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# The Voices and Experiences of College 101 Students at Kirkwood Community College

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**The voices and experiences of College 101 students at Kirkwood Community College**

by

**Wendy Wishman Lingo**

A dissertation submitted to the graduate faculty  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

**DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY**

Major: Education (Educational Leadership)

Program of Study Committee  
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Robyn Cooper  
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Iowa State University

Ames, Iowa

2009

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This dissertation is dedicated to my partner in life,

Jim Lingo,

who consistently encouraged and believed in me through this entire process.

And to my parents

June Wishman

and

Mel Wishman,

Who raised me to think life-long learning was normal.

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## ABSTRACT

The purpose of this qualitative study was to provide insight into how community college students experienced college after completing a first-year experience course. The population studied included students at the main campus of Kirkwood Community College, a comprehensive community college in a suburban setting in Cedar Rapids, Iowa. The study examined the experience of the Kirkwood students who successfully completed College 101, Kirkwood's first-year experience course. Research questions included: Did the completion of the College 101 course in their first semester influence students' academic success? Did the completion of College 101 in their first semester influence students' sense of Kirkwood as the right fit for them? Did the students think that the completion of College 101 benefited them? How did the second-year students describe their first academic year at Kirkwood? What did the completion of their first year of college mean to the students?

Seven Kirkwood students, including five females and two males, were interviewed regarding their perceptions of their College 101 experiences and the overall experience of their first year of college. Narrative inquiry was the methodology used to explore their stories. Upon analysis, several themes emerged from the data, all of which promoted a new familiarity with the experience of these Kirkwood first-year students. Most of the themes overlap each other in content and support. The analysis resulted in the identification of five larger themes: Social Development, Academic Development, Career Development, Personal Development, and Personal Meaning. Those themes were developed after clustering smaller themes that appeared to support and define the larger themes.

Overall, the completion of College 101 appeared to influence the participants' academic successes and to confirm that Kirkwood Community College was a good fit for

them. All participants gave overwhelming positive responses regarding the benefits they received from College 101. The study suggests that the Kirkwood College 101 model was effective for a small group of students.

While community colleges attract large numbers of traditional-age first-year students, there has been little research regarding first-year programming designed to help students acclimate to college. The bulk of the literature pertaining to first-year programming has been generated from four-year colleges. Indeed, most of the literature included in this study's review is primarily based on first-year students at four-year colleges. This study not only informs further development of the College 101 course at Kirkwood; it also suggests implications for the larger academic community regarding the experiences of first-year students at the community college.

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

In August of 1975 when my parents left me at the University of Northern Iowa to begin my first year as an undergraduate, all the supports that should have ensured success in college were in place for me. Both my parents attended and graduated from college. My father completed course work at the university during my formative years, and I had been well exposed to the university culture. They had the means to financially support my college education. I graduated in the top 10% of my high school class and had completed advanced math, science, and composition courses.

With all those supports in place, little thought went into what might happen when the small town high school principal's daughter arrived at college. Suddenly, not only was I out from under my parents' eyes; I was out from under the eyes of an entire community. My first official act as a college student was to walk across the street from my dormitory and purchase a carton of cigarettes from the convenience store. The possibility of success in my undergraduate career began to spiral downward from there.

By August of 1976, I had accumulated a 1.7 grade point, a different major, and a propensity for socializing around kegs of beer. The university could claim it retained me, but I am certain that the "social life" of college kept me there. With strong peer interaction, I made strides towards social integration into the college culture.

I experienced very little social integration with faculty, however. During that first year no one attached to the university in any professional role took an interest in my success. After being hospitalized for an infection late in my freshman year, I called my instructors, none of whom could recall me. My only identification was my student number.

As I continued at UNI, I experienced very little academic integration. My grade performance was dismal and rather than seeking intellectual stimulation, I bounced from major to major, attempting to find the passion that would guide my career development. There was little career development guidance offered by the university. My goal commitment was vague at best. Somewhere in academia Vincent Tinto was publishing one of his earliest publications regarding college dropouts. If we would have known each other, I might have served as one of his star research subjects.

The only reason I persisted in school was that my father insisted that I see it through. I was awarded a Bachelor of Arts Degree in Speech/Radio and Television by what I like to call default; it was the major I had landed on by the time I finally completed the requirements for the degree. When I was offered my first job in that field, I told the supervisor that I did not want to work nights or weekends. My naiveté and lack of career planning left me with a degree I had no interest in using.

I put these stories of my undergraduate days away for many years. I had little idea that my unremarkable undergraduate experience would provide the foundation for a professional journey that would ultimately lead me back to the world of higher education.

When my youngest son started school, I volunteered for a community college satellite program that provided GED preparation for community members for whom English was a second language. It was my first introduction to the scope of services offered by community colleges. Within nine months I moved from a volunteer to a paid volunteer coordinator, then to a full-time workforce development coordinator with the responsibility of managing a satellite campus office 75 miles from the main campus.

The workforce development position was part of a new contractual program that had been established with Nebraska Social Services. The program goals were to teach job search



skills, career planning, and parenting to social service clients. To receive benefits, the clients were mandated to attend workshops offered at the satellite office. The college had originally hired a much better qualified individual to coordinate the program; however, a week before the program was to begin, the individual decided not to keep the position. I think pure desperation led them to ask me to take the position temporarily. I'm not certain what made me accept it. I remember the sinking feeling I had when my supervisor offered me the opportunity, handed me a pop culture book on self esteem from which to develop curriculum, and left for the main campus 75 miles away. There I sat with my 10-year-old bachelor's degree in mostly nothing and my newly discovered self-esteem handbook. A week later I was in front of a classroom with students mandated to attend.

Despite my lack of experience, my first students and I made the program work. This experience allowed me to witness the profound economic, social, and intellectual opportunities education could offer people. My passion for the community college was born out of this chain of serendipitous events that brought me back to the doorstep of higher education.

It was 1991 and I found myself in a vocational world working with a program that included six women – three career counselors and three administrators. The influence of those women, the world to which my students were introducing me and my desire to be a better teacher led me to make a tentative step back into the college classroom as a student. I enrolled in a graduate-level counseling theory class. Participating in this class was the first time I felt the joy of learning something out of pure passion. It wasn't long before I was officially enrolled as a graduate student. Oddly, the community college had brought me to a master's degree.

While enhancing my formal education, I was also learning from my students that the education system had not been a welcoming or particularly safe place for them. I learned of their hopes and dreams that somehow the educational experiences of their children would be different than their own. I learned that intelligence could not be measured by a degree or a grade. I learned that the community college could be the place where they could start their journey towards economic security.

With these lessons and my newly conferred master's degree, I moved with my family to Iowa, identifying Kirkwood Community College as my target for employment. I entered the culture as a part-time employee just to gain entrance into the Kirkwood culture. One of the benefits of my diverse adjunct positions was the opportunity to learn about the many aspects of the college and its students.

My first full-time position at Kirkwood was as a Student Life Coordinator. This position put me in close daily contact with students of all ages and backgrounds. I was recruited to teach a version of Kirkwood's orientation program in which delivery of the program was extended six weeks into the semester rather than the usual two-day format. I saw the faces of first-year students, veiled with a look of bravado that barely covered their concern for where and how they might fit into their new college. I had given my own undergraduate experiences little thought until I saw the faces of those students. Driven by the desire to facilitate their integration in the way I wished I would have been integrated into the post secondary culture many years before, I began to reach out to them.

After two years in Student Life, I was offered a position as a counselor at Kirkwood. Three seemingly unrelated things occurred. First, I was also beginning to take courses from Iowa State University and gain exposure to student development theories. Second, I attended a session at a League of Innovation Conference that highlighted a Moraine Valley

Community College semester-long orientation course named College 101. Third, I had the opportunity to serve on a quality improvement committee charged with examining Kirkwood's student orientation practices. The idea of an extended first-semester experience at Kirkwood had been planted in my mind and the quality improvement committee was the place to cultivate it. After two years of debate, research, and political maneuvering, Kirkwood piloted 13 sections of its own College 101 course. Chosen to coordinate the program, I taught my first section of College 101 in the fall of 2005, 30 years after declaring my independence at UNI. My dismal undergraduate experience, having come full circle, was now solidly informing my professional life.

I have the unique professional experience of reflecting back on my own collegiate years with a new lens. My lens is influenced by my study of student development theories, counseling theories, and conceptual frameworks, many of which have developed over the span of my academic career. Faculty and students have also colored the lens through which I observe my own experiences.

I share the story of my professional development because it serves as a foundation for this research on the voices and experiences of College 101 students at Kirkwood. My own experiences as a first-year student provided a strong base on which academia and practice led me to an intense commitment to services for first-year students. I am very fortunate to have the opportunity to work closely with the development of College 101. As I experience increased interaction with first-year students, my affection for them grows stronger.

### **Problem**

Community colleges have unique challenges that call for research into the world of their first-year students. The number of first time students in community colleges has significantly increased, but academic challenges faced by these students are diverse. This

study provides insight into how community college students experience college after completing a first-year experience course.

### **Growth in community college enrollments**

Community colleges in the U.S. are serving as higher education portals for at least 45% of all first-time freshman students (American Association of Community Colleges [AACC], 2007)). Utilizing enrollment reports from the Iowa Department of Education, Rendon, Kanagala, Laanan, Nichols, Shelley, and Starobin (2006) reported that 66% of students enrolling in community college in Iowa are under the age of 21, suggesting that many high school graduates start their education at the community college. Iowa community colleges are attracting large numbers of traditional first-year students.

In fall of 2007, Kirkwood Community College enrolled 5,609 first-time, first-year students. Of those students 3,364 were registered as Arts and Science majors. Arts and Science majors are considered Associate of Arts (AA) or Associate of Science (AAS) degree seekers. AA and AAS degrees are designed to transfer to the baccalaureate level. By fall of 2008, enrollments for first-time, first-year students reached 6,260 with 3,372 seeking an AA or an AAS degree. In 2007 the average student age at Kirkwood was 24 years.

### **Unique Challenges for First-Year Students at the Community College**

McCabe (2003) described community colleges as “the most American of institutions” and as “agents of democratization, with a core mission to provide opportunity to all” (p. 13). He said the notion of “opportunity to all” lends itself to the challenge of meeting the education and training needs for all, since open enrollment offers no assurances that the first-year students scored a 20 or above on an ACT or took college preparatory math. The American Association of Community Colleges (AACC) surveyed a sample of community colleges in an effort to conceptualize the number of community college students needing

remedial work. On the average, 36% of the students from the sample colleges needed remedial work; also, 32% of the students surveyed by the 2006 Community College Survey of Student Engagement reported using skill labs to assist them in their academic work.

Vaughn (2000) viewed open access at the community college as a “misunderstood concept” (p. 4). He stated that open access does not guarantee admission to specific programs at the community college but the term does reveal a core value: “Rather than turn away people who do not have the prerequisites for college-level work, the community college offers avenues for students to obtain the necessary prerequisites” (Vaughn, 2000, p. 4). Providing those necessary prerequisites puts forth a set of challenges for community colleges and their students. First-year students at the community college are likely to vary greatly in their basic level of academic proficiencies.

### **Lack of Research**

There is little research regarding first-year services at the community college. The bulk of the literature pertaining to first-year programming has been generated from four-year colleges. Indeed, most of the literature included in this study’s review is primarily based on first-year students at four-year colleges. The challenge for community colleges is to translate and adapt the first-year programming from four-year colleges to what they know about the unique challenges of first-year community college students. The effectiveness of those adaptations must be examined with both quantitative and qualitative measures. It is essential to confirm that those adaptations were effective in reaching first-year students at the community college.

### **Background of Study**

**Site of Study: Kirkwood Community College**

Kirkwood Community College is located in the northeast quadrant of the state of Iowa. The main campus of Kirkwood is located in Cedar Rapids, Iowa. Kirkwood serves a 9-county area with 11 different locations including the main campus. Kirkwood offers 120 credit coursework programs. According to Kirkwood Community College Institutional Research, enrollment at the college in fall of 2007 was 15,091 students. Those students come from 96 of the Iowa counties, 35 different states, and 100 nations. Enrollments for fall of 2008 reached 15,241. Kirkwood is a founding member college of the prestigious League for Innovation in the Community College and remains the only Iowa community college with membership in the league.

### **Definition of First-Year Experience**

Hankin and Gardner (1996) defined the First-Year Experience as a philosophy that guides institutional services that work to “assimilate new students into the college environment” (p. 3). Robinson, Burns, and Gaw (1996) defined first-year orientation goals with the statement, “Orientation programs facilitate student learning in three general dimensions: transition processes, academic integration, and personal and social integration” (p. 55). Schroder’s (2003) interview with John Gardner led to Gardner sharing his concept of the definition for the first-year experience as “a national and international effort to improve the first year, the total experience of students” (p. 10). The first-year seminar was seen by Gardner as higher education’s effort to put a name and a program to the concepts of The First-Year Experience. Upcraft and Gardner (1989) contended that historically what were referred to as freshman orientation courses are now commonly called seminars. Thus, First-Year Orientation, First-Year Experiences, and First-Year seminars are titles used to describe similar programming in the field of higher education.

### **College 101: Kirkwood Community College's First-Year Course**

In fall of 2005, Kirkwood Community College piloted a first attempt at a semester-long first-year experience course. The course replaced a two-day orientation. First-time, first-year liberal arts students were targeted for enrollment. The course is not required and is considered a transfer elective. Students enrolled in College 101 are largely first-year students who have recently completed high school. There is one evening section that draws a small number of adult students.

Great care was taken in the design of the course to draw from extensive literature addressing first-year experiences. The bulk of the foundational research in the literature was generated by four-year institutions.

### **Tinto's Model of Institutional Departure**

Tinto (1987) recognized the first year of college as a critical year in the success of the student. During this year students face the challenge of transitioning to the adult world and adjusting both academically and socially to the college. Tinto (1987) observed that “the incidence of withdrawal is highest during this early stage of college” (p. 163).

Tinto's (1993) focus on students' integration into the college culture has had a large influence on how we look at predictors for students who leave the institution without completing their degree program. Both social and academic integration are influenced by the students' abilities to maintain and/or possess a value system that is congruent with that of the institution in which they are enrolled (Tinto, 1993).

Social integration includes positive experiences in both peer-group interactions and faculty interactions. Academic integration includes a successful transition into the intellectual development of a student. Applying Tinto's model to community college students, Halpin (1990) determined “the greater influence of academic integration compared to social

integration is particularly noteworthy” (p. 4). Halpin attributed this phenomenon to the commuter students who are attracted to the community college. Mutter (1992) also found that social integration had less impact than academic integration on community college student success. It was noted that the opportunities for social integration were also lacking for the community college students.

Tinto (1987, 1993) envisioned the classroom as a place to emphasize both social and intellectual communities:

Classroom experiences are seen as playing a very influential role in a student’s academic and social integration. It should be observed that our model of institutional departure is also a model of educational communities. It is a view of the educational process which emphasizes the role of social and intellectual communities, especially those that may emerge from involvement in classroom communities. (p. 137)

In addressing community college persistence, Tinto (1996) offered the Theory of Departure with “seven distinct causes of departure”: “adjustment, goals, uncertainty, finances, commitments, congruence, and isolation” (p. 98). Tinto accentuated the early need for support for the community college students’ academic and social integration. Because community college students have competing time commitments both on and off campus, Tinto saw the community college classroom as the venue in which to encourage student integration. He also suggested that community colleges begin to involve faculty, student affairs professionals, and administration in conversation regarding student persistence.

Tinto’s work was very influential in Kirkwood’s development of its College 101 course, which has a variety of activities and objectives that address student integration both academically and socially. The College 101 course has the distinction of being the only course at Kirkwood Community College designed and taught by a strong cross section of



representation from student services, faculty, and administrators. Their belief is that integration can occur between the students and Kirkwood in all facets of the college.

### **Chickering and Reisser's Theory of Identity Development**

Chickering and Reisser's identity theory (1993) appealed to the developers of Kirkwood's College 101 course because of the support it provides for the development of the whole student. Their theory of identity development, which assumes that "emotional, interpersonal, and ethical development deserve equal billing with intellectual development" (Chickering & Reisser, 1993, p. 39), is organized under seven vectors: developing competence, managing emotions, moving through autonomy toward interdependence, developing mature interpersonal relationships, establishing identity, developing purpose, and developing integrity. Each vector represents a series of developmental tasks for college students. The vectors serve as general course goals of College 101 and are listed on the course syllabus (see Appendix E).

The vectors are not thought of as sequential but rather working together towards the development of the whole student. Moreover, "students move through these vectors at different rates" (Chickering & Reisser, 1993, p. 38). The vectors can influence each other and we can find students re-visiting a vector as new issues and events color their college career. Vectors can be seen as "maps to help us determine where students are and which way they are heading" (Chickering & Reisser, 1993, p. 35). Evans, Forney and Guido-DiBrito (1998) stated, "Although not rigidly sequential, vectors do build on each other, leading to greater complexity, stability, and integration as issues related to each vector are addressed" (p. 38).

### **Incorporation of Student Development Theories in College 101**

Tinto's research reached deep into the level of engagement the developers were hoping to achieve in College 101. Other than class time, community college students are

rarely found on campus. The *Community College Survey of Student Engagement* (CCSSE, 2007) brought to light the many competing roles community college students juggle while attending college. CCSSE noted that 33% of the community college students surveyed spent 11 hours or more taking care of dependents. According to the report, 57% of community college students work 20 hours or more while attending college. In contrast, the 2007 *National Survey of Student Engagement* (NSSE) reported that only 15% undergraduates in four-year colleges work 20 hours or more off campus (CCSSE, 2007). Unlike their four-year college counterparts, community college students have many responsibilities outside of the campus. If community colleges have any chance of facilitating students' academic and social integration, it has to occur in the classroom. College 101 was founded with the hope of providing a classroom venue where social and academic integration could be facilitated.

Long before plans for a College 101 course were underway, I shared what I knew about Chickering and Reisser's (1993) vectors with a respected Kirkwood social science instructor. In a purely anecdotal fashion, we found them applicable to the community college students with whom we were working. This same instructor was on the team to develop the curriculum for College 101. When we were faced with finding a model to use for our overall course objectives, our inclination was to use Chickering and Reisser's vectors as the framework for establishing the overall goals of the course. We translated those goals to objectives which guided our curriculum design.

Chickering and Reisser's theory of identity development (1993) evolved from a base of research done on four-year college students. The majority of students viewed through Tinto's (1993) theory of student departure were also four-year college students. Some might argue that the research was done too many years ago to be relevant; moreover, both Chickering and Reisser's (1993) and Tinto's (1987, 1993) models could be perceived as

limited in the community college setting. Regardless of any limitations, we chose to build College 101 firmly around Chickering and Reisser's vectors of development and Tinto's theory of departure (1987, 1993). We have found the theories both relevant and applicable.

### **Assessing College 101**

Institutional research assessing Kirkwood's College 101 has provided strong supportive data for the program. It was quickly established that students who completed College 101 re-enrolled the subsequent semester. Twenty-five percent more of the fall 2006 College 101 completers were re-enrolled in fall of 2007, compared to the fall 2006 first-year arts and science students who did not complete College 101. That same group took, on average, three more credit hours than their peers, ending their first-year semesters with higher average GPAs. Seventy-three percent of students successfully completing College 101 in fall of 2007 re-enrolled for fall of 2008, compared to 48 % of the all first-year arts and science students. Students completing College 101 in fall of 2008 re-enrolled for spring of 2009 at a 27% higher rate than their arts and science counterparts (see Appendix F).

Less attention has been given to seeking first-hand student perspectives regarding the influence of College 101 on their collegiate experience. Quantitative institutional research can inform our policy and procedures through the use of solid empirical data but does little to inform us of the particular experiences of community college students through their own voices. My own experiences have taught me that giving the students a voice leads to incredible insight into their perceptions. Fidler and Hunter (1989) emphasized the importance of student perceptions of any first-year program: "No matter how well planned, research based, and proactively conceived a freshman seminar may be, programs can be capitulated toward institutionalization or totally destroyed by student reactions and perceptions" (p. 228). Their comment and my own perceptions call for careful consideration of what the student

voices may tell us about the College 101 experience and how it might influence subsequent semesters of coursework.

At the completion of Kirkwood Community College's College 101 class, the students are given a course evaluation to complete. The goal of the evaluation is to provide guidance in the delivery and content of the College 101 course. Having a lead position in the design of this course gave me an opportunity to design the evaluation so the students could respond "yes," "no," and "maybe," as well as write additional comments to the first 11 questions (see Appendix G). Making additional comments was optional. My experience with end-of-course evaluations led me to think that few students would respond to the optional comment sections. I assumed that the yes, no, and maybe responses and the scale they represented would generate an empirical base from which we could simply report student satisfaction levels. I was surprised when I sat down to compile evaluations from 168 students from our fall 2005 pilot semester of College 101 and found 962 student comments covering 32 pages. Fall of 2006 evaluations resulted in 312 students providing us with 58 pages of comments. The fall of 2007 evaluations filled another 58 pages. The students told us in their own words what happened in the course the semester they were enrolled, and it appeared they found it empowering. They were honest and frank about both the good and the bad of the College 101 experience and the influence that experience had on their first semester of college.

The compilation of the student comments presented me with a second surprise when I passed the comments on to the College 101 instructors and Kirkwood administration. Since fall of 2005 marked a pilot year for College 101, I presented supportive data for the initiative many times. My surprise came from the observation that while every group I presented to listened to the strong empirical evidence that College 101 was succeeding, almost immediately their attention gravitated to the student comments. Even the evidence that

College 101 could present some relationship to additional college revenues was overshadowed by students using their language to tell us that their College 101 instructor “rocked.” Giving the students a voice proved to be a remarkable experience.

Hearing those voices and curiosity to know more about their experience drives this study, which takes a closer look at some of the College 101 students’ voices.

### **Purpose**

This study examined the experiences of the Kirkwood Community College students who successfully completed the College 101 course. Fidler and Hunter (1989) considered it prudent for directors of first-year experiences to “constantly keep a finger on the pulse of the students and continually check the perceptions of potential and current students, as well as former freshman seminar students” (p. 228). Hankin and Gardner (1996) wrote, “The freshman year experience, in part, is designed to get educators back in touch with the realities of the student experience” (p. 5).

The challenge for community colleges is to get in touch with the realities of their first-year students’ experiences. This study focused on both the unique and similar first-year experiences of the first-time, first-year community college student. The students’ own words provided a window of research into the world of first-year Kirkwood Community College students as they completed subsequent semesters at Kirkwood. This study not only informs further development of the College 101 course at Kirkwood; it also suggests implications for the larger academic community regarding the experiences of first-year students at the community college.

### **Research Questions**

The following key questions about students’ experiences in College 101 provided a foundation for this study:

1. Did the completion of the College 101 course in their first semester at Kirkwood influence students' academic success? If so, how? If not, why not?
2. Did the completion of the College 101 course in their first semester at Kirkwood influence students' sense of Kirkwood being the right fit for them? If so, how? If not, why not?
3. Overall, did the students think and feel that completion of the College 101 course benefited them?
4. How did second-year Kirkwood Community College students describe their first academic year at Kirkwood?
5. What did the completion of their first year of college mean to the students?

### **Theoretical Framework**

Crotty (1998) described constructivism as a process in which “truth or meaning comes into existence in and out of our engagement with the realities of the world” (p. 9). Meaning is “constructed” differently by individuals even if they are engaged in the same experience (Crotty). Using constructivism as an epistemological foundation, this study allows an examination of what meanings the students may have constructed for themselves during and after completion of College 101. Constructivism provided the methodological theory for this study.

Merriam (2002) described the theoretical perspective of a basic interpretive study as appropriate for the researcher who “is interested in understanding how participants make meaning of a situation or phenomenon” (p. 8). Merriam described the researcher as a research instrument whose role is to mediate the participants' meaning. A basic interpretive approach will be used in this study.

Creswell (2005) described narrative research as “qualitative procedures in which researchers describe the lives of individuals, collect and tell stories about these individuals’ lives” (p. 53). The narrative largely focuses on an episode or a single event referred to as a personal experience. Clandinin and Connelly (1994) referred to teachers and learners as storytellers. A narrative researcher uses those stories to focus on individuals’ experiences and examine how those stories might influence the present and future (Creswell). Narrative inquiry was used in this study in an attempt to capture the Kirkwood students’ stories of their first year of college. Special care was taken to encourage the participants to share what their experiences in their College 101 class meant to them in light of their first year of college. Connelly and Clandinin (1990) described narrative inquiry as a “theory in educational research that holds that humans are storytelling organisms, who, individually and socially, lead storied lives” (p. 2). This study used storytelling to allow me to listen to and effectively tell the students’ stories.

Tinto’s (1987, 1993) theory of departure is embedded in the curriculum of College 101, with social and academic integration considered to be course goals. Chickering and Reisser’s (1993) theory of identity development also served as a foundation for this study. Each theory provided a perspective from which to view the students’ journeys.

### **Significance of Study**

The significance of this study is that it gives a student voice to the first-year experience of a Kirkwood Community College student. With insight gained, the study will inform programming and policy regarding first-year programming at Kirkwood Community College. The study also has the potential to play a significant role in informing first-year programming and policies at community colleges similar to Kirkwood. Additionally, the

study will provide a foundation for further research regarding the community college first-year student.

### **Delimitations**

Students who had completed their first year of studies at Kirkwood Community College served as participants in this study. The participants were chosen from a pool of students who completed the College 101 course in fall of 2007, completed the fall of 2008 semester, and were enrolled in coursework at the college in spring of 2009. The two-year time frame was feasibly the period during which the students would complete a degree at Kirkwood.

This is a limited study with findings that were the result of interviews from a small group of Kirkwood Community College students. The diversity of the participants was limited. All had graduated from Iowa high schools and had established solid grades at Kirkwood. Therefore, interpretations derived from this study should consideration and the results should be used with caution.

### **Summary**

This study provides insight into the world of a first-year student at Kirkwood Community College and attempts to capture what the completion of College 101 and the experiences attached to the first year of college mean to the participants. The student stories provide insight and guidance in the further development of the college's first semester experience course, College 101. This research serves a role in informing researchers and practitioners who are interested in a growing population of first-year students in the community college.

Chapter 2 provides a review of literature emphasizing the development of the first-year experiences in an attempt to set the study in the framework of current research. Creswell



(2005) noted that the literature review plays only a minor role in a qualitative study. True to Creswell's recommendation, Chapter 2 of this study serves only to set the stage for the telling of first-year students' stories.

Chapter 3 provides an overview of the methodological framework, research design, methods, and procedures proposed to complete this study. Chapter 4 provides an extensive description of the students' stories elicited by the research questions, along with an analysis of those stories. Chapter 5 summarizes the findings and recommendations of the study.

## CHAPTER TWO

### LITERATURE REVIEW

Qualitative studies are an emerging form of research, and at least one researcher (Cresswell, 2003) suggested that the use of a literature review can be used to “frame” the problem in a qualitative study. Other qualitative researchers advised not to include a review of research in a qualitative study because it might overly influence the researcher’s inductive process (Bogdan & Bilken, 2003). Since a literature review provided framework for the intentional design of the College 101 course at Kirkwood, and since the results of this study may inform further development of such framework, a literature review is included.

Providing both a historical and a theoretical context, the literature review first addresses definitions and descriptions of first-year programming in the community college. Next, the need and support for extended models of first-year programs is discussed. The third section of the review focuses on time frames typically used in extended programming, while the fourth section discusses best practices of first-year programming. Literature that documents and describes actual community college programming models is provided in the fifth section.

#### **First-Year Experience Defined**

John Gardner, the Executive Director of the Policy Center on the First Year of College, has been involved in developing, facilitating, and validating programs targeted at first-year students since 1972 (Schroeder, 2003). In an interview with Schroeder, Gardner shared his definition for the first-year experience as “a national and international effort to improve the first year, the total experience of students” (2003, p. 10). Gardner saw the first-year seminar as higher education’s effort to put a name to the concepts of the first-year

experience (Schroeder). Upcraft and Gardner (1989) suggested that historically what were referred to as freshman programming courses are now commonly called seminars.

In the introduction of *The 2000 National Survey of First Year Seminar Programs*, published by the National Resource Center for The First Year Experience, Linder (2002) described the variety of first-year seminars with the following titles: “extended programming seminars, academic seminars with generally uniform academic content across sections, academic seminars on various topics, professional or discipline linked seminars, and basic study skills seminars” (pp. 1-2).

Some models are purist, sticking to the frameworks of The First-Year Experience as defined by the National Resource Center for the First-Year Experience. Some have garnered bits and pieces of the first-year experience work in an attempt to develop eclectic programming models to customize the delivery according to the institution’s culture. Models can last a semester, several weeks, or an entire first year. First-year experience curriculum can be delivered in a stand-alone classroom, a classroom learning community, or a resident hall community. Some experiences focus on academic development, some on social development, and some on both. Regardless of delivery, nearly all models are defined by words like integration and transitioning. Regardless of the diversity in definitions, descriptions, and deliveries, first-year programming shares common goals. Robinson et al. (1996) paraphrased Tinto with the statement, “Integrating students into the social and academic fabric of the institution is key to their retention and success” (p. 55). The goal of orientation programs, they say, is to “facilitate student learning in three general dimensions: transition processes, academic integration, and personal and social integration” (p. 55). Upcraft and Gardner (1989) stated, “Orientation classes grew out of the counseling movement in higher education and the obvious need to help freshman adjust to the college

environment” (p. 189). Adjustment, integration, and transitioning are all terms used to define the goals of first-year programming.

### **Need and Support for First-Year Programming in the Community College**

Elsner (2002) observed that community colleges are estimated to lose 40% of their enrollments in the first year. Recognizing that there are a myriad of reasons students disappear, he questioned whether community colleges have done enough to engage those students early on or whether they have merely processed them through the system. In other words, a policy of processing students versus engaging students is an issue in retention. The proponents of first-year programming see the programming as a long-term engaging process. Tinto (1987) asserted that retention is influenced by an institution’s ability to construct opportunities for all students to be integrated both socially and academically into the institution’s culture. One consistent goal of the first-year programming highlighted in the literature is to integrate students into the college culture. Pascarella and Terenzini (1991) stated, “The weight of evidence suggests that a first semester freshman seminar designed to orient the student to the institution and to teach important academic survival skills is positively linked to both freshman year persistence and degree completion” (p. 419). Pascarella and Terenzini’s findings stand even when academic aptitude and secondary school achievement are considered. Fourteen years later, Pascarella and Terenzini (2005) offered the following in regard to First-Year Seminars (FYS):

In short, the weight of evidence indicates that FYS participation has statistically significant and substantial, positive effects on a student’s successful transition to college and the likelihood of persistence into the second year as well as on academic performance while in college and on a

considerable array of other college experiences known to be related directly and indirectly to bachelor's degree completion. (p. 403)

Cuseo (2003) cited a 2001 study by ACT that estimates the attrition rate of first-year, two-year college students at 50%. With institutions of higher education fighting for state and federal dollars, the ability to retain a student from semester to semester is a decisive factor in those institutions' ability to compete and deliver quality programs.

Tinto (1993) found that "among two year colleges, nearly half of all beginning students leave before the start of their second year" (p. 101). The reasons for departure cited by Tinto provided a connection between retention and first-year programming/seminars. In 1987, Tinto made it clear that integrating students socially and academically into the environment was essential to student retention and success. Tinto was still making those claims in 1996.

Open admission policies challenge community colleges to assume the responsibility to educate all regardless of their preparedness for college. McCabe (2003) estimated that more than 40% of entering community college students are under-prepared. Roueche and Roueche (1993) proposed first-year programming as a possible tool for transitioning under-prepared students to the new world and culture of higher education. They wrote, "Programs should be required and should initiate the building of student support services" (p. 250).

Glass and Garrett (1995) pointed out that although studies of extended programming at four-year institutions had documented positive impacts of first-year programming, little statistical research had been done to substantiate the same results at community colleges. These researchers designed a study with the intention of determining the impact of extended first-year programming on community college students. Glass and Garret were careful to define programming as an extended programming, meeting weekly for the first semester.

Since programming had proven effective in reducing attrition and improving GPAs in a four-year college, Glass and Garrett predicted the same results at the community college. In 1990, four community colleges ran similar extended programs. Students who had taken the first-year seminars had earned a significantly higher number of credit hours after the first year than the students who had not been enrolled in the first year seminars. Students who completed the programming had significantly higher GPAs than those who had not. Positive student performance was documented when taking into account age, race, gender, and entrance exam scores of the students (Glass & Garret).

Cuseo and Barefoot (1996) cited a study by Strumpf and Hunt (1993) in the statement, “Participation of at risk students in the extended programming seminar has been found to result in significant improvement in their retention rates” (p. 60). The supportive research was strong enough to cause the American Association of Community and Junior Colleges (now the American Association of Community Colleges [AACC]) to issue the following statement in 1988: “We urge that community colleges give more attention to student retention. Every college should develop a comprehensive first-year program with programming for all full-time, part-time and evening students” (p. 60). Rationale for extended programs includes retention measures, academic preparedness measures, and ethical measures.

### **Time Frames for First-Year Programming**

Cuseo (1991) made a twofold argument for extended programming. First, he saw a need for an extended time frame to enable enough course contact time to give ample coverage to issues facing first-time students. He also saw the advantage of having a “timely discussion of college adjustment issues as the need arises” (Cuseo, 1991, p. 4). Learning note taking skills is enhanced by the student taking the information and applying it to coursework.

Test-taking skills curriculum delivered before midterm becomes a recognizable need by the students. Cuseo (1991) saw a learning cycle develop when students could immediately practically apply what is learned. Timely delivery of instruction is a means of ensuring course relevance to the student, thus increasing the student's motivation to attend and participate. Cuseo (1997) made a strong assertion for the first-year seminars to be a semester in length; at the very least, he stated they should be seven or eight weeks long. Cuseo's (1997) point is substantiated by Blanc, De Buhr, and Martin (1983) in their research on attrition in an urban institution with an enrollment of 11,000. They observed that the highest level of attrition occurred within the first six weeks of the semester. Cuseo (1997) observed, "Empirical research indicates greater retention-enhancing effects of longer program interventions" and "greater course length results in more contact time for content" (p. 14). In a 2003 publication, Cuseo restated the case for extended first-year seminars. His message regarding extended programming is strong:

Using virtually all major types of research methods (quantitative and qualitative, experimental and correlational) the positive impact of the course on student outcome has been reported for all types of students (for example at risk and well prepared, minority and majority, residential and commuter), at all institutional types (two year and four year, public and private), institutional sizes (small, midsize and large), and institutional locations. (p. 288)

Pascarella and Terenzini (1991) observed that "scholars and administrators are increasingly coming to realize that the most effective orientation programs are not limited to the first few days or weeks of the first semester" (p. 650). Hankin and Gardner (1996) called for providing information to students in a timely manner, pointing out that study skills make

sense to students if the skills are taught during the course of a semester when students can directly apply what they are learning in their first-year seminar.

Roueche and Roueche (1996) provided a common sense approach on extended programming:

Some colleges plan their activities over several days or a full week; others keep the programming alive during the full first semester. Students are required to enroll in semester-long courses that explore the questions students have and the demands they are experiencing over a period of sufficient length to give the abundances of new information time to “gel.” (p. 79)

Roueche and Roueche also saw the extended programming as an influencing factor in students building long-term mentoring relationships with the faculty who teach the programming. Overall, the literature contains a strong, repeated emphasis on extended delivery of first-year programming.

### **Best Practices for First-Year Programming**

As stated earlier, “First year programs facilitate student learning in three general dimensions: transition processes, academic integration, and personal and social integration” (Robinson et al., 1996, p. 55). Cook (1996) offered more specificity as to content: “The main purpose of programming should be to assist the student in making a smooth transition and adjustment to collegiate life while at the same time breaking down some of the fears and anxieties that might exist” (p. 49). According to Upcraft and Gardner (1989), content topics of first-year programming typically include: differences between high school and college; college survival skills; time management and study skills; college regulations, deadlines, and procedures; health issues, including alcohol and drug abuse as well as human sexuality; learning styles and their applications; values clarification; stress and conflict management;



and principles of career development and decision making. Elements of all these objectives mentioned make up the content of best practices in programming. Tinto (1987) provided higher education with a guiding premise, as well: “Educational communities which are committed to their students and which reach out to them in the community’s educational life also generate student involvement in learning and eventually student commitments to the goals of education” (p. 188).

Cuseo and Barefoot (1996) provided some guidelines for possible content of first-year seminars. The seminars are opportunities to expose first-year students to the differences between high school and college academics. Cuseo and Barefoot stressed the importance of providing information regarding college policies, procedures, and resources as a valuable course content. They recommended assisting students in understanding the meaning and reasoning for general education and liberal arts. First-year programming also provides an opportunity to assist students in understanding and navigating the curriculum.

Cuseo and Barefoot (1996) highlighted academic skill development as essential to a first-year program. Teaching students learning strategies, test taking, studying, note taking, memorization skills, and critical thinking are all essential to the student’s success. The development of strong academic skills should be the focus of first-year programming (Cook, 1996).

Cook (1999) observed the need for social/personal development of students as a best practice in extended first-year programming. Orienting students to co-curricular activities was also considered a first-year programming best practice, as was exposing students to college services (Cuseo & Barefoot, 1996). First-year students need a clear understanding of how to access college personnel.

Advising and exposure to registration processes were considered best practice components of first-year programming (Cook, 1999). Skipper (2000) recognized the practice of enrolling a first-year student in a first-year seminar section that is taught by the student's faculty advisor. Such an arrangement is a logical springboard for a long-term advising relationship, which can support practices that address degree requirements.

Academic and career planning are essential elements for a student's educational and career goal development, making them a best practice in any programming (Cuseo & Barefoot, 1996). Life management and wellness are also essential goals of first-year programming (Cuseo & Barefoot).

An emphasis on relationship-building is prevalent in the literature. McCabe (2003) observed that students who see faculty as reaching out to them are more likely to take responsibility for their roles in a classroom partnership that encourages learning. McCabe encouraged faculty to make meaningful contact with students in and out of the classroom. McCabe also saw a strong working relationship between academics and student services as an essential student support. Cook, Cully, and Huftalin (2003) cited "collaboration between student affairs and academics" (p. 129) as a best practice in extended first-year programming. Faculty participation allows for early, solid relationships between the students and faculty member to develop. Student affairs participation allows for first-year students to develop solid contacts with resources for supportive services. Establishing membership in the entire community of the college will support student persistence (Tinto, 1999). Hankin and Gardner (1996) saw a campus-wide approach to the first-year experience as essential to developing a culture of student success. Overall, a collaborative effort on the part of faculty and student affairs professionals is a "best practice" when designing and implementing extended first-year programming.

Cuseo and Barefoot (1999) recommended that class size be limited to 25 students. Roueche and Roueche (1993) called for first-year programming to be a required course in the community college. Roueche and Roueche encouraged community colleges to draw from the university programming models that continue to offer programming opportunities throughout the first year.

Best practices include putting student needs at the center of programming. Cuseo and Barefoot (1996) wrote:

What unifies all the forgoing topics and subtopics is their student-centered focus.

Arguably, the first year orientation seminar may be unique in that it is the only course in the curriculum whose content derives from and originates with the needs of college students. (p. 64)

Best practices develop out of institutions' efforts to meet these observed student needs. First-year programs are encouraged to see first-year programming as both dynamic and evolving courses.

First-year extended programming appears to support a student's chance at success because the elements of programming address each student's need for transitioning, academic, personal, and social integration. Jacobs (2003) provided the following description of first-year programming:

Perhaps no single activity can do more to set the academic tone of the collegiate experience and establish a comprehensive approach to student academic success than new student orientation. A well planned orientation program accentuates the interrelationship of the classroom experience with student development initiatives, and a well conceived program exposes the student to the importance of techniques for academic success and individual development. (p. 127)

### **Community College Extended Programming Models**

Brawer (1996) cited a 1993 article by Nelson who reported impressive statistics from Valencia Community College in Florida regarding positive results of extended programming. Of the students completing the extended student programming, 81% passed all their first-term classes. The students enrolled in preparatory classes other than the programming had only a 56% passing rate. All other students' passing rate was 67%.

Cook et al. (2003) described a number of first-year seminar models used in community colleges across the United States. Florida Community College, with an enrollment of 20,800, makes programming mandatory. Florida Community College offers the students the opportunity to choose whether to do first-year programming in a small- or large-group setting. The program is offered in several delivery models, including a section for ESL students only. Cowley Community College in Arkansas City, Kansas, has a unique delivery model for first-year programming, with a month-long seminar held on Saturdays. Non-traditional age students spend Saturday mornings on the campus and traditional age students are oriented in the afternoons. Oakton Community College in Des Plaines, Illinois, with an enrollment of 10,000 students, delivers its first-year programs in three workshops limited to 15 students each. One workshop focuses on placement testing, one on advising, and one on overall programming.

Meridan Community College in Meridan, Mississippi, serves 3,000 students. Meridan made the first-year seminar mandatory (Cook et al., 2003). Programming was a part of the actual registration process. Meridan used veteran students to assist in facilitating the programming. Spokane Community College linked advising to first-year programs. The coupling of advising and programming along with a college credit made the program appealing to students. Spokane's program was designed by a college-wide programming

committee made up of faculty and student service providers. Manatee Community College in Bradenton, Florida, offered an extended model of programming for students identified as “at risk.” The program was open to all interested students (Cook et al.).

In their book, *Between a Rock and a Hard Place*, Roueche and Roueche (1993) highlighted a freshman seminar required for liberal arts and liberal studies students at Middlesex Community College in Massachusetts. Interestingly, faculty originally taught the seminars in addition to their contractual loads without compensation. Later budgets included compensation, and instructors who offered to teach numbered in the forties. The freshman seminars were team taught by a faculty member linked with a student service provider. Class size was limited to 25 students. A variety of student success topics were covered and weekly journaling was required, allowing the instructors and students to interact privately through writing. The seminar was offered for one credit and met twice a week for the first two months of the semester. In studies based on control groups from the first two years of the freshman seminar, Middlesex found a significant increase in retention of those students who attended the seminar. Students who had completed the seminar had slightly higher GPAs. Evaluations of the seminar were highly positive. Faculty observed that students gained self-confidence and a higher commitment to their education by attending the seminar. Students observed that they benefited from information regarding college services and developed strong relationships with faculty and other students. Instructors reported gaining knowledge and new respect for what both the academic and the student service departments do to support students.

Middlesex also offered a course clustering schedule with the freshman seminar as part of the course load. A student could enroll in a cluster made up of developmental coursework and a freshman seminar, one that included Introduction to Psychology and English

Composition and a freshman seminar, or an Introduction to Business and English composition cluster with a freshman seminar. The clusters were scheduled by blocks during peak class time hours. The relationship between the instructors for each particular block was highly collaborative. The administration of the clusters was the responsibility of the Dean of Student Development, who relied on input from the Dean of Academic Affairs and Department Chair People. The program appeared to exemplify collaboration at all levels of the college. Middlesex reported that by attending first semester cluster classes, the students in the clusters developed positive relationships with peers. Students reported they had established both study groups and social interactions by attending the clusters with the same group of students throughout the semester. Evaluations of the course clustering discovered first-year course cluster students had a much higher rate of retention. The effectiveness of the clustering was supported by the discovery that none of the cluster students left the college after the first semester. The retention of the course cluster students was even more significant in light of the finding that 34% of the first-year students who were not in the clusters left after the first semester (Roueche & Roueche, 1993).

Suffolk Community College in New York follows a first-year experience model similar to many four year colleges (Roueche & Roueche, 1993). Suffolk requires all students to attend an initial programming and then follow up with a required freshman seminar class.

The 2003 League of Innovation in the Community College Conference was the setting for a presentation by Manley, Taylor, and Wright (2003) regarding a new first-year experience at Moraine Valley Community College. Moraine Valley is located in Palos Hills, Illinois, and serves an estimated 14,000 students. Moraine Valley had linked a required programming to a first-year success class, with the goal of giving students just what they need to get started. The student programming and registration program (SOAR) consisted of

a presentation from counselors, a student-led tour, pre-enrollment assessment and interpretation led by advisors, the completion of a comprehensive online program introducing the types of degrees offered at Moraine Valley, a unit on how to develop their first semester course choices, and course registration. Although the registration was done online, a counselor closely supervised the course selection. Students' first-time registration must occur in person.

The second phase of the required first-year activities was enrollment in Moraine Valley's *College 101-College: Changes, Challenges, Choices* course. *College 101* was a required eight-week, two-hour weekly seminar. At the time of the presentation, Moraine Valley had 110 sections of *College 101* running with 22 faculty members from a cross section of disciplines providing instruction. Seven counselors delivered 14 co-curricular workshops either in the context of the *College 101* classroom or outside the classroom. In addition to the co-curricular workshops, *College 101* was designed to provide students with information literacy skills and a Master Academic Plan (MAP). Students, with the assistance of an academic advisor, developed their personal MAP, which spelled out their individualized plan of study for the first year.

Implementation of the Moraine Valley program required the support and collaboration of all levels at the college. The program was supported by a task force that represented administration, faculty, and student development. The presenters stressed the importance of the involvement of the faculty association in the development and success of The Freshman Experience. Discussions regarding implementation of the program were included in the actual negotiations with faculty and administration agreeing that faculty would receive a half-credit overload pay for teaching the class.

The successful completers of Moraine Valley's freshman experience showed a 70% retention rate across the year, while those who did not take the class had a retention rate of 47%. Successful completers were defined as students who had received a C or better in the class. The successful completers had higher rates of course completions and stronger GPAs throughout the year. The unsuccessful students had lower retention rates than both the successful completers and those who did not take the class. Positive student accounts of the experience were included in the presentation and were supported by obvious enthusiasm and support expressed by the presenters (Manley et al., 2003).

### **Summary**

First-Year Experience, First-Year Programming and First-Year Seminars are all accepted names for college programming designed to address the transitioning needs of first-year students in the realm of academic, social, and personal development. The literature supports an experience, program, or seminar of at least eight weeks into the semester to provide the most favorable delivery of the programming. The literature reports these courses to be highly effective in supporting under-prepared students' successes at the community college. There has been a strong call for the implementation of such programs in community colleges. Successful programs demonstrate a common thread of collaboration between both the academic side and the student service side of the institution. The literature supports the practice of tapping into that spirit of collaboration as an effective strategy to make an extended first-year experience a possibility on any campus.

When designing first-year programming the first step is to identify what is already being done on the campus and by whom. Considering that student success is the goal of first-year experiences, it is likely one will find clusters of both academic and student-service activities that support student success. Focusing on retention benefits of such programming



will support the rationale for first-year programming. Focusing on the programming/seminar goals of preparing students for the classroom will enhance support.

This literature review, while far from addressing a complete strategy for institutional change, does provide strong arguments for the need and rationale behind the integration of first-year programs in community colleges. All of these best practices provided a foundation for the design of College 101 at Kirkwood Community College. They also serve as a foundation for this study.

## CHAPTER 3

### RESEARCH DESIGN, METHODOLOGY, AND METHODS

Chapter three contains the research design used in this study of the first-year experience of Kirkwood Community College students who completed the College 101 course. The goal of the study was to use the stories of these students to illuminate how they experienced their first year at Kirkwood from the vantage point of their second year at the college.

This chapter first provides a rationale for the decision to use a qualitative approach for the study. The rest of the chapter describes the research design structure supported by Crotty (1998). Crotty's structure called for an epistemology, a theoretical perspective, a methodology, and the methods used for the study. Each component of the study's structure informs the next, beginning with the epistemology that informs the theoretical perspective of the study. The theoretical perspective, in turn, informs the methodology, which guides the selection of the methods. The chapter continues with discussion of the researcher's role and the importance of reflexivity, the data collection methods, the data analysis procedures, and the strategies for validating findings.

#### Qualitative Approach

Merriam (2002) described the nature of qualitative inquiry as an attempt to discover how individuals make meaning of their world. Meaning is derived from interactions individuals have with the world. Qualitative research design is organized to tell us what the individual experiences rather than the predetermined, measurable outcomes of quantitative research. Qualitative research also allows for using an inductive process to obtain knowledge. Esterberg (2002) claimed that one looks to the empirical world to support a theory, while one

looks to the social world through a qualitative approach to develop theory from what one is seeing.

According to Denzin and Lincoln (2000), there are several ways qualitative research adds perspectives of the human experience that are limited in a quantitative approach. Qualitative research allows the researcher to extract individual points of view from the participants. The qualitative researcher's ability to see how participants are impacted by the responsibilities of daily life is a unique perspective that cannot be seen in quantitative work. Qualitative research allows for richer descriptions, leaving a better understanding of the personal experience of those being studied.

As this study was grounded in the area of student development, the choice to use qualitative research in the study was also influenced by Briodo and Manning (2002), who discussed qualitative research in the field of student development. They claimed that the concept of applying quantitative predictors of student behavior has come under criticism because behavior is "extremely dynamic, subject to change, and hard to control" (p. 43). They illustrated those dynamics with the quip, "One can ask any first-year resident hall director about the students' predictability, controllability, and futility of broad sweeping generalizations about their behavior" (p. 436). We can generalize about students' behaviors, but the explanation for such behaviors lie in the students' perceptions of what their motivations are. Qualitative research allows us to look at those perceptions through the voices of the students.

Seidman (2006) introduced readers to the power of story. Using his own experience, he described the winding road of research he traveled before finding personal authenticity in the experience of doing qualitative research. Seidman's academic experience was rooted in education in the early 1960s when quantitative methodology and the application of scientific

models were the norm. He discussed later experiences he had with leading innovators in the field of qualitative research and how the power of a story changed his thinking. Seidman speculated that the personal void of the unwritten story of his immigrant father and grandfather may have been a motivator for his qualitative leanings. In the 1980s, Seidman and some of his colleagues used qualitative interview techniques to produce a film documenting how community college faculty came to teaching and what it meant to them. Seidman's stories influenced my own decision to make this a qualitative study.

This study was an attempt to examine the rich individual experiences of the first-year students through their stories and meaningful events. A qualitative approach allows for a window into the world of personal nuances and individual interpretations of events.

### **Epistemology**

Epistemology explains the "philosophical grounding for deciding what kinds of knowledge are possible and how we can ensure that they are both adequate and legitimate" (Crotty, 1998, p. 8). Crotty described constructivism as an epistemology based on the belief that truth and/or meaning is constructed out of the experiences in the world of the individual. Constructed definition allows for the meaning of a similar experience to differ from one individual to the next (Crotty). The meaning or truth is constructed through each individual's experience and his/her thought process. Constructivism as an epistemology provided a foundation for knowledge claims in this study since it is an attempt to understand how students make meaning and construct and apply knowledge from the College 101 experience.

Constructivism is an often used epistemology in the world of student affairs (Briodo & Manning, 2002). The underlying philosophy of constructivism supported this study's examination of first-year student experiences and the meanings they derive from those experiences.

### Theoretical Perspective

The theoretical perspective used for this study was interpretivism. Merriam (2002) described basic interpretive studies as a “common form of qualitative research found in education” (p. 38). Interpretivism supports the practice of a researcher drawing related educational theories and/or models into the study (Merriam). A researcher’s findings will be influenced by the theories and models that mold his or her discipline. Since the Kirkwood College 101 course was based on Tinto’s theory of departure (1987, 1993) and Chickering and Reisser’s seven vectors (1993), it was important to view the data collected in this study through the lens of those theories of student development. Esterberg (2002) saw the interpretive approach as providing the researchers “interpretations of what they think their research subjects are doing” (p. 16). Interpretive writing is a “best guess” but “rooted in the social actors’ lives” (Esterberg, 2002, p. 16). Interpretivism allowed me to make interpretations and best guesses through knowledge of student development theories.

Rationale for the choice of interpretivism also came from Merriam’s (2002) observation that the constructivist’s quest to unearth the individual participant’s meaning of an event is an act of interpretation. Gubrium and Holstein (1997) emphasized this act of interpretation with “understanding how individuals construct and interpret social reality” (as cited in Esterberg, 2002, p. 16). Esterberg described the importance of interpretation by pointing out that “there is no social reality apart from how individuals construct it, and so the main research task is to interpret those constructions. The focus is on how given realities are produced” (2002, p. 16). Pairing Esterberg’s descriptions with Crotty’s idea that “we construct meaning” (1998, p. 44) provided support for a constructivist interpretive framework for this study.

The choice of interpretivism as a theoretical framework for this study was also influenced by the choice of narrative inquiry, the practice of asking participants to tell their stories, as a methodology. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) described the persistent research perception that narrative inquiry lacks a theoretical foundation. They treat theory lightly, stating, “We wish to point out that for narrative inquiry, it is more productive to begin with explorations of the phenomena of experience rather than in comparative analysis of various theoretical methodology frames” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 128). Clandinin and Connelly included reviews of the works of several researchers who they believe have impacted both them and the field of narrative. Included among those researchers are Polkinghorne and Czarniawska, whose narrative inquiry works were used to describe what Clandinin and Connelly referred to as providing theories that may be borrowed to support narrative inquiry. My choice of interpretivism for this study is an example of borrowing a theory.

### **Methodology: Narrative Inquiry**

Allowing students to tell their stories about their first-year experiences and to explore the meaning of those stories was an essential component of this study. Therefore, narrative inquiry was the methodology used to explore these stories. Connelly and Clandinin (1990) reinforced the use of narrative inquiry in this way:

The main claim for the use of narrative in educational research is that humans are storytelling organisms who, individually and socially, lead storied lives. The study of narrative therefore is the study of the ways humans experience the world. This general notion translates into the view that education is the construction and reconstruction of personal and social stories; teachers and the learners are storytellers and characters in their own and other’s stories. (p. 2)

Sharing of stories is a time-honored way to share experience. Narrative inquiry allows stories to illuminate the participants' life experiences for the researcher to interpret. This study does not attempt to measure the end result of an experience but rather uses individuals' stories to explain the results in the context of their experiences. As researchers, we can labor over a survey that offers a "yes," "no," and "maybe" response and quantifiably offer up variables that may have influenced the responses. We can make knowledge claims based on the results of a survey. However, the data-based results give little insight into the experiences of individuals that influenced them to respond yes, no, or maybe. The stories or experiences that came to their memory as they checked a response on a survey are not revealed by the quantitative survey results. Narrative inquiry provided a methodological guide from which to view individual experiences of first-year Kirkwood students through storytelling.

Polkinghorne (2007) described narrative research as "the study of stories" (p. 471). Stories are the basis for exploring the experience of the research participants (Savin-Baden & Niekerk, 2007). Denzin and Lincoln (2008) see narrative inquiry "as socially situated performances, ways of acting in and making sense of the world" (p. 42).

Clandinin and Connelly (1994) described narrative as "both a phenomenon and a method" (p. 416). They explained that the story is a phenomenon, while the inquiry is the narrative. The story (phenomenon) is considered the experience seen through the participant's viewpoint, while the narrative serves to provide the methods in which the story is studied. Clandinin and Connelly (1994) further offered the following description of the nuances of narrative: "Thus we say that people by nature lead storied lives and tell stories of those lives, whereas narrative researchers describe such lives, collect and tell stories of them, and write narratives of experience" (p. 416). Polkinghorne (2007) stated, "Narrative research is the study of stories" (p. 471) and stories are told through the views of everyday people.

Hendry (2007) spoke of narrative as an opportunity for marginalized people to tell their stories. The act of narrative inquiry gives voice to such people. Hendry saw narrative as constructivist in nature in that stories provide context, situational nuances, and contradictions. The act of storytelling is powerful: “Through telling our lives we engage in the act of meaning making. This is a sacred act. Stories are what make us human” (Hendry, 2007, p. 495).

Narrative provides a tool to study individual stories as told by the participant. Narrative inquiry provides a voice to those who exist outside the margins of society. Although it cannot be assumed that Kirkwood first-year students fall into the category of marginalized people, it is true that their voices have been rarely heard. Narrative inquiry is a methodology that provides insight into the experiences of everyday people. Stories gleaned from narrative inquiry may serve as a collective comment on education. This study is small in nature but it can provide an awareness of an emerging collective comment on the first-year experience at Kirkwood Community College.

Narrative inquiry provides this study with the means to hear and share the individual stories of how College 101 Kirkwood students experienced their first year at Kirkwood while exploring whether College 101 positively influenced those experiences.

### **Researcher’s Role and Reflexivity**

Creswell (2007) viewed the researcher as a “key instrument” in the research processes that make up a qualitative study (p. 38). Creswell dismissed the idea that one needs to present findings as an “omniscient, distanced, qualitative writer” (p. 178). Instead, the researcher is impacted by his/her own “cultural, social, gender and class and personal politics that we bring to research” (Creswell, 2007, p. 179). The experiences and views of the researcher are going to influence at qualitative study (Creswell). Therefore, it is important for the researcher



to examine his/her own experiences in an attempt to establish validity in the findings. Patton (2002) recognized that “absolute objectivity of the pure positivist variety is impossible to attain” and encouraged the researcher to be “prepared to admit and deal with imperfections in a phenomenologically messy and methodologically imperfect world” while still believing that “objectivity is worth striving for” (p. 93).

My own early experiences as a first-year student already color the introduction of this study. I have been a strong proponent of a Kirkwood extended first-year orientation course since the year 2000 when I first taught a six-week extended version of the former orientation.

As described in the introduction, I attended a 2003 League of Innovation conference session that highlighted the very successful efforts Moraine Valley Community College made towards an extended orientation type course. Moraine Valley Community College is very similar in size and demographics to Kirkwood Community College. I came back from the conference with a driving need to establish such a program at Kirkwood. That drive has led me to many leadership roles in the development and facilitation of the College 101 course. I am highly vested in the success of the program. It is, however, this vested interest that allows me to listen to both the negative and the positive student experiences regarding College 101. In the four years I have directed College 101, constant improvements generated out of both student and faculty input have been made. I have been, and will continue to be, open to both the positive and the negatives of the program.

Patton (2002) encouraged researchers to “convey a sense that you are dedicated to getting as close as possible to what is really going on in whatever setting you are studying” (p. 93). My deep investment and interest in continuing development of the College 101 course requires me to listen closely and report objectively.

As I embarked on this research study I held close this statement from Patton (2002):  
 “As an evaluator, I now try to approach my task with equal measures of chutzpah and humility so that I will not fail to challenge all the assumptions, especially my own, nor ever assume that I have all the questions, much less the answers right” (p. 337).

## **Data Collection**

### **Participant Selection**

Data collection took place in the spring 2009 semester. Participants were drawn from the pool of Kirkwood students who completed College 101 in fall of 2007 and continue to be enrolled at Kirkwood in spring of 2009. Students listed on class lists from all fall 2007 College 101 sections held in Cedar Rapids were cross referenced with individual student records in the Kirkwood Colleague System. The referencing was done with the goal of finding students who had been enrolled in at least three consecutive semesters at Kirkwood and were still enrolled at Kirkwood in spring of 2009. Originally students who were enrolled in the section of College 101 that I taught were not considered as potential participants. The referencing resulted in identifying 68 potential participants. Emails were sent to all of the potential participants asking them to participate in this study. Of those 68, 11 prospective participants responded with interest. I made several attempts to reach those 11 by both phone and email and was able to get 3 prospective participants to actually schedule appointments. Of the three appointments, one did not show up. When it appeared that I would not be able to recruit a sample of 6 participants, I sought the assistance of the fall 2007 College 101 instructors to serve as gatekeepers in recruiting participants. Five instructors sent emails to the eligible students from their sections. I was able to recruit 2 more participants through that process. The total number of participants at that time was 4, all female. The group of participants was still smaller and limited to less than I was comfortable with. I also needed

some male representation. I had attempted to assemble a group of participants without using students from the College 101 section that I team taught with another instructor but it became evident that I would have to expand the pool from which I drew the participants. After consulting my major professor, I began recruiting from the fall 2007 section of College 101 I taught. There were six eligible students that I contacted via email. Of the six, three responded that they were willing to participate. All three followed through, bringing the total pool of participants to 7, five females and two males.

The pool consisted of individuals who had graduated from Iowa high schools in spring of 2007. The size of the school systems they graduated from varied from total enrollments in the 600 range to 16,000 total enrollment.

### **Data Collection Methods**

The choice in what method(s) to use in a narrative study can be discipline driven. Savin-Baden and Van Niekerk (2007) stated that “what counts for a story varies within methodological fields” (p. 462). Chase (2005) described narrative inquiry as an “amalgam of analytic lenses, diverse disciplinary approaches, and both traditional and innovative methods – all revolving around an interest in the biographical particulars as narrated by one who lives them” (p. 651). Chase suggested that narratives can be obtained during field work, interviews, or conversation. Savin-Baden and Van Niekerk (2007) provided a short list of methods with “field notes, journals, interviews, storytelling, letter writing, and autobiographical and biographical writing” as possible methods to consider (p. 463).

Polkinghorne (2007) stated, “Narrative research is the study of stories” (p. 471). How we gather those stories calls on several different methods. Connelly and Clandinin (1990) and Clandinin and Connelly (1994) provided a framework of several methods that can be used to gather data from participants. These methods can be used by themselves or can be

used in combination. One method may result in data that can be supported or negated by the data obtained from another source.

Storytelling can be embedded in all of the narrative methods. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) included narrative inquiry as a method in itself. Storytelling has provided many powerful sources of narrative to be used by researchers (Clandinin & Connelly, 1994). Czarniawska (2004) suggested interviews serve as a place to ask people for their stories. The interview is where a conversation can occur between two persons. Czarniawska (2004) provided solid reasoning for the use of interviews:

What people present in the interview is but the results of their perception, their interpretation of the world, which is of extreme value to the researcher because one may assume that it is the same perception that informs their actions. (p. 49)

Interviews and conversations in this study created a setting for the participants to tell their stories of their experiences through their perceptions.

Interviews conducted by the researcher with the participant are another method used to collect narrative data (Clandinin & Connelly, 1990). The interview is recorded and then transcribed into a research document. Savin-Baden and Van Niekerk (2007) saw interviews as the place for participants to tell their stories. They encouraged the interviewer to be organized with an open-ended agenda to accommodate the directions of the participants' stories (Savin-Baden & Van Niekerk). Seidman (2006) credited interviewing as providing him with "a deeper understanding and appreciation of the amazing intricacies and, yet, coherence of people's experiences" (p. 130).

Interviewing served as the primary method for data collection used in this study. The study employed a three-interview model proposed by Seidman (2006). Interview questions were designed for each interview session (see Appendix D). The first interview was used to

set the context of the study in the subject's life history. The second interview examined the concrete details of the students' experiences. The third interview was designed specifically to allow the participants to make meaning of their first-year experience at Kirkwood. Making meaning was perhaps the most difficult task for the participants. Participants were also asked to confirm the accuracy of the narrative gathered from the first two interviews during the third interview. Jones, Torres, and Armino (2006) define saturation as the point in which "patterns in the data continuously emerge" (p. 71). It was evident early in the interviewing process that the seven participants, three interview format of this study allowed for saturation.

The initial design of this study called for each interview to be 90 minutes in length. The first interview however was no longer than 60 minutes. Both the second and third interviews were at least 70 minutes in length. None of the interviews exceeded the 90 minute time frame. There were several instances when conversations occurred between the researcher and the participants after the interview was concluded and the taping had ceased. Pertinent information obtained through those conversations was noted in the researcher's journal. All of the interviews were held in the researcher's office at Kirkwood Community College. The location provided convenience for the participants as well as an environment that could be controlled to guard against interruption. I used a journal throughout the research process, since journal records can serve as a source for narrative data (Clandinin & Connelly, 1990). My journal provided insight into the process of making sense of and interpreting the participants' stories. My journal also served as a venue in which I could explore my own reflexivity in regard to the participants' stories.

Oral history can serve as a method of capturing an individual experience (Clandinin & Connelly, 1994). The guidelines for obtaining oral history are diverse and can range from

simply asking participants to tell their story in their own way to a structured set of sentences (Clandinin & Connelly, 1994). Through the interview process, this study obtained oral history from the participants regarding academic experiences before enrolling in Kirkwood and College 101. The participants continued to offer an oral history of events that happened after they began their Kirkwood experience.

Narrative researchers also can use documents as sources for narrative research (Clandinin & Connelly, 1990). The last major assignment of the College 101 course is to complete a portfolio to document the student's own assessment of growth throughout the first semester. Major assignments in College 101 and other courses or experiences serve as artifacts for the portfolios. One participant provided a portfolio for examination. One other participant was able to share parts of the portfolio. Student transcripts also provided documents for document analysis.

The interview is a place where a conversation can occur between two persons (Czarniawska, 2004). Conversations may take the researcher and participant beyond a normal interview. Clandinin and Connelly (1990) describe the conversations as "In-depth probing, but it is done in a situation of mutual trust, listening and caring for the experience described by the other (p. 422). Conversations are thought by some as an effort to obtain stories that are less influenced by the researcher's questions, thus producing richer data (Clandinin & Connelly, 1994). Several conversations will naturally occur as a result of interviewing. Documenting these conversations served as a venue to explore the participant's experience free from any influences the researcher might project through semi-structured interview questions. Conversations also provided subsequent questions to explore in later interviews.

The conversations that took place in this study challenged the structure of the interviews. The questions often interfered with the narrative story line the participant was

sharing. Seidman (2006) provided me with some understanding of what was happening in a section of his book titled “Use an Interview Guide Cautiously” (p. 91). Participants often brought up subject matter that although not driven by the interview questions, contributed to the richness of their stories and thus was worthy of inclusion into the data. Seidman warned that researchers may observe more than one participant bringing up issues that were not covered in the research questions. This study uncovered many such issues worth exploring. My experience with the interviews is well-described by Seidman (2006) who wrote:

Interviewers must try to avoid imposing their own interests on the experience of the participants. Interviewers working with an interview guide must allow for the possibility that what may be of interest to them or other participants may be of little interest to the person being interviewed. Interview guides can be useful but must be used with caution (2006, p. 92)

### **Data Analysis Procedures**

Patton (1990) described data analysis as “making sense of massive amounts of data” (pp. 371-372). This study yielded a large amount of data. Data analysis was challenging. I drew on the works of Creswell (2003), Bogdon and Bilken (2003), and Clandinin and Connelly (1994, 2000) to provide the tools for conducting the data analysis.

### **Theoretical Background**

Bogdon and Bilken (2003) stated that “the first step involves a relatively simple house-cleaning task: going through all the files and getting them in order” (p. 172). After organizing all the data, these researchers recommended spending uninterrupted time reading the data while developing a list of possible coding categories. They see the completion of the coding process as the starting point of writing results.

Creswell (2003) recommended a six-step process to use when analyzing data that helps in preparation and organization. The organized data can serve to give the researcher a generalized view of the data. Creswell recommended that the researcher then begin to organize data by chunks, in a sense categorizing them. The researcher should read the data to get a sense of the meaning the data might portray. At this point, the researcher might begin writing notes in the margins pertaining to what might be emerging (Cresswell). Creswell's third step involves labeling those categories with preliminary codes. The preliminary codes quickly emerged from the data. The fourth step involved further use of the codes to collapse them into themes. Identifying specific themes was perhaps the most challenging part of the analysis. The data contained a great deal of overlap from theme to theme.

Step four involves using the codes from step three to "generate a description of the setting or people as well as categories or themes for analysis" (Creswell, 2003, p. 193). Detailed descriptions should be used regarding "people, places and events" (p. 193). Using those details, the codes can be funneled from step three down to themes or categories. Creswell suggested using five to seven themes to frame the study.

Step five allows further development of predominant themes into a decision on how they should be presented in the research (Creswell, 2003). The decisions are organizational and are made based on an awareness of what are the most effective ways to present the data. Creswell used the example of an actual narrative passage supported by a discussion of themes from the findings. Step six is the point at which the researcher interprets the data. This is the opportunity for the researcher to explore what was learned from the data.

Clandinin and Connelly (1994) referred to any information gathered as a field text. Field texts can include photographs, journals, and the transcripts of electronic recordings in narrative research. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) suggested that narrative researchers



“narratively code their field texts” (p. 131). The coding can be centered on “narrative threads, tensions, and themes” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 133). Those codes serve as organizational tools to write what the researchers refer to as interim texts. It is suggested that interim texts are written between field texts and final research. Interim texts also allow the researcher to make a tentative check with the participant to see if the participant’s story is being captured.

Creswell (2007) explained that there is no one way to handle data analysis in a qualitative study. Creswell did, however, assert that “data analysis conforms to a contour” (p. 150).

### **Data Analysis**

Creswell’s (2003) data analysis provided a guide for this study. The analysis also drew on Bogdan and Bilken’s (2003) and Creswell’s (2003) recommendations that the process begin with organizing and putting some order to the data. Drawing on Bogdon and Bilken’s (2003) approach to house-keeping, I attempted to make some sense of order out of the data. I discovered that writing each individual’s narrative story gave me an overall picture of what the results might look like and provided me with order and an organizational foundation. Those narratives were also a source of emerging themes on which the study ultimately would focus.

The interim texts were all emailed to the participants allowing them to read them and comment about any inaccuracies. Two of the 7 participants responded. Only one made suggestion for changes and those changes pertained to the enrollment of the K-12 system from which the participant graduated.

This study also drew on Creswell’s (2003) recommendation that data be chunked by codes. Codes for this study were guided by Clandinin and Connelly’s (2000) suggestion that

codes be centered on narrative threads. Creswell recommended preliminary codes that allow for further development of codes as the data emerge. This study required preliminary codes with movement through the spiral to solid coding. Once coding was complete, an examination of threads and themes throughout the data occurred. Using Creswell's model, descriptions started to emerge at this point in the research process. I started to solidly understand what was meant by the messiness of qualitative research.

Using Creswell's model, I took preliminary topics and themes at this point in the process, and then started to chunk them together as possible relationships were identified. The development of codes emerged in the third step. I found that even the codes had to include overlapping themes in order to analyze the data. In the world of student development, it is very difficult to separate career development data from some of the data that exemplifies personal development.

Clandinin and Connelly (2000) suggested the use of interim texts as a way to move from coding to the actual design of the study's results. Interim texts were examined as part of the analysis of the data. The interim texts gradually evolved into the analysis of this study. Decisions were made regarding what themes were focused on as they connect to the research questions addressed in this study. In some cases the data reported in this study did not fit neatly into the framework of the research questions but rather contained rich narrative that was deemed an essential part of the participants' stories. In line with Creswell's (2003) suggestions, the process moved into making and supporting actual interpretations that emerged from the findings.

### **Strategies for Validating Findings**

#### **Validity Criteria**

Patton (2002) provided a description of the researcher's challenges when attempting to establish validity in a qualitative study, stating:

You realize that completely value free inquiry is impossible, but you worry about how your values and preconceptions may affect what you see, hear, and record in the field, so you wrestle with your values, try to make any biases explicit, take steps to mitigate their influence through rigorous field procedures, and discuss their possible influence in reporting your findings. (p. 93)

Hendry (2007) clearly voiced a concern with "that analysis often becomes a mode for saying what we want to say and not really listening to what is being said" (p. 493). Narrative researchers can compromise the validity of the story by writing and reporting what they want to hear (Hendry). Hendry's concerns rest with the concept of "staying true to our informants' stories and not imposing our narratives on them" (p. 493). Hendry encouraged the researcher to have faith in the story and the storyteller when listening to the story as well as interpreting it. Experience has allowed me to have great faith in the story of a student.

### **Layering**

Connolly (2007) insisted the researcher's stance be clearly identified in narrative inquiry to maintain validity. Stance must identify assumptions and the analytical lens the researcher is applying to the written narrative. Connolly (2007) saw that "layering the two narratives, that of the narrator and that of the listener or researcher, should perhaps be an ethical norm when reporting narrative inquiry" (p. 453). Layering may allow for a clear understanding of the researcher's stance when analyzing and re-telling the story of the participant. As a researcher, my analytical lens has been strongly influenced by theory and

## **Triangulation**

Creswell (2003) described triangulation as “using different data sources of information by examining evidence from the sources to build a coherent justification for themes” (p. 196). Merriam (2002) described one type of qualitative triangulation as a “combination of interviews, observation and document analysis” (p. 25). Lincoln and Guba (1985) described triangulation as using multiple sources to support data. Findings from this study were verified through an audit trail, member checking, document analysis, interviews and my journal entries that included observations.

This study relied on the experiences and stories of seven former College 101 students. Each participant brought rich additions to the data. Themes emerged from the data that are documented as part of the whole experience. I conducted observations of the participants before, during, and after the interviews and recorded field notes from these observations. Documents used included qualitative data obtained from end-of-course evaluations, academic assignments participants completed during the College 101, and academic success as documented in unofficial transcripts.

## **Audit Trail**

Merriam (2002) described an audit trail as a “running record of your interaction with the data as you engage in analysis and interpretation” (p. 27). Journaling and detailing how data were obtained and analyzed, and how conclusions were reached, is one means of establishing an audit trail (Merriam). Laying out all the procedures used in a study can also provide a map for any later attempts at replication of the study (Dey, 1993).

Journaling served as a tool to establish an audit trail for this study. My journal included my introspections, my examination decisions and rationales for data analysis, my

observations both in and out of the field, any document analysis procedures, and any other information that appeared to be pertinent to the conclusions that were drawn from the study.

### **Consensus**

In order to make claims of validity in narrative research, Polkinghorne (2007) encouraged researchers to “spell out their understandings of the nature of their collected evidence” (p. 479). Polkinghorne also established the concept of “consensus within a community of speakers” (p. 474) as a rationale for validity. In order to truly convey the complexities of human behavior, Polkinghorne (2007) suggested:

Narrative researchers do not ask readers to grant validity to their claims only when they reach a level of near certainty about a claim. Readers are asked to make judgments on whether or not the evidence and argument convinces them at the level of plausibility, credibleness or trustworthiness of the claim. (p. 477)

According to Polkinghorne (2007), persuasive argument on the part of the researcher can serve to establish acceptable levels of validity for a narrative study. “Narrative researchers need to argue for the acceptance of validity” (p. 478).

### **Member-Checking**

Creswell (2003) described member checking as providing the participants with reports, themes, and findings and allowing the participants to check for the accuracy of the findings. In this study, the second and third interviews served as opportunities for the participants and researcher to discuss any suspected inaccuracies in earlier interviews. Each participant was sent the narrative of his or her story via email. They were asked to read the narratives and comment on any inaccuracies they thought the narrative contained. Only two of the participants responded and only one suggested a change. The change was related to the total enrollment in the K-12 system from which she graduated.

### **Commitment to Personal Best**

Establishing validity, goodness, and trustworthiness in qualitative research study is a challenging goal. I have attempted to establish the worth of the student stories I compiled through my research. As I worked to tell those stories, I drew on a statement by Patton (2002):

There are no formulas for determining significance. No ways exist of perfectly replicating the researcher's analytical thought processes. No straightforward tests can be applied for reliability and validity. In short, no absolute rules exist except perhaps this: Do your very best with your full intellect to fairly represent the data and communicate what the data reveal given the purpose of the study. (p. 433)

This dissertation is representative of my desire to do my very best at sharing the voices and the experiences of College 101 students at Kirkwood.

## CHAPTER 4

### RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

#### Background

Seven Kirkwood Community College students participated in this study. The participants successfully completed Kirkwood's College 101 course in the fall of 2007. All of the participants attended and graduated from Iowa school systems. Five of the participants were females and two were males. In order to protect their identity, pseudonyms have been assigned to each of the participants. The participants were each asked to choose a title for their story of their first year of college at Kirkwood. Their chosen titles are used to name their sections of the narratives.

Czarniawska (2004) discussed the path of narrative inquiry as one where there is opportunity to traverse an individual's story beyond what the researcher may think is important. "It is important to elicit a narrative concerning the issue of interest to the researcher but sometimes another issue brought spontaneously by the interviewee turns out to be more interesting" (Czarniawska, 2004, p. 55). Czarniawska (2002) described her own experience in this way:

The researchers ask people in the field to compare, abstract, and to generalize. But in my experience, although many respondents engage in such questions, they also ramify by adding, say, "Let me tell you how it all first started" or "You need some more background first." The result is the production of a rich narrative, which might or might not be finally summarized along the lines of what the interviewer had in mind (p. 735).

Czarniawska (2002) offered some solace to the researcher who discovers worth in a human story although it may not neatly fit into the original intentions of a study. "I must

admit this used to bring me to the verge of panic – How to bring them back to the point? – But now I have learned that *is* the point” (Czarniawska, 2002, p. 735).

Czarniawska’s (2004) description of Narrative Research fed directly into this study. Though driven by some specific research questions, this study revealed many additional responses that added richness to the participants’ stories. Some of the research questions were answered in vague terms; some were answered with overwhelming data. Some research questions could have been posed in the study that were not. Perhaps they could not have been asked prior to hearing the student stories.

### **College 101 Assignments**

The participants’ narratives contain references to several College 101 assignments and activities. This section will provide the readers with background for understanding the participants’ narratives. These particular assignments are required in each College 101 class. This is not, however, a comprehensive list of the assignments and activities in each section of College 101. The course is designed with a shared curriculum that instructors fine-tune according to their personal style and the needs of the students in their particular section. The delivery, style, and some of the processes vary from instructor to instructor.

The Portfolio Assignment in College 101 is designed to provide the students with a composite look at their accomplishments in the areas of academic, social, and career development. Sections of the portfolio are titled “Introduction,” “Academic Development,” “Social Development,” “Academic and Career Planning,” and “Celebrate Your Growth as a Person and A Student” in the assignment. The students are required to include some specific College 101 assignments as artifacts that support each of the portfolio sections. They are also required to provide at least one artifact for each section from a course other than College 101. Requirements of the portfolio also include presenting it to their instructors in a polished, well



organized manner. The “Portfolio Assignment” is made in the first week of classes in order for the student to begin organizing artifacts during the semester. It is presented to the instructors by the students at a final one-on-one meeting with the instructors at the end of the semester.

The “Who Am I?” assignment, which provides the first artifact in the portfolio, is a self-reflection that is completed within the first two weeks of classes. The assignment parameters are intentionally loosely designed to allow the student to reflect on how they view themselves in the world at that time. The focus of the assignment is on self-awareness. Students often choose to explore what significant experiences brought them to their first year in college and what they hope for in the future.

The “Who Am I Now” assignment, which provides the final artifact, is a reflection that is very similar to the “Who am I?” assignment but is completed at the end of the semester. Students are directed to examine ways in which their self-awareness has changed over the first semester.

The “Places to Go” is a scavenger hunt assignment that requires students to answer questions regarding student services and their locations, policy, and degree requirements. The assignment requires the students to use the student handbook, the college catalog, and online services and to physically visit some of the departments on campus. The assignment is usually made early in the semester and often used as a group assignment requiring the students to meet and work cooperatively with each other.

The “Time Monitor” assignment asks students to prioritize and rank a list of activities common to college students according to how much time they think they spend on each task. The students are then required to monitor and track how they spend their time over a week. Students use the results of the tracking to calculate how much actual time was spent on each

activity. Using the results of the activity, students write a short reflection about how they are spending their time.

The “Food Diary” requires students to track all food and beverages they consume for a four-day period. They then enter that data into an online food pyramid tracker. The tracker analyzes their food intake and gives them a report on their intake by nutritional standards. The assignment requires a short reflection focusing on what they discovered about their eating habits and how they might improve.

The Meyers Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) is used in College 101 as a tool to generate self-awareness. Each student completes the MBTI online. The results and interpretive report of each MBTI assessment is printed by Kirkwood counselors. The Kirkwood counselors visit each College 101 section to provide the students with copies of their reports and a group interpretation of what the MBTI types mean. Students are asked to complete the assignment “MBTI Reflection” after receiving their reports and attending the interpretation. The “MBTI Reflection” asks students to examine both the strengths and weaknesses of their type. Students also explore their opinions regarding the accuracy of their given type.

The “College 101 Careers Checklist and Reflection” is required after the student has used the “Choices Planner,” which is an online career guidance package. Students complete assessments in the package that are based on interests and work values. The program generates a list of careers that match these interests and work values. The “College 101 Careers Checklist and Reflection” assists students in prioritizing top career possibilities. The assignment requires copies of career information and descriptions from the Choices Planner of at least two careers.

“Boundaries” is a piece of curriculum that assists students in defining healthy relationships and provides tools to set and enforce boundaries in their personal relationships. After the presentation of the curriculum, students are asked to write a reflection about a time they set boundaries in a relationship, a current situation for which they need to set a boundary, and how they might apply what they learned from the curriculum to the current situation.

The midterm meeting is a one-on-one meeting that is held with the student after midterm grades are posted. Students are required to make midterm grade reports on each of their classes. The report also encourages them to speak with their instructors regarding any grades that are unfavorable. Students share strategies to improve the grade both on paper and with their College 101 instructor. The midterm discussion allows the instructor an opportunity to explore the need to drop a class if it appears that completion will not result in a favorable outcome. The instructor and student have an opportunity to familiarize themselves with each other in a setting other than the classroom during the midterm meeting.

### **Participants’ Narratives**

#### **Julie’s Story: An Adventure**

When asked what she would title a story about her first year of college, Julie paused, smiled, and replied with her title.

*I guess I am not sure of the exact title, but I know it would probably have the word adventure in there.*

Julie is a 20-year-old student who reports her cumulative grade point average somewhere in the 3.5 to 4.0 range. Julie reports working 15-20 hours a week at a job she acquired during her second semester at Kirkwood. She has lived at home with her parents while attending Kirkwood. Both of Julie’s parents graduated from Kirkwood.

Julie graduated from a rural school district that is in the Kirkwood nine-county service area. She described her high school experience as more academic focused than social.

*Maybe not a lot of social interaction but more focused on academics, kind of a bookworm.*

Julie described math as her most challenging subject in high school. The highest level of math Julie obtained in high school was Algebra I. She took some Kirkwood health-related courses while attending high school.

In Julie's first description of how College 101 helped her in her first year, she focused on several aspects of her development.

*Socially and then also academically, I had no idea what I wanted to do or where I was really going with my life, and so it definitely helped me kind of figure out a career direction, what I might be interested in studying.*

Julie discussed how College 101 positively influenced her ability to transition from high school to college.

*I mean first of all just kind of...letting us know what to expect and... I think they had an activity showing us the difference. Here's what was in high school, here's what college work is like, and I think there was even a section for...out in the workforce.*

She also described College 101 as the place she learned about Kirkwood resources. Julie used the Writing Center after learning about it in her College 101 class.

*And then I guess like resources here at the college. I didn't even know where a lot of things were or classes...that resources were available to help.*

Julie found College 101 a place to overcome the shyness that she affirmed may have limited her in high school. She discussed her shyness as something she wanted to get over. She credited the general interaction in the classroom and the "Who Am I Assignment" as assisting her in accomplishing that personal milestone.

*Well, that was one of my first classes and one thing that kind a drew me to it was it said that...you could make some new friends, and so I just kind of went in there with an open mind and met some of the kids and my teacher and everybody was really*

*friendly and nice and it kind of encouraged me....There was this one assignment, "Who Am I?" and I got to see a lot because-I don't know-I kind of characterize myself before that, you know....I thought I knew what I was, I'm just 18 years old, female, shy. That's pretty much how I describe myself, and I got to see I am a lot more than that....I have a lot more to offer than just-you know.*

Julie recognized her changes. She noted her growth in her ability to talk with others. Her level of shyness was something she was certain had changed in her first year.

*I think I have grown a lot; I've noticed a lot of changes.*

Julie credited her new ability to be able to talk with others as supporting her academic success.

*Yes, definitely I mean studying and then also...asking people the assignments if I am not getting something, if I miss a class...asking "What did I miss" or going over the assignments.*

Julie joined a club at Kirkwood with a Christianity theme her first year at Kirkwood. She chose to participate in a Bible study group during her second year at Kirkwood.

When asked if she had made many friends different than herself, Julie responded with enthusiasm.

*That's one good thing about Kirkwood and then my job, too. Over the past year or so I've met so many different people and, you know, got to see a lot of things I hadn't before coming from that rural school.*

Julie viewed her academic transition from high school to college favorably.

*It was pretty good; I found it a little bit different than high school. A lot more tests and quizzes and just kind of reading and studying...like homework assignments every night.*

Julie's first semester coursework included a Pre-Algebra preparatory math course, followed by Survey of Math her second semester. She was also enrolled in Composition I. She could also recall taking a Music Appreciation class. When asked if there were a type of teacher she favored over another, Julie said she preferred teachers who help students apply what they are learning to life.

*I know one thing I really like out of an instructor is that they kind of apply it to your life and...make it seem real for the students.*

Julie lived at home with her parents for both years at Kirkwood. Her main motivation to live at home was to save money, although she did confess that moving out was a bit frightening.

*I thought...it'd be good...to stay there and save some money and I would start working...just a smoother kind of...step-by-step transition to living on my own....it was kind of scary for me to move out.*

Julie described how she had developed her ability to make decisions independently of others during her first year.

*At first I'd ask my parents or I'd ask my friends or other people what should I do and I wasn't really independent at all and that's one thing....I really wanted to achieve that independence and be able to go out and get a job and choose my classes and my major and all that stuff and so I think...that really helped me take those steps. I'm a lot more independent now.*

Living at home presented Julie with the necessity of negotiating her independence as a young adult with the old role she played as a child in her parents' home.

*I'd have trouble and stuff...for so long I'd ask them (parents) and whatever they said I'd do and it was kind of a struggle for both of us adjusting to now I am independent and now I make my own decisions.*

Julie was pleased with her progression to making decisions on her own. She thought her parents had adjusted to her independence as well.

The Boundaries Assignment in College 101 was described as helping her learn to make those decisions.

*There was this kind of thing I think we looked at about codependence...establishing healthy relationships.*

Julie thought several other College 101 topics helped her although none of them stood out in the way that "Boundaries" and the "Who Am I?" assignments had.

She hadn't applied any of the health-related curriculum to her daily life. Finding the time to do so was difficult. Exercising was something she did only when she had time. Julie did recall the food diary assignment.

*One of the activities we did was a Food Diary to see what you're eating and that was kind of a surprise...kind of opened your eyes. Wow, this is what I should be eating! So that was helpful.*

Julie's career plans were influenced by the College 101 experience. She recalled doing some inventories.

*We did a couple of inventories of what would you like based on your personality and what interests you have and your skills or what skills you have, what areas you excel, and which ones maybe aren't some of your strengths.*

With the help of the inventories Julie was able to narrow her interest in veterinary science to a major in Veterinary Tech.

*Before I was kind of looking at veterinarian...just to see some of the differences and to see some of the skills that a vet needed and a vet tech needed and I am more closely matched to the vet tech.*

Clearly Julie would recommend College 101 to a first-time student at Kirkwood.

*I would definitely recommend it...It provides knowledge of a variety of areas – personal relationships, just your own health, and then also knowledge about Kirkwood and the campus and what services are offered and then academic help and career decision-making.*

After completing her first semester Julie experienced some strong feelings of accomplishment.

*It felt really good....At first going into college it's a big experience; it's kind of scary starting off, like will I be able to succeed? How will I do? Kind of like a weight is lifted off your chest. Oh, I can do this and it is just kind of empowering. I made it. I did well.*

To Julie, her first semester accomplishments meant that she was accomplishing her goals.

*It seemed kind of like a step closer to like reaching my goals. It felt really good to finish, to know that I could succeed and I could I guess do well in college.*

Julie titled the beginning of the story of her first year, “An Adventure.” She described the beginning of her adventure as shaky.

*I guess just like I was nervous coming into it, not really sure what to expect.*

She described the middle of her story as better than the beginning.

*Just kind of seeing that...I can succeed and maybe this isn't going to be so bad after all.*

Julie described the end of the story of her first year as a good ending.

*To see that I did succeed and I can make it here; I can go on and I will be successful.*

### **Lisa's Story: A Challenge**

When asked for a title of the story of her first year at college, Lisa replied with “A Challenge.”

Lisa is a 20-year-old, full-time Kirkwood student. Lisa's father graduated from college. Her mother completed a year of college. Lisa came to Kirkwood at the age of 18, after graduating from high school. She attended high school in a small, rural Iowa district which, according to the Iowa Department of Education (2009), has a total enrollment of 933 students. Lisa took some higher level coursework in high school but no Advanced Placement courses. Her high school GPA was a 3.75. Lisa thought her high school academics were somewhat difficult.

*It was like they made it hard, kind of like college. You can make it as hard as you want to make it and I took kind of some upper level classes. I didn't take PE just because I wanted to take more classes.*

Lisa was very involved in high school activities.

*I was involved in softball, volleyball, wrestling, cheerleading, golf, band, chorus, and all kinds of groups.*



Lisa misses seeing all of her high school friends every day. She sees most of her high school friends about once a month, although they all attended different post-secondary institutions after high school. Lisa volunteered at her old high school as an Assistant Softball Coach last year and intends to resume her coaching for summer of 2009.

Lisa experienced a tragic event during her senior year at high school that contributed to the stress she incurred during her first year at Kirkwood. In spring of 2007, two young women were brutally murdered in an apartment near Kirkwood. The accused murderer had been enrolled at Kirkwood. One of the women killed was a Kirkwood full-time student and the other a high school student. The Kirkwood student was from Lisa's hometown. Their families were neighbors and Lisa considered her a good friend. Lisa did not really process the death until she came to Kirkwood and the trial commenced in Cedar Rapids during her first semester.

*When that all happened I didn't really deal with it then so it kind of all came out when I came up here.*

Lisa chose to attend most of the trial. The trial forced her to process what happened and allowed her to show support for her friend's family.

*Yeah, in high school when it all happened, I was kind of dating his [the accused's] cousin at the time and we never talked about it. We never did anything; we just spent all our time together so I really didn't deal with it, and then when I came up here and we were broken up and the trial was going on....I just had to find out what happened and be there for their family so I went pretty much every day to see it and it was really hard but my parents would come up with me, so I didn't have to go alone.*

Lisa relied on her parents to help her through the additional stress the trial caused for her.

*I remember one night I called my Dad at midnight and just said I wanted to come home, and he just told me to come. It wasn't a big deal but I don't know, I guess I wanted to be with my parents more than up here, but then it was fine and I didn't really have any problems after that.*

Lisa was clear in claiming that her friend's death did not deter her from coming to

Kirkwood at all. One of the positive factors was that Lisa was the recipient of a scholarship given in the name of the friend who was murdered.

*Both my brothers went here and she went here...and I actually won her memorial scholarship at school for Kirkwood and I was pretty excited. It was more of an honor to get to come here.*

Lisa discovered that the need to organize her time and committing to study would be one of her challenges early on in her first semester.

*Just organizing time and really having to study...you know, in high school I really didn't have to, just kind of knew it and then here I got my first test back and it wasn't very good. I knew I had to study.*

The College 101 instructor helped provide Lisa with some study techniques that she found useful.

*He explained that you have to find...like your way of studying, the way you like to be taught and if you have a problem, you need to talk to your teacher and usually teachers are willing to help, which they are. And if you're more like lecture based or if you're more of a hands-on usually the teacher will help you out if you ask them to.*

Lisa cited several assignments in College 101 that aided in her transition from high school to college, including the "Who Am I?" assignment, done at the beginning of the semester, and the "Who Am I Now" assignment, done at the end of the semester.

*We did this thing in the beginning and at the end of, who I want to...we wrote a paper about who I want to be and then at the end of the semester we wrote who I am and that helped a lot in my first semester here so I don't know. I think College 101 really helped me, because I was having a really hard time adjusting and well not like really adjusting but I did miss home and I missed a lot of things and some personal things were going on in my life that just overwhelmed me, but I wrote the paper in the beginning and I reread that and then I went back and wrote Who Am I Now? It helped a lot.*

Lisa saw the MBTI as an assignment that assisted her in transitioning to college the most. Lisa could remember that she was an extrovert.

*We did this thing that sticks out in my mind like what your personality type is and I guess it really helped me because it helped me realize like what kind of person I am to like study or how I study and how I need to interact with other people or teachers to*

*get across how I function compared to how they teach. So it helped in that way, like I've gotten more confident in telling teachers that I need help or need a different way of explaining this. That was probably the biggest thing that helped me out.*

Lisa clearly remembered the first time she talked to a Kirkwood instructor. She claimed that it made her nervous.

*It was my math teacher, and I was asking him about my test on what I did wrong, this one problem because I didn't know but he just talked to me like he was my best friend or something. It wasn't a big deal at all.*

She was relieved after her first experience talking with her college professor.

*That was a relief and then that just made me talk to other teachers a lot easier.*

The Food Diary Assignment gave Lisa some awareness that she was not eating healthy foods.

*That was surprising, I was like wow I eat a lot during the day but I changed my eating habits a lot.*

Although she changed her eating habits, Lisa thinks that the real changes in her eating and the time she was working out didn't really occur until her second semester.

*I got sick of myself. I felt gross and I was like, I should probably lose [weight] before I try to get back into those clothes.*

Lisa spoke about her midterm conference with her College 101 instructor. After collecting all of her grades at midterm, she discovered she wasn't doing very well in one of her first-semester classes. Her instructor discussed the grade with her at their midterm conference and assisted her in making some immediate changes.

*I wasn't doing very well in a class and he took me down to tutoring, set me up there....He did that with a lot of the kids in my class.*

Lisa narrowed her career direction with the decision to major in psychology. She is hoping to teach psychology at the high school level. Lisa doesn't think College 101 did

much to help her clarify her career decision. She does, however, give strong credit to one of the Kirkwood psychology professors.

*I've had two classes with her and everything she explains really well. And then I kind of talked to her about it one day after class and said I want to do something in psychology or I don't know what I want to do and then she actually set me up with a job shadow in North Liberty. I went there and it was all fine. I just decided that day that that's what I want to do.*

Lisa has made some strong social connections at Kirkwood. She started at Kirkwood living in an apartment with three randomly assigned roommates. Two of the roommates were best friends but they quickly let Lisa and her friends into their social circle.

*That's the good thing about those two is that they were willing to let my friends in, and my friends back home from school are you know, their friends.*

Lisa tried out and made the Dance Team at Kirkwood. In her second year at Kirkwood, she decided she wanted to try to walk on to the softball team. She thought softball contributed to her fitting socially at Kirkwood.

*I think being on the softball team helps just because you see more familiar faces as you walk [through Kirkwood].*

Lisa's decision to try out for the softball team led to a unique interaction with her College 101 instructor during the summer after her first year. During the 101 class, Lisa's instructor had encouraged her to try out for softball at Kirkwood. Lisa was reluctant to do so but after coaching softball in her hometown, Lisa realized how much she missed the game and contacted her 101 instructor about the possibility of trying out for the Kirkwood team.

*I went back and talked to him and he said he'd help me out and do whatever he could to get me in shape.*

Lisa was playing her first season of softball at the time she was interviewed for this study.

Lisa focused on the difficulty she had in dropping a class the first semester. She sought approval from her parents when making the decision to drop.

*I thought I would like disappoint them just because I felt like I couldn't handle it, but actually they're the ones that kept telling me that it's fine, that everyone does it.*

Lisa also sought the advice of a Kirkwood advisor before dropping the class.

*It just didn't work with me and that teacher and I stressed out about it a lot and I just felt like kind of, I don't know, like I failed, but then I talked to an advisor and they said it happens, it's not as big of a deal as you think and as long as you withdraw before the time's up...you know you can make it up later...it just took me awhile to figure out and it made me really nervous when it happened.*

Lisa credited College 101 with helping her learn to make decisions independent of others.

*College 101 helped just because they, it kind of made you realize that you are on your own.... We did those time charts and the foods and all and then it make you realize that someone isn't there to tell you what to eat or what time to do this. It helped us figure out that you are on your own.*

Lisa made several decisions that were independent of the influence of others in her first semester. She didn't discuss her decision to try out for the dance team with anyone. She also found herself asking her parents for advice in the beginning. Lisa discussed how her relationship with her parents changed after she left for college.

*Yeah, at first it was kind of a big shock. I'm really on my own and they don't know what I'm doing. After the first couple of months I guess I went back to them. My relationship with my parents has changed a lot, especially with my mom; we're a lot close now than we used to be.*

Lisa elaborated on the changes she felt in her relationship with her parents.

*We didn't get along; we fought and stuff....Once I got to college, I think I realized how much they were actually there and how much time I actually spent with them and I wanted to spend with them and then it just changed a lot for both my mom and I. She even said that we're more like friends now than a mother-daughter type thing, more like friends than authoritative.*

Lisa saw the changes in her relationship with her parents as part of her maturing process.

*I think that just comes with like kind of growing up and being on your own. You start to understand that you have other responsibilities.*

Lisa discussed how College 101 seemed like a boring class when she was in it, but as her college career progressed she saw much more worth in the experience.

*Yeah, the first semester I was kind of like, “oh well, this is a boring class” but really it did help. Now that I look back on it, it helped a lot. It makes me think about it after the class....During [the class] you’re kind of like, “I just want to get through this, this is boring” but once you get through you’re like “that really did help.” It helps you be more organized.*

Lisa would recommend College 101 to all first-year students as a venue to build a foundation for their success.

*I would tell them to take it....I think it is a good foundation....You just kind of figure out how to study and how to do things and then you find out you can go to other teachers and advisors and stuff and they’ll talk to you. I don’t know, it’s just really helpful to know things around campus and be more comfortable with it.*

### **Jeff’s Story: Finding Myself**

Jeff had just turned 18 when he started his first semester at Kirkwood. He described his first year with the title to his story, “Finding Myself.”

Jeff’s mother has completed an associate’s degree and his father a bachelor’s degree. He has lived at home and commuted to campus for both of his years at Kirkwood.

Jeff was enrolled in a section of College 101 that was team taught by Wendy Lingo, the researcher in this study, and another College 101 instructor.

Jeff came to Kirkwood from an area metro school. According to the Iowa Department of Education (2009), the district has a total enrollment of 16,000. Jeff thought his high school had 2,000 plus students.

Jeff accentuated the activities he was involved in when describing his high school experience.

*It was pretty fun at times. It was also really busy for me anyways. I did four years of band. I played the trombone and then I ran track for four years and then played*

*baseball for four years...classes were still, classes have always, I've had to work kind of hard to do well at...It was a pretty fun time though, a good time.*

Jeff recognized that high school had prepared him for some college subjects but not for others.

*It [high school] prepared me pretty well for like a lot of classes like some of my math classes and even my chem. class, Intro to Chem., but not like for my history class and not too much for my literature class.*

Jeff's transition from high school to college was aided by his involvement in high school band. He received a scholarship from Kirkwood to participate in band at Kirkwood.

*I play in the Jazz and the Concert Band.*

Jeff noticed that the relationship between students and teachers changed from high school to college.

*You were a kid back then more so than now and I mean some teachers would help you like more...maybe give you breaks that college professors wouldn't.*

Jeff referred to his first semester of college as an eye opening introduction to what college was going to be like.

*My first semester was kind of a wake up to what college is, a lot more work than high school...It was also different because your professors look at you as adults more and they just expected you to do what you needed to do. They didn't go too far out of their way to push you to do well because it was up to you, basically. They wouldn't badger you for not being there like they would in high school and stuff.*

Jeff found that college required much stronger organizational skills than high school.

He found his College 101 class a good place to learn organizational skills.

*The main thing it did was encourage me to write in a planner, which I have been doing a lot and because I can't remember everything that I have to do in my classes like I thought I could. It also encouraged me to keep my papers together and organized.*

His family has a college fund for him but has encouraged him to save it for the

increased expenses he will incur after transferring from Kirkwood. He remarked about an activity done in the College 101 class regarding the cost of a class. The activity made him realize how much of his money he would sacrifice when choosing to skip a class.

*It definitely makes you realize how you're paying for your classes; it's not like high school...It puts the pressure on you...the responsibility on you.*

Jeff had always planned on living at home while attending Kirkwood.

*It's a lot cheaper and I get along with my family pretty well still. I mean, there are scenarios where we don't get along and stuff but I am glad I am for now.*

Jeff's social adjustment to college came slower to him. He described himself as lonely in his first semester.

*I got to know some people in class pretty well....It was kind of cool to see people after class in the hallways, like know them a little bit...but I also got to know some people in the jazz band and stuff there too...of course I see them around a bit. This year I have a couple of buddies that I see that are younger than me....My first year there wasn't anybody around and it was like a pretty lonely time but it [College 101] helped me....It helped me to have fun in the class; the class was fun and I got to know people there.*

Jeff found that the challenges of college required that he make decisions independently of others.

*I'd have to decide on my own when I wanted to do homework and how long I wanted to spend on it and also I could decide a lot more in college...if I am going to class or not, or it would be better not to sometimes or like if you feel sick, you decide whether you go or not, or want to go or not. It's your own responsibility to get things done.*

Jeff discussed a difficult time he had balancing his schedule and commitments during the first semester.

*I kind of had a little break down halfway through and I had to get back to the basics....This is who I am and what I'm trying to do.*

Jeff clarified that he was juggling a heavy course load with the commitment to complete a course at church.



*I was right in the middle and I had a pretty tough couple of classes. I was taking a class at church we were supposed to keep up with and I kind of wasn't. I wanted to catch up and late nights, early mornings, just kind of everything wasn't going very well. I just kind of had to take a breath and slow down.*

Jeff believed that the time management and organizational skills he gained in College 101 contributed to his ability to succeed at Kirkwood.

*Definitely...using the planner was one of the things that I got from College 101 as well as managing your time wisely was definitely a big one...prioritizing your schedule and your life...making room for important things like eating.*

Jeff thought he knew himself better after completing his first year at Kirkwood.

*I think my first year was kind of a defining time...that year was pretty hard and kind of a trying time and I found out more who I was and like where I wanted to go and stuff.*

Jeff mentioned a friend he has who is not doing very well at Kirkwood. Jeff thought College 101 would have benefited his friend and wished he had taken it.

*I think it would have helped him manage everything at a more agreeable pace....I think he is getting behind and things and also I remember in College 101 they talked about family ties and it seemed like his family situation is not good and stuff right now.*

Jeff has taught his friend some of the things he learned in College 101.

*I've tried to teach him what I learned in College 101...like where things are or like what college is like...also how to manage your time and to get with counselors about all your classes.*

When asked what he would tell a new student about 101, Jeff was expansive in his descriptions.

*It helps you get to know the college a lot, a lot of useful things like we went on a tour of the rec center...which helped a lot....We learned how to go to the counselors and sign up for classes online, and we learned about the library and stuff. A lot of useful and helpful things...also how to organize more...write down what you need to do a lot so it is definitely helpful there. I'd tell them, unless they have somebody that has already gone there...I would tell them to take it...for one you have to be organized in the class for a lot of assignments and stuff....It also helps you get to know the campus...how you can reach people that you have to talk to, like counselors, and how to sign up for like scholarship applications and stuff. I think we had to do the*

*scholarship application in class. It's really helpful about looking for financial aid and stuff like that....It definitely helps you get used to college life and what your classes are going to be like, as well as gives you a good summary of what it's going to be and how to plan and organize stuff for it.*

Jeff didn't find much meaning in his success of completing his first year regardless of his challenges. However, he was pleased to be finished with it.

*I'm just glad it is over.*

When questioned more about the meaning of completion of his first year, Jeff provided a little more of his story.

*Mainly that I was just done with one fourth of college anyways at least, and that it was summer and ready to relax and stuff.*

Jeff may have expressed meaning for himself when he titled and expounded on the story of his first year at Kirkwood. After titling the story "Finding Myself," he described the beginning and the middle of his story with the metaphor of climbing a mountain.

*It would describe how in a new, a new situation that I've never been in and how it seemed like a mountain...that I couldn't climb but I realized that every mountain can be climbed and this one was no different.*

Continuing to use metaphors, Jeff described the end of his first year.

*I reached a peak, a small peak but I looked out...just touching the bottom of the stratosphere and could see for miles and saw bigger mountains...but just knew that I could do it and had overcome something and if I have overcome this, than I can overcome whatever lies ahead.*

### **Heidi's Story: Discovering A New World**

Heidi graduated from a rural Iowa school system with a total enrollment of 1,922 students (Iowa Department of Education, 2009). Heidi estimated a graduating class of 150 students. Her high school involvement included volleyball, drill team, track, cheerleading, and National Honor Society. Heidi enjoyed high school and referred to her transition to Kirkwood as difficult.

*I really enjoyed it....In the beginning it was a hard transition going from high school to college.*

Heidi was 18 when she started college and is soon to be 20. Heidi came to Kirkwood to play volleyball. Her Kirkwood cumulative GPA is a strong 3.86. She anticipates graduating in May of 2009. Heidi is a first generation college student.

Heidi chose “Discovering a New World” for the title of her story. She described how the story of her first year began with many new and different elements.

*Moving into a completely different place, my mom helped me move in. I had a boyfriend then so it was kind of being away from him for the first time, I guess, then starting volleyball which consisted of two weeks straight volleyball. Right after that school started so I really didn't have much time to settle in like most college students get that week to kind of get familiar with things. So volleyball started and then I have coursework which was a culture shock...then I was on the road for volleyball tournaments so that was way different than I was used to and the amount of time I spent for volleyball in itself. Then me being with whole different people. I grew up with the same people for my entire life, then I had to go meet friends and worry about if you were going to fit in or not...and then the semester ends and you start all over with new teachers again and new people. I'm just kind of figuring out things on your own...you have to discover a new city of Cedar Rapids. I'm not used to it so, just everything is crazy, just a whole different place.*

Heidi struggled early in her first semester at Kirkwood but appeared to make the transition quickly.

*In the beginning I struggled a little bit, not grade wise but just the transition of really having to study, picking up study habits. The course load was a lot more and especially when I was in volleyball. I was on the road a lot so it was a really difficult transition but I managed to get a 4.0. So my grade point average, it wasn't bad. It was just more or less the transition that was hard for me.*

Heidi thinks College 101 assisted her in making the transition to college academics.

*My teacher gave me resources and showed me different features about the college that I was unaware of and just the little things that no one ever thinks of until somebody actually tells you and you're a freshman in college, so you're not going to ask anybody for help. But she just gave you those things...like little study habits or ...where the counselor's office would be at Kirkwood...just little things that would help.*

Heidi described all her College 101 experiences as lots of little things that added up. She referred to the Who Am I assignment as helping her define herself.

*That helped me a lot and just...writing random stuff about yourself...you don't really think about but you really take time in your day and you really had to focus on yourself.*

The reflections Heidi did as part of her 101 requirements gave her added confidence and assisted her in becoming an independent college student.

*It gave me a reflection of myself... We did different assignments and different papers about yourself, and then when you do it's like "okay, I have a lot that I have done in my life and I have a lot of experiences that I've learned from" and so with that I think that helped me become independent...just reflecting on myself...just kind of giving myself some time instead of worrying about it.*

Managing time was challenging in Heidi's first year before her first semester classes even started. She discovered in her first week at Kirkwood that the added time requirement of volleyball and everyday living tasks made time management essential for her.

*I went for two weeks with nothing but volleyball. I didn't get to see very many people...and then you have to get groceries. You gotta find time to get school supplies. You gotta find time to do stuff with your teammates. You gotta find time to do all these things, cook, eat, and shower. I mean it all takes time, so you just have to breathe a little bit and kind of find time for everything so that was kind of my thing...just getting things in order. I've learned to write on post-it notes a lot, write down what I have to do that day.*

Heidi spent a good deal of time on her studies and took some teasing from her roommates over it. Her studying paid off with being designated as an Academic All American Award winner in her first year at Kirkwood.

*They [her roommates] joke around with me like I will go into the "bat cave" because I have to study again. I'm kind of a freak about that but I was distinguished Academic All American this year, which was a big accomplishment for me.*

Maintaining her relationship with her boyfriend back in her hometown put an added burden on Heidi's time.

*I had just moved to college and he was still a senior in high school an hour and 40 minutes away. So on the weekends we would have volleyball tournaments and we'd get back on Saturdays maybe not until five or six....My entire team joked around with me....I would already have all my stuff packed and I would just be in my car, you know, out the door. So I wouldn't get back to town until 8:00 or 9:00 sometimes on Saturdays and then not spend much time and then Sundays or even Monday mornings I'd get up at 6:00 a.m. and have to go to school, be at school at 9:00 or so.*

Heidi found herself frustrated with fellow college students when she perceived them as wasting their time.

*It's kind of frustrating when I see people, you know, not putting in the necessary effort and just because my time schedule had been hectic....I have to have a structured time I'm going to go to bed. I know when I'm going to get up. I have this meeting at 9:30, after that I am going to study, after that I have volleyball....Maybe it is too structured for some people but you know it gives me stability....If I didn't have it mapped out I don't know what I would do. But to see other people just kind of whittle away their time drinking or you know when they have all this other time that they could be putting into studying and doing their homework or other things, it is just frustrating.*

Heidi cited the time management portion of College 101 as a reason new students should take College 101.

*It's just helpful. It consists of managing your time. Those are things you don't learn in high school....In college you have a lot more freedom, a lot more time to fritter away your time at doing other activities, so with that freedom you sometimes waste away your time doing other things you shouldn't be doing. I guess College 101 tries to help you organize your time; with the time log you realize how much time you spend with certain things. So I had to learn to manage my time. In a way my schedule was strict but I did have time to do other things but had to make sure those things were done before I could go hang out with friends.*

Heidi credited her College 101 instructor as making the course worthwhile.

*I enjoyed my teacher....She was probably one of the most maybe easy going. Like I said, the course load wasn't too strenuous but she made it, just you know, with her personality, she made the course a lot better.*

Heidi appreciated her instructor's willingness to work with her to accommodate her volleyball schedule. In Heidi's mind her College 101 instructor stood out above her other instructors. Her instructor also supplied the class with a bonus: she brought food.

*I was in volleyball so she worked with me and she's a very, very, nice person. She brought food to class; that was always nice.*

Some of Heidi's instructors were not as cooperative at accommodating her volleyball schedule.

*Some of them, you know, told us like you have to have your assignments in by this time and you know kind of said it up front, like just cuz we were athletes we thought that we were gonna get by which is totally not the case....They would make me take the tests way earlier....Sometimes it was frustrating because I would have to cram all this in one day before we left.*

Heidi didn't come to any decisions regarding a career path during her first year. She remembered completing the career assignment and Choices Planner but not becoming focused on a career.

*It just gave me a list of careers that I could possibly pursue.*

Heidi thought the Portfolio assignment completed at the end of the semester was a fun and useful assignment. She and a group of her friends had used a "snow" day to gather and put their portfolios together.

*You put together a portfolio all about yourself and all these assignments you did and just kind of a reflection of yourself....You made it through your first semester; here's your composite book that you've made all about yourself....I mean you are somebody, you are somebody in the world.... You know you can make a difference.... This is all the stuff you have done and experienced.*

Heidi lived in some apartments near Kirkwood. One of her roommates was another volleyball player with whom Heidi became friends. The second roommate had been randomly assigned to the apartments; Heidi's experience with her was not good. Although Heidi remembered concepts from College 101 she could use to cope with the randomly assigned roommate, she chose not to use them.

*I'm not a huge outspoken person so I just kind of shoved it under the carpet. There are things I remember my instructor telling us...ways to deal with maybe a pesky roommate or something but I was too chicken to do any of them.*

Heidi viewed the security at her apartment building as strict.

*I got a noise violation once just cuz security is really strict over there and it's just kind of okay. They're trying to monitor stuff, but I also want to be able to live in my apartment and be able to do what I want....They just try to ticket you for everything.*

She and her roommates experienced noisy neighbors at one in the morning, forcing them to call security and making Heidi wonder where security was when they were really needed.

*You could hear all banging on the walls at one o'clock in the morning...my roommates called security.*

Heidi was challenged by the diversity she was exposed to during her first year at Kirkwood.

*There's just so many different people that you met at Kirkwood that aren't like you so you walk into a world that's totally different from the one that you've grown up in. There's just some things that you say to people and other things that you don't. I mean, it just kind of gives you a different perspective so, hey, this is different....Maybe you should watch what you say sometimes or accept people who are different from you and kind of deal with it.*

Volleyball put Heidi in a unique spot, requiring her to make different decisions than her peers when it came to socializing.

*You don't have like that constant mother....OK you can do this, you can't do this....There would be times when I would have my homework done for the night and go over to someone's place. There would be peer pressure there, but...you just got to, OK, I'm going back to my apartment now.*

She found a group of players with a similar mind set that made walking away from parties easier for her.

*When it came to, you know [heavy partying], we just say, "hey we're going to leave, see you later".*

Heidi didn't participate in the partying scene at Kirkwood much. At the most she limited it to once every couple of weekends during her off-season time. She recognized that

the parties were a place to meet people at Kirkwood.

*When you are in college that is what it is about. I'm not saying it is the only thing to do but when you know it's kind of sad, that's how you make other friends almost. It kind of breaks the ice, which is kind of bad.*

College 101 supported Heidi in her ability to make decisions on her own.

*I think it gave me a reflection of myself... We did different reflections on yourself. You're not reflecting on yourself but then when you do, it's like okay, I have a lot that I have done in my life and I have a lot of experiences that I've learned from and so with that I think that helped me become independent, just knowing... reflecting on myself and just kind of giving myself... some time instead of worrying about it.*

The first year at Kirkwood gave Heidi an opportunity to know herself better.

*I got a better understanding of my strengths and weaknesses... just telling myself that I could do things that I didn't think I would be able to and I just became like a better person overall and managing my time... my social life and you know, I met a whole new group of people and to... start a different life basically it's kind of self-rewarding.*

Heidi would recommend the College 101 course to new students as a venue to learn about themselves.

*If you put time and effort into the class, then you'll fare very well and it's not a difficult class but more of a class about life skills and it's all about you... I think it's important that a lot of people take time especially in that first semester for themselves with all the stuff going on in their life. I just think it's very fun.*

### **Sarah's Story: The Beginning**

Sarah was 18 when she started at Kirkwood. Her mother graduated from college but is not working in her degree field. Her dad did not attend college. She has an older sister who graduated from Kirkwood and continued to get her education to obtain a degree at the University of Iowa. Sarah's father is deceased. Her mother has been a single parent for most of Sarah's life.

Sarah graduated from a small, rural school system, which according to Sarah has a total K-12 enrollment of 600 students. Her graduating class held 60 students. Sarah was involved in a variety of high school activities.



*For my freshman year I went out for volleyball, basketball, track, and softball, and then my sophomore year I dropped out of basketball so I did volleyball, softball, and track and my junior and senior year I just did volleyball and softball and then I was in NHS, National Honor Society, and I was a class officer, secretary of the class.*

Sarah described her high school academics as easy and thought she could have done better if she had tried harder.

*I could have done better, but I did exactly what I needed to do or be where I was at or right above.*

Sarah thought her B grade was probably the result of her continued habit of doing just enough in a class. Sarah elaborated on some of the challenges she had her first year that may have also influenced her final grade.

*It was my first year and my friend that I was in the class with dropped out, who was my roommate, and my other friend that was in the class ended up dropping out also and so then I just, like I went a lot but I just started [skipping class]. I had two weeks where I just didn't try.*

Sarah was unsure of specifics but thought College 101 had helped her through her first year.

*It helped you, like little things that you know you don't realize.*

She thought College 101 served a helpful role in her transition from high school to college.

*It was just a good starter class...It just pointed out to the obvious things you need to, like pay attention to, going from high school to college, like the work in there was pretty easy but after you got on you had more stuff to do so it was like a gradual increase. They like to...go from high school in the very beginning of class to doing almost like college work.*

Sarah thought she did well her first year at Kirkwood. Although she knew she could have done better, she was satisfied with her overall performance.

*Well, I think overall I did pretty good. I didn't fail any classes or come close to failing any classes, but I know I could have done better than what I did, because some of my classes were actually really easy my first year and they're still not very hard....I could have tried a lot harder and done a lot better. I guess I am satisfied.*

The group of peers Sarah socialized with during her first year at Kirkwood did not have a positive impact on her academics. Sarah pointed out that she was the only group member still at Kirkwood.

*I don't hang around them anymore. They mainly all dropped out last year since we were partying like every single night, and they lived in the building next to me so I'd just walk over and walk home and it was the most convenient source....They all dropped out and so now I don't have that, to go party with them...which is actually good for me cuz if I had people around to go out with I would probably be doing like I was last year.*

Sarah was adamant that her partying did not include drugs, although she was certain that drugs were readily available to Kirkwood students.

*I saw pot, like cocaine and crack...I could have had it for free. That's just not what I would...I would not do anything like that.*

One of Sarah's roommates left Kirkwood early in the year and the second one did not return for fall of 2008. Sarah knew there were expectations for her from her mother that held her accountable to her academic success, despite the fact that all her friends had left.

*Yeah it was [hard to do]. I don't know it was just like what's expected I guess cuz my mom wouldn't have let me drop out....She wouldn't let me register for classes and then drop out for no reason at all, so I didn't. I don't like to do that, anyways.*

Sarah also feared that not succeeding would disappoint her mother.

*I'd just be scared she'd be disappointed....I just wouldn't want her to be disappointed.*

When Sarah started at Kirkwood, she was dating someone still attending her high school. She didn't think she had fully made the transition to college until after she broke off the relationship.

*I was going back home a lot still and I dated someone in high school, but that ended and I didn't go home at all. Then I finally knew when I was [a college student] because I didn't have to go home all the time.*

Sarah also thinks of her breakup as the point in her first year when she started to go to parties.

*Once we broke up is when I started going out....It was like the day we broke up I then I started doing, not bad but I just didn't try nearly that hard at all.*

Sarah lived in some of the apartments that are close to Kirkwood and provide a great deal of student housing. She didn't think that the security firm that polices the complex was very effective.

*I mean security...it sucked having that there but I mean they have to be there, they just weren't there for some of the things you would want them there, for like break-ins and stuff like that we had happen a lot. I never had that happen but it did happen to friends.*

Despite the break-ins, Sarah always felt safe there. She thought having one of the basketball coaches in her building added to her feeling of safety.

*I was on the third floor so it's like if they're going to break in there going to go to the first floor. If I lived on the first floor I might have been more nervous....Surprisingly I know the guys that lived next to us in the building next door and they left their door unlocked all the time and they never got anything stolen, but their cars got broken into and subs were stolen and iPods and CD players and stuff like that but I never felt like I was in danger like I had any weird people living by me. I felt safe because downstairs...we lived in the apartment that had one of the basketball coaches.*

Sarah thought of herself as having had minimal stress during her first year. She credited that to her ability to organize her responsibilities. What stress she did have was related to relationships.

*I deal with stress pretty well, like I am organized, really organized....I don't like to be stressed out or in a bad mood. I realized now that I dated that loser but like I only live once and I wanted to be happy and finally I just had to realize that and that's when I broke up with him and I don't talk to him at all....I'm like yeah, I don't want to be stressed out and unhappy because I was for like a month....It was my own fault. I put myself in that situation.*

When discussing all the friendships and relationships she had in her first semester, Sarah recognized that they might not have been good relationships. She said she doesn't regret her decisions and takes responsibility for her actions.

*It was probably more my fault for letting them, like me wanting to hang out more and party more than just concentrate on school, but overall I'm happy that I met them and did all those things cuz I mean it was fun and I guess that is what college is suppose to be, fun and like a learning experience.*

Sarah remembered the Boundaries assignment in College 101 as providing guidelines for healthy friendships.

*I kind of remember the boundary stuff, like I mean what friends are healthy [friendships].*

Sarah worked at a convenience store near campus. She worked 20-30 hours a week. She also benefited from an inheritance her mom received after her grandparents passed away.

*My mom got inheritance money so she put it away. She had my great uncle invest it for us...into an investment company that you couldn't lose money really you just gain interest and then when we turned 18 we could get into it. Before that no one could get into it, not even my mom...so last year I used that money to pay for schooling.*

Sarah was comfortable from a financial standpoint last year and was confident her mom would help out if necessary.

*I always paid my bills and stuff like that...like if I was never short on money...I knew I could call my mom and she would help me out.*

Although she knew about financial aid, she did not apply for it her first year. Her older sister was not awarded any financial aid when she started at Kirkwood so Sarah and her mother assumed she would not either. They hadn't considered that Sarah's mother's financial situation had changed.

*My older sister has gone to school and she's signed up [for financial aid] but she didn't get that much money because...when my older sister was going to school my mom had a lot more money because my dad had just passed away so she got a lot of insurance and stuff so my mom had a lot of money when my sister was going to school. And then she didn't have near as much when I went to school, so they [financial aid] could help me out more than they helped her [my sister]....My mom told me I wouldn't get that much when I signed up for financial aid and she didn't*

*really encourage me to do it, cuz she didn't think I would get any, she didn't want to have me waste all the time filling out papers and stuff.*

After going through the Federal Financial Aid Application process, Sarah was awarded aid for her second year at Kirkwood.

Sarah remembered the Food Diary assignment in College 101 as being helpful and had begun to track her food consumption again during her second year.

*I actually started keeping one this year too. I remember like having a hard time doing it, but once I finally got in to the habit of doing it, it was a lot easier....I started doing that this year but then I kind of quit. I think I am going to start again; it's interesting.*

Sarah was surprised by what she discovered about her eating habits from doing the Food Diary.

*Some things, some days I would look at it and go Wow, I didn't really eat that much and it seemed like I ate a lot but I ate lot of little meals....I'd look at it and be like Wow, that was all junk food, french fries, cheeseburgers.*

Sarah thought she managed her time well during her first year but thought that skipping classes during her first semester kept her from completing some assignments.

*I always got everything, like everything done for the most part. I know College 101, a couple of times I didn't get things done....[I] missed school a lot [in a] three-week period and that's when I got really behind in class. I think that is why I got a B and could have gotten an A.*

Sarah remembered some of the career planning activities in College 101 but did not receive any guidance from them. She considered going into accounting until she took an accounting class.

*I thought about going into accounting and then I was still thinking that and after I took class, I'm like wow, this is really hard and I didn't find it that interesting....If I find something interesting I'm good at studying for it because I like to do it.*

The College 101 Who Am I and Who Am I Now reflections stood out as helpful in Sarah's mind.

*Actually I still have them. I thought they were really cool....I still have both of those and I read them once in awhile....They are really neat cuz at the beginning of the semester I was still, you could tell, real young, like everything was you know, cool or whatever, but at the end of the semester I realized that I don't know just like little things, just stuff you think about, like think deeper I guess and actually put thought into it. It's a reflection so it's about yourself and your life.*

Overall, Sarah thought College 101 made her reflect on some of her behaviors.

*It makes me think about who I am, like, do I want to be that kind of person.*

Sarah favored instructors that personalized courses. She considered her College 101 instructor one of her favorite instructors at Kirkwood.

*It's boring if you just sit there and listen to someone teach, but if they can do something simple like tie in a story from their life, and if it's personal, it's always cooler, you know more interesting.*

College 101 was one of her favorite classes at Kirkwood.

*I'm not just saying this because it is for College 101 but I think that would be another one, because it was actually fun and you learned a lot about yourself.*

Sarah had some clear advice to instructors to take attendance. She saw attendance as indicative of whether or not the instructor cared about a student's success.

*I know some college instructors...they come here and they teach and we pay for classes and it's our fault if we screw up....In college if they want you to do well I would think they would take, they should...it would help to take attendance and just act like they care if you're there...you can tell if you went in and sat in their class you'd figure out that they don't care if you are there or they don't care if you do well, so you're not going to try to impress them like some classes...if you went back and skipped it, like I missed one class this semester, once, and when I came back the teacher made me feel stupid but you could tell he was disappointed....I haven't missed class since then, if I was going to miss a class I would not miss that one again....He seems like he cares.*

Sarah remembered creating her two-year academic plan in College 101. Although her plan changed, Sarah was able to apply what she learned about academic planning in College 101.

*We had to come up with I think it was like our two or two and a-half year plan, or something like that. That just helped by looking at that orange sheet [checklist of AA*

*degree requirements]...I still kind of go by that....That just made me realize that I need to...you only have four chunks of time that you can decide you'd have to take certain classes at certain times and if you don't, you are going to be behind like I am doing now....That's why I am going to be here longer. I didn't take Spanish last year.*

The lack of planning required that Sarah to attend Kirkwood for at least an additional semester. She wanted to eventually transfer to a state university in Iowa. Her plan was to complete Spanish for her foreign language requirement.

*I think I am going to take a Spanish class in this summer, more than likely. I think I'll just have my credits to finish up in the fall.*

Sarah was hesitant to make a spring semester transfer because she thought starting in the second semester would be a little odd and she didn't want to commit to the university until she had chosen a major.

*I'm not going to enroll myself in [the state university] unless I know [my major] for sure. That's a lot of money to waste and plus I think I would like starting there in the fall. I don't really want to start in the spring semester, I kind of feel like it would be a little, I don't know [odd].*

When looking at her College 101 experience from the vantage point of her second year, Sarah found worth in the experience that she admitted she might not have seen when she was enrolled in the class.

*I don't realize that there are things that I learned in that class that I am carrying forward, so now I realize stuff like...boundaries and relationships and stuff like that. That stuff I brought forward with me even though I might not apply it all the time. When I remember that I go duh, you know...so I think I used it more than I think I do, so I realize now that I need it.*

Sarah would encourage new students at Kirkwood to take the College 101 course.

*I would definitely take it because, I don't know, that's one of the main classes that teaches you about that if you show up you will do pretty well cuz that was my problem. I just didn't go for a week and then it happened a couple of other times and that's why I didn't do as well in that class and that's how college is....If you come everyday and you put in at least a little effort the teacher is not going to fail you...it teaches you that cuz if you don't come to class, they don't let you do well.*

Sarah though the work in College 101 was both easy and basic and found worth in

learning about herself.

*It's pretty easy basic work. It's interesting....I learned a lot about myself.*

Sarah's experiences her first year left her in the position to offer some clear advice to new students. She included the strategy she uses to decide when she might get by missing an occasional class meeting. Sarah's advice also addressed partying.

*There's a lot of peer pressure....You have to know that you're going to school not just to have fun. I mean you have to have fun, too. You're going to miss a class but it is whether you pick the right day to miss class, paying attention to the syllabus, you know what days you can miss and you know what day you definitely shouldn't miss....You look at your syllabus and decide, oh, okay, that day we won't have anything going on....That's what I do now. I don't miss hardly any school this semester....They should just come to get a new area like people here are so much different than where I grew up. I think everybody is pretty friendly but I have to remind them [new students] not to start partying because I mean they all would, that's the problem. Everybody is going to party their first year, but it depends on where you figure out you're not going to class ever or missing like one in couple of weeks.*

Sarah was quick to point out that she rarely needs to apply her strategy for skipping class now.

*I don't hardly miss any school this semester. I think I missed like maybe two classes.*

Sarah wasn't sure what meaning the completion of her first year at Kirkwood had for her.

*I don't know. I don't think I realized that it was a big deal.*

Sarah named the story of her first year "The Beginning." When asked to elaborate on her story, she focused on her social development. Her beginning was learning how to say "hi" to people she didn't know.

*I think I changed a lot in that first year, just from adjusting....I was pretty, mainly still high school minded my first part of my semester when I was going back home a lot, but once you quit going back home you're around college people and you know you have to be friendly....I think I learned that a lot last year cuz if you're not friendly, I*



*mean I was friendly in high school but you didn't need to be friendly in a small school because you knew everybody and it was just...you would say hi to people that you knew, you knew everyone. It wasn't like saying hi to strangers like last year. If you are not friendly with strangers, you're not going to meet anybody. If you look unhappy or you don't smile, you're not going to meet anybody either....I'm not going to approach someone that's like just frowning.*

Sarah liked the story of her first year because she thought she made choices that made her happy.

*I really had a good first year....This year is really good too....It's going to sound kind of corny, but I've made choices that made me happy cuz that's what you have to do. That's what I realized, I guess, after going through like two years of college and meeting people I shouldn't have met and you know just trying different things out, like if you don't make yourself happy or pick things that are going to make you happy, put yourself in situations that will make you happy, you're not going to be happy. That's just how it works.*

### **Suzie's Story: Suzie's Great Adventure**

Suzie named her story of her first year "Suzie's Great Adventure." She started her adventure at Kirkwood the fall after her high school graduation. Suzie graduated with a class of 107 from a small, rural Iowa school district. According to the Iowa Department of Education (2009), the total K-12 enrollment for the district is 1,073.

Suzie's section of College 101 was team taught by Wendy Lingo, the researcher in this study, and another College 101 instructor.

Suzie's mother graduated from a community college and is currently taking courses toward a four-year degree. Her father did not attend college. She has two older brothers, neither of whom finished college.

*My brother is a semester away from graduating with an AA and he's just, once you get out of school it's really hard to get back in; for most people it is. My other brother he went to Kirkwood....There was just so much going on down here that he just couldn't do it, like he failed and then he just dropped out second semester and he hasn't tried....He was just like "This is hard, I'll go back home."*

Suzie's mother is a strong supporter of Suzie's college success.

*My mom is just like “I wish someone would go to college like I want them to go.” She’s going to go with me on my [university] college visit. She’s all excited.*

Suzie will graduate from Kirkwood with an AA Degree in spring of 2009. She estimated her current cumulative GPA to be 2.8. She is planning on transferring to a state university in Iowa to complete a degree in communications.

Suzie didn’t push herself academically in high school. The highest level of math she completed was Algebra II.

*I didn’t really try in high school that much because it was just high school and I was like I’m just going to go to a community college anyway, so I didn’t really try. The courses were... some were pretty tough, I thought. Math especially was really hard but I passed.*

Suzie was very involved in her high school and had many social connections there.

*I was the kind of girl who was out for dance and cheerleading, so I was very well known. I was out for Student Senate, so I mean a lot of people knew me. I got along with mostly everybody. I don’t think we had any enemies. There were no bullies; everybody was pretty much laid back.*

Suzie felt isolated and lonely her first week at Kirkwood. Her first day at Kirkwood was an emotional one.

*My parents and my brothers dropping me off and then as soon as they walk out of the apartment I try to tell myself, “Okay, you are a big girl” I start crying, family has to come back in. I’m still crying and after about twenty minutes I’m like, “Okay, now leave.” My roommate wasn’t there the first week that I moved in because she was on vacation. I was there for a week, didn’t know anybody, and didn’t know how to meet anybody. I didn’t know how to do anything. I didn’t know how to cook...so it was interesting. I know I went to the mailbox and my neighbors whistled at me and I didn’t know what to do....I called my brother and I was like “Some guy just whistled at me, What do I do?” My brother is like... “Just walk away.” I didn’t know but it was just me being really lonely and then just how weird it was being on your own.*

Her comfort in knowing everyone at her high school left her uncomfortable and confused about her role in the new social setting at Kirkwood.

*In high school I knew like everybody and like everybody was friends with everyone pretty much and like my first year of college...I didn’t know where to begin...I was*

*like, “Okay, are people looking at what I was like in high school? Do they want to know about my past or are they just, they don’t care?” I didn’t know how to act.*

Suzie thought the first benefit of her College 101 course was the social support she gained in class.

*You guys taught us to go up to people and just start like a simple conversation....I don’t think I would have met nearly as many friends as I do just because I didn’t know, I didn’t know how to act. I was just like “I’m from a small town; they’re from a big town, they’re probably going to be stuck up snobs” but really like everyone is just here to make friends.*

Initially Suzie was intimidated by her college experience. Part of her rationale for taking College 101 was the hope that it would help her meet people.

*I honestly took it [College 101] because I was so intimidated when I first came down here because everything is so big, so new. I mean, I never had like diversity in my hometown and then I come here and it’s just everything....It’s just so different, so it helped me open up my horizons and everything....It’s just so different.*

Suzie had a clear recollection of a socialization activity that was done at the first meeting of College 101.

*In College 101, the first day we had to get up and say our name and say everything about us....I was like so embarrassed because I was like, “ I don’t want to do this.”I’m going to feel dumb.” But it was good.*

The comfort Suzie had of knowing everyone in high school left her feeling confused about how to meet other students. College 101 assisted her in figuring out how to define herself outside of her small town. The forced socialization in the College 101 classroom gave Suzie a venue in which to meet people.

*When I first got down here I was very intimidated because Cedar Rapids is so much bigger than what I am used to. Then when I went to College 101 I felt like...we could do anything because you guys [her 101 instructors] made us go and talk to other kids. You’re like, “Where are you from?” and “What do you like to do?” and that really helped me open up to people....There are still kids from my College 101 class that I still talk to.*

By the end of the first semester, Suzie could define herself as one of the social leaders

in her College 101 section.

*By the end yes, but at the beginning no because I didn't, I don't know, I wasn't really comfortable in there and then once you had to move our nametags [name plates] around...you moved them around and then I felt more comfortable because I talked to the person next to me.*

Suzie was able to successfully use her new confidence toward meeting people at Kirkwood in other classes and social settings.

*My really good friend now, I met her in a math class....I met my roommate now through other friends....and then my other roommate now I met at the rec center because we'd go there every day and she'd play basketball and I'd be on the machines or whatever and then she would go over to my friends' apartment and I'd be over there. I didn't really meet a lot of people through parties, I guess, though now that I am thinking about it, it was basically just through friends or like through classes.*

Suzie was able to teach some of the socialization skills she gained to another student who was trying to meet new friends.

*My one friend....She is very shy and very like kept to herself....She doesn't meet friends very well at all and I told her "Hey, just go up to people....That's how I met most of my friends....Just go up to a girl and ask her how her day is"...so she [her friend] would go up to her [another person] and she was like "Hey, you are in one of my classes."*

Suzie lived in some apartments near Kirkwood that are largely used for student housing. Her roommate was randomly assigned. Suzie did not get along with her roommate at all. The issues began with the roommate eating Suzie's food and escalated from there. After some discussion of the issue in College 101, Suzie made some adjustments and moved on. Her neighbors provided her with a place to sleep on several occasions.

*I was over at my neighbors quite often; they were really nice to me, like if we [she and the roommate] didn't see eye to eye they would be like "Yeah just come over and crash on our couch" ....I would just stay on their couch.*

Her College 101 instructors insisted that she needed to be assertive in her situation.

*She's [the roommate] 23 years old, she's four years older than me. What am I gonna do?...She's going to eat me, but you guys [College 101 instructors] told me you have to say something if you want something done.*

Suzie credited College 101 with assisting her in getting past her roommate issues.

*I think College 101 played a big part in that role.*

Suzie had very few interactions with the apartment security force. Her one interaction added some humor to her story. She went to a party in sweat pants and the security person decided not to test her for alcohol level because he didn't think a female student would go to a party in sweatpants.

*I know one time I was at a party across the parking lot [from her apartment] and security came....They got out the breathalyzer and they were going to make me blow and they were like, "Well, you're in sweatpants so you can't be partying" and they just let me go. I was like "okay; I'm going to wear sweatpants to parties from now on." He's like "Well, you obviously look like you are not partying tonight so I am going to let you go."*

Suzie did well academically at Kirkwood her first semester but by her second semester she found that things were slipping.

*My first semester was really good. I had all A's so I made the Dean's List and then second semester I kind of ran into the more like, "oh, this is college, I actually get to do what I want, when I want to," so I was going to be really late and my grades were slipping more and more....I mean I still passed the classes; it's just, they weren't as high as they were the first semester.*

Suzie thought that by second semester her social life had begun to infringe on her academics.

*I ran into a lot more people that I know like from my classes that I met, and they'd be like "Party here tonight," and that was my way of socializing, so it was bad.*

In an effort to get back on track academically, Suzie re-visited some of the concepts about studying time to which she was introduced in College 101.

*There was an activity for each class that you have to x amount of hours for that homework. I know that in my psychology class I would study for three hours because it was three credit hours, so I'd study three hours probably like every two class*

*periods [class meetings]...I would study for it so that kept coming back to me like "Okay, I need to study this much" and then for tests it actually got easier for me because I was studying more instead of like the day before the exam. I would keep on studying more and more so I'd do better on exams.*

Suzie also recalled and re-visited an exercise she did in College 101 in which the students figured out how much they were paying for every class meeting. That, coupled with College 101 discussions about the cost of partying and paying a ticket, made her consider what kind of choices she was making during her second semester.

*You [her instructors] asked us, "Are you really going to throw how much money away?... We did an exercise of like how much money we pay per class...and you're like you're really going to throw all that money away just to have a good time at one party?...You guys would tell us, "What if you got a ticket, it'd be this much money," so that really jumped out at me.*

Suzie struggled with cooking for herself and found that fast food was a roadblock in her ability to stay healthy. She used a handout of quick healthy recipes she received in 101 and her mother's advice to help her learn to cook.

*I ate a lot of junk food the first month...I really got sick of it...so then I was like, "Mom, how do you make this?" Granted, I called her every five minutes asking how to make something but like I was living way healthier....You guys [her instructors] gave us a booklet of easy recipes....I made a couple of them.*

Suzie's College 101 instructors brought food to class often. She thought that the one thing that might have made the class better was to bring food even more frequently.

*I thought you guys [her instructors] helped my first year go great, you know. You guys brought food, which was awesome! Just awesome. Because I would wake up and I'd be like "Oh, I have to have cereal again," but I'd be like "wait, [my instructors] are cooking. I don't have to do anything."*

Suzie struggled with finding the right major. One of her College 101 instructors gave her assistance in addition to the career exploration that she did in class.

*[My teacher] came up to me....She was just like, "I can tell that you were just lost"...I went up to her office and she gave me different major opportunities....That was like awesome about College 101...because you guys were like more than teachers.*

Suzie started as an education major but quickly decided against the major after completing an exploring teaching course.

*I was really excited about teaching and then I took a course that was like exploring teaching and I hated it. I hated it...I don't know what the class was but I did not like it.*

Suzie experienced trouble registering after she decided she no longer wanted to major in education. She sought out the assistance of one of her College 101 instructors.

*I still remember, it was my second year at Kirkwood....There was a long line for advising. I was like "Omigosh I'm never going to make it to my Comp class....I don't know what classes to take....My computer broke down on me"....I remember I saw [my instructor] walking down the hallway and I am like "I need you." And you helped me sign up for classes.*

She said she is comfortable now with her major in communications and her intentions to transfer to a state university in Iowa.

Suzie was not totally certain that she was making decisions independently of the influence of others. She described her ability to make those decisions as difficult.

*Oh that's a tough one, yes and no...I mean like we'll go to a party and I won't drink sometimes just cuz I know it's a school night and I don't want to drink and I'll go to parties and socialize. I still play the games and instead of drinking alcohol, I'll drink a soda and so there's like my independence...my own doing...then there are other times when peer pressure gets to me or if they're all doing it.*

Suzie said she drinks lemonade at parties sometimes and lets others believe she is drinking. She is amused because people assume she is drinking to the point that they have tried to stop her from driving.

*People will be asking what I drink. I'll say lemonade and they'll think that vodka is in there....They'll be like...you can't drive, like you're drunk. I'm like "Actually I haven't drank all night but thanks."*

Suzie credited her mother as still playing a big role in Suzie's decision-making and she said her mother generally supports the decisions she has made for herself.

*I ask my mom a lot...like can I do this? She really supports me.*

Suzie discovered the Kirkwood Recreation Center her first year and spends a good share of her time there. It serves as both a social hub and a place to keep in shape for her.

*I love the Rec Center. There's always classes you can take there. People are always doing something....There are so many machines that you can do. I do the elliptical and every day I go, there is always one open because there are so many of them.*

Suzie thought of College 101 as her favorite class at Kirkwood. College 101 stood out over her other classes because of the nature of the class.

*In College 101 there weren't any tests....We had to show up for class, participate, you know we got to be ourselves, there was food , you know everybody in the class.... We always talked, you know we did activities together. I mean I felt like I was good friends with some of them. I still stay in contact with some of them even though they might go to a different school. I know three students that went to [the same university Suzie is going to] from our College 101 class.*

If Suzie were talking with a new student at Kirkwood she would recommend College 101 as a course they should take.

*Because it helps you meet people and helps you get familiar with the campus better. It helps live on your own...with cooking and finances. [The] instructors always seem to be nice, like you guys were awesome. I don't know about any other instructors but I have never heard anything bad about College 101.*

By the end of her first year Suzie recognized her accomplishments.

*I knew that I could still pass classes without Mommy and Daddy being on my case....I knew that I could manage money....I knew that I was taking steps forwards, not backward, so that helped me be like, "Okay, I am growing up....I'm not slacking....I'm not making bad decisions."*

Suzie described the meaning of completing her first year as feeling good.

*It felt good, really good, like "Wow, I passed all my classes, I'm doing well, like decent and like it was good to like finish. One year is already done. I'm already half done at Kirkwood."*

Suzie named the story of her first year, "Suzie's Great Adventure." The beginning of the story painted a picture of a lonely new student who wasn't certain how she was going to



fit in the college setting. When describing the end of the story of her first year, Suzie focused on her social adjustment.

*The end would be really happy, really cheerful, not lonely anymore cuz I met a lot of people and you know my classes went pretty well. I still stayed in contact with my parents...and I didn't die.*

### **Andy's Story: A New Beginning**

Andy's section of College 101 was team taught by Wendy Lingo, the researcher in this study, and another College 101 instructor.

Andy graduated from a large suburban Iowa high school. According to the Iowa Department of Education (2009), the total K-12 enrollment of the system is 5,791. Andy graduated with a class of about 530 students. Andy's mom completed one or two years of college. His Dad did not go to college. His brother is currently attending a state university in Iowa.

Andy completed high school Algebra I and II and Geometry in high school. He did not take any AP courses or any courses through post-secondary option. He regretted not taking advantage of the post-secondary options his high school and local community college offered.

*I wish I did [take college credit classes] because I am kind of borderline of getting all my credits and it was free through my high school.*

Andy had a positive high school experience. He was involved in soccer and played almost year round. Soccer is about the only thing he misses about high school.

*I really don't [miss high school], pretty much [miss] playing soccer...I enjoy my freedom now.*

Quite a few of Andy's friends attended Kirkwood, including the three roommates he had for his two years at Kirkwood. He and his girlfriend from high school continued their

relationship, although they attended different colleges. She and Andy saw each other nearly every weekend and alternated taking the traveling responsibility.

Andy's social adjustment to college was aided by the fact that he lived with three other students he knew from high school. Most of his social contacts outside of his roommates were with people who lived close by. Andy's social circle grew as he and his roommates met other people and then introduced and invited them into the circle.

*Really, it kind of centered around who lived by me...I met most of my neighbors and a lot of friends that I have came here....I meet [others] through them and stuff like that.*

Andy acknowledged that some of the College 101 curriculum regarding relationships helped him during his first year.

*I know that we had a big course about good relationships, unhealthy and healthy, at least when you are knowledgeable, you can, if you are in a bad relationship, you can see what side you're on....Issues are going to be issues and College 101 probably just made it more noticeable or maybe easier to know how to handle a situation.*

He thought the relationship with his roommates changed when they had to address keeping house and other issues that go with living together.

*It was almost more business-like, like getting things done, making sure everyone is staying on top of their stuff, just maybe little things that bother someone else, someone else does that you have to deal with.*

Andy had a little difficulty setting the roommate boundaries but found that once he tried, it wasn't difficult.

*It's kind of hard because you really just don't know what to say to someone, you know, without being too blunt or too rude about it, but I think it was pretty easy because we knew each other so we could sit down and talk to them and say, "Could you do this more or could you not do this." I think if it was someone you didn't know, you know, it would be a little tougher.*

Andy and his roommates had more than one interaction with the apartment's security force last year.

*Yeah, we got a couple of tickets.*

He and his roommates moved out of that complex last year and into a more residential area. He discovered quickly that the security procedures in the complex he lived in his first year weren't as bad as being involved with the real police force.

*Last year we had security; this year we have cops....When we first moved up here [second year housing] the cops were really on us....I got two public intox...in probably about two weeks.*

Andy partied about two or three times a week during his first year. That increased to four or five times at the beginning of his second year but has slowed down as the year progressed.

*Last year probably two or three times a week...beginning of this year was a lot more...probably four or five times a week.*

Andy's partying did interfere with his attendance. When he realized that he was skipping too much, he slowed down on his social life.

*Sometimes [I skipped class] depending on how much I partied the night before....That's one reason I cut back [on partying].*

Andy isolated himself from the parties when he needed to.

*If my friends wanted to have people over or something and I didn't, or if I had school work to do, I'd either go to the library, friends' places, or lock myself in my room.*

Andy could make decisions independently of peer pressure. He could say no to socializing when his schoolwork required.

*It wasn't bad because if I have something due the next day or a test, I am the person who needs to study. I have to get it done or I kind of put myself down.*

His first year experience was reflected in advice he would give other first-year students.

*I would be out late. I would not always do my stuff...not the most responsible...kind of free since I'm independent...away from my parents but I think I learned from that, that I can't do that because I suffer in classes and stuff, so for some people they just*

*have to experience it. Learn lessons from others....They might be more inclined to make the right decision ahead of time. I think just being organized...get on a schedule, get up everyday at the same time, maybe set a few days a week or whatever to do your entertainment stuff.*

Andy didn't remember many specifics about College 101. He recalled the activities attached to some of the things covered in College 101.

*I mean one thing that did help me was using the website, Kirkwood website, Eagle Net and that job search [Choices Planner]...that really helps because I can go back and do that.*

Andy's College 101 experience helped him understand what college professors expected of their students as well as the adjustments he made to his new independence.

*What it helped me most with was understanding what to expect from professors and what do they expect from you...just kind of the different lifestyle college has compared to what I was at.*

Andy benefited from a portion of College 101 that covered how to communicate with instructors.

*We had a thing on how to email our teachers...how to talk to them...that was one thing that really helped cuz a lot of teachers I have liked to be called by their official title...if they have a Ph.D. or what not and others want you to call them by their name, they don't really care.*

Andy uses email as a primary communication tool with his instructors.

*If I have questions or I'm not sure about a date for a test or something like that, I'll email them.*

One of Andy's biggest challenges during his first semester was taking a class with an instructor who had a heavy accent.

*I didn't like the teacher....[He] was really hard to understand.*

Andy adapted by sitting close to the front and taking copious notes. His work resulted in what he thinks was a B grade.

*I wrote down everything he said pretty much...[The instructor] wrote down a lot of stuff on the board though which helps. I think I got a B, pretty sure.*

Andy took some things from College 101 that helped him learn more about himself.

Andy makes it a point to take something away from every class he takes.

*I think every, really every class I go into I take something away.*

College 101 had broad application for Andy.

*I think College 101...the class atmosphere was a little different; it wasn't as much academic studying...it was more like learning, understanding type stuff, and knowing more about yourself. I think a lot of the projects we did...just really helped me ground myself, get my footing.*

Andy would recommend College 101 to first-year students at Kirkwood because he thinks it would aid all students in making the transition to college.

*I think it is just a good transition. I think [it] kind of showed what to expect...and just the overall college experience...we covered a lot of stuff...help you with your classes, professors...I recommend it. I think each person has different views of what college is and I think College 101 just kind of highlights it for you a little bit. It opened up sources of information, if you have questions or where to go, who to talk to, stuff like that...that I would have no idea if I hadn't gone [to College 101].*

Andy thought his College 101 experience benefited from having two instructors because they provided different views and styles.

*The fact that there were two teachers in College 101, I think really helped...It gave you a broader view because you have two different jobs. I just enjoyed having two teachers better. It made the class fun, I think.*

Andy was curious about what the future of College 101 was at Kirkwood. When asked if he thought it was something that should be required of first-year students, he replied that he thought it would be a good idea.

*I think so. I think a lot of kids go into that thinking it's an easy credit maybe because you're not graded very hard on stuff, but I think everyone ends up taking something out of it whether they expect to or not. I think for a lot of kids, it's helpful, especially kids who are nervous for the transitions. It makes it a lot easier.*

Andy knew students who did not make it through their first year at Kirkwood. His observations led him to believe that those students did not have school as a priority.

*I would say that a lot of people who don't make it, their priorities are just wrong. I think if you put the time in, there's no reason you can't pass a class or do good on a test.*

Andy's story of his first year included a change in priorities over his first year. Early on his motivation for attending Kirkwood was based more on friendships and moving away from home. By the time the year was over, success in the classroom became more of a motivation.

*Friends and getting away from home, living on my own, I think it kind of changed too...I really wasn't that serious about my major or career....I think as college progressed, as I got into college...that mode kind of changed.*

Andy thought that a shift in his own mind helped him change his reasons for going to college.

*I think just the reality check...I have three more years, or so before I get out into the world and I have to have a job and make money, pay off my loans and get serious.*

The first year of college allowed Andy to get to know himself better.

*You just...I think through the choices and decisions you make really show you kind of how you are...makes you reevaluate some things.*

Andy found that the way in which he communicated with his girlfriend illustrated one way in which knowing himself better directed a change in his style.

*I think with my girlfriend, especially being more truthful and honest cuz a lot of times since it's a long distance relationship when you talk to them on the phone... stuff I might want to do something else at the time, but I didn't want to tell her because I thought she would be mad about it so I kind of swayed the truth a little bit to get around that type of stuff.*

Andy acknowledged that he got caught in his "swayed truths." He also acknowledged that his girlfriend changed her reaction to his doing other things. The changes matured their relationship.

*Yeah, I mean, it made me realize just being straightforward is probably better...that's kind of changed with her too, the reaction part of it.*

Andy is still unclear about his major. He arrived at Kirkwood with the idea that he would major in business. The career decision activities he did in College 101 moved him away from that major.

*I was kind of [sure] of what I was going to do prior to coming to College 101, but I think it made me kind of push away from it a little bit.*

Choices Planner left Andy with some options for majors he was considering. He liked the idea of political science but was unsure what he would do in that field.

*[Choices Planner] kind of led me towards other majors; political science is one of them, government, that type of stuff...except I really don't know what I'd want to do in that field.*

Andy stated his intentions are to finish at Kirkwood and then transfer to a state university in Iowa. He was accepted to the university for Fall of 2009. Andy is still a few credits short of his Kirkwood AA degree in Liberal Arts. He plans to take his foreign language requirements at Kirkwood for transfer to the university over the summer of 2009.

*It's kind of complicated because I have I think 8 credits left or maybe I am wrong, maybe it is 12....I am going to take Spanish I and II this summer, plus one of my humanities, and then actually I just dropped a class so I am going to have to make it up. I went and saw an advisor and I think what I have to do is I'm going to [the university] and I'm not going to graduate from Kirkwood yet and I am going to take that one humanities class that I have to do at [the university] and have them transfer it back to Kirkwood, then have them transfer over my whole degree.*

The visit to an advisor made in his fourth semester at Kirkwood was the first time since College 101 he had used the services of the Advising Center. Andy attempted to figure out his requirements on his own.

*It's not too difficult but when it gets time to graduate [he visited the Advising Center] just to kind of make sure that I've got everything in order.*

When asked to reflect on what completing the first year of college meant to him, Andy commented on stages of his life.

*I think it is pretty important. It's just a whole year of my life and I think more of a different time in my life, because I think you go through stages of high school and then you have that little stage of college.*

Andy also viewed his first year as the place he proved meaningful success.

*Coming to college, you don't know if you're going to do well or if you are going to be a good student....I think I proved to myself that I could do it, I think now I kind of hold [a] standard that I can do it.*

Andy named his story "The New Beginning" only after he reviewed the accomplishments of his first year. There was sense of satisfaction at the end of his first year.

*Satisfied, I think.*

The success of his first year allowed Andy the confidence in his ability to accomplish a great deal.

*I think if I really put my mind to something that I have to accomplish, I'll do it.*

### **Summary**

All of the participants interviewed found their College 101 experience useful. All of them highlighted the "Who am I?" and "Who am I Now?" assignments. The students focused largely on their personal development in their first year. Personal development included issues of meeting people, making friends, and making the right kind of friends. Time and time management presented issues for all of the participants interviewed.

### **Document Analysis**

Esterberg (2002) suggested that documents and texts be used to examine participants' experiences in an unobtrusive manner. It was the intention of this study to analyze the participants' College 101 Portfolios as part of a document analysis. Only one participant was able to locate his/her final College 101 portfolio. One participant was able to locate and share the "Who Am I?" and "Who Am I Now?" reflections but could not locate the rest of the



portfolio. There is some reference to that participant's reflections in the final analysis of the study. The lone portfolio and reflections did not shed a great deal of light on the study that had not been examined in the interview process. Therefore, this document analysis focuses on the participants' Kirkwood academic transcripts alone.

The transcripts examined reflect only the grades issued by the time the interviews took place. At that time, 5 of the participants had completed at least 44 credit hours at Kirkwood. The 2 participants who were below 44 credits intended to take summer classes in the summer of 2009.

Six of the participants got A grades in College 101. One attained a B+. At the time of the interviews the participants' cumulative grade points ranged from 2.8 to 3.85. With the exception of one cumulative grade point of a 2.8, all of the participants were at a 3.1 or better.

### **Themes and Analysis**

Several themes emerged from the data, all of which promoted a new awareness of the experiences of these Kirkwood first-year students. Preliminary themes were originally noted in the margins of the interview transcripts. Overall themes emerged as titles were assigned to clusters of the preliminary themes with similar threads. Even with thoughtful separation of threads, many of the themes overlap each other in content and support. For instance, it is difficult to discern when a career decision supports career development and when it supports academic development. The analysis ultimately resulted in the identification of five overall themes: Theme I: Social Development, Theme II: Academic Development, Theme III: Career Development, Theme IV: Personal Development, and Theme V: Personal Meaning. Those themes were developed after clustering preliminary themes that appeared to support and define the overall themes.

## **Theme I: Social Development**

The participants' stories all contained documentation supporting their social development. There are several themes running under a general theme of social development. The subthemes are examined under the titles Social Contacts, Partying as a Social Activity, Challenges with Living with Others, Involvement in Kirkwood Activities, Awareness of Kirkwood Diversity, Developing Independence, and Knowing Themselves Better.

### **Social Contacts**

Some of the students experienced difficulties making new friends and expanding their social circles during the first year. Although difficult for some, they all had met enough people to feel comfortable walking in the hallways and seeing people they knew on and off campus.

Julie saw her ability to talk to others enhanced and encouraged in her College 101 class. Her "Who Am I" assignment done in the beginning of class led her to see that she described herself as shy. The recognition of her shyness and her desire not to be shy opened a window for her to see herself as something different than she had been.

Lisa described The "Who Am I?" assignment as a place where she began to see how much she was missing high school and gave her the impetus to move on. Lisa's willingness to try out for dance team and softball aided her in meeting people. Lisa had two randomly assigned roommates who were good friends and in their second year at Kirkwood. The roommates opened their social circle to Lisa. They also made Lisa's friends from home feel welcomed into their group of friends.

Jeff described himself as lonely during his first year. Jeff gained more confidence in the social realm during his second year at Kirkwood. He did find that College 101 and Jazz

Band were good places to meet people and to at least be able to recognize and speak to people in the hallways.

Heidi's social circle was defined by her involvement in volleyball at Kirkwood. By maintaining friends who were expected to honor the same athletic restrictions, Heidi was able to navigate the college partying scene without many problems. Heidi expressed the social boundaries she developed by stating:

*When it came to [partying], you know, we just say, "Hey we're going to leave, see you later."*

Sarah faced some exceptional social challenges her first year. No one in her entire social circle took academics seriously, and they were engaged in behaviors that included a great deal of partying. None of them returned for a second year at Kirkwood. Her sister who lives in Cedar Rapids has been her only consistent companion throughout her time at Kirkwood. Despite the challenges, Sarah remained upbeat and recognized her growth in her ability to say hi to new people and to engage students who were strangers in conversation.

*You're around college people and you have to be friendly....I think I learned that a lot last year....If you are not friendly with strangers, you're not going to meet anybody.*

Suzie had anxiety about fitting in socially. She started the semester very lonely. She went from knowing everyone in her small high school to knowing no one at Kirkwood. Suzie gave College 101 credit for boosting her confidence enough to begin opening conversations with new people.

*You guys [her instructors] taught us to go up to people and just start a simple conversation....I don't think I would have made nearly as many friends as I do because...I didn't know how to act.*

I had the unique experience of being one of Suzie's College 101 instructors. From my perspective as an instructor, I saw Suzie as one of the social leaders in our classroom. When I

shared that with her, she assured me that she definitely saw herself as a leader by the end of the semester.

Andy came to Kirkwood with several other students who had graduated from his high school. He knew all of his roommates. Andy's social adjustment was aided by the fact that he and all of his roommates were quickly meeting people and introducing them to each other.

### **Partying as a College Social Activity**

Julie and Jeff made no mention of being involved in the Kirkwood party scene. Lisa mentioned it in light of her apartment being a "no party" apartment. Lisa had a brother die in an automobile accident that might have been alcohol related. The experience of the accident left Lisa very reluctant to drink alcohol.

Partying took a more serious meaning in the stories of Sarah, Andy, and Suzie. These students referred to partying as social gatherings where alcohol and underage drinking were involved. They saw partying as a part of going to college.

Andy, Sarah and Suzie all mentioned seeing mainly marijuana use at some parties but they denied using any drugs. Andy considered students using drugs as a partying group in and of itself. All three were somewhat disdainful of others who used drugs. Andy and Sarah both discussed seeing drugs at what they considered Kirkwood students' parties.

Heidi attended some parties at Kirkwood but found that her commitment to volleyball was compromised by the amount of alcohol being consumed at the parties. Her commitment supported her when she would just leave a party that had become too extreme for her. Heidi found it sad that partying was an opportunity for students to expand their social networks.

*When you are in college, that's what it is about. I'm not saying it is the only thing to do, but...it's kind of sad, that's how you make other friends....It kind of breaks the ice, which is kind of sad.*

Sarah thought that her break-up with her high school boyfriend during her first year marked the beginning of her partying days at Kirkwood. Her social circle consisted primarily of friends who got together to party. None of her friends returned for their second year at Kirkwood. She looks back on those relationships with no regret and thinks of the experience as a learning experience.

*Overall, I am happy I met them and did all those things....I mean, it was fun and I guess that is what college is suppose to be, fun and like a learning experience.*

Sarah's friends in her first year lived in the neighboring apartment building and she found herself partying with them frequently.

*We were partying every single night....They lived in the building next to me, so I'd walk over there and walk home. It was the most convenient source of having fun.*

Suzie looked at the parties as a social hub but not as a primary but not the only place to meet people. Suzie also attended parties but often did not drink alcohol. Instead, she drank lemonade or soda and let people think she was drinking. Suzie recognized that her grades started slipping during her second semester at Kirkwood. She attributed that to an increase in the amount of time she spent partying.

*I ran into a lot more people that I know from like my classes, that I met, and they'd be like, "Party here tonight" and that was my way of socializing, so it was bad.*

Suzie recognized that she was partying too much and missing classes. She applied an exercise she was introduced to in College 101. In the exercise she was directed to figure out how much she was actually paying for each class meeting. She discovered that by missing a class meeting, she was wasting money. She had also been part of a discussion about how much alcohol actually costs to drink and the costs of tickets if she were caught drinking. The issue of wasting money to drink made an impression on her.

Andy partied two or three times a week during his first year. His partying increased

during his second year to four to five times a week but slowed down as he moved into the second semester of the second year. Andy thought the negative effect his partying had on his attendance was the reason he was able to remove himself from the partying scene. Andy did not feel much peer pressure to party. He saw it more as an option to socialize. Andy had the ability to pull back from his friends and isolate himself if he needed to study.

*If my friends wanted to have people over or something and I didn't, or if I had school work to do, I'd either go to the library, friends' places, or lock myself in my room.*

Andy, Sarah, Suzie and Heidi all experienced having roommates and friends who severely compromised their academic success with the use of alcohol. Sarah's experience was perhaps the most dramatic with her entire social circle leaving Kirkwood.

### **Challenges of Living with Others**

All the participants were challenged by their living arrangements their first year. Julie and Jeff both lived at home. Heidi, Sarah, Lisa, Suzie, and Andy all lived in apartment complexes near Kirkwood where a large majority of tenants are Kirkwood students.

Julie's decision to live at home was based on saving money. She did admit that she was a little scared to move out, but she looked at it as one more transition she would make regardless of her misgivings. Julie found herself negotiating with her parents regarding her independence.

*For so long, I'd ask them [parents] and whatever they said I'd do, and it was kind of a struggle for both of us adjusting to now.*

Julie was confident that she and her parents had worked through the transition and adapted to her making her own decisions.

Jeff's parents had a college savings set away for him that would cover his tuition and

costs when he transferred to a four-year institution. They were all working to cover his costs at Kirkwood without borrowing any money. In an effort to save money, Jeff and his parents made the decision for Jeff to live at home, which Jeff described as “not bad.”

*[It is] not too bad; it's a lot cheaper....I get along with my family pretty well still....I mean, there are scenarios where we don't get along and stuff but I'm glad I am for now, at least....I'll be ready to move out soon.*

Lisa had three roommates who were all randomly assigned to her. Two of the roommates were second-year Kirkwood students who were very close friends with each other. These women took Lisa into their circle. Lisa spoke of them as good friends who continued to be good friends at the time of the interview. Lisa found the third roommate to be incompatible. She didn't elaborate on the relationship but said they tended to avoid each other.

*It was more like she stayed out of my way and I stayed out of hers....It wasn't anything we did to each other.*

Heidi lived with two other women. One of them played volleyball, so she and Heidi had that connection. The third one had been randomly assigned to the apartment. Heidi described her experience with this roommate as not very good. Heidi recalled concepts from College 101 that she could have tried with the roommate but she did not use any of them.

*I'm not a huge outspoken person, so I just kind of shoved it under the carpet. There are things I remember my instructor telling us...ways to deal with maybe a pesky roommate or something, but I was too chicken to try any of them.*

Sarah started the year with two roommates, neither of whom made it to a second year at Kirkwood. One of the women was a good high school friend who was also enrolled in the same College 101 section with Sarah. When the former roommate and another friend in her College 101 section dropped out of school, Sarah quit finding a reason to attend College 101 for about two weeks.

*I had two weeks where I just didn't try.*

Suzie found herself extremely incompatible with her randomly assigned roommate. The roommate was quite a bit older than Suzie, which intimidated by her. The issues in her apartment started with the roommate eating Suzie's food and escalated from there. Suzie's roommate issues became a discussion forum during one of her College 101 class meetings. Her instructors and classmates made suggestions on how she might be more assertive with her roommate.

*She's [the roommate] 23 years old; she's four years older than me.... What I am gonna do?... She's going to eat me, but you guys [instructors] told me, you have to say something if you want something done.*

Suzie's neighbors made their apartment available to her whenever she needed to get away from the roommate. Their willingness to offer her respite from the situation helped Suzie get through the year.

Andy knew all of his roommates from high school. Although he knew them all well, he found himself having to re-define their friendship in order to live together.

*It was almost more business like, like getting things done, making sure everyone is staying on top of their stuff, just maybe little things that bother someone, someone else does that you have to deal with.*

Andy's apartment was also home to a few parties. During the first year he and his roommates had accumulated a "couple" of tickets from the apartment security. Andy did not have many problems with the situation even when he chose not to participate.

*If my friends wanted to have people over or something and I didn't, or if I had school work to do, I'd either go to the library, friends' places or lock myself in my room.*

### **Involvement in Kirkwood Activities**

This group of participants may be unique from other College 101 students because of the seven, five were engaged in formal Kirkwood activities. Suzie and Andy were not



involved in formal Kirkwood activities; however, they were socially engaged with the greater community of Kirkwood students.

Jeff played in the Kirkwood Concert Band and Jazz Band. He received a scholarship for his participation and enjoyed a continuation of using the talent he had cultivated in high school.

Heidi played volleyball for Kirkwood. She found that volleyball influenced most of her first semester both academically and socially.

Lisa made the Kirkwood Dance Team during her first year at Kirkwood. She also tried out for and made the Kirkwood Softball team during her second year. Lisa made the decision to try out for softball with her College 101 instructor's encouragement. Lisa's instructor had close ties to Kirkwood athletics.

*I went and I talked to him [her instructor] and he said he'd help me out and do whatever he could to get me in shape.*

Sarah's involvement did not begin until her second year, when she became a participant in the service learning program at Kirkwood through some course requirements.

*I'm actually done with it [service learning]. I'll be done tomorrow but it'll be my 40 hours, because I'll have 20 points extra credit, but I'm going to keep doing it. I didn't think I would because Yeah, hurry up and get it done, but after I started doing it I was like "This is kinda cool"...I want to do it, especially this summer it'll help me get up and I do like knowing that I'm making a difference, I'm helping out people.*

Julie was a member of a club with a Christian theme her first year. She joined a different club with a similar theme her second year.

Suzie was an avid user of the Kirkwood Recreation Center. Although this was not a formal Kirkwood activity, it provided her with an opportunity to work out and a place to socialize.

*I love the Rec Center. There's always classes you can take the, I mean, people are always doing something...I do the elliptical everyday.*

Andy was involved in the community in ways totally unsanctioned by Kirkwood, but his partying linked him to many other students.

### **Awareness of Diversity**

The participants in this study represented very little diversity in their race and background. All the students interviewed were Caucasian and graduated from Iowa school systems. Efforts were made to attract students who were not Caucasian. The small pool of such students who were enrolled in Kirkwood and the even smaller pool enrolled in College 101 severely limited those efforts. Three of the 7 participants thought they had seen diversity that they had not seen in their school systems. All 3 came from small high schools and noted that they recognized diversity in the city of Cedar Rapids and at the college. They were also challenged by the new “city.” Heidi spoke of the challenges of the urban area:

*You have to discover a new city of Cedar Rapids. I'm not used to it so, just everything is crazy, just a whole different place.*

Heidi also expressed an awareness of diversity at Kirkwood that she had not experienced in her hometown.

*There's just so many people you meet at Kirkwood that aren't like you, so you just walk into a world that is totally different than the one you grew up in.*

Julie highlighted her experience of meeting people different from herself.

*That's one good thing about Kirkwood and then my job, too. Over the past year I have met so many people and seen so many things I hadn't before coming from that rural school.*

Lisa spoke about how different the Kirkwood world was from her hometown.

*I never had diversity in my hometown and then I come here and it's just everything is so different so it [College 101] helped me open up my horizons and everything. It was just so different.*

Lisa made a negative remark regarding “city” kids.

*It seems like people from the city just seem stuck up.*

The two male participants were from larger Iowa cities and did not express any challenges related to the larger metropolitan area or the diversity it brought with it. However, Andy was challenged when he took a class from an instructor with a strong accent. Sarah and Lisa didn't make any remarks regarding a difference regarding diversity. Although Lisa comes from a small rural district, the geographical area in which her district resides includes a variety of meat processing facilities that hire a number of Latin Americans and other minorities. The school district enrollment is much more diverse than one would find in a typical small Iowa district.

### **Developing Independence**

All of the participants saw themselves as making decisions independently of others. Most often their stories included moving away from depending on their parents to make their decisions for them.

Julie focused on gaining independence from both her parents and her peers. She related stories about how making decisions about getting a job, choosing a major, and picking out her classes provided her with the confidence and settings to make independent decisions. Julie lived at home during her first year and she thought that might have challenged her independence.

*It was kind of a struggle for both of us, adjusting to now I am independent and now I make my own decisions.*

Lisa credited College 101 for helping her realize the necessity of making decisions on her own.

*College 101 helped because we did all those time charts [time monitor] and foods [food monitor] and then it makes you realize that someone isn't there to tell you what to eat and what time to do this. It helped us figuring out that you are on your own.*

The tasks of being a college student made Jeff realize that he had to make decisions on his own. How much time he spent on homework and whether he even went to school or not were decisions he had not really made for himself before. Although he lived at home, his parents did not restrict his decision making.

Many of the reflection assignments in College 101 assisted Heidi in recognizing her growth in developing independence.

*We did different assignments and different papers about yourself and then when you do, it's like "Okay, I have a lot that I have done in my life and I have a lot of experiences that I've learned from" ....I think that helped me becoming independent.*

Heidi's story identified how involvement in volleyball required her to make decisions that were contrary to the peer pressure she experienced in regard to socializing.

*You don't have like that constant mother...."OK, you can do this, you can't do this"....I would have my homework done and go over to someone's place; there would be peer pressure there but you just got to, "OK, I'm going back to my apartment now."*

Heidi thought the overall experience of College 101 gave her confidence in her ability to make decisions on her own.

*I got a better understanding of myself....I think that helped me become independent.*

Sarah saw herself as making independent decisions long before she enrolled in College 101. She might call her mother for advice but Sarah would make the ultimate decision as to whether to act on that advice. Sarah admitted in her story that she might not have made the best choice regarding the crowd she surrounded herself with her first year, but she took full responsibility for making her own both good and bad decisions regardless of peer pressure.

*It was probably more my own fault for letting them [become my social group]...me wanting to hang out more and party than just concentrate on school. Overall, I'm happy that I met them and did all those things.*

Suzie developed more confidence in her ability to make good decisions by the end of her first year.

*I knew I could still pass classes without Mommy and Daddy being on my case....I knew I could manage money....I knew I was taking steps forwards and not backwards, so that helped me be like “Okay I’m growing up” ....I’m not slacking....I’m not making bad decisions.*

Suzie said she is very close with her mother. As she moved further into her college career, Suzie consulted her mother and sought her approval when she made a decision.

Suzie’s mother generally accepted Suzie’s decisions. Suzie saw that acceptance as moving her toward independent decision making.

*I ask my mom a lot...can I do this? She really supports me.*

Andy had developed some independence in decision-making before coming to Kirkwood. His parents had allowed him leniency in high school. His independence did not keep him from recognizing mistakes he made in his decision-making. When offering advice for new students, he looked back on some mistaken decisions he might have made.

*I would be out late. I would not always do my stuff...not the most responsible...kind of free since I’m independent...away for my parents...I learned that I can’t do that. I can’t do that because I suffer in classes.*

### **Knowing Themselves Better**

The participants thought their first-year experience helped them to know themselves better. Some of the participants pointed out ways in which College 101 had a direct impact on their self-awareness. For some, the self-awareness came slowly over the first year. For many of the participants, the reflections in College 101 assisted them in gaining self-awareness.

Julie had what she looked at as a major change in her definition of self when she wrote her “Who Am I?” reflection.

*There was this one assignment, Who Am I? and I got to see a lot because I don't know, I kinda characterized myself before that...I just thought, I knew what I was. I'm 18 years old, female, shy. That's pretty much how I describe myself and I got to see I am a lot more than that and I have a lot more to offer than just, you know.*

The “Who am I?” reflection served as one of the motivators that moved Julie to begin redefining herself as something different than shy.

*I've grown a lot; I've noticed a lot of changes.*

Lisa thought the “Who Am I?” and the “Who am I Now?” helped her clarify her definition of self. The activities aided her in processing what she thought of as a stressful semester.

*We did this thing at the beginning and at the end of, Who I Want to Be [Who am I?]. we wrote a paper about who I want to be and then at the end of the semester we wrote who I am [Who am I Now?] and that helped a lot in my first semester here....I think College 101 really helped me because I was having a really hard time adjusting....I did miss home and I missed a lot of things and some personal things were going on in my life that just overwhelmed me....I wrote the paper in the beginning and reread that and then I went back and wrote who I am now, it really helped.*

Lisa noticed a change in the way in which she related to her parents. She recognized that the change was part of her maturing process.

*I think that just comes with growing up and being on your own.*

Jeff revealed the self-awareness he acquired in his first year with his story title, “Finding Myself.” The completion of his first year left him with the sense of confidence.

*[I] knew that I could do it and had overcome something, and if I can overcome this, than I can overcome whatever lies ahead.*

Heidi focused on the “Who am I?” as a tool that helped her define herself.

*It helped a lot...just writing random stuff about yourself...you really don't think about but you really take time in your day and you really had to focus on yourself.*

Heidi explained her growth with a composite view of all of the assignments in College 101.

*It gave me a reflection of myself....We did different assignments and different papers about yourself....It's like "Okay, I have a lot that I have done in my life and I have a lot of experiences that I've learned from.*

Heidi described her first year as an opportunity to know herself better.

*I got a better understanding of my strengths and weaknesses... just telling myself that I could do things that I did not think I would be able to....I became a better person overall and managing my time...my social life...I met a whole new group of people and to you know, start a different life...it's kind of self-rewarding.*

Sarah used the "Who am I?" and "Who am I now?" reflections as tools for self-discovery.

*I still have both of those and I read them once in awhile....They are really neat cuz at the beginning of the semester I was still...real young, like everything was...cool or whatever but at the end of the semester I realized that, I don't know, just stuff you think about, like think deeper I guess and actually put thought into it. It's a reflection about yourself and your life.*

The whole College 101 experience made Sarah stop and think about who she wanted to be in light of her behavior in her first semester.

*It makes me think about who I am, like, do I want to be that kind of person.*

Sarah revealed a little bit more about the self-awareness she gained through College 101 when she was asked what she would tell a new student about taking the course.

*It's interesting....I learned a lot about myself.*

Suzie drew self-awareness from the fact that she had completed her first year. She had successfully navigated college without direction from her parents.

*I knew that I was taking steps forwards...that helped me be like, "Okay I am growing up....I'm not slacking....I'm not making bad decisions."*

Andy broadly applied concepts learned in College 101 to his self-awareness.

*I think College 101...the class atmosphere was a little different; it wasn't as much academic studying....It was more like learning, understanding type stuff, and knowing more about yourself. I think a lot of the projects we did...just really helped me ground myself, get my footing.*

Andy found his priorities changing during his first year at Kirkwood.

*Friends and getting away from home, living on my own, I think it kind of changed too....I really wasn't that serious about my major or career....I think as college progressed, as I got into college...that mode kind of changed.*

Andy had a shift in thinking about his priorities.

*I think I just had a reality check....I have three more years or so before I get out into the world and I have to have a job and make money, pay off my loans and get serious.*

Andy thought of the first year of college as a place where he got to know himself better.

*I think through the choices and decisions you make really show you kind of how you are....It makes you reevaluate some things I think.*

## **Theme II: Academic Development**

The participants' stories often moved with fluidity, in and out of academics and personal development. It was often hard to determine what theme supported which area of development. Career development certainly supports academic development, yet there is a strong self-awareness component to career decision-making. At times the participants directly referred to developing academic skills for academic success. Two sub-themes that appear to support academic success emerged from this study: Academic Skills and Time Management.

### **Academic Skills**

Academic skills for the participants included transitioning to college studying. Some of the participants also saw College 101 as a place where they learned how to communicate with their instructors.

Julie's story is an example of personal development providing her with academic skills. As she found herself gaining the skills to shed her shyness, she discovered a new ability to talk with her instructors and fellow students about classroom activities.



*Yes...you know asking people the assignments, like when I am not getting something, if I miss a class...asking “What did I miss” or going over the assignments.*

One of the first points Julie made in her story was the impact College 101 had on helping her understand the differences between college and high school.

*Letting us know what to expect....I think they had an activity showing us the difference. Here’s what was in high school, here’s what college work is like.*

Julie also discovered Kirkwood resources through College 101. She continues to benefit from using the writing center when necessary.

Lisa thought she had learned useful study tips from her instructor.

*He explained that you have to find...like your way of studying, the way you like to be taught. If you have a problem, you need to talk with your teacher and usually teachers are willing to help, which they are. And if you are like...lecture-based or if you’re more of a hands on [student], usually the teacher will help you out if you ask them to.*

Lisa found the MBTI had useful application to academic skills. She could remember that she was an extroverted type.

*We did this thing that sticks out in my mind, like what your personality type is.... It really helped me because it helped me realize like what kind of person I am to like study or how I study and how I interact with other people and how like I need to interact with other people or teachers to get across how I function compared to how they teach. So it helped in that way. I’ve gotten more confident in telling teachers that I need help or need a different way of explaining this. That was probably the biggest thing that helped me out.*

Lisa was surprised when she worked up the courage to talk with her math teacher.

Once she approached him, she found it easier to talk to all of her instructors.

*That was a relief and it just made me talk to other teachers a lot easier.*

Jeff’s biggest academic benefit from College 101 was learning to organize his time and his schoolwork.

*The main thing it did was encourage me to write in a planner, which I have been doing a lot....I can’t remember everything that I have to do in my classes like I thought I could. It also encouraged me to keep my papers together and organized.*

Heidi had some academic struggles in her first semester although her final grade point average for the semester was a 4.0.

*In the beginning I struggled a little bit, not grade-wise, but just the transition of really having to study, picking up study habits. The course load was a lot more and especially when I was in volleyball, I was on the road a lot so it was really difficult.*

Heidi's story contained both specific and unspecific ways that her academic skills were supported in College 101.

*My teacher gave me resources and showed me different features about the college that I was unaware of and just the little things that no one ever thinks of until someone actually tells you and you're a freshman in college, so you're not going to ask anybody for help. But she [my instructor] gave you those things...like little study habits or...where the counselor's office would be...just little things that would help.*

Sarah's academic development came more in the form of a lesson learned. She made the decision not to attend her classes several times and it had a negative impact on her grades.

*A couple of times I didn't get things done....[I] missed school a lot in a three week period and that's when I got really behind in class.....I think that is why I got a B and could have gotten an A. I missed a lot, a few weeks.*

Sarah made sure she clarified in her story that she learned a lesson and rarely skips class now.

*I don't hardly miss any school this semester. I think I missed like maybe two classes.*

Suzie came out of her first semester relatively strong academically. It wasn't until her second semester than she began to experience difficulties. Those difficulties were related more to her social life than her academic skills.

*My first semester was really good. I had all A's, so I made the Dean's List and then second semester I kind of ran into..."Oh this is college, I actually get to do what I want, when I want to" so I was going to be really late and my grades were slipping more and more....I mean, I still passed the classes; it's just they weren't as high as they were in the first semester.*

Suzie's recall of two concepts presented to her in her first semester College 101 class assisted her in getting back on track academically. The first concept she applied was a lecture activity where instructors discuss how much time a student should study for every credit hour they are taking. Studying includes reading, taking notes on the reading, and doing assigned activities. The actual formula is two clock hours of study for each credit hour taken. Suzie's habit, however, was one hour of study for each credit hour.

*That kept coming back to me like, "Okay, I need to study this much" and then for tests it actually got easier for me because I was studying more.*

The second concept that served to motivate Suzie to take her academics seriously was a classroom exercise where the students calculated how much they were paying for each class. The formula used for the exercise allows students to see what each class costs them in books and tuition. The total is broken down even further so they can calculate how much money is invested in each class meeting. Realizing how much money she was losing for a few extra hours of socializing provided Suzie with a discovery that got her back into the classroom and paying attention to academics.

Andy's academic skills were enhanced by the overall College 101 experience that led him to better understand the academic culture.

*What helped me most was the understanding what college professors expect from you...just kind of the different lifestyle college has compared to what I was at.*

Andy also cited the portion of College 101 that was based on how to communicate with your instructors.

*We had a thing on how to email our teachers...how to talk to them...that was one thing that helped a lot.*

All of the participants gave the impression that academic achievement was not a problem for them. From the stories it appears that the various study skill activities shared in

College 101 were not highlighted by the participants in this study as much as developing the ability to communicate with the instructors.

### **Time Management**

Managing time proved difficult for some but not all of the participants. The time monitor assignment was an opportunity for some of the participants to discover how they were using their time.

Lisa found time management to be one of the earliest challenges of her first semester. She realized she needed to carve out more study time.

*Just organizing time and really having to study, you know in high school I really didn't have to....Then I got my first test back and it wasn't very good; I knew I had to study.*

Jeff found College 101 a place where he learned invaluable time management skills.

*The main thing it did was encourage me to write in a planner.*

He accentuated the importance of his new habit of using a planner several times in his story. When asked about how he benefited from College 101, he used the planner as an illustration of the benefits.

*Definitely the planner. Using the planner was one of the things I got from College 101 as well as managing your time wisely...prioritizing your schedule, your life...making room for important things.*

Heidi started at Kirkwood a week before classes started and faced a grueling volleyball practice and conditioning schedule. She found that the structure of managing her time allowed her to accomplish what she needed to.

*My time schedule had been hectic....I have to have a structured time....I'm going to bed. I know when I am going to get up. I have this meeting at 9:30; after that I'm going to study.*

Heidi thought the time management skills taught in College 101 were compelling reasons students should take the class.

*It's just helpful. It consists of managing your time. Those are things you don't learn in high school....In college you have a lot more freedom to fritter away your time at*

*doing other activities so with that freedom you sometimes....College 101 tries to help you organize your time; with the time log you realize how much time you spend with certain things....I had to learn to manage my time.*

Andy made a short reference to how he benefits from setting priorities when he discussed why students might not be successful at college.

*A lot of people who don't make it, their priorities are just wrong. I think if you put in the time, there is no reason you can't pass a class or do good on a test.*

### **Theme III: Career Development**

The target student group for College 101 enrollment is first-year students who have declared Liberal Arts as a major. Students who are undecided about their majors are advised to declare Liberal Arts as a major. The design of College 101 includes an assignment that includes Choices Planner and a reflective assignment related to career decision-making. The inclusion of curriculum regarding career decision-making was based on our desire to assist the undecided students in finding a career path. Students were strongly encouraged to use the Advising Center as part of their career planning. Career Decision-making and Use of the Advising Center compose the subthemes under Career Development.

#### **Career Decision-making**

In the course of the interviews for this study, it became evident that despite the best efforts of College 101 to assist these students on deciding on a career or major, only two of them had committed a major. Of those two, one had made a tentative choice but had not followed up on specific requirements for the program she was looking at. There was little consistency in where the participants were, regarding career planning.

Julie recalled using Choices Planner to identify her interests and strengths.

*We did a couple of inventories...what you would like based on your personality and what interests you have and your skills.*

Choices Planner helped her decide between veterinary science and a two-year degree as a veterinary technician. Julie decided that being a veterinary technician was a better choice and was hoping to get into that program at Kirkwood. She had not applied to the program although she knew there was a waiting list to enter the program. The program also has a science entrance test that she had not yet taken.

Lisa had concluded that she wanted to major in psychology. She did not believe College 101 helped her in coming to that conclusion. Lisa had a psychology instructor at Kirkwood who provided her with some strong career guidance.

*I've had two classes with her....I kind of talked to her about it one day after class and I want to do something in psychology....She actually set me up with a job shadow in North Liberty. I went there and it was all fine; I just decided that day that that's what I want to do.*

Jeff had not come to any conclusions regarding a major. He was still in the process of deciding where he might transfer. He thought he would like to attend a specific four-year private institution in Iowa. He had listed the school on his federal financial aid application but he had not applied to the school yet.

Heidi had been loosely following the transfer requirements for one of the state universities in Iowa. She had since changed her mind on where she wanted to transfer to and was taking coursework on the assumption that what she was taking was on track.

*I would assume that the classes I've taken here fall within the same guidelines and so in the back of my head I kind of had a career choice and field in place but I'm still, I don't know for sure.*

Her assumptions may or may not be correct. She gleaned only vague assistance from the career decision-making activities in College 101.

*Those different tests that we took kind of gave me a broad list of things I would enjoy.*

Sarah remembered some of the career decision-making activities in College 101 but did not find them particularly helpful. She had considered a major in accounting but decided differently after taking an accounting class. Although Sarah would soon have enough credits to transfer, she was postponing her transfer to a state university until she had determined a major.

*I'm not going to enroll myself at [a state university] unless I know [my major] for sure.*

Suzie had a difficult time choosing a major. When she did the career activities in the classroom, she was overwhelmed. Her instructor noticed her frustration and talked to her after class. The instructor took Suzie back to her office and helped her process some ideas.

*[My teacher] came up to me....She was just like, "I can tell that you were lost"...I went up to her office and she gave me different major opportunities....That was like awesome about College 101...because you guys were like, more than teachers.*

Suzie decided on teaching for a tentative career choice. She enrolled in the "Exploring Teaching" course at Kirkwood and quickly decided teaching was not for her. Suzie enrolled in some of the communications classes at Kirkwood and found them more to her liking. At the time of the interviews Suzie was certain she would major in Communications. She has been accepted into one of the state universities.

Andy came to Kirkwood thinking he would major in business. The career decision-making activities in College 101 left Andy wondering if a business major was really what he wanted.

*I was kind of [sure] of what I was going to do prior to coming to College 101, but I think it made me push away from it a little bit....[Choices Planner] kind of led me towards other majors, political science is one of them...except I really don't know what I want to do in that field.*

Andy knew he could go back into Choices Planner to get more information if he wished. Andy has been accepted into a state university for fall of 2009. He will start there as

a liberal arts major.

### **Use of the Advising Center**

Whether a Kirkwood student's intentions are to transfer at the end of an Associates of Arts degree or to complete a two-year program in Applied Science, it is important for him or her to get accurate advising. Students who do not use the services of an advisor often end up taking classes for more than two years. The number of faculty with expertise in the vocational programs are limited. A required course might only be offered on two-year intervals. The transfer requirements for students seeking to transfer after Kirkwood are difficult to navigate. Many of the students do not realize that the transfer requirements vary according to major. All of these factors were taken into consideration when designing the College 101 course. Each class spends at least two class meetings with an advisor from the Advising and Transfer Center. With the help of the advisors, the students design their two-year plan. The advisors instruct them in using transfer guidelines before registering for each semester. Those students seeking applied science degrees work on a plan in College 101 but are also referred to department advisors who are more familiar with the schedules of those specific programs.

Students who are in associate of arts or sciences programs are strongly encouraged but not required to use the Kirkwood Advising and Transfer Center each time they register. The participants all remembered the advising sessions in College 101, but they did not use the Advising and Transfer Center for subsequent semesters.

Julie relied on the two-year plan she wrote in College 101 to choose her classes. She did not use the Advising Center. She was also certain she was going to change her major to Veterinary Technician but had not contacted or spoken with an advisor from that department.



Lisa used the Advising Center. She found them helpful and understanding when she made the decision to drop a class for the first time.

*I kind of felt like I had failed, but then I talked to an advisor and they said it happens, it's not as big a deal as you think, and as long as you withdraw before the time is up, then you know you can make it up later....It just took awhile for me to figure out.*

Jeff consistently used an advisor each semester.

*They helped me out a lot about what I needed to take, especially the last time I thought I needed to take like a lot more credits than I actually had to graduate.... [The advisor] showed me how many to take and stuff.*

Sarah relied partially on the two-year plan she created in College 101. She did not seek the assistance of the Advising Center. Sarah will be attending Kirkwood for at least the Summer of 2009 in an attempt to finish her AA degree.

Suzie attempted to use the Advising Center but had waited too late to get into an advisor before her registration time. Her change in major from Education to Communication presented some course choice difficulties. She returned to her College 101 instructor for help.

*It was my second year at Kirkwood....There was a long line for advising....I don't know what classes I am going to take...my computer broke down...I remember I saw[my instructor] walking down the hallway and I am like, "I need you." And she helped me sign up for classes.*

Andy visited the Advising and Transfer Center for the first time in his fourth semester at Kirkwood. He went to the Advising and Transfer Center to check his transcript to see what he had left to take. He thought he had navigated the degree requirements pretty well on his own. He was fully aware that he was going to be short on credits. His visit to the Advising Center confirmed that his transcript was in order and he indeed needed more credits to graduate.

## Theme IV: Personal Development

All of the participants found personal value in their College 101 experience. The specific benefits of the course varied among the individuals. The participants all saw enough worth in the course to recommend it to other first-year students. The sub-themes supporting personal development in the College 101 experience are Benefits and Recommendation to New Students to Enroll in College 101.

### Benefits

Some of the participants found specific benefits in the College 101 class. Julie was motivated to overcome her shyness and College 101 provided her with the place to start to work on it in a safe environment.

*You could make some new friends and so I just kinda went in there with an open mind and met some kids and my teacher and everybody was real friendly and nice and it kinda encouraged me.*

Jeff discussed organization and time management as the biggest benefits of College 101.

*It helps you... get to know the college, a lot of useful things like we went on a tour around the Rec Center which helped a lot.... We learned how to go to the counselors and sign up for classes online and we learned about the library and stuff. A lot of useful things... also how to organize more... write down what you need to do a lot so it is definitely helpful there.*

Some participants were less specific when expressing ways they thought their College 101 provided benefits that enhanced their personal development. When asked to reflect on the benefits, they were thoughtful in their responses. Lisa paused when asked if College 101 was worth taking.

*Yeah, the first semester I was kind of like, "Oh well, this is a boring class" but really it did help. Now that I look back on it, it helped a lot. It makes me think about it after the class.... During you are kind of like "I just want to get through this, this is boring" but once you get through you're like "that really did help." It helps you be more organized.*

Heidi described many little things presented to her in College 101 as valuable.

*My teacher gave me resources and showed me different features of the college that I was unaware of and just the little things that no one actually thinks of until somebody actually tells you...like study habits...where the counselors' offices would be...just little things that would help.*

The reflections Heidi did in College 101 also stood out in her mind.

*That helped me a lot and just, you know, writing random stuff about yourself...you don't really think about but you really take time in your day and you really had to focus on yourself.*

Sarah used the same expression, "little things" that Heidi used when describing the benefits of College 101.

*It helped you with the little things that you don't realize.*

The interviews gave Sarah an opportunity to reflect on the benefits of College 101 from the perspective of her second year at Kirkwood.

*I don't realize that there are things that I learned in that class that I am carrying forward so now I realize stuff...like with boundaries and relationships...that stuff I brought forward with me although I might not apply it all the time. When I remember that I go "duh" ...so I think I used it more than I think I do....I realize now that I need it.*

Suzie expressed that she received many benefits from College 101.

*You know everybody in class...like we always talked, you know, we did activities together....I felt like I was good friends with some of them....I know some of them still.*

Andy found the College 101 experience as a grounding experience for him.

*I think... College 101...the class atmosphere was a little different; it wasn't so much academic studying....It was more like learning, understanding type stuff, and knowing more about yourself. I think a lot of the projects we did...really just helped me ground myself, get my footing.*

### **Recommendations to New Students**

Each participant thought that the College 101 experience was valuable enough that they would recommend it to other first-year students. The participants varied in the reasons that College 101 could be important to new students.

Julie would recommend that first-time students take College 101 for both personal and academic development.

*I would definitely recommend it. It provides knowledge of a variety of areas...personal relationships...just your own health...knowledge about Kirkwood and the campus and what services are offered and then academic help and career decision-making.*

Lisa thought that College 101 would give new students a foundation for success.

*I would tell them to take it...I think it is a good...like kind of foundation....You just figure out how to study and how to do things and then you find out...you can go to other teachers and advisors and stuff and they'll talk to you. I don't know, it's just really helpful to know things around campus and be more comfortable with it.*

Jeff's recommendation of College 101 was lengthy and included many of the activities students complete in the course.

*I would tell them to take it...for one, you have to be organized in the class for a lot of assignments and stuff....It also helps you get to know the campus...how you can reach people that you have to talk to, like counselors and how to sign up for like scholarship applications and stuff....It's really helpful about looking for financial aid and stuff like that. It definitely helps you get used to college life and what your classes are going to be like as well as gives you a summary of what it's going to be and how to plan and organize stuff for it.*

Heidi's recommendation came with some advice to first-year students as well.

*If you put time and effort into the class, then you'll fare very well and it's not a difficult class but more of a class about life skills and it's all about you....I think it's important that a lot of people take time especially in that first semester for themselves with all the stuff going on in their lives. I think it's [College 101] very fun.*

Sarah added a little advice to her recommendation to future first-time students.

She wanted them to be mindful of the peer pressure that might influence their attendance and social habits.

*I would definitely take it because...that's one of the main classes that teaches you about that if you show up you will do pretty well....That was my problem, I just didn't go for a week and then it happened a couple of other times and that's why I didn't do as well in that class and that's how college is....If you come every day and you put in at least a little effort, the teacher is not going to fail you....There's a lot of peer pressure out there.*

It was not a surprise that Suzie highlighted meeting people in her recommendation to take College 101.

*It helps you meet people and helps you get familiar with the campus better. It helps you live on your own....with cooking and finances. [The] instructors always seem to be nice. I don't know about any other instructors but I have never heard anything bad about College 101.*

Andy's recommendation cited many reasons a new student could benefit from College 101.

*I think it is just a good transition. I think [it] kind of shows what to expect...and just the overall college experience...we covered a lot of stuff...help with your classes, your professors. I recommend it. I think each person has different views from what college is and I think College 101 just kind of highlights it for you a little bit. It opened up sources of information, if you have questions or where to go, who to talk to, stuff like that...that I would have no idea if I hadn't gone [to College 101]....A lot of kids go into that [College 101] thinking that it's an easy credit or maybe because you are not graded very hard on stuff, but I think everyone ends up taking something out of it whether they expect to or not. I think for a lot of kids it's helpful, especially kids who are nervous for the transitions...it makes it a lot easier.*

### **Theme V: Personal Meaning of the Completion of the First Year**

When asked about the meaning of their first-year experience, a message of accomplishment appears in many of the participants' meanings. In addition to a question about the meaning of the completion of their first year, they were asked to title their story and to expand on their title. As some of them expanded their stories, the end of the stories illuminated what might be considered meaning of their experience.

At the end of the first semester Julie recalled strong feelings of accomplishment.

*It felt really good....At first going into college it's a big experience, starting off like "Will I be able to succeed? How will I do?" Kind of like a weight is lifted off your chest. "Oh, can I do this?" And it is kind of empowering. "I made it; I did well."*

Asked to define the meaning of that accomplishment, Julie discussed the reality of reaching her goals.

*It seemed like a step closer to like reaching my goals. It felt really good to finish, to know that I could succeed and I could do well in college.*

Julie described the end of the story of her first year with a very similar statement, one that supports the meaning of the experience for her.

*You know, to see that I did succeed and I can make it here, I can go on and I will be successful.*

Meaning for Lisa was hard to define from the information gathered from the interviews. Her first semester was very unique, as she was attending the trial of the accused murderer of one of her friends. Lisa relied on her parents to help her through the trial. Lisa was one of the two students who could find their Who Am I Now? reflections written for College 101. Attached to her Who Am I Now assignment was a paper she had written in another class about the death of her older brother in 2000. He was killed in a car accident. Another brother was injured in the accident. Meaning of her first year of college might be derived from a combination of an interview response she gave about family, combined with a statement from her Who Am I Now reflection. Both statements refer to family and her discovering how much family meant to her after leaving home for college. Lisa spoke about changes in her relationship with her family in an interview.

*We didn't get along; we fought and stuff....Once I got to college I think I realized how much they were actually there and how much time I actually spent with them and I wanted to spend with them, and then it just changed a lot for both my mom and I. She even said that we're more like friends now than a mother-daughter type thing, more like friends than authoritative.*

Lisa saw that relationship change as part of her own maturing process. The process and the maturity it required appeared to have great meaning to Lisa.

*I think that just comes like kind of growing up and being on your own. You start to understand that you have other responsibilities.*

Her Who am I Now? reflection contains a strong statement that may indicate what the change in her relationship with her parents means to her.

*Family is now the most important thing in my life. Without family, I am nothing.*

When Jeff was posed with the question about what it meant to finish his first year of college, his response was very pragmatic.

*I'm just glad it is over.*

Asked to explain what that meant, he did not elaborate much.

*Mainly I was just done with one fourth of college, at least, and that it was summer and ready to relax and stuff.*

Jeff was asked to tell about his story, "Finding Myself." Jeff used metaphor to describe the beginning, middle, and end of his story. The meaning he'd derived after completion of his first year may be best illuminated through the ending of his story.

*I reached a peak, a small peak but I looked out...just touching the bottom of the stratosphere and could see for miles and saw bigger mountains...but just knew that I could do it and had overcome something and if I have overcome this, than I can overcome whatever lies ahead.*

Jeff first expressed the meaning of his story in simple terms: he was done. However, by looking at his complete story, one can speculate that he overcame some things in his first year that gave him the confidence that he could continue to be successful in college.

For Heidi, completing her first year provided an opportunity to know herself better. That opportunity gave her rewards that provided meaning and guidance in her experience.

*I got a better understanding of my strengths and weaknesses...just telling myself that I could do things that I didn't think I would be able to and just like a better person overall. I met a whole new group of people....To start a different life basically, it's kind of self rewarding.*

Sarah was uncertain what the completion of her first year meant to her.

*I don't know. I don't think I realized it was a big deal.*

When Sarah talked about the story of her first year, she focused on making decisions and perhaps her realization that her decisions had made her happy. The end of her story suggests that the decisions she made in her first year had meaning to her.

*It's going to sound kind of corny but I've made choices that made me happy, cuz that's what you have to do. That's what I realized, I guess. If you don't make yourself happy or pick things that are going to make you happy, put yourself in situations that will make you happy, you're not going to be happy. That's just how it works.*

Suzie looked at her accomplishments as a way to explain what the completion of her first year meant to her.

*It felt good, really good, like Wow, I passed all my classes, I'm doing well, like decent and like it was good to finish, one year already done, I'm already half done at Kirkwood.*

Andy illustrated meaning of the completion of his first year by describing stages of his life.

*I think it is pretty important. It's just a whole year of my life and I think more different time in my life because I think you go through stages of high school and then you have that little stage of college....I mean, coming to college you don't know if you are going to do well or if you are going to be a good student...I think I proved to myself that I could do it; I think now I kind of hold [a] standard that I can do it....I think if I really put my mind to something that I have to accomplish, I'll do it.*

Meaning for the participants took on all kinds of faces as the interviews progressed.

The act of telling the story of their experience may have influenced what the experience meant for them.

### **Context of Theory of Departure and Seven Vectors of Student Development**



The Theory of Departure and Seven Vectors of Student Development were introduced in Chapter One as part of the theoretical framework for the development of the College 101 course. Both provide theoretical lenses through which to examine the analysis of this study.

### **Tinto's Theory of Departure**

To analyze the results of this study through Tinto's Theory of Departure, it is necessary to re-visit Tinto's (1993) vision of the classroom as a place to emphasize both social and intellectual communities:

Classroom experiences are seen as playing a very influential role in a student's academic and social integration. It should be observed that our model of institutional departure is also a model of educational communities. It is a view of the educational process which emphasizes the role of social and intellectual communities, especially those that may emerge from involvement in classroom communities. (p. 137)

Tinto's statements provided one of the foundations of the development of College 101 as a classroom setting for the development of social and academic integration of students into the culture of Kirkwood Community College.

According to this small sample of former College 101 students, their College 101 classroom provided them what they described as transitions, foundations, and footings into the college culture. Many of the participants were involved socially in their classrooms. They reported that knowing themselves better was a benefit of the class. The participants may have found less intellectual integration into the culture; however, they reported gaining knowledge on how to navigate that culture.

Their stories shared in the context of the second year allowed for some unique perspectives regarding when the lessons learned in College 101 came into play for them. It is

possible that Heidi and Sarah did not recognize what they gained in College 101 until they were asked to consider the idea in the context of this study's interviews. It is possible that none of the participants did. Academic integration may have occurred later for Andy when he took a class from a particularly engaging instructor or Lisa when she was inspired by her psychology instructor. Sarah was completing a service learning assignment as part of a course when these interviews occurred; she was finding extraordinary meaning and application to the intellectual setting of a sociology course.

Many of the participants were highly involved students. Heidi played volleyball for Kirkwood. Lisa had been on Dance Team her first year and was playing softball her second year. Jeff played in both Concert and Jazz Band. It is very possible that their involvement in activities played a role in their integration.

As a college, Kirkwood did retain this small group of students. There is certainly no compelling evidence that they would not have made it without College 101. What is here is support in their stories to conclude that College 101 helped in the social and intellectual transitions they made into the college culture; they gained a foundation, a footing.

### **Chickering and Reisser's Seven Vectors**

Chickering and Reisser's identity theory (1993) is organized under seven vectors: developing competence intellectually, socially and physically; managing emotions; moving through autonomy toward interdependence; developing mature interpersonal relationships; establishing identity; developing purpose; and developing integrity. Each vector represents a series of developmental tasks for college students. The vectors are listed as general course goals of College 101 Syllabus (see Appendix E).

In the course of their first year, the participants' stories serve to document their movement in and out of all of the seven vectors. Julie moved obtained a new level of social

competence while establishing her identity as something more than shy. Jeff transcended some overwhelming emotions related to stress by defining his purpose at college. Heidi exhibited integrity while establishing an identity that did not include partying. Lisa established an identity that included college involvement while learning to manage a strong emotional reaction to the death of a friend. Sarah achieved intellectual competence while struggling to define her identity in light of her social group. Suzie's development highlighted the growth of her social competence at the same time she her moved towards establishing her identity. Andy defined his academic and social competence while attempting to navigate his way towards developing a purpose. Would those movements occurred without College 101? The answer is without a doubt, yes. Did College 101 support and in some cases initiate that movement? Again, the answer would be yes. The College 101 classroom, the instructors that led them, and the students themselves constructed an environment that facilitated and supported the participants' movement through the seven vectors.

The participants often focused on the reflection pieces of the course as a way to know themselves better, explore their identities, and examine their purpose. The Who am I and Who am I Now assignments were meaningful to several of the participants. They reported that their College 101 instructors assisted them in navigating their transition to college. Finding tutoring, handling roommate issues, teaching the students how to talk to their instructors are just few examples of leading the students to their own competence and navigation of relationships. Even though the participants left the class without solid career plans, they did begin to identify their purpose in life. Social connections were also made in College 101. For at least one participant, the transition from socializing in high school to socializing in college got its roots in the College 101 classroom.

Chickering and Reisser's Seven Vectors are fluid standards of development that underscore these participants' movement from young, first-time college students to students who are comfortable and involved in the institution's culture.

**CHAPTER 5****SUMMARY, FINDINGS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS****Summary**

The purpose of this study was to provide insight into the experiences of first-time Kirkwood Community College students who took the College 101 course in their first semester at Kirkwood. It was anticipated that the participants would reveal their stories about their first year at a community college. The participants' stories could then be used to guide programs that would foster academic and social development.

The study drew from a Narrative Inquiry methodology, using interviews and documents as sources for analysis. Seven Kirkwood Community College students were interviewed individually in three separate 60-minute interviews. The open storytelling interview style required by Narrative Inquiry unveiled many themes, some that addressed the research questions and some that did not; however, they provided a richness to the study that could not be ignored. The following are the key research questions that guided the study:

1. Did the completion of the College 101 course in their first semester at Kirkwood influence students' academic success? If so, how? If not, why not?
2. Did the completion of the College 101 course in their first semester at Kirkwood influence students' sense of Kirkwood being the right fit for them? If so, how? If not, why not?
3. Overall, did the students think and feel that completion of the College 101 course benefited them?
4. How did second-year Kirkwood Community College students describe their first academic year at Kirkwood?
5. What did the completion of their first year of college mean to the students?

## Findings

The completion of the College 101 course appeared to influence the participants' academic success. The influence is not entirely clear because the stories differed from participant to participant. For some participants, actual study skills, time management, and organization supported their academic success. For others, it was the encouragement and academic integration they received from College 101 that supported their academic success.

The participants focused a great deal on their ability or inability to make social connections at the college. The participants' consistent focus on social integration could indicate some possible conflicts with earlier research done with community college students. In the review of literature for this study, it was noted that both Halpin (1990) and Mutter (1992) found that academic integration was a predominant need for community college student retention. Halpin (1990) and Mutter (1992) dismissed the need for social integration for community college students as less important, due to their commuter student status. For this study, however, it appeared that the students saw social integration as a key factor in their ability to feel like they fit in at Kirkwood. Some of the focus could be attributed to the young age of these participants. According to the Kirkwood Index (2007), the average age of a student at Kirkwood in 2007 was 24.2 years, compared to the national community college student average age of 29. Kirkwood does not serve a large urban population and draws a large number of students directly from high school. Although all of the participants of this study were technically commuter students; they could not be categorized as traditional commuter students. Traditional commuter students are largely considered those who enroll at the community college for the convenience of only being on campus long enough to attend classes then leave for work and family obligations. All of these factors may serve to explain why this particular sample focused on social integration.

The participants all expressed the sense that Kirkwood Community College was the right fit for them. The academic fit did not appear to be as important to the participants as fitting in socially. College 101 was often seen as a comfortable place to find their way socially. The participants also shared the experience of learning where Kirkwood student support services were located and how to use those supports. The use of those support services assisted the participants in making smoother transitions into the Kirkwood culture.

The participants gave overwhelming positive responses to the benefits they received from College 101. College 101 assisted them in developing solid footings and foundations required of successful college students. The participants all would advise a first-time, first-year student to take College 101 in the first semester. Each participant recommended the experience and listed many benefits.

The participants were interviewed while well into their fourth semester at Kirkwood. Academically, all of the participants were strong. At least three of them shared academic challenges in their first year that related to social life infringing on their attendance. Some had sought services designed to foster academic success. Some participants had used student support services, The Writing Center, and/or tutoring. Some had sought their instructors' assistance in their first year. Regardless of what services they used or difficulties they had in their coursework, all presented solid grades at the end of their first year. At least one participant found the experience of dropping a class in the first year a difficult but necessary choice.

The meaning of the completion of the first year was in the sense of accomplishment all the participants felt. The act of actually seeing the year to completion was a relief for some of the participants. They had proven that they could complete college and, indeed, they

were half-way to being done at Kirkwood. There was an air of celebration in their meanings and the end of their first year of college.

### **Limitations**

The results of this study are based on participants stories and recollections of their first year at Kirkwood. The participants' recollections and storytelling may not be factual. Each participants' stories were influenced by their personalities and perceptions of their first year. The results of the study are reported through the researcher and are limited the researcher's interpretations.

### **Policy Implications for Kirkwood Community College**

This study suggests that the Kirkwood College 101 model was effective for a small group of students. The model appears to work well, though it has not been applied to students who come to Kirkwood to study in an Applied Science program. As that pool of first-time students continues to increase, it may become appropriate to use the model for first-year students who do not have the intention of transferring. It is possible to attempt to generalize the participants' experiences in this study to that of other Kirkwood students. Further study of those students would be required after they had completed the College 101 experience.

The Kirkwood College 101 model could be generalized to other community colleges' first-year students. Kirkwood could host site visits and offer advice based on experience to other institutions interested in establishing first-year courses on their campuses. Kirkwood is not unique in the ability to draw first-year students who are using the community college as a gateway to a four-year institution.

This study also suggests that more time and effort to capture the student experience at Kirkwood needs to be made and supported at the administrative level by institutional research. The surprises in this research came not in the form of commonalities but in the



form of differences in the participants' experiences. The open style of narrative inquiry may have encouraged the diverse stories obtained in this study. The following quote offers an important reminder to heed each student's individual experiences when doing research in student affairs:

Although a general understanding for the culture can inform student affairs practice, we must understand that each student possesses his or her own culture which influences how each student experiences the college. Narrative research reminds us of the idiosyncratic nature of humans, and that as researchers we must value and understand the differences and contradictions we observe. (Reason, 2001, p. 99)

Individual experiences were indeed discovered in this study. Research examining the subtle differences between each student experience could better direct student services in the community college. The increased research and amount of time that would allow for further narrative inquiry into the experiences of community college students has large implications for institutional research. Regardless of the investment of time and money into such an effort, the access to the largely hidden world of community college students would assist us in better serving their needs.

### **Recommendations for Practice**

College 101 worked for this small group of Kirkwood students, leaving the question, If College 101 worked for this group, will it work for others? A pressing recommendation evolving from this study would be to expand the program to include students who are pursuing applied science degrees.

Recommendations emerged for the actual curriculum of the College 101 course in this study. A strong recommendation would be to revisit what is being offered in the area of career development. It is possible that the activities offered in College 101 planted the seeds

of career development for these participants but did not see the seedling through harvest. A close examination of the career-related activities and their objectives is indicated.

College 101 curriculum attempts to build a supportive relationship between the students and the Advising and Transfer Center. It was obvious that the majority of this group of students did not fully use the center after completing College 101. The curriculum should be revised in order to emphasize the importance of using the center. There is a possibility that part of the problem is in the organization of the Advising Center itself. The results call for an examination of the services and procedures of the Advising Center to insure they are offering worthwhile and accessible services.

The social activities in College 101 appeared to have a significant impression on this group of participants. This impression can be used to guide any new curriculum or activities introduced into the course.

The College 101 instructors themselves were mentioned in the student narratives. Currently instructors in College 101 are chosen in part because of their reputations for being involved with students and engaged with them in the classroom. The participants' experiences support the continued use of such criteria to be in the hiring and recruitment of College 101 instructors.

The participants and their stories tell of the solid foundation College 101 provided for them. They were not aware that the theoretical foundation of College 101 comes from Vincent Tinto, Arthur Chickering, Laura Reisser, John Gardner, and a wealth of people experienced in the field of student development and first-year experiences. Any post-secondary institution that desires to provide a first-year course or experience for their students can draw from the same scholars, theorists, and researchers.

### **Recommendations for Further Research**

Engaging students in the classroom is a practice that supports retention of students. The student stories in this study emphasize the engagement they experienced in the College 101 course. Further research might be done in this area with the possibility that findings could be applied to other classrooms and disciplines.

The instructors in College 101 made positive impressions on all the participants. Further research could be done to examine what intricacies in the instructors' styles and delivery support various levels of engagement by their students. Such research might provide stylistic recommendations that could inform faculty from all areas of the college.

Community colleges often have very few services for students in the area of residential life. At Kirkwood there are several apartment complexes nearby that are promoted as student accommodations. The complexes have different management companies and security forces. Since students are virtually moving from their parent's homes into apartments, the transition opens up all the issues students would have in a traditional college residential setting. However, the apartments are void of any resident life system. This void leaves students without the support and disciplinary system that would be found in a typical residential life system. Apartment living requires that they prepare their own food, pay bills on a monthly basis, and navigate the college without the support of a residential life staff. Parties, noise infractions, and conflicts lead many of the students to interactions with private security firms at the complexes. The participants' stories in this study shed a little light on what is going on in their lives in light of their residential choices. More research needs to be done regarding residential setting and the implications for those settings at Kirkwood.

On the other hand, many community college students chose to live at home with their parents. The participants in this study suggested that living at home challenged the ability of

the student and their parents to re-define their relationships in regard to the students' independence. As college costs continue to rise, more students may choose to live at home. Research in this area could be beneficial to the students, their parents, and institutions of higher education.

Several of the participants referred to easy access to alcohol-related parties involving Kirkwood students. More than one participant reported other students' partying habits causing them to drop out of Kirkwood. This study was derived from a small sample of Kirkwood students; nonetheless, at least three of them had seen students' alcohol consumption reaching dangerous levels. Research into the alcohol consumption of Kirkwood Community College students is needed.

Early studies of community college students implied that social integration was not as important a support for their success as academic integration. However, this study hints that social integration played an important part in these students transition to college. Further research in this area could clarify these conflicting observations and assist us in designing appropriate services for community college students.

One participant mentioned the unique position of being an athlete. Not only did the participant have to transition to college academics, she had to be prepared to take tests and complete assignments earlier than her peers. In her mind she was being penalized for being an athlete. In this participant's view the instructors made an intentional attempt to make academic success harder for the athlete than for the rest of the class. Community college student-athletes develop their skills athletically and/or academically with the hope that they can transfer to college or university and play their sport in a four-year college. This goal requires that their performance in the classroom be as successful as their performance in their sport. One is left to wonder if we make it more difficult for athletes to be academically

successful than we do for students not involved in athletics. The impression and mindsets of faculty regarding community college athletes could be explored. The first year and the role of athletes in the community college is an area of research that might also be explored.

One might also explore the first-year experience from the perspective of first-year students who did not enroll in College 101. Research in that area would allow us to expand knowledge of what is known about Kirkwood Community College students. Such research would allow the institution to develop comparative data.

There are voices noticeably missing from this study. Those are the voices of students who, despite enrolling in College 101, left the institution before or after completing their first semester. Students leave for a variety of reasons. One acceptable reason is to make an intended transfer. There are many other reasons that are not as positive. The first steps might include finding out how many students are leaving the institution and the reasons they cite for leaving. Further exploration could examine what makes them different from the resilient participants interviewed in this study.

### **Reflections**

I chose to study students' first year of college for two reasons. The first was practical: when I did a review of literature on first-year experiences, I found very little work relating to the community college. That discovery was particularly troubling in light of the increased numbers of first-time, first-year students who are choosing the community college for their point of entry into higher education.

The second reason I embarked on this research was because of my own story of my first year of college. I realized my reasoning was not a novel approach when I began further reading about the practice of qualitative study. Esterberg (2002) captured my process:

Often qualitative researchers begin where they are. That is, they look at their own lives to see if they can find anything interesting to study, an unusual angle or puzzling event or phenomenon. Then they try to refine the topic into a more manageable and researchable form (p.26).

When I read Esterberg's passage, I was struck by how close it came to describing my reasons for choosing the focus of this study.

As I reflect on this project I am grateful for the dependability of all of the participants. With the exception of some unruly audio tape, every one of the 21 interviews occurred without problems. Each of the participants arrived for all three of their interviews on time and ready to start the process. Only one interview had to be re-scheduled, due to illness.

The biggest surprise was the way the participants responded to narrative inquiry. Our conversations flowed sometimes perhaps in spite of the interview questions I had for them. It was in the conversation where the bulk of the findings occurred.

My surprise might have been mitigated had I truly believed the following quote from Czarniawska (2002) I used earlier in this study: "I must admit this used to bring me to the verge of panic – How to bring them back to the point? – But now I have learned that *is* the point" (p. 735). More than once I held my breath and relied on the participant to tell me the important things. They did and I gained confidence in the process. Late in this study I came upon an article by a friend and colleague, Robert Reason (2001), who wrote about the benefits of using narrative in Student Affairs. He described a student with whom he used narrative inquiry to interview: "Without prompting from the interviewer, Jim attended to what was important to him and his experience" (p. 98). As I reflect on Reason's article and

my experience, I better understand what happened in the span of my conversations with my participants.

I must admit that the participants' responses to narrative inquiry left me with lengthy transcripts that covered a gamut of issues. The sorting and coding process was challenging. Even as I look back on the transcripts, I still find an additional gem or two in the participants' words to contemplate.

In my journal I noted that I could almost see the students change as they told their stories. It was interesting to see one of them moving from not seeing much benefit in College 101, to realizing that she drew on her College 101 experience quite often over the span of her time at Kirkwood. The look on this participant's face told a great deal when she was asked what the completion of her first year meant to her. She replied that she hadn't thought it was a big deal, but as she answered the question, it appeared that she realized that maybe it was a big deal, after all.

Throughout the process my confidence in my choice of narrative inquiry grew. I think that my role as a counselor informed my decision to use narrative inquiry more than I was willing to give credit because the conversations were supported by my counseling listening skills. The ability to re-frame participant statements in the context of the interview was a testimony to my role as a counselor. I am pleased that I chose narrative inquiry because, in truth, I had no idea how my counselor role would impact my ability to interview with the goal of obtaining knowledge rather than helping.

I did find it challenging, however, not to fall back into a counseling role many times in the process. It was very difficult not to intercede when the participants shared something that I knew was going to cause them difficulty down the road. One participant who originally thought she would go to a university after Kirkwood planned her courses according to what

the university required. She had changed her mind and was transferring to a small college and was assuming the transfer classes were the same. She needed information that was not appropriate to give in the context of our interview. In fact, all the participants needed accurate information in some area or another. I made notes of those areas and addressed them with the participants after the third interview was complete. I left alone any issues that might require personal counseling, but did let them know that the student development counselors were there to help with most anything that might get in the way of their successful completion of college.

All of this means a great deal to me. Each of the participants gave me gifts that have will inform my professional and personal life. Reason (2000) says it well: “By examining the narrative of students’ stories student affairs professionals stand to gain a greater understanding of student experiences and cultures, build relationships that benefit both parties and better inform theories that guide our professional decisions” (p. 102). Indeed, the participants’ voices in this study will impact the services we offer our first-year students at Kirkwood.

There are numerous benefits of this study. These participants will stand a little prouder when they think of their accomplishments at Kirkwood. College 101 at Kirkwood Community College can improve with the knowledge gained from this study. Community colleges at large can benefit from what has been learned about first-year students in this study. Perhaps most importantly, when first-year students present themselves at the doors of Kirkwood Community College, we can better understand their needs as we assist them in integrating both academically and socially to the culture of higher education.



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## APPENDIX A

## IOWA STATE UNIVERSITY IRB APPROVAL

**IOWA STATE UNIVERSITY**  
 OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

**DATE:** 25 July 2008

**TO:** Wendy Lingo  
2535 Heatherview Circle, Marion, IA 52302

**CC:** Dr. Larry Ebbers  
N226 Lagomarcino

**FROM:** Jan Canny, IRB Administrator  
Office of Research Assurances

**TITLE:** **The Voices and Experiences of Kirkwood Community College Students:  
Applying Knowledge Gained in College 101 to the First Year of College**

**IRB ID:** 07-247

Institutional Review Board  
Office of Research Assurances  
Vice President for Research  
1138 Pearson Hall  
Ames, Iowa 50011-2207  
515 294-4566  
FAX 515 294-4267

**Approval Date:** 25 July 2008  
**Date for Continuing Review:** 30 July 2009

The Chair of the Institutional Review Board of Iowa State University has conducted the annual continuing review and approved the modification of this project. Please refer to the IRB ID number shown above in all correspondence regarding this study.

Your study has been approved according to the dates shown above. To ensure compliance with federal regulations (45 CFR 46 & 21 CFR 56), please be sure to:

- **Use the documents with the IRB approval stamp** in your research.
- **Obtain IRB approval prior to implementing any changes** to the study by completing the "Continuing Review and/or Modification" form.
- **Immediately inform the IRB of (1) all serious and/or unexpected adverse experiences** involving risks to subjects or others; and (2) **any other unanticipated problems involving risks** to subjects or others.
- **Stop all research activity if IRB approval lapses**, unless continuation is necessary to prevent harm to research participants. Research activity can resume once IRB approval is reestablished.
- **Complete a new continuing review form** at least three to four weeks prior to the **date for continuing review** as noted above to provide sufficient time for the IRB to review and approve continuation of the study. We will send a courtesy reminder as this date approaches.

Research investigators are expected to comply with the principles of the Belmont Report, and state and federal regulations regarding the involvement of humans in research. These documents are located on the Office of Research Assurances website [[www.compliance.iastate.edu](http://www.compliance.iastate.edu)] or available by calling (515) 294-4566.

Upon completion of the project, please submit a Project Closure Form to the Office of Research Assurances, 1138 Pearson Hall, to officially close the project.

**APPENDIX B****INFORMED CONSENT DOCUMENT**

Iowa State University I

**Title of Study: The Voices and Experiences of Kirkwood Community College Students: Applying the Knowledge Gained in College 101 to the First Year of College**

**Investigator:** Wendy Lingo

This is a research study. Please take your time in deciding if you would like to participate. Please feel free to ask questions at any time.

**INTRODUCTION**

The purpose of this study is to learn about your first year at Kirkwood Community College. You will be asked to share ways your completion of College 101 at Kirkwood influenced your success as a student. You are being invited to participate in this study because you are a current student at Kirkwood Community College who successfully completed the College 101 course in your first semester at Kirkwood.

**DESCRIPTION OF PROCEDURES**

If you agree to participate in this study, your participation will last for one semester. You will be asked to meet for three meetings with the researcher (Wendy Lingo). The meetings will each take 90 minutes. You will receive \$5.00 as an appreciation for your participation for each of the three meetings with Wendy Lingo. You will be asked to sign an Iowa State University Research Participant Receipt Form (RPRF) acknowledging that you received the \$5.00 at each interview. The RPRF form is required by Iowa State University in order to comply with the State of Iowa, the internal revenue service (IRS) and funding agencies. If you do not wish to complete the RPRF you can also chose to participate in the study but decline the \$5.00 of appreciation fee.

You can expect the following procedures to be followed during this study. You will meet with Wendy Lingo for three meetings. At those meetings she will ask a series of questions regarding your experiences and insights about your first year at Kirkwood Community College. If at anytime you are uncomfortable responding to a question posed by Ms. Lingo you may ask to skip that question. Your interview will be recorded with audio recordings. Those recordings will then be transcribed into a word documents.

Wendy Lingo will examine the results of all interviews taking care to find themes you and others may have shared in the interview. Those themes will be coded in a qualitative research manner. Your statements and the statements of others will provide a basis for Ms. Lingo's dissertation study.

Ms. Lingo will keep a record of your name and contact information in a locked file in her home. The recordings and the contact information including your name will be kept securely in a locked file in Ms. Lingo's home for one year after the completion of this study. At that time they will be destroyed. The transcripts of your interviews will be held in a locked file in Ms. Lingo's home office and/or her Kirkwood work office. If any audio recordings and/or transcripts of the recordings are moved from one of Ms. Lingo's offices to the other they will be transported in a locked luggage bag. Transcripts, audio tapes and electronic records of your interview will be destroyed one year after the completion of Ms. Lingo's dissertation.

### RISKS

The probability for risk is minimal in this study. If, however, you experience physical and/or emotional discomfort during the interview, you may request that you be excused from the process.

### BENEFITS

If you decide to participate in this study, there are some possible indirect benefits to you. The interview process will give you an opportunity to reflect on your first year of college at Kirkwood. The information gained in this study will benefit society by providing valuable information that can be applied to designing programming and curriculum for first year students at Kirkwood and other similar community colleges.

### COSTS AND COMPENSATION

You do not have any costs from participating in this study. You will be compensated for participating in this study

You will receive \$5.00 as appreciation for your participation at each of the three meetings with Wendy Lingo for a total of \$15.00. If you decide you do not wish to continue in the study after the first interview, you will receive a total of \$5.00. If you decide you do not wish to continue in the study after two interviews, you will receive a total of \$10.00. You may chose to participate but decline the appreciation payment.

### PARTICIPANT RIGHTS

**Your participation in this study is completely voluntary and you may refuse to participate or leave the study at any time. If you decide not to participate in the study or leave the study early, it will not result in any penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.**

### CONFIDENTIALITY

Records identifying participants will be kept confidential to the extent permitted by applicable laws and regulations and will not be made publicly available. However, federal government regulatory agencies, auditing departments of Iowa State University, and the Institutional Review Board (a committee that reviews and approves human subject research

studies) may inspect and/or copy your records for quality assurance and data analysis. These records may contain private information.

To ensure confidentiality to the extent permitted by law, the following measures will be taken. Your interview will be recorded with audio recordings. There will be no reference to your name in the audio recordings. Ms. Lingo will keep the record of your name and contact information in a locked file in her home. The audio recording will be transcribed into a word document. The audio recordings and/or transcripts will be held in a locked file in Ms. Lingo's home office and/or her work office at Kirkwood. If any audio recordings and/or transcripts of the recordings are moved from one of Ms. Lingo's offices to the other they will be transported in a locked luggage bag. Any electronic records related to your interviews will be stored on Ms. Lingo's password protected home computer.

Transcripts of your interview, audio recordings, all electronic records and any records of your name and contact information will be destroyed one year after the completion of Ms. Lingo's dissertation. If the results are published, your identity will remain confidential.

## QUESTIONS OR PROBLEMS

You are encouraged to ask questions at any time during this study.

- For further information about the study contact  
Principal Investigator:  
Wendy Lingo  
2535 Heatherview Circle  
Marion Iowa 52302  
Home Phone: 319 373 5720  
Cell Phone: 319 360 9416  
Work Phone: 319 398 5436  
Email Address: [wlingo@kirkwood.edu](mailto:wlingo@kirkwood.edu)

Iowa State University Professor/Supervising Faculty:  
Dr. Larry Ebbers  
N226 Lagomarcino Hall  
Iowa State University  
Ames, Iowa  
Phone: 515 294 8067  
Email: [lebbers@iastate.edu](mailto:lebbers@iastate.edu)

- If you have any questions about the rights of research subjects or research-related injury, please contact the IRB Administrator, (515) 294-4566, [IRB@iastate.edu](mailto:IRB@iastate.edu), or Director, (515) 294-3115, Office of Research Assurances, Iowa State University, Ames, Iowa 50011.

\*\*\*\*\*

## PARTICIPANT SIGNATURE

Your signature indicates that you voluntarily agree to participate in this study, that the study has been explained to you, that you have been given the time to read the document and that your questions have been satisfactorily answered. You will receive a copy of the written informed consent prior to your participation in the study. Participant's Name (printed) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Participant's Signature)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Date)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Signature of Parent/Guardian or  
Legally Authorized Representative)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Date)

## INVESTIGATOR STATEMENT

I certify that the participant has been given adequate time to read and learn about the study and all of their questions have been answered. It is my opinion that the participant understands the purpose, risks, benefits and the procedures that will be followed in this study and has voluntarily agreed to participate.

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Signature of Person Obtaining  
Informed Consent)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Date)

**APPENDIX C****RECRUITMENT PHONE SCRIPT****Wendy Lingo IRB**

Phone calls will be made by Wendy Lingo.

The following script will be used:

Hello, I am Wendy Lingo. I am a counselor here at Kirkwood and I am interested in finding out about your first year at Kirkwood. I am a Doctoral student at Iowa State University and am working on the research for my dissertation. I am calling you to find out if you would be interested in participating in a research project regarding College 101 and your first year at Kirkwood. If you are interested I will schedule three, ninety minute interviews with you. I will have some prepared questions for you and will also encourage you to discuss your experiences in your first year at Kirkwood and the influences College 101 might and/or might not have had on that experience. Our interviews will be tape recorded. After the taping the interview will be transcribed to paper. At that time any reference to your name will be removed from the data. The transcribed record will serve as data for the dissertation study.

Your participation is voluntary and you may chose not to participate at anytime. Your name will not be used in any reporting of what you have told me. Your words and the transcripts of the interviews however may be used in the final presentation and/or publication of the data.

Do you have any questions so far? (Address questions)

Here is a review of what you are committing to:

Signature on an informed consent, confirming that you are agreeing to participate in this study.

Three 90 minute audio taped meetings with Wendy Lingo to discuss your first year at Kirkwood and the influences the College 101 course may or may not have had on your experience.

If the student expresses a willingness to participate Wendy will ask the student for their schedule and make arrangements for first meeting.

**APPENDIX D****INTERVIEW QUESTIONS**

Wendy Lingo IRB# 07-241

**Interview 1**

*Explain confidentiality of study and purpose in light of “The Voices and Experiences of Kirkwood Community College Students: Applying Knowledge Gained in College 101 to the First Year of College.” Researcher will disclose her role in College 101.*

1. Line of demographics related questioning
  - Age
  - Year last attended high school
  - Size of high school
  - Parent’s level of education
  - Cumulative GPA
  - Final grade in College 101
  - Anticipated graduation year
2. What was your high school experience like?
3. Looking back at your first year of college tell me how College 101 helped or did not help you transition to college.
4. Were you living at home or on your own your first year at Kirkwood?
5. Do you know where and/or how to contact your College 101 instructor(s)?
6. Have you contacted them for any reason since you took College 101?
7. If you were talking to a new Kirkwood student who asked you about taking College 101 what would you tell them?

**Interview 2**

*Check demographic information with interviewee. Summarize discussion from Interview 1 for checking and with the intention of transitioning to interview 2. Lead with “today I’d like to talk to you about your first year at Kirkwood Community College. ”*

1. Tell me about your academic experiences in your first year of college at Kirkwood.
2. Did your completion of College 101 influence your abilities to transition from high school coursework to that of college coursework?
3. Describe the social relationships you developed first year of college at Kirkwood

Do you think of these relationships as healthy relationships? If so why, if not why

4. Did your completion of College 101 influence your abilities to maintain healthy relationships and set relationship boundaries?
5. Did you find yourself making decisions independent of other people? If so, tell me how that felt.
6. Did your completion of College 101 influence your abilities to transition to making decisions independent of others?
7. Where did you live?  
Tell me about that experience.
8. Did your completion of College 101 influence your abilities to manage your living space and get along with those you were living with?
9. Do you think you maintained a healthy life style your first year of college at Kirkwood?  
If so, how did you do it?  
If not, why not?
10. Did your completion of College 101 influence your abilities to understand what a healthy lifestyle is and maintain a healthy lifestyle?
11. Do you think you successfully managed your time your first year of college at Kirkwood?  
If so, how did you did you do it?  
If not, why do you think that is?
12. Did your completion of College 101 influence your understanding and/or use of time management in college?
13. Did you choose a major and establish a career plan in first year of college at Kirkwood?  
If so, tell me about it.  
If not, why not?
14. Did your completion of College 101 influence you establish a major and/or develop a career plan?
15. Do you think you knew yourself any better after your first year of college?
16. Did your completion of College 101 assist you in learning about yourself?



17. Do you remember specific things about College 101 that encouraged your:

Academic success?

If so, how? If not, why not?

Ability to find services on campus?

If so, how? If not, why not?

Development of healthy relationships?

If so, how? If not, why not?

Adaptation to living on your own?

If so, how? If not, why not?

Development of independence?

If so, how? If not, why not?

Living a healthy lifestyle?

If so, how? If not, why not?

Managing your time?

If so, how? If not, why not?

Establishing a career path?

If so, how? If not, why not?

Understanding of who you.

If so how? If not, why not?

### Interview 3

Interview 2 questions will be driven by responses from interview 1 and 2. Interview 3 will allow the researcher an opportunity to apply member check for accuracy. In Interview 3 the researcher will review the respondent's answers to the following questions and ask the respondent to add to and/or correct any of their original responses. Interview 3 will ask the respondent to reflect on the meaning of the completion of their first year at Kirkwood.

First step will be to review responses from interviews 1 & 2 to check for accuracy.

1. Is there anything else you would like to tell me about your first year of college and/or your College 101 class?
2. If you were talking to a new Kirkwood student who asked you about taking College 101 what would you tell them?
3. What did the completion of your first year at Kirkwood mean to you?

**APPENDIX E**  
**COLLEGE 101 COURSE SYLLABUS**

**College 101 (SDV 109)**  
**Term, Year**

**Contact information**

**Instructor name:**  
**Campus address:**  
**Campus Phone:**  
**Email address:**  
**Office hours:**  
**Department Phone:**

**Section:**                      **Time:**                      **Building and Room #:**

**Course Description:** Develops academic success skills by connecting students to important resources and facilitating participation in college culture. Activities include study and classroom performance strategies, personal development, academic and career planning and exploring the college experience.

**General Course Goals:**

Arthur Chickering's Seven Vectors of Student Development serve as a foundation for College 101. The course assignments and activities are all designed to encourage student growth both in both academic and personal realms. The Vectors are as follows:

- Vector 1 Developing Competence intellectually, socially and physically
- Vector 2 Managing emotions
- Vector 3 Moving Through Autonomy Toward Interdependence
- Vector 4 Developing Mature Interpersonal Relationships
- Vector 5 Establishing Identity
- Vector 6 Developing Purpose
- Vector 7 Developing Integrity

**Learning Objectives:**

The student will:

1. Develop intellectual, social and physical (skills) competence. (Vector 1)
2. Develop the ability to recognize and accept emotions as well as to appropriately express and control them. (Vector 2)
3. View self as able to make decisions independent of others views. (Vector 3)
4. Develop a "tolerance" (embrace/honor/welcome/appreciate/value) and appreciation for others. (Vector 4)
5. Develop a positive sense of who one is. (Vector 6)
6. Develop a sense of purposeful vocational and personal goals. (Vector 7)
7. Develop a humanized value system in which the interests of others are balanced with one's own interests. (Vector 8)

**Evaluations will be based on:**

Your evaluations will be based on reading, attendance and participation in exercises and discussion, small group work, completion of both short and long assignments, projects, and quizzes, preparation for exams and exams.

**Learning Resources:**

A. Textbook:

Baldwin, A. (2007). *The College Experience: Plus*. New Jersey: Pearson Prentice Hall.

**Agreement for a Productive Learning Environment:**

We believe that the best learning takes place in an environment where faculty and students exhibit trust and mutual respect.

Students promote trust by preparing honest and thoughtful work, and by expecting evaluation based on performance. Faculty promote trust by setting clear guidelines for assignments and evaluations, honest feedback, and by assigning bias-free grades.

Students show respect by being prepared and attending class on time, by paying attention, contributing to discussions, listening respectfully to others' points of view, meeting deadlines, and by striving for their best performance. Faculty show respect by their timeliness and preparedness, by taking students seriously, by valuing their goals and aspirations, and by providing honest feedback.

In a productive learning environment, faculty and students work cooperatively, recognize and respect differences, model the values of character and citizenship. and become lifelong learners.

**Course Requirements:**

In order to receive course credit, students must:

Attend class and participate in classroom discussions and activities. If you do not attend class you are unable to participate. Excused absences can be issued at the discretion of the instructor. If you are going to be absent call or email your instructor.

Students must complete all activities and course assignments in an acceptable and timely manner.

**Course Policies:**

Students are expected to attend all class sessions. Absences will in no way lessen student responsibility for meeting the requirements of any class. Students are expected to know the attendance policy of this course. Failure to abide by the attendance policy may result in failure of the course.

Students are expected to be active learners through class participation, small group discussions, and in-class presentations. Students are expected to be thoughtful and civil in their interactions with others.

Personal issues discussed in this class DO NOT leave the classroom. The only exceptions to this policy will be:

1. If a student indicates they will harm themselves or others. In such case the instructor will notify the Dean of Students and/or law enforcement officials.
2. If the instructor feels they need clarification from another professional regarding strategy to assist each of you in your success at Kirkwood.

Student behavior that is disruptive or prevents other students from learning is inappropriate in a college classroom and instructors reserve the right to ask the offending students to control their behavior or leave for the day. Once the class is in session, the focus should be on thinking, discussion, and learning.

In the interest of preserving an effective learning environment, as free of as many disruptions as possible, all cellular telephones and pagers must be turned off or placed in a non-audible mode while in the classroom.

Kirkwood Community College endeavors to reinforce the value of independent, honest work on the part of the students. Students are expected to conduct themselves with scholarly integrity. Cheating and plagiarism are serious acts of misconduct and shall be subject to disciplinary action, including possible expulsion from the college.

#### **Plagiarism Policy:**

According to Webster, to plagiarize is “to steal or pass off the ideas or words of another as one’s own to use created productions without crediting the source to commit literary theft present as new and original an idea or product derived from an existing source.”

**Kirkwood Students are responsible for authenticating any assignment submitted to an instructor. If asked, you must be able to produce proof that the assignment you submit is actually your own work. Therefore, we recommend that you engage in a verifiable working process on assignments. Keep copies of all drafts of your work, make photocopies of research materials, write summaries of research materials, hang onto Writing Center receipts, keep logs or journals of your work on assignments and papers, learn to save drafts or versions of assignments under individual file names on computer or diskette, etc.**

The inability to authenticate your work, should an instructor request it, is a sufficient ground for failing the assignment.

In addition to requiring a student to authenticate his/her work, Kirkwood Community College instructors may employ various other means of ascertaining authenticity – such as engaging in Internet searches, creating quizzes based on student work, requiring students to explain their work and/or process orally, etc.

#### **Americans with Disabilities Act:**

Students with disabilities who need accommodations to achieve course objectives should file an accommodation application with the Learning Services in 133 Linn Hall as soon as possible.

#### **Drop Date:**

The last day to drop is 75% through the course. The drop date is listed on the Academic Calendar.

**End-of-Semester Course Grade:** You can obtain your final grade in this course by accessing your grade off the Kirkwood webpage through the EagleNet system. To comply with federal guidelines, final grades are not posted or mailed.

**College Closings & Delays:** At various times throughout the semester we may experience weather-related closing or delays. The college policy is that students should report to whatever class would normally be in session when the campus opens.

### Course Plan and Point Scale

The following outlines the assignments and due dates for assignments.

DATE DUE	ASSIGNMENT:	POINTS POSSIBLE:	POINTS EARNED:
	Participation/Preparedness/Attendance- 5 points possible per class	145	
08/23/07	Take-home Syllabus Quiz	10	
08/30/07	Places to Go assignment	10	
09/06/07	Who Am I? Assignment	20	
09/11/07	Chapter 12 IR pg. 316	5	
09/13/07	Food Diary	10	
09/18/07	Chapter 8 IR pg. 224	5	
09/20/07	Study Reflection Chap 8 pg. 222	10	
09/25/07	Reading log pg. 189	5	
09/25/07	Chapter 7 IR pg. 104	5	
09/25/07	Chapter 10 IR pg. 274	5	
09/27/07	OK5R Assignment	10	
10/02/07	Chapter 5 IR p. 146	5	
10/16/07	What I Already Know midterm	20	
10/23/07	Time Monitor	10	
10/30/07	Instructor Interview	20	
11/01/07	Two Year Academic Plan	20	
11/01/07	Exercise 6.5 Chapter notes	10	
11/01/07	Note taking reflection pg. 162	5	
11/18/07	Mid-Term Grade Report and Conference	20	
11/20/07	Writing Center Assignment	20	
	Online test	10	
	MBTI Reflection	20	
	CSI Reflection	20	
	Combating Test Anxiety Reflection	10	
	Letter to a student	10	
	Boundaries	20	
Final	Who I Am Now reflection	20	
Final	Portfolio & Presentation	100	

**Total Pts.**

**580**

**Grading Scale**

A	93-100%
A-	90-92%
B+	87-89%
B	83-86%
B-	80-82%
C+	77-79%
C	73-76%
C-	70-72%
D+	67-69%
D	63-66%
D-	60-62%
F	0-59%

**Appendix F**  
**College 101**  
**Student Success Measures**

	Students Enrolling in College 101	Students Completing College 101 (W's Removed)	Students Successfully Completing College 101	All Arts & Sciences Students	All Kirkwood Students	1st Semester Arts & Sciences Students	1st Semester Kirkwood Students	1st Semester Non-College 101 Arts & Sciences Students	1st Semester Non-College 101 Kirkwood Students
<b>Fall 2005 College 101 Students</b>	292	245	218	9,112	15,112	3,887	5,928	3,690	5,907
<b>Percentage of Students Returning (Who Did Not Graduate) of Fall 2005 Students:</b>									
Fall 2005 to Spring 2006	88.7%	91.8%	94.0%	70.1%	73.3%	70.0%	71.2%	68.7%	71.2%
Fall 2005 to Fall 2006	64.4%	70.2%	74.3%	46.1%	50.8%	47.3%	50.1%	45.8%	49.9%
Fall 2005 to Spring 2007	61.3%	65.7%	69.7%	38.8%	43.7%	41.0%	43.7%	39.4%	43.5%
Fall 2005 to Fall 2007	39.3%	41.7%	43.4%	26.3%	30.0%	26.9%	28.5%	26.2%	28.4%
Fall 2005 to Spring 2008	27.9%	28.6%	31.3%	21.7%	25.6%	21.6%	23.6%	21.2%	23.4%
<b>Number of Credits Successfully Completed by Fall 2005 Students:</b>									
Fall 2005	11.7	11.9	12.2	8.6	8.8	8.8	9.0	8.5	9.1
Spring 2006	11.6	11.8	12.0	9.2	9.4	9.6	10.0	9.3	10.0
Fall 2006	12.0	12.1	12.1	9.1	9.2	10.2	10.5	10.0	10.5
Spring 2007	12.0	12.1	12.1	9.2	9.1	10.4	10.6	10.2	10.6
Fall 2007	9.7	9.8	10.1	8.4	8.1	9.6	9.4	9.5	9.4
Spring 2008	10.4	10.7	10.8	8.9	8.8	9.9	9.9	9.8	9.9
<b>Average Term GPA of Fall 2005 Students:</b>									
Fall 2005	2.18	2.42	2.67	2.16	2.26	2.10	2.18	2.07	2.18
Spring 2006	2.00	2.11	2.24	2.21	2.29	2.12	2.20	2.12	2.20
Fall 2006	2.06	2.13	2.23	2.11	2.16	2.10	2.13	2.08	2.12
Spring 2007	2.33	2.36	2.45	2.21	2.25	2.23	2.25	2.20	2.25
Fall 2007	1.86	1.88	2.00	1.99	2.02	1.98	2.00	1.98	2.00
Spring 2008	2.26	2.21	2.26	2.09	2.11	2.11	2.09	2.09	2.09

**College 101  
Student Success Measures  
Continued**

	Students Enrolling in College 101	Students Completing College 101 (W's Removed)	Students Successfully Completing College 101	All Arts & Sciences Students	All Kirkwood Students	1st Semester Arts & Sciences Students	1st Semester Kirkwood Students	1st Semester Non-College 101 Arts & Sciences Students	1st Semester Non-College 101 Kirkwood Students
<b>Fall 2006 College 101 Students</b>	College 101	(W's Removed)	College 101						
<b>Number of Students</b>	524	457	384	8,928	15,064	3,616	5,605	3,303	5,260
<b>Percentage of Students Returning (Who Did Not Graduate) of Fall 2006 Students:</b>									
Fall 2006 to Spring 2007	82.8%	86.4%	93.7%	70.4%	73.0%	69.0%	69.6%	66.6%	68.0%
Fall 2006 to Fall 2007	62.1%	65.8%	71.9%	46.0%	50.0%	46.6%	48.8%	44.3%	47.3%
Fall 2006 to Spring 2008	54.9%	60.2%	66.8%	35.0%	37.7%	39.0%	41.1%	36.4%	39.4%
Fall 2006 to Fall 2008	34.1%	37.2%	40.8%	25.9%	29.7%	25.9%	28.2%	24.8%	27.5%
Fall 2006 to Spring 2009	27.3%	30.1%	32.9%	21.5%	26.0%	21.0%	23.9%	20.2%	23.4%
<b>Number of Credits Successfully Completed by Fall 2006 Students:</b>									
Fall 2006	11.1	11.3	11.8	8.5	8.8	8.4	9.0	8.0	8.8
Spring 2007	11.1	11.3	11.5	9.1	9.3	9.1	9.6	8.7	9.4
Fall 2007	11.5	11.6	11.8	9.2	9.3	10.2	10.6	9.9	10.4
Spring 2008	12.2	12.3	12.4	9.8	9.9	10.9	11.1	10.6	10.9
Fall 2008	10.5	10.7	10.6	9.0	9.1	10.0	10.3	10.0	10.3
<b>Average Term GPA of Fall 2006 Students:</b>									
Fall 2006	2.07	2.30	2.68	2.21	2.28	2.21	2.25	2.16	2.22
Spring 2007	1.94	2.07	2.23	2.19	2.27	2.12	2.21	2.11	2.21
Fall 2007	1.94	2.06	2.19	2.04	2.12	2.04	2.11	2.00	2.09
Spring 2008	2.18	2.25	2.37	2.18	2.25	2.26	2.31	2.23	2.30
Fall 2008	2.00	2.02	2.07	1.97	2.05	1.99	2.04	1.98	2.03



**College 101  
Student Success Measures  
Continued**

	Students Enrolling in College 101	Students Completing College 101 (W's Removed)	Students Successfully Completing College 101	All Arts & Sciences Students	All Kirkwood Students	1st Semester Arts & Sciences Students	1st Semester Kirkwood Students	1st Semester Non-College 101 Arts & Sciences Students	1st Semester Non-College 101 Kirkwood Students
<b>Fall 2007 College 101 Students</b>	741	633	526	8,771	15,091	3,364	5,609	2,914	5,129
<b>Percentage of Students Returning (Who Did Not Graduate) of Fall 2007 Students:</b>									
Fall 2007 to Spring 2008	82.5%	87.5%	93.3%	70.1%	72.5%	69.4%	69.7%	65.8%	67.5%
Fall 2007 to Fall 2008	60.8%	66.5%	73.6%	45.5%	49.1%	48.3%	48.2%	44.1%	45.6%
Fall 2007 to Spring 2009	54.0%	60.0%	67.6%	38.2%	42.7%	42.2%	42.3%	37.9%	39.7%
<b>Number of Credits Successfully Completed by Fall 2007 Students:</b>									
Fall 2007	11.0	11.3	11.8	8.6	8.7	8.9	8.9	8.2	8.6
Spring 2008	12.0	12.2	12.3	9.8	10.0	10.5	10.6	10.1	10.3
Fall 2008	11.9	12.2	12.3	9.8	10.0	11.1	11.2	10.7	11.0
<b>Average Term GPA of Fall 2007 Students:</b>									
Fall 2007	2.04	2.31	2.70	2.15	2.22	2.08	2.10	1.98	2.04
Spring 2008	1.84	1.99	2.17	2.14	2.25	2.05	2.16	2.02	2.15
Fall 2008	1.99	2.09	2.21	2.07	2.13	2.09	2.12	2.06	2.10

**College 101  
Student Success Measures  
Continued**

	Students Enrolling in College 101	Students Completing College 101 (W's Removed)	Students Successfully Completing College 101	All Arts & Sciences Students	All Kirkwood Students	1st Semester Arts & Sciences Students	1st Semester Kirkwood Students	1st Semester Non-College 101 Arts & Sciences Students	1st Semester Non-College 101 Kirkwood Students
Fall 2008 College 101 Students	736	637	547	8,458	15,241	3,372	6,260	2,899	5,758
<b>Percentage of Students Returning (Who Did Not Graduate) of Fall 2007 Students:</b>									
Fall 2008 to Spring 2009	83.4%	87.9%	93.4%	71.2%	71.1%	71.3%	65.8%	67.6%	63.4%
<b>Number of Credits Successfully Completed by Fall 2007 Students:</b>									
Fall 2008	12.1	12.5	12.6	9.3	9.2	9.6	9.1	9.1	8.7
<b>Average Term GPA of Fall 2007 Students:</b>									
Fall 2008	2.08	2.33	2.66	2.21	2.18	2.15	2.01	2.07	1.96

## APPENDIX G

## College 101 FINAL STUDENT EVALUATION

Directions: Check (x) your responses in the columns on this form, and fill in the dots on the Scantron form as well. Please put your course section number in the "Date" section.

**Your responses are anonymous and will be considered collectively. Your comments and feedback are welcome and will be very helpful to us in improving this course for future students.**

A YES	B NO	C MAYBE	QUESTION #
			1. Are you aware of student support services and feel you know how to access them as a result of taking this course. Ex: Student Health, Counseling Services, etc... Comments:
			2. Has your level of comfort in approaching your instructors at Kirkwood increased as a result of taking this course? Comments:
			4. Do you think you will be more successful in college as a result of taking this course? Comments:
			5. Do you feel like you have developed more connections to people at Kirkwood (faculty, staff and students) by taking this course than you would have without it? Comments:

## COLLEGE 101 FINAL STUDENT EVALUATION CONTINUED

			6. Do you have a better understanding of the career possibilities for you as a result of this course? Comments:
			7. Has your understanding of your personal values and the values of others increased as a result of taking this course? Comments:
			8. With the assistance of an advisor, do you feel comfortable planning your schedule and academic plan as a result of taking this course? Comments:
			9. Do you feel you have a better understanding of the academic demands of college as a result of taking this course? Comments:
			10. Do you feel better equipped to understand and develop strategies to insure your academic and personal success as a result of taking this course? Comments:
			11. Would you recommend this course to new first-year Kirkwood students? Under "comments", indicate why or why not. Comments:

**College 101 FINAL STUDENT EVALUATION CONTINUED**

**Please add additional feedback here:**

What did you like best about this course?

Is there anything you think should be changed in this course? If so, please explain.

Is there anything else you would like to tell us?