (#51)
- Dealing with emotions related to loss of mother and aunt – 1 respondent (#54)

Childrearing responsibilities were a stress of 21% of respondents and working a stress expressed by 15% of respondents. Thus, non-academic responsibilities again are noted as struggles that many of the respondents had to contend with while pursuing a postsecondary education.

## Interview Summaries

Following is the presentation of responses from respondents selected to be interviewed. Nine respondents were selected to be interviewed as they were determined to represent maximum variation within the respondent group through their survey responses. Of the nine, 2 respondents (#17, #60) requested not to be interviewed and a third (#66) had to cancel interview appointments on several occasions and an interview was not performed. As a result, a total of six interviews were conducted. The interviews will appear in ascending numerical order by assigned respondent number. A profile of each respondent is provided in a table and the responses to the interview protocol (refer to Appendix E) are discussed in a narrative format after each table.

Table 24 Profile of Respondent #37

Item	Response
Gender	Male
Age group	26 – 36 years old
Highest composite ACT score	18
Initial enrollment status in college	Full time
Father's highest education level	Middle School
Mother's highest education level	Elementary
Respondent's highest education level	Bachelor degree
Respondent responsible for dependents during college	No
Distanced lived from campus	Lived on campus
Attended In-state or Out-of-state	In-state
Employment level 1 <sup>st</sup> year of college	Did not work
Employment level 2 <sup>nd</sup> year of college	Part time (21 – 40 per week)
GPA after first 2 years of college	3.00 – 4.00
Involved in Native American club	Aware of a club but not a member
Adjusted well to college	Agreed with statement
Felt prepared academically for college	Disagreed with statement
Meeting academic deadlines was important	Strongly agreed with statement
Had a mentor while in college	Neutral to statement

Respondent #37 is a male who was between 26 and 35 years old at the time of the interview. He reported scoring 18 on the ACT, near the Mississippi (MS) state average of 18.9 (ACT, Inc., 2007). He had no dependents during his postsecondary education, lived on campus and did not work his first year of college. Respondent #37 began his postsecondary career at a community college near Choctaw, MS and maintained a grade point average above a 3.00. He has earned a bachelor degree.

Respondent #37 was influenced in his pursuit of a postsecondary education by his family, a teacher in high school, apparent professor bias, a response to peer pressure, and the TSP. These influences helped motivate him, provided necessary emotional and practical support and developed the perseverance to persist to completion of a postsecondary education. Together these influences helped shape his self-concept and directed him towards the achievement of academic goals.

Reflecting on his childhood, respondent #37 stated that “just looking ahead of what my brothers went through, that reality enlightened me from the standpoint of how far they got and also gave me some personal incentive just to try to do better, more of a competitive role.” Further, respondent #37 explained that his parents both concluded their formal education with elementary and middle school, yet they understood the need and importance of an education for their children. “That really played a vital factor because they kept pushing me and kept encouraging me throughout elementary, high school, through college years ... I saw the need of it [education] from their lifestyle because they didn’t have an education background ... they had to do things the hard way and that was their influence.” Respondent #37 shared that he went home most weekends since everything he enjoyed was there. A primary reason for coming home was “church.

I attended church all the time so that was one of the main reasons ... church life made it very important to go back home. Not anything cultural, ceremonies, nothing like that.” And he has “always been close to [his] dad, so I always felt the need to go home and see him and help him with whatever needed help with.” Although, he admitted by his senior year he also enjoyed the university setting and his roommates, “I enjoyed getting to know my roommates and actually having activities with them – sports or just talking.”

A biology teacher in high school instilled qualities and skills that proved to have a positive impact on his educational success, “He [the biology teacher] said if you want to be successful in college you better pay attention to detail.” In addition, respondent #37 benefited from involvement in the UB program, “the incentive package was very nice when you made good grades and attended school [regularly].” However, “some teachers made things easy just to get you by and that didn’t help me any.” Once in university, respondent #37 gained an appreciation and admiration for “the [high school] teachers that made me do a lot of work.”

With regard to his Choctaw ancestry, respondent #37 mentioned perceived disrespect by professors at a community college he attended at the beginning of his postsecondary experience. He attributed this perception to the notion that perhaps some Choctaw students prior to him had underperformed. In fact, after a class one professor asked whether he thought he belonged in the class. The question initially discouraged and then it angered him. “That [disrespect] fueled what I needed to do was just to prove them wrong.” Respondent #37 successfully completed those courses and learned that he “may not be as intelligent [as other students] but I can work as hard and I can make it in this world like anybody else. That gave me a driving force ... it actually bettered my

understanding of myself, who I was and what I can be.” Respondent #37 did admit that “maybe that first course even though it did help me get through, it probably made me feel uncomfortable to go to the professors and discuss some problems or some questions I had about some issues.” Thus, first impressions regarding the postsecondary experience had a lasting impact on future interactions on campus. However, a later professor came to serve as an informal mentor, and provided timely encouragement & advice. “You know he just gave me some helpful hints on how to get ahead, how to get above and beyond ... he liked to talk with me out in public in the classroom. He asked me some opinions I had of the world or just on any matter ... that felt good that he valued my opinion in front of everybody.”

Respondent #37 recounted how a subtle but pervasive competition between he and his roommates served as motivation to succeed academically and in extracurricular activities. He described this as a form of peer pressure. “There was a competition there but it was unspoken.” Participation in intramural sports with his roommates “made me balance out some things ... you have to prioritize” and this served as a motivation to complete academics in order to participate in the sports. “In some ways I felt like they [his roommates] wanted to see me succeed ... there was one in particular who questioned me on how I did on tests.... He had confidence in me.” Thus, it was suggested that in addition to support from home, quality personal relationships were essential for respondent #37 to be successful academically. Even though respondent #37 set priorities for the use of his time he was reluctant to seek assistance through available campus services such as tutoring or academic counseling. “I never did take advantage of that and I wish I had done that because there is a lot of opportunities such as assistance with

interviewing ... resumes ... that goes back to being uncomfortable [i.e. experience with professor that discouraged him] from that standpoint.”

The TSP provided necessary financial assistance and was supportive as the director “was very confident in my ability.” Personnel within the TSP encouraged respondent #37 towards academic success. “The financial aid you know if they didn’t do it, my parents would have taken care of it. So that wasn’t a major concern but the major factor they play is that you know that they fund it [postsecondary education] and you don’t have to worry about a part-time job ... That made it very easy.”

At the conclusion of the interview, respondent #37 recommended that the high school provide the best available instruction to “both sets of students.” He explained that there are those students who want to attend college and “have professional jobs, professional careers and you have some that could do very well in manual labor [vocational track].” More concentrated career counseling and “real career” exposure to potential career fields were suggested. “Their race or their color should not matter as far as what they can do ... you can do anything you want to within your realm of ability.” Respondent #37 summed up that “as an individual you have to find your niche, what you like to do and what you are able to do and progress toward that direction.” Thus, he encouraged CCHS students to find their passion and for the teachers and support staff to help them in that pursuit.



Table 25 Profile of Respondent #42

Item	Response
Gender	Female
Age group	26 – 35 years old
Highest composite ACT score	16
Initial enrollment status in college	Full time
Father's highest education level	Some high school
Mother's highest education level	Some high school
Respondent's highest education level	Associates of arts (AA) degree
Respondent responsible for dependents during college	Yes
Distanced lived from campus	21 – 30 miles
Attended In-state or Out-of-state	In-state
Employment level 1 <sup>st</sup> year of college	Part time (21 – 40 hours per week)
Employment level 2 <sup>nd</sup> year of college	Full time
GPA after first 2 years of college	3.00 – 4.00
Involved in Native American club	Aware of a club but not a member
Adjusted well to college	Agreed with statement
Felt prepared academically for college	Agreed with statement
Meeting academic deadlines was important	Strongly agreed with statement
Had a mentor while in college	Agreed with statement

Respondent #42 is a female who was between 26 and 35 years old at the time of the interview. She reported scoring 16 on the ACT, below the average respondent ACT score of 16.9. She had a dependent she was responsible for during her postsecondary education, commuted between 21 – 30 miles each day to campus and worked a part time job her first year of college. Respondent #42 began her postsecondary career at a community college near Choctaw, MS and maintained a grade point average above a 3.00. She has earned an AA degree and is pursuing a bachelor degree.

Involvement in the Upward Bound program in high school, a supportive family, the responsibility of caring for her young child, a language barrier, a Native American campus club and the TSP were factors that affected the transition experience to college for respondent #42. The UB program provided exposure to what the college experience would be like. Support from her family made it possible for her to consider pursuing a postsecondary degree. And her sense of responsibility for a young child caused respondent #42 to take an alternate path to achieving a postsecondary education. Despite constraints related to being a single mother and being a Choctaw speaker, respondent #42 has remained focused on keeping postsecondary education a main priority.

Respondent #42 felt the UB program played a significant role in the college preparation process. "... they prepared me for college. We always went to visit colleges ... we could even take a course or two before we completed our high school credit." The counselors in UB encouraged her while in high school and answered any questions she had. The UB program "mainly helped us with English and they also prepared us for our ACT." Thus, the UB program assisted respondent #42 in developing practical academic

and test preparation skills as well as introduced her to the college experience while in high school.

Respondent #42 received support from her mother and brother throughout her education. She was raised by a single parent who had a 9<sup>th</sup> grade education. “Her [mother’s] goal was to let me graduate from high school and college.... She just wanted me to finish so that I could obtain a good job in the future.” Thus, after taking a year following high school graduation to care for her baby, respondent #42 attended a local community college and earned an AA degree. Further, her brother completed a bachelor degree. “That influenced me to continue on with my education and graduate. He was the first to graduate from a university in my family.”

The responsibility of caring for her baby caused respondent #42 to make several adjustments in the pursuit of her postsecondary aspirations. As stated above, she did not begin college directly out of high school, instead elected to take a year with her child. In order to take the financial burden off her mother, who had a minimum wage job, respondent #42 worked part time while at college. “I was able to put my child in daycare but the classes I had, I went 4-days a week at the community college and that was a 35 to 45 minute drive ... and sometimes when the baby got sick, they would call me at school and I would have to leave the campus ... and take her to the doctor.” She and her mother shared one vehicle and this resulted in respondent #42 missing class on several occasions. Study time was relegated to the evenings after her child was asleep. “Sometimes I would stay up until 1:00 AM to study and the next morning would have an 8:30 class.” This exertion for studying coupled with the necessity to work a part time job contributed to low grades. “I wasn’t doing too well in classes due to lack of sleep or not being there

because the baby was sick and that is why I had to drop my full-time status to part-time.” Obviously the additional responsibilities of caring for a dependent added extra stress to her postsecondary transition experience. Regardless of the obstacles, respondent #42 continues working on a bachelor degree.

Being a native Choctaw speaker presented respondent #42 with a language challenge. In one particular course during her second year of college she “didn’t understand what she [the instructor] was asking ... I had to show her my work and if I was on the right pages and that was an English course.” Membership in the seven member college Native American club provided her necessary support to help overcome this and other barriers. Respondent #42 had classes with members of the club “so this made it easier to keep up with the group and getting help during class from them if one of us needed it.” One of the club members made her aware of campus tutoring services and invited her to the tutoring. “I went one time with her. The time that she went kind of interfered with the time I had class.” Thus, the Native American club was a source of social and academic support. Additional counseling and academic support came from TSP personnel. And the TSP directed her to another Tribal program which had a van transporting students to college and this helped resolve the transportation dilemma mentioned above. Thus, there were support networks that respondent #42 was able to access in order to meet the unique needs she had as a single Choctaw mother from a low income family pursuing a postsecondary education.

Table 26 Profile of Respondent #44

Item	Response
Gender	Female
Age group	36 – 45 years old
Highest composite ACT score	Did not know
Initial enrollment status in college	Full time
Father's highest education level	Elementary
Mother's highest education level	Elementary
Respondent's highest education level	Bachelor degree
Respondent responsible for dependents during college	Yes
Distanced lived from campus	More than 30 miles
Attended In-state or Out-of-state	In-state
Employment level 1 <sup>st</sup> year of college	Full time
Employment level 2 <sup>nd</sup> year of college	Full time
GPA after first 2 years of college	Did not know
Involved in Native American club	Unaware of a club
Adjusted well to college	Strongly disagreed with statement
Felt prepared academically for college	Strongly disagreed with statement
Meeting academic deadlines was important	Agreed with statement
Had a mentor while in college	Neutral to statement

Respondent #44 is a female who was between 36 and 45 years old at the time of the interview. She reported not knowing what her composite ACT score was. She had dependents she was responsible for during her postsecondary education, commuted more than 30 miles each day to campus and worked full time her first two years of college. Respondent #44 began her postsecondary career at a community college near Choctaw, MS and did not know her GPA for the first two years of college. She has earned a bachelor degree.

Mixed support from home, confronting obstacles related to race, dealing with the reality of a language barrier, and the positive experience with UB and TSP all contributed to increasing the self-confidence of respondent #44 leading to an eventually successful transition to a postsecondary education. Respondent #44 had little direct encouragement from home to attend college but received practical support as a young mother once in college. Early on in college there were several incidences of perceived racial prejudice that seemed to hinder her. In addition, struggles with the English language were a constant challenge to academic progress. Support and direction from the UB and TSP programs helped lead respondent #44 to persevering to a successful transition to college and persisting to college completion.

Respondent #44 opened her responses in the interview by stating, “I really didn’t have anybody to encourage me to continue my education, I guess because my mom never went to school. I think her highest grade that she completed was maybe 3<sup>rd</sup> or 5<sup>th</sup> grade and I don’t think she really knew the importance of education.” Thus, a lack of understanding regarding the need and importance of education seemed to be the source of low family support for her education. Siblings initially did not place emphasis on the

importance of a formal education either. As a teenager, respondent #44 had a disagreement with her mother that resulted in her leaving home and moving in with a family whose mother motivated her to finish high school and attend college. “I listened to her more than I did anybody. She was part of the reason why I tried to continue my education.... She use to talk to us about how education was important and I took her word and I tried to do what she said.” Once siblings began to see that respondent #44 was motivated with a goal that required education she received some support from them. “My oldest sister, she didn’t really encourage me but then when I did go back to school, she did say you might be the only one in our family that gets a college education so go ahead and go and don’t worry about it.” Practical support from her mother, her sister and eventually her husband, surfaced in the form of babysitting help and assistance with household chores when respondent #44 worked full time and attended night classes.

The first experience for respondent #44 with a postsecondary education was at a nearby community college where she lived in the dorm. This experience was difficult due to perceived racial prejudice towards her, she “just didn’t feel accepted in the classroom” and she dropped out within the first semester. “I wasn’t use to socializing with other races I guess and that made a big difference. I went into the classrooms and there is [*sic*] other races in there and I just didn’t feel comfortable. I would just stay in my room.” Through this self-imposed isolation respondent #44 allowed herself to become marginalized. “The professors there I felt like they were prejudice toward me.... when I tried to talk to the teacher after class because I was scared to ask questions during class ... she would say that the time you need to ask is in class.... I guess that is why I thought that they were prejudice.” Respondent #44 did not receive the support she

expected or anticipated. These perceptions of the dominant culture are similar to observations Jackson et al. (2003) and McGaha and Fitzpatrick (2005) made with other AI students that became marginalized on campus. Respondent #44 would continue and complete her postsecondary education at another community college followed by attendance at a four year university and stated, “I felt comfortable being Choctaw around them because the university that I attended they accepted any race.” Also, she explained from the perspective of her university experience, “one thing I realized after I was older too was not to be afraid to ask questions in class because the other person might not be the same race ... but they don’t know more than what you know.” Thus, a sense of belonging and acceptance were fundamental ingredients for respondent #44 transitioning to college and persisting to postsecondary completion.

The Choctaw language was respondent #44’s first language. She shared that one of the differences in the Choctaw language and English is that “the sentences are turned around” and “when I am reading something it is hard for me to comprehend. I have to read, read, and read before I really get it. Especially on those tests, when I am being timed I cannot do those tests.” This language barrier coupled with an apparent deficiency in writing skills created an additional obstacle as she transitioned to a postsecondary education. “Because when I first went to college, I did not know how to do a term paper.”

Both UB and TSP had significant impact on respondent #44’s transition to postsecondary education. In high school respondent #44 was a participant in the UB program. She felt ongoing support from the program counselor, “his door was always open.” And UB trips to several campuses helped her decide on what college she wanted



to attend. The TSP not only provided funding but was a motivational source. “The director would say you can do it, just hang in there, don’t quit and go ahead and finish what you started.” Respondent #44 mentioned that the TSP gave her opportunity to develop educational skills, “The TSP did offer like test taking points, they had us go to some sessions.” The UB and TSP played important support roles in making her aware of educational opportunities and helping guide her to postsecondary completion.

Respondent #44 concluded the interview with several suggestions that she felt could positively impact the postsecondary transition experiences of future CCHS graduates. With regard to high school less “chances in completing their assignments” should be given” and more higher math, science and writing courses should be offered. And from her personal experience, “Another thing is not to hurry up and trying to have kids because after you have that first child, it is hard to go back to school” because of financial and other child care responsibilities. For those who are already teenage parents, respondent #44 advised “go ahead and go to school and do your best because it is hard to raise a child not having a good education.”

Table 27 Profile of Respondent #54

Item	Response
Gender	Female
Age group	18 – 25 years old
Highest composite ACT score	24
Initial enrollment status in college	Full time
Father's highest education level	Did not know
Mother's highest education level	Some college
Respondent's highest education level	Pursuing degree
Respondent responsible for dependents during college	No
Distanced lived from campus	Lived on campus
Attended In-state or Out-of-state	Out-of-state
Employment level 1 <sup>st</sup> year of college	Did not work
Employment level 2 <sup>nd</sup> year of college	Part time (1 – 20 hours per week)
GPA after first 2 years of college	1.00 – 1.99
Involved in Native American club	Aware of club and member
Adjusted well to college	Agreed with statement
Felt prepared academically for college	Agreed with statement
Meeting academic deadlines was important	Agreed with statement
Had a mentor while in college	Agreed with statement

Respondent #54 is a female who was between 18 and 25 years old at the time of the interview. She reported scoring 24 on the ACT, well above Mississippi (MS) state average of 18.9 and 2.8 above the national ACT average of 21.2 (ACT, Inc., 2007). She had no dependents during her initial transition to a postsecondary education, lived on campus, traveled home twice a year and did not work her first year of college.

Respondent #54 began her postsecondary career at an out-of-state university and maintained a grade point average between 1.00 – 1.99 the first two years of college. She is currently pursuing a degree.

For respondent #54 the NA club on the university campus she attended had a profound influence on her transition to postsecondary education. The NA club helped motivate her, provided important emotional and practical support even though she deviated from her original plan of completion of a postsecondary education. In many ways the NA club helped shape her self-concept and directed her towards a better understanding of the need of a postsecondary education and how to achieve it.

Respondent #54 indicated that her association with a campus NA club was a primary source of support while at the university. She became associated with the club as a result of a month long freshman summer bridge program offered by the university for NA students to help them transition to university. The bridge program made her aware of the club. Once the regular school year began respondent #54 would “go everyday [to the club office] ... just to hang out, meeting people, do homework.” She mentioned that professors and upper level NA students would come by the office and be available for scheduled tutoring. With respect to other student support services on campus the respondent stated, “I didn’t access them because the help I needed was pretty much in the

Native American program [club]”. Thus, the club helped induce interaction between students and faculty as well as provided a support network for respondent #54.

Furthermore, the club was the point of introduction to her mentors.

Respondent #54 had two mentors, “They were brother and sister.... They kind of guided me, helped me, told me when I was doing wrong and they weren’t afraid to tell me. I liked that about them. They said they had already heard all of the excuses because they gave them too, so they held me accountable.” These mentors were NA upperclassmen at the university, “one just got her Masters ... and the other one has his BA.” Thus, being a positive role model and having the ability to hold her accountable was seen by respondent #54 as important attributes of her mentors. However, despite the positive influences respondent #54 grieved losses of close relatives and had difficulty staying focused at university “I got lazy. Sometimes I just didn’t care about things” and dropped out.

Respondent #54 sat out for two years from college and recently returned to a local Mississippi college with a new motivation. “I have a little one that I need to take care of and like an \$8 [an hour] job part-time is not going to cut it for us. I could have had my BA already ... I regret it but the choices I made, I learned from them ... I know I have to apply myself now.” Her advice to future graduates of CCHS wanting to pursue a postsecondary education centered on “Be open minded. When there is people there [at university] that tell you this is how you should do it or that is how it needs to be done, listen because they have done it already.”

Table 28 Profile of Respondent #59

Item	Response
Gender	Male
Age group	18 – 25 years old
Highest composite ACT score	19
Initial enrollment status in college	Full time
Father's highest education level	Some college
Mother's highest education level	Some college
Respondent's highest education level	Pursuing degree
Respondent responsible for dependents during college	No
Distanced lived from campus	Lived on campus
Attended In-state or Out-of-state	In-state
Employment level 1 <sup>st</sup> year of college	Did not work
Employment level 2 <sup>nd</sup> year of college	Did not work
GPA after first 2 years of college	1.00 – 1.99
Involved in Native American club	Aware of a club but not a member
Adjusted well to college	Agreed with statement
Felt prepared academically for college	Agreed with statement
Meeting academic deadlines was important	Agreed with statement
Had a mentor while in college	Disagreed with statement

Respondent #59 is a male who was between 18 and 25 years old at the time of the interview. He reported scoring 19 on the ACT, above the Mississippi (MS) state average of 18.9 (ACT, Inc., 2007). He had no dependents, lived on campus and did not work during the first two years of his postsecondary education. Respondent #59 began his postsecondary career at a community college near Choctaw, MS and maintained a grade point average of 1.00 – 1.99 the first two years of college. He is currently pursuing a degree.

The influence of family, CCHS, perceived prejudices, and the TSP characterized the transition experience to a postsecondary education for respondent #59. These influences helped motivate him, provided necessary guidance, insights, and support to learn how to persist to the completion of a postsecondary education. Together these influences appeared to enhance his independence and refine his focus on the achievement of academic goals.

Both parents of respondent #59 took classes at a local community college following graduation from high school. As a result, respondent #59 believed, “they wanted me to go to college but they never really told me.” He wanted to pursue a technical degree at a nearby community college and received his parents support. “My parents didn’t mind me going there I guess since family, my older brother he went.” Respondent #59 attended the college full time for a semester living in the dorm, changed majors in the process and then decided to work. “It [college] was a whole lot different life there staying in the dorm, I missed home, I missed family because I would only see them on weekends.” Later when respondent #59 decided to attend a special one semester program at an out of state college his parents “were worried because this college was in a

big city ... they wanted me to be close where they could if I needed any help financially or emergency wise, they could be there.” This parental worry could be interpreted as a sign of a close knit family and genuine emotional support of their child’s endeavors. Additionally, the choice to attend the out of state college was partially based on “the feeling that I could prove to my family ... that I could do it ... and I did what I had to do to make good grades.”

Reflection on education at CCHS revealed to respondent #59 strengths and deficiencies in his experience. The primary strengths in respondent #59’s estimation were the friendliness and support of several teachers. “The teachers were really friendly.... There were so many people to talk to and [they] would allow me to ask questions. I thank everybody who helped me there.” He mentioned that “some [teachers] would tell us how to further our education by studying, what we should do when we study.” Whereas one of the deficiencies that he detected included teachers focusing on students with greatest needs rather than challenging all students on their appropriate levels. Respondent #59 stated that, in his opinion, a lot of students had trouble reading, “the teachers have to kind of lower sort [*sic*] of standard teaching where these people have to catch up and I always felt like, I am ready to move on, I am ready to learn.” When he arrived at college this deficiency became apparent, “I found that it wasn’t like that at all. Nobody is going to wait for you ... They are not going to wait for you if you miss class, they are just going to mark you absent and move on.”

The perception of prejudice toward him for being Choctaw was experienced only at the two colleges respondent #59 attended in state. In lab classes “I didn’t like how they talked to me, seemed like they dumb down their words, but I knew that I wasn’t

there to make friends with them ... sometimes I felt like nobody wanted to be partners, nobody ever chose me because of Choctaw [*sic*], they mostly stuck with own race.”

Respondent #59 resolved that he had to prove himself capable in the classes but that was difficult for him. “I did have that feeling where I could prove to them but then at times it just became overwhelming where I think I shied away and let them [other students] handle it.” As his skills developed in his technical field a higher level of self-confidence and independence had built up. “I feel like I can go now and just do what I need to do without having to worry about anything like that [prejudices].” Contrasting his in-state college experience with the out-of-state experience regarding perceived prejudice, respondent #59 voiced, “there is [were] a lot of cultural backgrounds there, have mix in the school so nobody worried about what you were, who you were and everybody treated you the same.”

The TSP provided a wide variety of support for respondent #59. He felt comfortable sharing his postsecondary experiences with the staff and considered them friends. “We could talk about anything, joke ... they really wanted me to further my education as much as possible ... anything [in the college process] that I didn’t understand they would explain it to me.” They provided guidance in the funding process, he just to be on time with his paperwork, “all I would need was an acceptance [from a college] and they could do the work.”

Overall, respondent #59 encouraged future graduates of CCHS to “find something that interests them” and “go and learn.” Thus, he believed that students finding a passion and following it with the appropriate goals and education will make the transition to



college less overwhelming. He continues to apply that belief as he takes night classes to complete his degree.

Table 29 Profile of Respondent #78

Item	Response
Gender	Female
Age group	26 – 35 years old
Highest composite ACT score	21
Initial enrollment status in college	Full time
Father's highest education level	High school graduate
Mother's highest education level	Some college
Respondent's highest education level	Bachelor degree
Respondent responsible for dependents during college	No
Distanced lived from campus	1 – 10 miles
Attended In-state or Out-of-state	Out-of-state
Employment level 1 <sup>st</sup> year of college	Part time (1 – 20 hours per week)
Employment level 2 <sup>nd</sup> year of college	Part time (1 – 20 hours per week)
GPA after first 2 years of college	2.00 – 2.99
Involved in Native American club	Aware of club and a member
Adjusted well to college	Agreed with statement
Felt prepared academically for college	Agreed with statement
Meeting academic deadlines was important	Strongly agreed with statement
Had a mentor while in college	Agreed with statement

Respondent #78 is a female who was between 26 and 35 years old at the time of the interview. She reported scoring 21 on the ACT, above the Mississippi (MS) state average of 18.9 and below the national average of 21.2 (ACT, Inc., 2007). She had no dependents during her postsecondary education, lived between 1 – 10 miles from campus and held two part time jobs working a total of less than 20 hours per week the first two years of college. It should be noted that she took a semester off between her first and second years of university and changed majors upon her return. Respondent #78 began her postsecondary career at a four year out-of-state university and maintained a grade point average between 2.00 – 2.99 the first two years of university. She earned a bachelor degree.

The influence of CCHS, family, support at the university, other Native Americans and the TSP were factors that affected the transition experience to college for respondent #78. These influences helped motivate her, provided necessary emotional and practical support and developed the perseverance to persist to completion of a postsecondary education. Together these influences helped her overcome a sense of becoming marginalized and directed her towards the achievement of academic goals.

When asked to consider her experience at CCHS, respondent #78 saw strengths and shared suggestions for future graduates. The UB program and the guidance counselor were supportive. The UB program, “gave me an opportunity to actually look at colleges more in depth than I would have on my own. They gave me ideas of what to question ... advisors in college as opposed to what I would ask on my own.” The guidance counselor at CCHS helped in the planning process for her postsecondary education. “I had a lot of applications to fill out and she [the guidance counselor] made

sure that those were filled out on time, reminded me when they were due, and what all I needed to do to make sure all questions were answered.” From the perspective of college, respondent #78 identified things she would have done differently at CCHS and offered four suggestions, in no particular order, for future graduates of CCHS. First, “I wouldn’t have decided on my major as quickly as I did ... It seemed very stressful because I was trying to get all of these courses [at college] done for that particular major and maybe I could have taken ... something I was interested in.” Second, “AP [advanced placement], I think that would have helped me a lot more in college ... having better prepared myself.” Next, respondent #78 felt, “more ACT prep courses. I took a few [during high school] but I think if I had taken a little more then that would have helped me on my tests. I think I stopped once I made enough just to get in the college I was looking at.” And fourthly, respondent #78 suggested that “probably some study skills, and time management classes” would have been beneficial for college. Therefore, respondent #78 realized that the more practical and rigorous academic experiences one receives on the high school level the better prepared they will be to be successful in postsecondary education.

Family support became the underlying theme of the interview with respondent #78. She stated, “My mother has a big influence. She has earned her associates [AA degree]. She always wanted me to get a higher education.” Respondent #78 reflected that her mother, “always stressed reading no matter where” she was and “she [her mother} always encouraged.” In the absence of her biological father, respondent #78’s grandfather served as a father figure, “He encouraged me a lot as well. He and my grandmother only had a sixth grade education but they put all their kids through high

school” and beyond, “they would always sit up late at night helping their kids do homework.” Thus, the importance of an education was well instilled within the family of respondent #78. Once at university, the family provided respondent #78 with moral support. She shared that,

My school discouraged parents to call the kids [*sic*] everyday cause that would get the kids homesick. My mom would always send me letters everyday ... Every chance she would get, she would send me gifts.... Of course every chance she had, she would come and visit me in college [more than a 10 hour drive each way]. And when they did come and get me from college, there was always the whole family. My aunts and uncles would come with her, make it a whole family trip.... After the first year, it got a little easier by talking to her [mother] everyday. It became a daily ritual to talk to her every night, just to give her an update of what I am doing, how I am doing, and also to see how my family back home were [*sic*] doing as well.

Obviously, her family supported her postsecondary education and was committed to being there for her.

Respondent #78 accessed support from friends, professors, and an academic counselor while at university. “I think my friends in college, especially my college roommate had a major role in my academic success in college.... Her motivation and how important education was I think just got to me.” Through her roommate respondent #78 got connected with a study group and “we studied everyday. I know some people here [Choctaw, MS] don’t believe me but my friends and I were always studying even Friday night, Saturday nights, some Sundays we would take a break to see football.” Her

friends did get her involved in ballroom and ethnic dancing as extracurricular activities. However, the dedication and preparation to these activities were linked by respondent #78 to building the self-discipline for successful academic pursuits. She stated that,

In all those things you put in a lot of hard work, a lot of sweat, also determination you know you get a lot of aches , bumps, and bruises.... A month before the dance [public performance] the whole month we would meet 11:00 at night until 3:00 in the morning dancing just to make sure we had our routine down.... I think with that that came from how they perceive academics. Most of them would pull all nighters [*sic*] for academics. I guess it is basically hard work.

Thus, peer interactions can have a very positive impact on the development of positive academic habits. With respect to her professors, in her first year at university respondent #78 mentioned that “at first I was [intimidated] because it was such a big university, well known. I didn’t know how they would react.” By her senior year respondent #78 had adopted a professor as her mentor and could “go to my professor[‘s] house just hang out or baby-sit.... I emailed a lot of them [professors] constantly about homework or testing and they would respond in a timely manner.” Further, ‘classes were overwhelming’ in her sophomore year, respondent #78 decided to seek the help of a university academic counselor. The counselor assisted in developing organizational and time management skills. The academic counselor “gave me kind of an idea you know how to prioritize my life.... Which helped me a lot ... she also gave me numbers or names of tutors for certain subjects that I was taking, which was very helpful.” Respondent #78 shared that she learned academic counseling was a service available to students during freshman orientation but refrained from the services since she initially was “scared to ask questions

or ask for help.” Evidently respondent #78 socially isolated her the freshman year – “I just wanted to hide somewhere and just never get out.”

Respondent #78 attributed her social isolation to a “combination of being Native American and being away from home. I didn’t know anyone, I really didn’t have a comfort zone yet.” A unique occurrence then led her to find a ‘comfort zone.’ One of her professors told respondent #78 that she was “the first Native American from a reservation to attend this college.” As a result she became a spokesperson for the NA and “started having interviews with local newspapers.” Native Americans in the area not attending the university “actually called me up and said hey good luck. Glad you are there and I would be invited to pow wows or events locally ... I started making friends who were Native American. They gave me more of a comfort zone within the school. The support that they gave me helped me ... come out of my shell.”

### **Answers to Research Questions**

There were two research questions to be answered in this study. Each question is stated below and followed by an answer.

1. How do Choctaw Central High School (CCHS) graduates who participate in the Tribal Scholarship Program describe their transition to postsecondary education?

The findings of this study documented several themes that characterize the transition of CCHS graduates who participate in the TSP to postsecondary education. These themes are influenced by attributes of the three primary factors discussed throughout the literature, questioned by the survey and interviews, and analyzed from the

findings: sociocultural, academic, and personal factors. Generally, from the descriptions of respondents to the study, there appears to be influence from each of the primary factors on the transition experience to postsecondary education. The primary factors tend to be interrelated. I found four themes characterizing the transition experience of respondents to postsecondary education. They include: (a) academic rigor and the development of self-discipline towards education are considered critical at the high school level, (b) female respondents generally deal with more barriers to postsecondary persistence than males, (c) an increasing education level in the MBCI appears to be improving the support for education that students receive from family, (d) the positive influence of peer groups, faculty, mentors and formal college support services need to be accessed by TSP students. Therefore, the respondents to this study indicated that sociocultural, academic, and personal factors together play an integrated role in the successful transition to a postsecondary education.

2. Why are some CCHS graduates more successful in completing postsecondary educational goals?

I found that TSP respondents who were more successful in completing postsecondary goals were motivated to work through the barriers they encountered during their educational pursuits. They tended to view obstacles to educational pursuits as challenges and made the necessary social, academic, and personal adjustments. The survey responses revealed some of the adjustments, yet the interviews provided clear insights into how individuals dealt with barriers to their postsecondary education and any related adversity. Each of those interviewed who had obtained a postsecondary degree identified at least one major adverse experience or situation during their first two years of



college that required them to re-focus and adjust otherwise they would have dropped out. These situations included racial conflict with peers or faculty, being overwhelmed academically, and having to care for a child. Conversely, those interviewed who have not yet completed a college degree shared similar experiences however, were unable to make the necessary adjustments to overcome the barrier(s). Those able to make the adjustments typically sought and received practical support from peers, family, faculty and/or university student services. Thus, learning how to access the support necessary to persist in college appears to be a significant element to postsecondary success for the TSP respondents.

### **Discussion of Related Literature**

The purpose of this case study with a survey component was to explore the postsecondary education transition experiences of graduates of CCHS who received support from the TSP to better understand the barriers to successful postsecondary completion and the means to overcoming those barriers. Four themes were found characterizing the transition experience of respondents to postsecondary education. These themes were: (a) academic rigor and the development of self-discipline towards education are considered critical at the high school level, (b) female respondents generally deal with more barriers to postsecondary persistence than males, (c) an increasing education level in the MBCI appears to be improving the support for education that students receive from family, (d) the positive influence of peer groups, faculty, mentors and formal college support services need to be accessed by TSP students. In the context of these themes three general barriers to successful postsecondary completion

were identified: (a) racial conflict with peers or faculty, (b) being overwhelmed academically, (c) having to care for a legal dependent.

Academic rigor and the development of self-discipline towards education were noted by several respondents to be critical at the high school level. Less than 50% of respondents indicated they were academically prepared for college and felt they did not possess sufficient study skills from high school to be successful at the postsecondary level. Applying Choy's (2001) definition of academic rigor, the greater the rigor of high school curriculum has been linked to an increased persistence in attaining a college degree (Demmert, 2001; Jackson et al., 2003; Larimore & McClellan, 2005; U.S. Department of Education, 2005; U.S. General Accounting Office, 2003). Further, Choy (2001) documented that "taking advanced mathematics in high school in turn is associated with a higher rate of enrollment in a 4-year institution."

Self-discipline towards education was determined in my study to encompass practical learning skills such as study habits and meeting deadlines. Although more than 85% of respondents in this study stated meeting academic deadlines was important to them, only 32% felt the study habits they learned in high school helped them achieve academic success at college. In fact, 24% of respondents noted the need of learning effective writing skills, study habits/skills and college life skills in high school in order to successfully transition academically to college. Hence, there appears to be disparity between desire to and ability to be self-disciplined towards education. Aragon (2004) found in a study of AI/AN students at a southwest community college that the participants displayed low ability levels in: the use of test strategies, concentration, time management and deep processing. These findings suggest a low level of preparation in

these areas in high school. Pewewardy (1998, 2002) and Swisher and Deyhle (1989) found similar low levels of AI/AN high school academic preparation in various tribal populations and suggested it is linked to a need for culturally relevant and learning style sensitive instructional methodologies to effectively engage AI/AN students. The attention to cultural relevancy and student learning styles is believed to instill self-confidence and encourage student motivation towards academic success. Thus, this provides evidence that some AI/AN students go to the postsecondary environment with a lower level of self-discipline towards education than other students. Therefore, there is an element of CCHS graduates who pursue a postsecondary education that have to overcome the barrier of lack of academic preparation in order to persist at college.

Findings in the survey responses and interviews indicated that female respondents generally dealt with more barriers to postsecondary persistence than males. Two-thirds of the female respondents were responsible for a legal dependent during the pursuit of their first college certificate or degree. Just over 25% of male participants had a similar responsibility. Having responsibility for a legal dependent can limit college choices and often involves decisions to attend a college closer to home, to live off campus, to attend part time, to work full time while attending college, to initially pursue an associate's degree and not participate in campus activities or access student services due to a lack of spare time. These choices include characteristics of nontraditional students (Choy, 2002). Choy related that,

Students who work full time have family and work responsibilities competing with school for their time, energy, and financial resources. Difficulties in obtaining child care and class schedules that do not mesh with work schedules are just two of the barriers that nontraditional students may encounter. (p. 2)

The extra demands on time create a barrier to effective social integration on campus. Estrada, Dupoux and Wolman (2005) found that likelihood to persist to degree completion corresponds to how students adjust academically and socially in their first year. And the finding of Cain (1997) and Mayo, Murguia, and Padilla (1995) that “the establishment of meaningful social networks [that] appeared to be positively correlated to academic performance for Native American students” (as cited in Larimore & McClellan, 2005) was less likely to occur for female respondents with legal dependents. Thus, these female respondents in my study continually struggled with the challenges of being nontraditional students and the associated barriers to education. Therefore, focused effort and support for their areas of need must be provided.

An increasing education level in the MBCI appears to be improving the support for education that students receive from family. Younger respondents in this study tended to have higher educated parents. For example, 10 of 11 respondents whose father had a college degree and 14 of 17 respondents whose mothers held a college degree were under 36 years old. As principal of CCHS I have observed that both uneducated and educated parents can be beneficial sources of support for their children. However, typically I find the more educated a parent is the better they understand the nuances involved in obtaining learning skills, acquiring sufficient guidance counseling, accessing available educational resources, and guiding their children to knowing how and why to successfully pursue a postsecondary education. Choy (2001) substantiates these claims with data showing that as a parent’s education level increases there is an increase in their child’s likelihood to enroll in college, an increase in the educational expectations for the child, an increase in the child’s academic preparation for college success, and an

increased assistance from the parents in applying to colleges. In a study examining persistence of AI students at Southwestern University, Tato (2006) discovered that

their families held a high regard for education, which appears to have had positive effects on the students' persistence and perseverance at the university. They planned on attending college because their family expected them to do so and /or because of personal ambitions.... For participant's parents who had achieved some level of college education ... there was an indication that parents encouraged their student to get a college degree. (p. 193).

Thus, as the education level of MBCI members increases the active and focused involvement of those individuals will increase having a positive impact on the educational process for their families and community.

The positive influence of peer groups, faculty, mentors and formal college support services need to be accessed by TSP students. Each of the interviewed respondents shared at least one example of support at university from peer groups, faculty, and/or mentors. Only 2 sought help from formal college support services and in each case it was with initial hesitation. Of the 2, one went to tutoring services once with a friend and the other received academic counseling in her sophomore year. However, all of those interviewed did receive varying levels of guidance counseling, practical support and encouragement from TSP staff. Each of the 6 interviewed described the development of significant positive social interactions with peer groups and/or mentors within the first two years of their college experiences. Negative interactions with faculty in two year colleges were associated with the experience of 2 of the interviewed group. Similar trends were observed within the survey responses of the entire study group. Seventy-seven percent of respondents indicated they made many friends at college and 55% had informal, personal contact with professors. Only 28% agreed they had a person serve as

a mentor. In terms of use of college support services only 24% accessed available tutoring services and 27% utilized counseling services. There was a low response by respondents to available college support services during their transition to college. This could be partly attributed to the fact the TSP was providing needed support resulting in a diminished demand for additional support. Although the importance of understanding how to make college support services more accessible and inviting to AI students remains.

In this study 99% of the respondents indicated that their cultural heritage was very important to them. While 88% were comfortable interacting with students of other races only 58% felt free to express their cultural background on campus. Watson (2006) conducted a study of 76 MBCI students in two rural Mississippi community colleges. The study population was similar to my study in that “84% of the participants reported living on the tribal reservation and 65% reported that they had attended a tribal high school [CCHS] before enrolling in college” (p. 18). One of the conclusions reached related to the sociocultural factor of racial or cultural identity. Watson found “that those individuals who were able to value their own cultural beliefs while at the same time attempting to understand the cultural beliefs of other groups experienced an easier time adjusting to their new college environment” (p. 17). Huffman (2001) supports this finding and suggests that AI students who maintain their cultural identity resisting assimilation with and marginalization from campus are more likely to succeed. However, Huffman (2005) discovered two distinct groups in studying culturally traditional AI college students: a group that left college and a group that persisted in college. Each group wanted to retain and preserve their cultural identity but differed in the way “they

responded to the cultural difficulties they encountered in college” (p. 20). It was suggested that the group that left college feared losing their cultural identity while those who persisted in college “drew strength” from their cultural identity. Positive peer relationships, mentors and college support services could serve as sources for fostering culture identity encouraging more AI students to retain such identity as well as persist in college.

I found that participation in a campus Native American club had no apparent effect on student GPA. Findings did show that respondents not involved in a Native American club were significantly less likely to feel free to express their cultural background on campus. Three of the interviewed respondents explained that their involvement in a Native American club connected them to peers and faculty/staff who helped them feel comfortable as they transitioned to campus. The other three interviewed respondents were not involved in a Native American club and experienced varying levels of discomfort as they transitioned to college.

Tato (2006) documented the positive impact of an AI focused support program Native American Success Program (NASP) on the Southwestern University campus as a source of positive peer relationships and mentorship. The student participants had access to a similar resource network including “a social network of peers to relate to” (p. 195) which aided in overcoming institutional barriers and using campus services. Further, Brown and Kurpius (1997) recognized the key role non-Native and AI staff and faculty play in making AI students feel welcome and valued on campus. They suggested a proactive academic advising approach with first year AI students in order to provide them needed transitional support knowing that many AI students will not initiate the process.

Larimore and McClellan (2005) and Watson (2006) support this approach indicating the difficulty some AI students encounter accessing services at the time they need them.

Thus, even with the support of the TSP, MBCI college students need the positive, active and focused support of college peers, staff and associated services to make the necessary campus connections that will help provide a successful transition to college.

One of three general barriers to successful postsecondary completion identified in this study was racial conflict with peers or faculty. Racial conflict was expressed by the respondents in a variety of subtle instances as there was not an item directly addressing this barrier. In composing the survey items I did not consider racial conflict to be a significant issue for TSP students. However, approximately 40% of respondents did not agree that they felt free to express their cultural background on campus, 33% did not agree to adjusting well to college and 41% of respondents did not ask instructors for help when they had questions. Five respondents noted stress associated with cultural background as a primary issue. They perceived a stereotype of American Indians being imposed on them by peers and struggled to overcome the perceived stereotype. This is supported by Perry (2002) who found a significant percentage of AI students experienced verbal racism or harassment on predominantly white campuses. In addition, three of the interviewed respondents stated specific examples of perceived racial discrimination by peers and/or faculty and a fourth referenced social isolation experienced during her freshman year.

Racial conflict is associated with racial identity development (Watson, 2006). A symptom of racial conflict for members of the study group and AI/AN students in general appeared to be social isolation resulting in marginalization. Jackson et al. (2003) and



McGaha and Fitzpatrick (2005) found that American Indian students feel isolated when they arrived on campus because of their perceptions that the dominant culture(s) represented were hostile to them. Native American students who do not reconcile these perceptions tend to become marginalized, isolate themselves from the mainstream and eventually dropout. However, as Willetto (1999) suggested, the students who come to terms with their cultural identity and self-confidence related issues tend to counter the marginalization impulse.

Being overwhelmed academically served as a second general barrier to successful postsecondary completion identified in this study. A significant percentage of respondents (37%) disagreed that they were academically prepared for college. There were 31 respondents indicating stress related to academic factors in the transition to postsecondary education. Lacking adequate study skills, perceived inadequacy of high school preparation, major projects/assignments, the impediment of English as a Second Language, meeting academic deadlines, and being overwhelmed by college material were among the academic stresses mentioned. Further a number of respondents noted that CCHS was too lenient on deadlines, and completion standards for assignments and tests. Two interviewed respondents concurred with the language impediment and each of those interviewed indicated struggles in college related to underdeveloped study skills and lack of appropriate academic preparation. Demmert (2001) and the U. S. Department of Education (2005) provide support for postsecondary academic performance being positively linked to the rigor of the curriculum students were exposed to in high school. Choy (2001) agreed in part noting that rigorous high school curriculum is an important indicator of college persistence yet sociocultural influences also play an important role in

college success. Further, Watson (2006) referenced research showing “that academic preparation and pre-college aspirations were most indicative of academic persistence for Native American students” (p. 6). However, Watson concluded that nonacademic variables may be better predictors of successful transition to college than academic variables.

A third general barrier to successful postsecondary completion that emerged was caring for a legal dependent. A total of 47 respondents, 7 males and 40 females, had legal dependents they were responsible for during the pursuit of their first college certificate or degree. Several respondents wrote they contended with the dual stress of caring for their child and working while attending college. An interviewed respondent shared that caring for a baby required her to make significant adjustments in the pursuit of her postsecondary aspirations. Because of such circumstances, these respondents can be classified as nontraditional students and have family and work responsibilities competing with school for their time and energy (Choy, 2002). The previous discussion regarding the theme that female respondents generally deal with more barriers to postsecondary persistence than males revealed a need for these students to establish meaningful social networks (Larimore & McClellan, 2005; Tato, 2006). Meeting this need, which should include faculty mentor support (Hoover & Jacobs, 1992) and sensitivity to distinct AI/AN cultures (Larimore & McClellan, 2005; Pewewardy, 1998), appears to be positively correlated to academic performance for AI students. Thus, it is incumbent upon universities and, the TSP for MBCI students in particular, to implement creative approaches to address the unique needs of these nontraditional students in order to increase their postsecondary completion rates.

This study focused on exploring the postsecondary education transition experiences of graduates of CCHS who received support from the TSP to better understand the barriers to successful postsecondary completion and the means to overcoming those barriers. The findings were categorized into four themes that characterized the transition experience of respondents to postsecondary education. These themes were: (a) academic rigor and the development of self-discipline towards education are considered critical at the high school level, (b) female respondents generally deal with more barriers to postsecondary persistence than males, (c) an increasing education level in the MBCI appears to be improving the support for education that students receive from family, and (d) the positive influence of peer groups, faculty, mentors and formal college support services need to be accessed by TSP students. Additionally, within these themes three general barriers to successful postsecondary completion emerged: (a) racial conflict with peers or faculty, (b) being overwhelmed academically, and (c) having to care for a legal dependent. Each of the themes was present in the review of the literature and the discussion above. With the transition to postsecondary education being of critical importance for persistence to degree completion for all students, and AI/AN students in particular, detailed insights into the nature of those experiences is valuable for understanding how to effectively assist AI/AN students in the transition process.

## CHAPTER IV

### SUMMARY, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter begins with a summary of the literature, the purpose of the study, the research design, and the case study with survey. The chapter will also provide implications developed from the case study with survey, and concludes with recommendations for practice and further research.

#### **Summary**

Research has found a significant achievement gap in postsecondary persistence to degree completion for AI/AN students compared to other races (Freeman & Fox, 2005; Larimore & McClellan, 2005; Watson, 2006). National figures report that AI/AN students were almost three times less likely to complete a bachelor's degree than the general population (Freeman & Fox, 2005). Persistence rates of AI/AN students have been estimated to below 25% for some tribes and generally are significantly lower than most other racial groups (Benjamin et al., 1993; Brown & Kurpius, 1997; Jackson et al., 2003; Watson, 2006).

Research noted the first two years of college as the period of greatest drop out for AI/AN students (Benjamin et al., 1993, Tato, 2006; and Watson, 2006). Estrada, Dupoux and Wolman (2005) found that likelihood to persist to degree completion corresponds to how students adjust academically and socially in their first year. AI/AN students

encountered several barriers to postsecondary success during the transition period (Demmert, 2001; U.S. General Accounting Office, 2003). These barriers are related to three primary categories of factors experienced by transitioning students: sociocultural, academic, and personal (Jackson et al., 2003; Larimore & McClellan, 2005).

The sociocultural factors deal with the social interactions AI/AN students have with others on campus. A pervasive concern in the research in this area has to do with AI/AN students allowing themselves to become socially isolated due to cultural identity issues resulting in marginalization (McGaha & Fitzpatrick, 2005; Watson, 2006). Once marginalized, McGaha and Fitzpatrick (2005) observed an educational disengagement and a refusal to seek help from college support services with the result often being withdrawal from school.

In the category of academic factors, a greater rigor of high school curriculum for AI/AN students has been linked to an increased persistence in attaining a college degree (Demmert, 2001; Jackson et al., 2003; Larimore & McClellan, 2005; U.S. Department of Education, 2005; U.S. General Accounting Office, 2003). However, Aragon (2004), found AI/AN students at a community college to be inadequately prepared academically as they displayed low ability levels in: the use of test strategies, concentration, time management, and deep processing. Further, the lack of academic preparation of AI/AN students for college is linked to a need for culturally relevant approaches to instruction that will effectively engage AI/AN students in high school (Pewewardy, 1998, 2002) and Swisher and Deyhle (1989). In addition, Choy (2002) and Huffman (2001) concluded that nontraditional students are at a disadvantage for academic success because of responsibilities competing with school for their time, energy and financial resources.

The personal factors of determination, goal setting, and academic aspirations were strongly associated with college completion of AI students (Demmert, 2001; Jackson et al., 2003). Successful goal setting and academic aspirations are linked to effective career and guidance counseling (Hoover and Jacobs, 1992; Watson, 2006). As a result, it is imperative that AI/AN students access necessary high school and college support services to facilitate the realization of academic goals and aspirations (Larimore & McClellan; Tato, 2006).

There appears to be resistance on the part of AI/AN students to access needed college support services such as academic counseling and tutoring during their transition to college. Cultural identity and racial conflict issues in the transition to the college environment may be the source of the resistance (Huffman, 2005; Tato, 2006; Watson, 2006). Researchers found AI/AN student performance is improved through relationships with approachable faculty advisors and mentors (McGaha & Fitzpatrick, 2005; Wilson, 1997). The initiation of these relationships can be enhanced through targeted campus orientation programs and effective follow-up that are culturally sensitive and thus, welcoming to AI/AN students (Tato, 2006). The cultivation of these relationships have been found to help overcome the barriers to accessing college support services, leading to a greater likelihood of successful transition to college and a higher rate of persistence to degree completion (Larimore & McClellan, 2005).

All the participants in this study attended CCHS of the Choctaw Tribal School District. The district is comprised of 8 schools (6 elementary, a middle school and the high school) and is under local control through a grant school agreement with the BIA. CCHS, established in 1963, is one of 45 BIA secondary schools in the United States.

CCHS has a dormitory facility on campus that is available as an option for up to 150 students. The Choctaw Tribal Schools was accountable to the OIEP. In the fall of 2006 the OIEP was designated the new Bureau of Indian Education (BIE). At the end of the 2006-07 school year CCHS had an enrollment of 460 students and 75 seniors who graduated.

Choctaws in Mississippi first opened schools in 1819 in conjunction with a church mission organization. By 1830 the Choctaw schools thrived and were considered to be among the best in the South (Ferrara, 1998; Fortune, 1985). The Treaty of Dancing Rabbit Creek of 1830 relegated the education of the Mississippi Choctaws to the federal government. According to Ferrara (1998), the educational system regressed and by 1971 there had only been 290 high school graduates and 22 college graduates in the tribe's history. By 1998 the tribe had 122 college graduates and 300 members attending college or university.

The MBCI Tribal Scholarship Program (TSP) was established in the fall of 1994. It was designed to provide enrolled members of the MBCI improved access to and support during a postsecondary education at an accredited higher educational institution of their choosing in the United States and essentially extinguish the financial factor associated with lower college completion rates. The data contained here-in-after about the TSP were obtained through a series of personal communications in 2006 and 2007 with the TSP Scholarship Officer and a Scholarship Assistant.

MBCI tribal scholarships are not income based. Through the fall of 2005, 1519 enrolled tribal members had been awarded funding for one or more postsecondary courses since the creation of the TSP. In the first 11 years of the TSP's existence, 376

individuals had earned a certificate or a degree and another 90 students earned multiple certificates or degrees.

In 2006 the TSP consisted of five staff members. The staff seeks to be actively involved in each aspect of an applicant's enrollment process and subsequent needs of a Tribal Scholarship recipient. TSP applicants are required to apply for federal financial aid, provide a letter of acceptance from an accredited postsecondary educational institution, and maintain a GPA of 2.0 or above. Applicants have the option of applying as a full-time or part-time student. An accepted applicant's TSP funding amount is the difference between the Cost of Attendance (COA) statement from the postsecondary education institution of choice and the financial aid award received. Apart from monetary assistance, the TSP provides students with pre-college counseling, help in selecting a college and major, information about campus life, and guidance in completing admission, housing, and financial aid applications. Staff also coordinate campus tours, visit enrolled students on campus, arrange for tutoring services as needed, and monitor student progress through college administrators and faculty.

This study was conducted to explore the postsecondary education transition experiences of graduates of CCHS who have received support from the TSP to understand better the barriers to successful postsecondary completion and the means of overcoming those barriers. The research was performed to add to the existing literature on the transition experiences of AI/AN to postsecondary education in general and the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians TSP students in particular.

The research design employed in this study was a case study with a survey component. Data from surveys, interviews, and observations were used to generate the



findings of this study. The survey and the researcher served as the data collection instruments.

The participants in this study were CCHS graduates who received support from the TSP for postsecondary education pursuits, as a full-time or part-time student, for a minimum of two consecutive semesters from the fall semester of 1994 to the spring semester of 2005. A total of 780 individuals composed this population and 87 members of this population participated as survey respondents.

A preliminary survey instrument was developed through personal communications with members of the TSP staff, the former Principal of CCHS, a Tribal education planner, the Director of the Choctaw Tribal Schools, the Assistant Director of Schools, and the CCHS UB staff. The preliminary survey instrument was administered to members of the target population as a pilot study. Changes were made to the survey instrument as a result of pilot study feedback. The modified preliminary survey became the survey instrument used for this study (see Appendix D). The survey instrument utilized is considered a cross-sectional survey.

The survey included items dealing with demographics, attitudes, behavior, and facts related to the research questions. Responses to the survey illuminated various perspectives on how CCHS graduates who participate in the TSP describe their transition to postsecondary education. This data became a source for the development of the interview protocol. In addition, responses to the survey were reviewed to identify potential interview candidates.

A mailing containing the survey instrument, informed consent letters, and a pre-stamped return envelope was prepared. A limited multi-step administration of the mail-

out was utilized as an adaptation of the Salant and Dillman (1994) survey mail out process. Respondents were asked to complete and return the survey within two weeks. Budget limitations resulted in just one mail out. TSP staff and the researcher contacted members of the research population by phone and in person to request participation in the survey. Extra sets of mail out materials were distributed as necessary. The original deadline was extended four weeks to accommodate the follow-up process and allow for residual returns from the original mailing.

The returned surveys were analyzed for common patterns that existed in the variations identified by participants. Purposeful sampling in the form of maximum variation was used to select 6 respondents for researcher conducted interviews. Patterns in the variations identified by participants were used to generate the interview protocol (see Appendix E). The interview protocol was used to guide the interviews. The interviews were designed to provide a greater depth of perspective to the case study.

All of the respondents interviewed were in general proximity of Choctaw, MS, at the time of the interviews allowing for all the interviews to be conducted in person. Each of the interviews I conducted were audiotaped and transcribed. I reviewed, evaluated for clarity, and analyzed each transcribed interview to determine topics requiring further probing in subsequent respondent interviews.

Multiple observations of the TSP staff were performed including observations of the TSP staff interacting with CCHS students during the 2006-2007 school year. In these instances I assumed the role of a complete observer. Personal communications with members of the TSP office staff were conducted offering the opportunity to probe further into revealed realities and verify the face and content validity of observations through

informal questioning. The TSP *Policies and Procedures Handbook*, the TSP *Student Handbooks*, newspaper clippings and reports were accessed.

The research processes of surveying, interview, observations, and document analysis were ongoing and interconnected. All data was analyzed.

In the context of the data analysis, the triangulation approach was applied to enhance validity and reliability. This study used survey data and interview data. As these data were collected I analyzed my descriptive statistics of the survey responses, transcripts of the interviews and documents to check for patterns and emerging themes. A coding process was used in the data analysis process. Data from survey responses and interview transcripts were color coded around distinguishing key words and phrases to sort the raw data into themes.

Yin (1994) suggested the use of three types of pattern matching logic: nonequivalent dependent variable as a pattern, rival explanations as patterns, and simple patterns. I used a combination of types of pattern matching logic to organize the coded data into patterns. As a result, I was enabled to establish a small number of main categories that addressed my research questions. These main categories became the major findings of my study. The categories reflected the diversity of the population studied.

A descriptive narrative including quotes by the respondents detailed the categories and their interconnections. The data analysis was concluded with an interpretation of the data. Questions to be considered in future research were suggested.

The following research questions were addressed in this study.

1. How do Choctaw Central High School (CCHS) graduates who participate in the Tribal Scholarship Program describe their transition to postsecondary education?

The findings of this study documented several themes that characterize the transition of CCHS graduates who participate in the TSP to postsecondary education. These themes are influenced by attributes of the three primary factors discussed throughout the literature, questioned by the survey and interviews, and analyzed from the findings: sociocultural, academic, and personal factors. Generally, from the descriptions of respondents to the study, there appears to be influence from each of the primary factors on the transition experience to postsecondary education. The primary factors tend to be interrelated. I found four themes characterizing the transition experience of respondents to postsecondary education. They include: (a) academic rigor and the development of self-discipline towards education are considered critical at the high school level, (b) female respondents generally deal with more barriers to postsecondary persistence than males, (c) an increasing education level in the MBCI appears to be improving the support for education that students receive from family, (d) the positive influence of peer groups, faculty, mentors and formal college support services need to be accessed by TSP students. Therefore, the respondents to this study indicated that sociocultural, academic, and personal factors together play an integrated role in the successful transition to a postsecondary education.

Less than half of respondents indicated they were academically prepared for college. Several researchers of AI/AN college students found increased academic rigor in high school is linked to increased persistence in attaining a college degree (Demmert,

2001; Jackson et al., 2003; Larimore & McClellan, 2005; U.S. Department of Education, 2005; U.S. General Accounting Office, 2003).

Findings in this study suggest the study habits learned by respondents in high school were deficient. Upon reflection from their college experience, almost 70% of respondents felt the study habits they learned in high school helped them achieve academic success at college. Aragon (2004) found in a study of AI/AN students at a community college that displayed low ability levels in the use of test strategies, concentration, time management, and deep processing. Larimore and McCellan (2005) and Watson (2006) cite similar findings. Thus, there is evidence to suggest that AI/AN students go to the postsecondary environment with a lower level of academic preparedness than other students.

My study showed that female participants generally dealt with more barriers to postsecondary persistence than males. In fact, about 67% of the female respondents were responsible for a legal dependent during the pursuit of their first college certificate or degree compared to just over 25% male respondents. As a result a higher proportion of females than males worked, lived more than 21 miles from campus, attended a college close to home, initially pursued an associate's degree and tended not to participate in extracurricular campus activities or access student support services while in college. This group of female respondents are considered nontraditional students (Choy, 2002). Thus, the responsibilities related to caring for a legal dependent create a barrier to effective social integration on campus. Effective social integration on campus is linked to likelihood to persist to degree completion (Estrada et al., 2005).

An increasing education level in the MBCI appears to be improving the support for education that students receive from family. Younger respondents tended to have higher educated parents. This is significant in that as a parent's education level increases there is an increase in their child's likelihood to enroll in college, an increase in educational expectations, an increase in a student's academic preparation for college success, and an increased assistance from parents in applying to colleges (Choy, 2001; Tato, 2006).

The positive influence of peer groups, faculty, mentors and formal college support services need to be accessed by TSP students. Only 28% of respondents indicated having a mentor at college. Only 24% stated they used available tutoring services and 27% utilized counseling services. All 6 interviewed respondents described the development of significant positive social interactions with peer group and/or mentors within the first two years of their college experience. However, only 1 interviewed respondent made mention of using college support services during their first year of college. Negative interactions with a faculty in two year colleges was reported by 2 interviewed respondents. Much of the resistance to accessing college support services and finding a mentor seems to be related to cultural identity. Individuals able to value their own cultural beliefs and respecting cultural beliefs of others make an easier adjustment to the college environment (Huffman, 2001, 2005; Watson, 2006).

Involvement in a campus Native American group seemed to facilitate significant positive social interaction for respondents. A greater level of discomfort transitioning to college was expressed by the 3 interviewed respondents not involved in a Native American compared to the other 3 who were. A proactive academic advising approach

with first year AI students to help overcome cultural identity issues and access needed support is advocated by Brown and Kurpius (1997), Larimore and McClellan (2005) and Watson (2006).

2. Why are some CCHS graduates more successful in completing postsecondary educational goals?

I found that TSP respondents who were more successful in completing postsecondary goals were motivated to work through the barriers they encountered during their educational pursuits. They tended to view obstacles to educational pursuits as challenges and made the necessary social, academic, and personal adjustments. The survey responses revealed some of the adjustments, yet the interviews provided clear insights into how individuals dealt with barriers to their postsecondary education and any related adversity. Each of those interviewed who had obtained a postsecondary degree identified at least one major adverse experience or situation during their first two years of college that required them to re-focus and adjust otherwise they would have dropped out. These situations included racial conflict with peers or faculty, being overwhelmed academically, and having to care for a child. Conversely, those interviewed who have not yet completed a college degree shared similar experiences however, were unable to make the necessary adjustments to overcome the barrier(s). Those able to make the adjustments typically sought and received practical support from peers, family, faculty and/or university student services. Thus, learning how to access the support necessary to persist in college appears to be a significant element to postsecondary success for the TSP respondents.

Racial conflict with peers or faculty was identified as a general barrier to successful postsecondary completion by respondents. In composing the survey instrument racial conflict was not considered to be a significant issue for TSP students. However, approximately 40% did not feel free to express their cultural background on campus. Three interviewed respondents cited examples of perceived racial discrimination by peers and/or faculty. Perry (2002) found a significant percentage of AI students experienced verbal racism or harassment on predominantly white campuses.

Racial conflict is associated with racial identity development (Watson, 2006). This conflict could lead, and did for several of the respondents, to self-imposed social isolation. This marginalization on campus is strongly connected to dropping out (Jackson et al., 2003; McGaha & Fitzpatrick, 2005). However, Willetto (1999) suggested students who come to terms with their cultural identity and self-confidence related issues often counter the marginalization impulse.

Being overwhelmed academically was a second general barrier to successful postsecondary completion identified in this study. Almost 40% of respondents felt they were not prepared for college. Lacking adequate study skills, the impediment of English as a Second Language, meeting academic deadlines, and being overwhelmed by college material were among the academic stresses mentioned. The English language barrier was reported as an issue for 2 interviewed respondents. In addition, each interviewed respondent noted college struggles related to underdeveloped study skills and lack of appropriate academic preparation. Demmert (2003) and the U.S. Department of Education (2005) provide support for postsecondary academic performance being positively linked to the rigor of the curriculum students were exposed to in high school.



However, Watson (2006) concluded that nonacademic variables may be better predictors of successful transition to college than academic variables.

A third barrier to successful postsecondary completion that emerged in this study was the responsibilities associated with caring for a legal dependent. Two-thirds of female respondents had such responsibilities. Just over 25% of male respondents had a legal depend during their transition to college. Again, as was stated earlier, female respondents typically have to deal with more barriers to postsecondary persistence than males. One of the resultant barriers is difficulty in building meaningful social support networks at college (Larimore & McClellan, 2005). This social support need is positively linked to academic performance for AI students (Hoover & Jacobs, 1992). Universities and the TSP are urged to continue to develop and proactively implement effective strategies for providing mentors and other social interaction support for transitioning AI/AN students.

### **Implications**

The results of this research have provided the MBCI with an insight into the preparation for college CCHS students believe they have and an understanding of the opportunities for a college education TSP provides youth of the MBCI. Additionally, a number of suggestions for improving the preparation of CCHS students, effectively supporting their transition to college and the operation of the TSP have been developed.

There were several insights gained from this study from the transition experiences of respondents. First, through reflection on high school from the perspective of college experience more than half of the respondents indicated they were not academically

prepared for college. They felt they did not possess the writing skills or study habits to be successful at college. They appear to have discerned what the research supports: increased high school academic rigor is linked to increased persistence in attaining a college degree (Demmert, 2001; Jackson et al., 2003; Larimore & McClellan, 2005; U. S. Department of Education, 2005; U.S. General Accounting Office, 2003). Thus, an academically rigorous high school environment with higher level courses in all subject areas was suggested as a foundation for postsecondary academic success.

A second insight is that female respondents tend to encounter more barriers to postsecondary success than males. Two-thirds of the females in this study were responsible for legal dependents whereas about approximately 25% of the males had a similar responsibility. This responsibility caused many of these females to work while attending college, remain close to home to attend school, and settle for a lesser postsecondary degree than they had aspired to. As Choy (2002) noted, nontraditional students have a decreased likelihood to persist at college to degree completion simply due to their circumstances. However, they have to face the additional barrier of having significantly decreased opportunity due to time constraints to socially integrate on campus. The relationships, such as peer and faculty mentors, and the accessing of college support services, formed by the social integration have been found to be critical for navigating to academic success (Estrada et al., 2005, Huffman, 2001, 2005; Watson, 2006). Thus, colleges and the TSP need take a heightened initiative with nontraditional students to provide and sustain effective mentor and other academic support relationships.

The fact that the education level within the MBCI is increasing serves as a third insight gained from this study (Fortune, 1997; personal communication with an education planner, February, 2007). This seems to be having a direct impact on the support for education students receive from their families (Choy, 2001; Tato, 2006). The increased number of tribal members holding a postsecondary degree causes an increase in the effective support future students receive from the home. Thus, the access provided by the TSP to a postsecondary education appears to be stimulating an educationally enhanced home environment to support the educational attainment of the resident children.

And finally, a fourth insight gained from this study is that racial conflict with peers or faculty was a general barrier for several respondents. Approximately 40% of respondents did not feel free to express their cultural background on campus. Perry (2002) found that a significant percentage of AI students experienced verbal racism while attending a predominantly white college. Thus, racial conflict can be considered a barrier to successful transition to the postsecondary environment for AI students. Willetto (1999) suggested that focusing on the development of the cultural identity of transitioning AI students to college could help retard the impulse to marginalization that racial conflict often triggers. Minority support programs on campus are helping to develop cultural identity in transitioning students and thus, allow these students to overcome racial conflict barriers (Larimore & McClellan, 2005). One example given is the American Indian program at Stanford University. Another example is the Native American Success Program (NASP) at Southwestern University in Texas (Tato, 2006). Therefore, further development and availability of these programs on campuses should prove beneficial for

AI students. Partnership with these programs by the TSP may positively impact TSP students as they transition to campus.

These results are of great importance to all underserved populations. The insights provided by program participants speak to the improved operation of schools preparing students for college and for similar service agencies supporting underserved students on college campuses.

## **Recommendations**

### **(a) Tribal Scholarship Program**

The TSP provides effective support to many MBCI postsecondary students. Many of their current practices however, tend to cater to the needs of traditional students. This study revealed a high percentage of nontraditional students participating in the TSP. Thus, further examination of the unique needs of these nontraditional students should be conducted. In particular, an evaluation of the aspirations of students responsible for legal dependents could allow for practical insights for assisting them to overcome current limitations that often result in their attaining a 2 year degree instead of a higher degree and remaining close to home for their studies.

A number of the participants in this study requested after hours access to computers with internet connections and tutoring services. Continuance and expansion of resource sharing with other MBCI on reservation entities would further provide for these services such as arranging access to existing computer labs and staffing them with TSP peer tutors to be operated after hours during the week and on the weekends. Also, the TSP may want to consider amendments to their current computer award program to better

accommodate the needs of nontraditional TSP students. Another option regarding internet access could be the provision of internet vouchers to off campus TSP students allowing them free internet access from home.

Additionally, it is recommended that the introduction of CCHS students and their parents/guardians to the TSP begin in the 9<sup>th</sup> grade and practical preparation skills workshops towards college continue each successive year of high school. Several respondents recommended a comprehensive series of orientation workshops be conducted a month prior to initial college enrollment by the TSP. These workshops would include yet not be limited to reviewing fundamentals of personal budgeting, college life survival skills, practical study skills, and effectively preparing for the dual ‘culture shock’ of college living and being a minority on campus. Collaboration with appropriate college entities should be initiated to ensure that each TSP student be partnered with a mentor.

An update of the TSP overall student database is currently in progress. The completion of this project will allow for more effective follow up of former, current, and future TSP students.

#### **(b) Future Research**

The justification of this research was founded on gaining further insights into understanding the barriers to postsecondary education for AI/AN students, and MBCI students who graduated from CCHS and received support from the TSP in particular. In addition, it was recognized from prior studies (Brown & Kurpius, 1997; Jackson & Smith, 2001; Tato, 2006; Watson, 2006) that there was a dearth in qualitative studies of

AI/AN students from individual tribes and studies that examined the personal experiences of these students during their transition to postsecondary education. This study provided insights into experiences of CCHS graduates supported by the TSP. Thus, an expansion of this research for comparison purposes is recommended. Future research of the individual, unique experiences and persistence to degree completion of MBCI postsecondary students who graduated from high schools other than CCHS could prove beneficial. Further, future study of MBCI postsecondary students who received support from the TSP could be compared with those who did not receive support from the TSP. In addition, similar qualitative studies of AI/AN from other tribes would allow for the detection of trends in postsecondary experiences that could help guide colleges and universities in effectively assisting AI/AN students to successful transition to and persistence in postsecondary pursuits. These studies could key in on such topics as characteristics of successful AI/AN college students, the direct impact of cultural identity on AI/AN academic performance, the significance of family influence on AI/AN student success, the importance of intercultural differences and their correlation to student success, the nature of college persistence problems for single AI/AN parents, effective mechanisms for supporting nontraditional AI/AN students to postsecondary persistence, and viable methods for encouraging and sustaining AI/AN student access to college support services as they are needed.

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APPENDIX A

RESEARCHER'S VITA

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**EDUCATION:**  
Leadership

**Doctor of Philosophy (anticipated December 2007)** – Educational

Mississippi State University, Mississippi State, Mississippi  
Dissertation Title: Postsecondary Transitions of Mississippi Band of  
Choctaw Indian Tribal Scholarship Program Students

**Master of Science (May 1994)** – Educational Leadership  
Mississippi State University, Mississippi State, Mississippi

**Bachelor of Science (May 1989)** – Biology  
University of Guelph, Guelph, Ontario, Canada

**CAREER-RELATED**

**EXPERIENCE:**  
Choctaw,

**Secondary School Principal**

Choctaw Central High School (CCHS), Choctaw Tribal School District,  
Mississippi  
August 2006 – present

- Supervise and evaluate more than 60 instructional and support staff and administrate an additional 50 cafeteria, custodial, dormitory, and security staff
- Serve as instructional leader for a 9<sup>th</sup> through 12<sup>th</sup> grade school and dormitory with student population of approximately 460 and over 40 certified staff
- Guide the school towards the establishment of an effective working rapport with school stakeholders
- Support the implementation of varied research based instructional approaches to significantly improve learning for each student
- Promote the establishment and maintain a positive school climate focused on developing students and staff towards academic, social and instructional excellence
- Develop, implement, and update a school improvement plan in accordance with the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS), the Mississippi Department of Education (MDE) and the Bureau of Indian Education (BIE) guidelines
- Actively and effectively involve parents/guardians in the school improvement process
- Lead the school to attaining and surpassing Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) standards in compliance with the federal No Child Left Behind Act

**Elementary School Principal**

Pearl River Elementary (PRES), Choctaw Tribal School District, Choctaw,  
MS  
July 2000 – August 2006

- Supervised and evaluated each of the 92 instructional and support staff members
- Served as instructional leader for a pre-K through 6<sup>th</sup> grade school with student population of approximately 450 and over 40 certified staff
- Guided the school towards the establishment of an effective working rapport with school stakeholders
- Supported the implementation and maintenance of effective school wide classroom management
- Actively sought to elicit the necessary factors to develop the school climate towards one that celebrated all aspects of the learning process and promoted life long educational pursuits
- Supervised Family and Child Education (FACE) program, which served approximately 60 families and employed five professional staff members
- Coordinated summer enrichment and extended summer school programs which served approximately 300 students and employed over 40 staff
- Ensured the effective completion and implementation of school improvement plans including SACS (Southern Association of Colleges and Schools), State Accreditation standards, Office of Indian Education Programs requirements and related accountability and funding reports
- Guided the school to attaining and surpassing Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) standards in compliance with the federal No Child Left Behind Act
- Directed school based drug prevention, parental involvement, day time and extended school tutoring, the After School program and extra curricular activities

#### **Elementary School Assistant Principal**

PRES, Choctaw Tribal School District, Choctaw, Mississippi  
August 1999 – June 2000

- Assisted the principal in planning, organizing, and directing the implementation of all school activities
- Monitored the implementation of the instructional curriculum and served to support staff in the instructional process
- Helped lead staff and school community to a unity of purpose and commitment to learning excellence

#### **Tutor for Tribal Scholarship Program (TSP)**

Choctaw, MS  
August 1998 – present

- Provided tutoring services in math, science, statistics, and English composition for TSP students

#### **National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) Educator**

##### **Resource**

#### **Center Coordinator**

CCHS, Choctaw, MS  
August 1997 – June 1999

- Liaison between the Choctaw Tribal Schools (CTS) and the Stennis Space Center Education office helping to integrate NASA educational resources

- into the Choctaw Tribal School curriculum
- Promoted the NASA resources through presentations in the CTS, surrounding county schools and libraries, and community events
- Planned and led student field trips to the Johnson Space Center, Stennis Space Center, and the Kennedy Space Center
- Established a CCHS ambassador group focused on providing leadership opportunities for participating students
- Guided a group of graduate students in a summer grant project that charted the Mississippi Choctaw Trail of Tears with satellite imagery
- Directed the CCHS five year SACS school improvement plan review process

### **Science and Foreign Language Teacher**

CCHS, Choctaw, Mississippi

August 1995 – May 1999

- Taught Biology and Spanish based on Mississippi State Department curriculum guidelines
- Served as Junior class staff sponsor
- Tutored with Upward Bound Program and presented ACT preparation workshops

### **Coordinator of Independent Study (IS)**

Department of Independent Study, Continuing Education

Mississippi State University, Mississippi State, MS

July 1994 – July 1995

- Coordinated the development and implementation of high school and college level courses of the IS program
- Communicated with students, parents, and school counselors to provide needed services

### **High School Science Teacher**

International Christian School, San Jose, Costa Rica

August 1990 – July 1992

- Taught and tutored Biology, Chemistry, and Physical Education based on an U.S.A. recognized curriculum
- Served as staff sponsor of the student council
- Coached Junior Varsity basketball team

### **PRESENTATIONS:**

**FACE (Family and Child Education) National Training Conference**

March 2006 – Portland, Oregon

Networking session presenter: *Administrative Support of FACE Programs*

**Louisiana Education Research Association (LERA)**

January 2003 – Kenner, LA

Poster presentation: *INTASC (Interstate New Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium) implementation*

**2002 National Indian School Board Association Convention**  
June 2002 – Albuquerque, New Mexico

**2001 National Indian School Board Association Convention**  
June 2001 – San Diego, California

**space**  
**Conducted videotaped demonstration representing the vacuum of  
for NASA**  
March 2000 – Broadcasted nationally on NASA Select Television

**PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS:**  
Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD)  
Mississippi Association of Secondary School Principals (MASSP)  
National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP)  
Mississippi Staff Development Council  
National Staff Development Council (NSDC)  
Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS)

**ACCOMPLISHMENTS:**

**Choctaw Central High School surpassed AYP  
as result of drastic improvements standards in accordance to the federal No  
Child Left Behind Act (NCLB)**  
2006-2007

**Pearl River Elementary surpassed AYP**  
2005-2006

**SACS School Evaluator**  
Fall 2004

**Boys and Girls Club of America, Pearl River Branch, Advisory Board  
member**  
2002 – present

**National Performance Review Hammer Award Recipient**  
Class of 1999

**Choctaw Central High School Teacher of the Year**  
1996-1997



APPENDIX B

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD FOR THE PROTECTION OF HUMAN  
SUBJECTS IN RESEARCH APPROVAL



October 11, 2006

Gregory Alexander Carlyle  
10680 Road 393  
Philadelphia, MS 39350

RE: IRB Study #06-229: Post-secondary Transition Experiences of Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians Tribal Scholarship Program Students

Dear Mr. Carlyle:

The above referenced project was reviewed and approved via expedited review for a period of 10/11/2006 through 9/15/2007 in accordance with 45 CFR 46.110 #7. Please note the expiration date for approval of this project is 9/15/2007. If additional time is needed to complete the project, you will need to submit a Continuing Review Request form 30 days prior to the date of expiration. Any modifications made to this project must be submitted for approval prior to implementation. Forms for both Continuing Review and Modifications are located on our website at <http://www.msstate.edu/dept/compliance>.

Any failure to adhere to the approved protocol could result in suspension or termination of your project. Please note that the IRB reserves the right, at anytime, to observe you and any associated researchers as they conduct the project and audit research records associated with this project.

Please refer to your docket number (#06-229) when contacting our office regarding this project.

We wish you the very best of luck in your research and look forward to working with you again. If you have questions or concerns, please contact me at [cwilliams@research.msstate.edu](mailto:cwilliams@research.msstate.edu) or by phone at 662-325-5220.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Christine Williams".

Christine Williams  
IRB Administrator

cc: Dwight Hare

**Office of Regulatory Compliance**

P. O. Box 6223 • 8A Morgan Street • Mailstop 9563 • Mississippi State, MS 39762 • (662) 325-3294 • FAX (662) 325-8776

APPENDIX C

PROCEDURAL MODIFICATION/ ADDENDUM REQUEST FORM

RECEIVED  
DEC 13 2006

### **Procedural Modification/Addendum Request Form**

*Please note: This form may NOT be used for personnel changes or time extensions. Please complete a Personnel Modification form for personnel changes or a Continuing Review Request form for time extension requests.*

IRB Docket # 06-229

Principal Researcher/Investigator: Gregory Alexander Carlyle

Research Title: Post-secondary Transition Experiences of Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians Tribal Scholarship Program Students

**1. Summarize / Itemize requested changes and justification for each.**

Changes made to descriptive survey following feedback from Pilot study:

- In response to IRB inquiry, the sentence, "The estimated completion time for the survey is 20 minutes" was added to the opening directions. This approximate completion time was validated by the Pilot study group.
- Questions 4 and 5, changed phrase "classification level" to "enrollment status". The first phrase seemed to elicit a dual meaning to some of the respondents.
- Question 11, added a response choice of "lived on campus." The original response choices all stated a distance a student lived from campus. Thus, the choices presented the underlying assumption that all the students participating in the study lived off campus. Therefore it was necessary to provide an answer choice for living on-campus to allow answers to reflect the reality of each students living situation.
- Question 13, added phrase "while pursuing your first certificate or degree" to provide consistency with the wording in question 12.
- Question 47 is new. Thus, the numbering for the descriptive survey originally submitted to and approved by the IRB increased by 1 for questions 47, 48, and 49. This question was added in response to suggestions by members of the Pilot study who felt it was important for respondents to have an opportunity to explain the level of practical support they received in preparing documentation as well as themselves for college entry. Some shared that the process was intimidating. Thus, attention to this aspect of the post-secondary education experience could provide helpful insights for assisting others from similar backgrounds to effectively prepare for the transition to post-secondary education.

**2. Do changes require a REVISED CONSENT statement or procedure? If so, attach revised form and procedures.**

No. The wording of the informed consent remains the same. The line in the informed consent listing the approximate length of time to complete the survey (20 minutes) was validated.

Version February 2005

RECEIVED

DEC 13 2006

3. Do changes require revisions to the assessment of risk of harm to the subjects? *If so, attach revisions.* No.
4. Do changes require revisions to the methods of ensuring anonymity or confidentiality? *If so, explain.* No.

Signature of Researcher/Investigator: *[Signature]* Date: 12-11-06

Signature of Advisor (if student): *[Signature]* Date: 12-11-06

\*\*\*\*\**(For office use)*\*\*\*\*\*

Type of Approval:  Administrative  
 Expedited  
 Full Board Date of meeting:

Authorized IRB Representative: *Christine Wall* Date: 1/5/07

CR 715

Version February 2005

APPENDIX D  
CONSENT LETTER AND SURVEY INSTRUMENT

## Informed Consent

**Title of Study:** POSTSECONDARY TRANSITION EXPERIENCES OF MISSISSIPPI BAND OF CHOCTAW INDIANS TRIBAL SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM STUDENTS

**Study Site:** Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians (MBCI) Tribal Scholarship Program

**Name of Researcher(s) & University affiliation:** Greg Carlyle, Dr. Nicole Thompson and Dr. Dwight Hare, Mississippi State University

**What is the purpose of this research project?** The purpose of this study is to explore the college experiences of the graduates of Choctaw Central High School (CCHS) who have received support from the Tribal Scholarship Program (TSP). By looking at these experiences, we hope to better understand factors that contribute to the successful completion of your college goals. About 750 CCHS graduates have participated in the TSP and all will be invited to participate in this research project.

**How will the research be conducted?**

The research will be conducted with respondents who agree to and sign this informed consent. You are then asked to complete the attached survey questions **by Friday, February 9, 2007** and return them in the enclosed envelope. The survey is estimated to take 20 minutes to complete. About ten people who complete the survey will be selected for an interview. The interview will be designed to gather more detail about your responses to the survey questions. The interview will be scheduled for an agreed upon time and location, will take approximately one hour, and will be tape recorded. A follow-up interview may be scheduled if needed.

**Are there any risks to me because of my participation?** There are no risks to you because of your participation. The information that you supply to the study will be aggregated and your identity will remain confidential.

**Does participation in this research provide any benefits to others or myself?** The benefits will be to identify items that can be targeted to help enhance the post secondary transition experiences of future CCHS graduates.

**Will this information be kept confidential?** Yes. To maintain confidentiality, only aggregated data will be reported. Individuals who are interviewed will be given a pseudonym. The researcher will keep the information that links your pseudonym with your real name in a lock box and be the only one with access to it. 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 Greg Carlyle at \_\_\_\_\_. For additional information regarding your rights as a research subject, please feel free to contact the MSU Regulatory Compliance Office at 662-325-5220.

**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.

**Please remember to sign and return one copy of this consent form. I cannot use your response unless you sign and return the consent form. One copy of the consent form is for you to keep.**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Participant Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

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

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

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

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date



## Descriptive Survey of CCHS graduates in college

Thank you for your willingness to complete this survey about your college experience. Before beginning this survey please read the enclosed informed consent form and sign indicating your understanding of what your participation involves.

The purpose of this survey is to assist in learning about your experience transitioning to your college education. Your opinions and descriptions are valued. This survey is not a test. There is no right or wrong answers. The estimated completion time for the survey is 20 minutes. The answers you give will be completely confidential.

### Demographics

Place an X in the box beside those items that apply to you.

- |                                 |  |
|---------------------------------|--|
| Gender:                         | Age group:                                 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Male   | <input type="checkbox"/> 18 – 25 years old |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Female | <input type="checkbox"/> 26 – 35 years old |
|                                 | <input type="checkbox"/> 36 – 45 years old |
|                                 | <input type="checkbox"/> 46 – 55 years old |
|                                 | <input type="checkbox"/> 56 or older       |

- High school you graduated from:  
 Choctaw Central High School (CCHS)  
 High school other than CCHS  
 Earned a GED (graduation equivalent diploma)
- Highest composite ACT score (write in the value): \_\_\_\_\_
- Number of years between high school graduation and when you began your college or post-secondary education:  
 Less than a year  
 1 year  
 2 years  
 3 years  
 4 years  
 5 years  
 More than 5 years
- Initial student enrollment status upon entering college :  
 Full-time student  
 Part-time student
- Did your student enrollment status change during first 2 years of college?  
 No  
 Yes  
If yes, please use the following space to explain how it changed. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

6. Father's highest education level:

- Elementary School
- Middle School
- Some high school
- High school graduate
- GED
- Some college
- College graduate
- Graduate level and/or Professional degree

7. Mother's highest education level:

- Elementary School
- Middle School
- Some high school
- High school graduate
- GED
- Some college
- College graduate
- Graduate level and/or Professional degree

8. Your highest level of post-secondary education completed (indicate all that apply):

- Currently pursuing certificate or undergraduate degree
- AA degree
- Bachelor degree
- Master's degree
- Professional degree
- Other (please state on line provided): \_\_\_\_\_

9. Your marital status while attending college for your first certificate or degree:

- Single
- Married
- Separated
- Divorced

10. Did/do you have any dependents for whom you were legally responsible, such as children or an elderly relative, during the pursuit of your first college certificate or degree?

- No
- Yes

11. Distance traveled to campus during the pursuit of first certificate or degree:

- Lived on campus
- 1 – 10 miles
- 11 – 20 miles
- 21 – 30 miles
- More than 30 miles

12. Did you attend more than one college while pursuing your first certificate or degree?

- No
- Yes

13. Did you attend a college outside the state of Mississippi while pursuing your first certificate or degree?
- No  
 Yes
14. Employment level during first year of college :
- Did not work  
 Part-time (1-20 hours/week)  
 Part-time (21-39 hours/week)  
 Full-time (40 + hours/week)
15. Employment level during second year of college :
- Did not work  
 Part-time (1-20 hours/week)  
 Part-time (21-39 hours/week)  
 Full-time (40 + hours/week)
16. Number of semesters you received funding from the Tribal Scholarship Program:
- 2  
 3  
 4  
 More than 4
17. Grade point average after first school year of college education:
- 0.00 – 0.99  
 1.00 – 1.99  
 2.00 – 2.99  
 3.00 – 4.00
18. Grade point average after first two years of college education:
- 0.00 – .99  
 1.00 – 1.99  
 2.00 – 2.99  
 3.00 – 4.00
19. Would you have attended college if you did not receive financial support from the Tribal Scholarship Program?
- No  
 Yes
20. Extracurricular involvement while pursuing first 2 years of first college certificate or degree:
- Not involved in any  
 Active in 1-3 activities  
 Active in 4 or more activities
21. Native American Student Clubs:
- I was not aware of any on campus  
 I was aware of a NA Student Club and choose not to join  
 I was aware of a NA Student Club and was a member

### Sociocultural Factors

Below you will find a number of statements possibly related to your circumstances while pursuing a college education following high school. Please think these over carefully. For each statement you need to decide to what extent you agree or disagree. To indicate your opinion, choose one of the following responses by circling it.

**SA** Strongly Agree    **A** Agree    **N** Neutral    **D** Disagree    **SD** Strongly Disagree    **NA** Does Not Apply or Do Not Know

22. A college education is important to my parents ..... SA A N D SD NA
23. My parents wanted me to go to college ..... SA A N D SD NA
24. My cultural heritage is very important to me ..... SA A N D SD NA
25. I felt free to express my cultural background on campus SA A N D SD NA
26. I am comfortable interacting with students of other races or ethnicities ..... SA A N D SD NA
27. I met many people and made many friends at college ..... SA A N D SD NA
28. I had a clear purpose for going to college and what I wanted to gain from it ..... SA A N D SD NA
29. I adjusted well to college ..... SA A N D SD NA
30. I used guidance counseling services offered on campus ..... SA A N D SD NA
31. I used tutoring services when I needed academic help ..... SA A N D SD NA
32. I had informal, personal contacts with college professors ..... SA A N D SD NA

### Academic Factors

Below you will find a number of statements related to your circumstances while pursuing a college education following high school. Please think these over carefully. For each statement you need to decide to what extent you agree or disagree. To indicate your opinion, choose one of the following responses by circling it.

**SA** Strongly Agree    **A** Agree    **N** Neutral    **D** Disagree    **SD** Strongly Disagree    **NA** Does Not Apply or Do Not Know

33. I felt prepared academically to pursue a postsecondary education ..... SA A N D SD NA
34. Keeping up to date on academic work is/was important to me. SA A N D SD NA

35. High school courses prepared me well for college courses... SA A N D SD NA
36. The study habits I learned in high school helped me achieve academic success at college ..... SA A N D SD NA
37. I enrolled in college classes that matched my abilities and interests ..... SA A N D SD NA
38. Meeting college course assignment deadlines was important to me ..... SA A N D SD NA

### Personal Factors

Below you will find a number of statements related to your circumstances while pursuing a college education following high school. Please think these over carefully. For each statement you need to decide to what extent you agree or disagree. To indicate your opinion, choose one of the following responses by circling it.

SA Strongly Agree A Agree N Neutral D Disagree SD Strongly Disagree NA Does Not Apply or Do Not Know

39. Going home to visit family and friends at least once a month during college was important to me ..... SA A N D SD NA
40. I decided to go to college because of pressure from family members ..... SA A N D SD NA
41. I asked instructors for help when I had questions ..... SA A N D SD NA
42. I was more comfortable e-mailing or using other forms of technology to communicate with instructors to request help than meeting with them in person ..... SA A N D SD NA
43. A person served as a mentor for me while at college ..... SA A N D SD NA

### General Questions

Please write your responses in the space provided below the question. If extra space is required, feel free to continue on a separate sheet of paper --- indicate the question number by responses on separate paper.

44. Are there ways you believe high school could have better prepared you for college? Explain.
45. Why did you choose to attend college?

46. What are your academic and vocational goals?
47. While preparing for college, were you aided in the preparation process and how soon did you begin the process?
48. How did the Tribal Scholarship Program (TSP) benefit you?
49. Are there ways you believe the TSP could better serve students?
50. What was the greatest stress you experienced while attending college? Explain.

APPENDIX E  
INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

## Interview Protocol – Respondents

1. Understanding the influence of family on postsecondary education.
2. Actions you could have taken to enhance the quality of your education.
3. Discussion of the role cultural identity plays in shaping the education experience.
4. Discussion of how interactions on campus affected the motivation you had in pursuing your education (extracurricular activities, Native American club, available campus services --- tutoring, counseling, and access to professors).
5. Discussion of the support received while attending college.
6. Concerns regarding barriers to a quality education for a Choctaw student.