In their own words, "The impact of a freshman seminar"

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In their own words, "The impact of a freshman seminar"

by

Kari Ann Ditsworth

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

MASTER OF SCIENCE

Major: Education (Higher Education)

Major Professor: Daniel C. Robinson

Iowa State University

Ames, Iowa

1998

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This is to certify that the Master’s thesis of

Kari Ann Ditsworth

has met the thesis requirements of Iowa State University

Signatures have been redacted for privacy
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ABSTRACT

Freshman seminars are courses designed to help first year students make the transition from high school to college and help them succeed in the classroom. In 1996, a retention-based program was developed to assist a group of freshman scholarship winners at Iowa State University. The purpose of this study was to describe how attending the Hixson Scholars Seminar: University 111 impacted the students' freshman year experience. Three focus group interviews were conducted with seven seminar participants invited to attend each session. In-depth, detailed descriptions obtained using qualitative methods helped the researcher accurately describe the seminar participants' experiences. The study addressed the following questions: (1) what are the reasons for having a freshman seminar; (2) how did the seminar affect the students' approach to their course work; (3) what specific ways did the seminar help students make the transition from high school to college; and (5) would the students want to attend a freshman seminar if they were not required to do so?

The Hixson Scholars reported that the seminar helped them make the transition from high school to college by providing strategies for adjusting to college life and getting involved in extracurricular activities. The seminar assignments and activities helped the students develop academic competence, make new friends and interact with faculty and staff members. The most important aspect of attending the freshman seminar was the relationship they developed with the Hixson Scholars Seminar leader. The students felt confident that someone at Iowa State knew them personally and cared about their academic and personal well-being. The students agreed that the Hixson Scholars Seminar impacted their freshman
year experience and provided them with information they needed to be successful at Iowa State. If attendance were not required, the majority of the students said they would still want to attend a freshman seminar.
CHAPTER 1. OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

Introduction

Each year millions of eager freshmen flock to colleges and universities with the hope of attaining a higher education. Research indicates that nearly half of these students will leave their institution during their freshman year (Noel, 1985; Terenzini, 1986). For instance, in 1993, approximately 2.4 million students began college for the first time. Roughly 1.5 million of these students left their first institution without receiving a degree, and approximately 75% of these students who departed from their initial institution did not enroll in another institution. In short, about 40 students out of 100 will leave the system of higher education without earning any type of college degree (Tinto, 1993). The majority will make this decision during their first year of attendance and many will leave in the first six to eight weeks of their initial semester (Blanc, Debuhr, & Martin, 1983).

Research indicates that the freshman year is a critical period during which students are most likely to withdraw from higher education. Given these alarmingly high rates of attrition during the freshman year, student affairs administrators have focused on early and overt efforts to help students persist. For example, the American Council on Education (1995) reported that in 1995, 82% of colleges and universities were taking steps to improve the first year experience compared to 37% in 1987 (p. 7).

The most common intervention to assist freshmen has been various types of orientation programs. An orientation program can be defined as “any effort to help freshmen make the transition from their previous environment to the collegiate environment and
enhance their success” (Upcraft & Gardner, 1989, p.82). For the purpose of this study, success was defined as the student reporting a positive experience at college.

Most orientation programs occur before classes start and do not extend beyond the start of classes. Pascarella, Terenzini and Wolfle (1986) found that initiatives are necessary beyond the first week of classes. They recommended that “rather than a one-time experience of limited duration preceding enrollment, orientation to college might be more effectively conceived as an institution’s ongoing attempt to enhance students’ successful integration into the campus academic and social systems throughout the entire year” (p. 172). Forrest (1982) noted:

Probably the single most important move an institution can make to increase student persistence to graduation is to ensure that the students receive the guidance they need at the beginning of the journey through college to graduation. . . . This guidance system should continue as a formal course during the first term on campus. (p. 44)

To bridge the gap between new student orientation programs and the start of classes, institutions developed freshman seminars to help students adjust to college and become aware of the expectations associated with achieving a higher education. “Freshman seminar” is a term that has been used to describe two primary types of courses—the first, focusing on providing students an extended orientation to campus and higher education, and the second, complementing the more traditional academic seminar course in which students work with faculty to devise career goals and plan their curriculum (Barefoot & Fidler, 1994).

Studies across the country illustrate that freshman seminars are the most common structure being implemented to improve the freshman year (A new approach, 1995). In 1994 the National Resource Center found that of 1,003 institutions around the country, 725 offered
a freshman seminar course. An additional 56 institutions reported that they planned to offer a freshman seminar course in the 1995-1996 academic year (Campus Trends, 1995, p.7).

Clearly, the freshman seminar is becoming more prevalent on campuses across the country.

The content and structure of freshman seminars vary at different institutions of higher education (Barefoot, 1992; Cuseo, 1990; Fidler, 1988). Some seminars meet several times a week and are offered for credit towards graduation. Other institutions offer a non-credit class that meets for one hour a week. Regardless of the format, many freshman seminars attempt to discuss both academic and adjustment issues (Gordon, 1989). For example, many seminars discuss career exploration, social adjustment, study skills, stress management, leadership opportunities, and a variety of other topics depending on the goals of the course.

The most widely studied and recognized freshman seminar is University 101, the freshman seminar at the University of South Carolina. A wide variety of seminars is offered for specific disciplines or individuals considered to be at-risk students—coming from less affluent families, having weaker academic skills, or being first generation minority students. Despite these risk factors, participants in the program have had equal or greater retention rates than non-participants for the twenty years the program has been evaluated (Fidler & Hunter, 1989).

The University of South Carolina is not the only institution that offers freshman seminars to support specific groups at their institution. Studies have indicated that the majority of freshman seminars in existence is targeted for specific populations of students. Iowa State University, a public land-grant research university with an enrollment of 26,000
students, recently implemented a freshman seminar course to ensure the success of a group of freshmen scholarship winners.

In 1995, Christina Hixson, on behalf of the Lied Foundation, donated five million dollars to support scholarships for freshmen from each of Iowa’s 99 counties (Siebert, 1995, p. 1A). The Opportunity Awards were intended to assist Iowa high school students who, because of challenging environments or circumstances, may not have otherwise attended college. In addition, the recipients had to demonstrate financial need, be residents of Iowa, possess the ability to succeed, and meet the admission criteria for Iowa State University.

In 1996 a retention-based program, called the Hixson Scholars Seminar: University Studies 111, was developed to help acclimate the students with university services, provide a structured weekly contact and an intrusive advising relationship with faculty members, and establish relationships among the Hixson recipients (Sanborn, 1996a). In the seminar students learn university traditions, interact with faculty and staff members, discuss leadership opportunities and learn ways to manage stress.

Statement of the Problem

One of the single most pressing issues facing higher education according to the Association for Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges, is the retention and graduation of students (Ten Public Policy Issues, 1996). “Over the four year sector generally, the total rate of four-year degree completion can be estimated to be roughly 61%—i.e. 39% of all entrants depart from the higher education system without their four-year degrees” (Tinto, 1987, p. 17). Research clearly indicates that the freshman year is a critical
period during which students are most likely to withdraw from higher education. The freshman seminar is a proven and effective way of enhancing freshman success (Barefoot & Fidler, 1994; Beal & Noel, 1980; Cuseo, 1990; Keenan & Gabovitch, 1995; Shanley & Witten, 1990; Tinto, 1994; Upcraft & Gardner, 1989).

Institutions have an obligation to support and enhance the freshman year. Freshman seminars increase retention and help freshmen achieve their academic and personal goals. It can be the glue that holds together and solidifies all efforts to enhance freshman academic and personal success. (Upcraft & Gardner, 1989, p. 5)

Although the benefits of the freshman seminar are well documented, the majority of institutions offering these programs continue to reserve them for special populations of students. In a recent study of 34 colleges and institutions that offer freshman seminar courses, Barefoot (1992) found that the majority of institutions reserve the programs for special populations of at-risk students. Institutions are reluctant to implement a freshman seminar course for all students because of the expenses involved in hiring enough staff to facilitate the small group sections (Cuseo, 1990).

There is evidence, however, that freshman seminar programs can be cost effective. Revenue generated by increases in student retention more than offsets the course expenditures (Ketkar & Bennett, 1989). Barefoot (1990) found that:

... freshman seminars have garnered strong support not only because they meet the needs of entering students, but also because they bring clear yields in terms of dollars and sense—that is, freshman seminars predictably increase retention rates and GPA's for participating students. (p. 12)

In addition, a study conducted by Fidler and Hunter (1989) concluded that the freshman seminar “can help the talented student perform better academically while at the same time
helping weaker students survive” (p. 228). The freshman seminar is an educational and economical tool that should be implemented for every freshman student at institutions of higher education.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to describe how attending the Hixson Scholars Seminar: University Studies 111 at Iowa State University impacts the students’ freshman year experience. The intent of this research was to assist student affairs professionals in evaluating and designing freshman seminar programs. By gathering this data, this researcher hoped to identify the key components that impacted the students’ freshman year experiences so that they may be replicated in programs for every freshman student.

Three focus group interviews involving Hixson Scholars were conducted with the intent of hearing, in the students’ own words, how participating in the Hixson Seminar impacted their freshman year experience. The information gained can be utilized by student affairs administrators and faculty members to develop and evaluate freshman seminars. In addition, the information will complement the current literature on the freshman experience by adding valuable qualitative findings to the existing body of knowledge.

Research Questions

The research questions in this study originated from the review of literature, an interview conducted with Debra Sanborn, the Director of the Christina Hixson Opportunity Awards and observations of the Hixson Seminar. This study focused on the impact of attending the Hixson Scholars Seminar: University Studies 111. There is a substantial body
of empirical evidence that supports the value of the freshman seminar for promoting students’ academic achievement and persistence towards graduation. This study did not address issues of the freshman seminars’ effect on identity formation and moral development.

The primary objective of this study was to identify the key components that impacted the students’ freshman year experience so they may be replicated in programs to assist every freshman student. This study enabled the students to communicate in their own words the factors that impacted their freshman year experience. To gain a greater understanding of the experiences of the participants in the Hixson Scholars Seminar, this study addressed the following questions:

1. What do the students feel are the reasons for having a freshman seminar?
2. What was the most helpful part of the seminar?
3. What was the least helpful part of the seminar?
4. How did the seminar affect the students’ approach to their coursework?
5. If the students were not required to attend a freshman seminar, would they still want to participate in a freshman seminar?
6. What specific ways did the seminar help the students make the transition from high school to college?
7. What do the students feel they have learned from participating in the freshman seminar?
Significance of the Study

Currently, freshman seminars are being implemented on approximately two-thirds of the nation’s colleges and university campuses to help students make the transition from high school to college and help them succeed in the classroom (Barefoot, 1992). Since the creation of the freshman seminar in the 1970’s, many studies have been conducted demonstrating that these courses improve retention rates and increase students’ academic performance (Barefoot & Fidler, 1994; Beal & Noel, 1980; Cuseo, 1990; Keenan & Gabovitch, 1995; Shanley & Witten, 1990; Tinto, 1994; Upcraft & Gardner, 1989). Barefoot (1992) stated that “there is more research to be done to demonstrate the ways in which students benefit from freshman seminars” (p. 7). She acknowledged that researchers have focused on retention and academics and maybe overlooking some of the most important ways that freshman seminars affect students.

The current study will: (1) add to the body of knowledge on freshman seminars; (2) add qualitative data to the vast amount of quantitative data in existence; (3) help identify the components that impacted the students’ freshman year experience in the Hixson Seminar; (4) assist student affairs professionals in evaluating and designing freshman seminars; and (5) provide evidence supporting the claim that freshman seminars have the potential to benefit all students.

This study will complement the current literature about the value of freshman seminars by adding valuable qualitative findings to the existing body of knowledge. Specifically, it will offer, in the students’ own words, information about what has impacted their freshman year experience. The majority of the studies examining the freshman year
experience use quantitative methodologies. Recently more institutions, such as the University of South Carolina, have begun to add a few open-ended questions at the end of their longitudinal surveys. However, this researcher has not found any studies of freshman seminars using exclusively qualitative methodologies.

In addition, this study will provide information to assist student affairs professionals and faculty members in evaluating and designing freshman seminar programs by identifying the key components which the students identify as impacting their freshman year experience. This information can be used to improve existing seminars or it can be used to create new seminars designed to help freshman students find success in college.

Finally, this study will provide information supporting the need to have freshman seminars for all students. It is the hope of this researcher that the information will compel student affairs administrators to give careful thought to implementing freshman seminars for every freshman student entering the college or university.

**Organization of Study**

This study examines the experiences of students who attended a freshman seminar program, University Studies 111, at Iowa State University. The information will assist student affairs professionals in evaluating and designing freshman seminar programs. By adding to the body of knowledge about freshman seminar programs, this study may assist colleges and universities to improve undergraduate education, increase retention and graduation rates and assist freshmen in making the transition from high school to college.
The remainder of this study explores the impact of attending the Hixson Scholars Seminar: University Studies 111. Chapter 2 is a review of literature that is divided into three sections. The first section, the origin and purpose of the freshman seminar, describes first year students and provides examples of successful programs. The second section outlines the developmental aspects of the freshman seminar. Cognitive and psychosocial theories as well as typological models for enhancing students’ success will be described. The final section provides evidence of how freshman seminars impact participants’ freshman year experience.

Chapter 3 describes the research methods used to obtain the data in the study including the research design, data collection methods, data analysis, establishing trustworthiness, and ethical considerations. A description of the subjects and the participant selection methods are illustrated. Chapter 4 describes the results of the study organized by the five themes that evolved as a result of data analysis: (1) orientation to campus; (2) impact of seminar assignments/activities; (3) developing academic competence; (4) student interaction with peers; and (5) student interaction with faculty/staff. Finally, Chapter 5 summarizes the findings in the study and discusses the implications of the information gained in the study. It also offers suggestions for future research on freshman seminars.
CHAPTER 2. REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

The review of the literature summarizes past research and presents evidence that freshman seminar programs enhance students’ academic and personal success. The chapter is organized into three sections: origin of the freshman seminar, developmental aspects of the freshman seminar and impact of the seminar. The first section describes who today’s first year students are and what needs they have when they enter an institution of higher education. The origin and purpose of orientation are described and the development of the freshman seminar is explained. University 101, the widely studied freshman seminar at the University of South Carolina is presented as an example of a successful program. The Hixson Scholars Seminar: University Studies 111 at Iowa State University, is also discussed as it is the focus of this study.

The second section of this chapter describes the developmental aspects of the freshman seminar. Several cognitive and psychosocial theories utilized by institutions to develop and implement freshman seminars are discussed. The use of typological models for enhancing student success will also be addressed. This section provides a foundation for understanding the development of freshman college students.

The final section of this paper discusses the impact of the freshman seminar. Prior studies will be examined to provide evidence that freshman seminars impact first year experiences and encourage the retention of students. Conclusions from the research will be
provided and specific activities from freshman seminars across the country will be highlighted.

**Origin of the Freshman Seminar**

The first section of this chapter is an introduction to the freshman seminar and an examination of the salient characteristics of freshman students. Next, the history of orienting students will be discussed as well as current orientation programs designed to help freshman make the transition from high school to college. The freshman seminar, which originated out of institutions’ desire to extend orientation efforts throughout the first semester, will be described. University 101, the most widely known and studied freshman seminar will be examined as a model freshman seminar. Finally, the Hixson Seminar: University 111, will be discussed as it is the focus of this study.

**Freshman characteristics**

Each year millions of students enter a university or college with the hope of attaining a higher education. Since 1590, new students have been referred to as *freshmen*, or newcomers in the field (Dwyer, 1989). More recently, institutions have acknowledged that many freshman students are still classified as freshman into their sophomore year by the number of credit hours they carry. For this reason, many institutions now refer to true freshman as first year students. The term *freshman* will be used throughout this study to mean a student in his or her first year of attendance.

Today, freshmen bring new concerns and issues to campus that need to be addressed by student affairs’ professionals and faculty. Brown (1989) described typical freshmen as
probably a little bit homesick, terrified to be on their own, not yet comfortable with
themselves, and academically underprepared. On the other hand, freshmen may be excited to
be on their own, anxious to have new social experiences, and eager to earn their degree.

Students entering colleges and universities today are much more diverse than the
students who first entered institutions of higher education. They will be more likely to live at
home, enroll part time and take longer than four years to graduate (cited in Upcraft &
Gardner, 1989). Today, 52% of all those earning a bachelor’s degree are women as
compared to 32% in 1952 (El-Khawas, 1996). More African Americans, Asian Americans,
Hispanics, and Native Americans were enrolled in 1993 than ever before. Students are
entering institutions later in their lives. “In 1992, a majority of undergraduate students, 55%
or 7 million students were over twenty-one, and 41%, or 5.1 million students, were over
twenty-four years of age” (El-Khawas, 1996, p. 69).

“Institutions must take into account the racial, cultural, ethnic, age, and gender
diversity of freshman” (Upcraft & Gardner, 1989, p. 4). Programs should be based on this
diversity, and not on historical stereotypes of the freshman student. Awareness of the
diversity among freshman students will assist student affairs professionals and faculty in
designing freshman seminars. Activities that discuss diversity and identity development will
courage students to recognize and celebrate their differences.

Orienting new students to campus

Because of the diverse student population that comes to campus each year, the need to
orient new students to college has been acknowledged early in the history of higher education
(Fitts & Swift, 1928; Rudolph, 1990). In 1640, the President of Harvard University implemented the first system of freshman counselors to ease the young man’s transition from home to college (Dwyer, 1989). Dunster and his colleagues at Harvard recognized that freshmen need assistance adjusting to their new physical and social surroundings and to academic expectations.

Orientation courses evolved out of institutions’ continued support for new students. In 1889, Harvard appointed a board of freshman advisors to help counsel and guide students through the classic curriculum (Rudolph, 1962). Years later, the President of Stanford University articulated the importance of guiding the freshman since the student is “led, not driven, to choose his field” (Gordon, 1989, p. 184). Stanford University later established faculty mentors to serve as role models and provide advice to new students.

The role of orienting students to college continues to be a vital part of higher education. Institutions utilize orientation programs in three stages: “any effort to help freshman make the transition from their previous environment to the collegiate environment and enhance their success” (Upcraft & Gardner, 1989, p. 82). The first stage involves efforts to inform prospective students about the institution and encourage enrollment. The second stage is characterized by special programs set up which provide more information for the student about enrolling in classes. These are opportunities for students and their families to spend a day at the institution. In the third stage, students officially register for classes. This often occurs prior to the start of classes in the fall and is an opportunity to highlight campus services, orient new students to college life and describe the requirements for obtaining a degree (Perigo & Upcraft, 1989).
In addition to this brief introduction, many campuses require students to attend an academic orientation session for the first part of the semester to explore academic issues and plan the students’ curricula. Orientation courses are seen as “skills courses where knowledge and coping strategies are taught to freshmen” (Upcraft & Gardner, 1989, p. 190). However, often these courses are only offered for part of one semester and usually do not cover issues of time management, study skills, developing identity or getting involved on campus (Upcraft & Gardner, 1989).

Studies have shown that initiatives are necessary beyond the first few weeks of classes. Forrest (1982) concluded:

Probably the single most important move an institution can make to increase student persistence to graduation is to ensure that the students receive the guidance they need at the beginning of the journey through college to graduation. This guidance system should continue as a formal course during the first term on campus. (p. 44)

To bridge the gap between new student orientation programs and the start of classes, institutions developed freshman seminars to help students adjust to college and become aware of the expectations associated with achieving a higher education. Researchers had observed an unhealthy separation between academic and nonacademic life (Boyer, 1987). The freshman seminar integrates “both academic and personal-adjustment issues and an introduction to the purpose of higher education” (Upcraft & Gardner, 1989, p. 191).

**Freshman seminar**

“Freshman seminar” is a term that has been used to describe two primary types of courses. The first type focuses on providing students an extended orientation to campus and
higher education. The second type complements the more traditional academic seminar course in which students work with faculty to devise career goals and plan their curriculum (Barefoot & Fidler, 1994). Overall, it is a course designed to maximize the student’s potential to achieve academic success and to adjust responsibly to the individual and interpersonal challenges presented by collegiate life.

Freshman seminars have been part of the curriculum at American colleges and universities for over 100 years (Fidler & Fidler, 1991). The first freshman seminar was offered in 1882 at Lee College in Kentucky. The first “for-credit” seminar became part of the curriculum at Reed College in 1911. Some of the topics that were offered in the first seminars and are still part of the curriculum today include: study skills, the history of the college, involvement in extracurricular activities, the college curriculum, career counseling, rules and regulations, time management, and making the transition from high school to college (Gordon, 1989).

The popularity of freshman seminars continues to grow. Studies across the country indicate that freshman seminars are the most common structure being implemented to improve the freshman year (A new approach, 1995). In 1994, the National Resource Center surveyed all accredited colleges and universities in the United States with a population over 100. Of the 1,003 institutions that replied to the survey, 723 reported offering a freshman seminar (Barefoot & Fidler, 1994). An additional 56 institutions reported that they planned to offer a freshman seminar course in the 1995-1996 academic year (Campus Trends, 1995, p. 7).
The content and structure of freshman seminars vary at different institutions of higher education (Barefoot, 1992; Cuseo, 1990; Fidler, 1991). At some institutions, seminars meet several times a week and are offered for credit towards graduation. Other institutions offer a non-credit class which meets for one hour a week. Researchers recommend that the seminar last for one full semester during the freshman student's initial semester on campus. In addition, it is recommended that the freshman seminar is offered for credit or is included in the general education requirements (Barefoot, 1992; Cuseo, 1990; Fidler, 1991; Upcraft & Garder, 1989). By giving academic credit for the class, the institution shows support and emphasizes the importance of attending the freshman seminar for all students (Cuseo, 1990).

Regardless of the format, freshman seminars attempt to discuss both academic and adjustment issues (Gordon, 1989). For example, many seminars discuss career exploration, social adjustment, study skills, stress management, leadership opportunities, and a variety of other topics depending on the goals of the course. The most widely studied and recognized freshman seminar is University 101, the freshman seminar at the University of South Carolina.

**University 101**

University 101 was introduced in 1972 in response to student riots in 1970 protesting the Vietnam War. The initial goals for the seminar were to improve teaching in undergraduate courses, encourage students to develop more positive attitudes toward the university, and increase student retention from the freshman to the sophomore year (National
Resource Center, 1996). Today, there are twenty-one stated goals included on the course syllabus.

University 101 can be described as a three-credit hour, letter-graded course offered exclusively to freshman and first-year transfer students. Eighty-five sections are offered every academic year and approximately 70% of the freshman class at the University of South Carolina will enroll in one of the sections (Fidler & Fidler, 1991). The main elements of the seminar include: (1) an extensive orientation to the university, (2) an introduction to campus services, (3) exposure to extracurricular activities, (4) establishing a base for peer interaction and support, and (5) a setting for clarifying personal values and attitudes (Shanley & Witten, 1990).

The objectives of University 101 are met in classes with a maximum of 20 to 25 students in each section. The class assignments and activities are not predetermined. Each instructor is urged to remain flexible and respond to the needs of the particular class. Although the content of each section varies, there are several required components. Extensive writing and reading assignments are required in University 101 and are believed to contribute to the University's liberal arts foundation. In addition, students are expected to participate in both individual and group presentations. Other required sessions include: alcohol/drug presentations, library exercises, career planning, computer competency, and attending the presentation, "Sex and the College Student" (National Resource Center, 1996).

Most of the students who enroll in University 101 represent traditional-aged, first year students who reflect the demographics of the entire student body. However, there are ten sections devoted to at-risk students. Special sections of University 101 include incarcerated
students in the prison college program, undeclared students, provisionally admitted students, student athletes, and first generation college students (Shanley & Witten, 1990). Research has concluded that students classified as at risk who participate in University 101 have had higher retention rates than nonparticipants despite being less prepared academically for fifteen years (Fidler & Hunter, 1989). Studies of other seminars have found that freshman seminar participants in general, regardless of pre-enrollment characteristics, will have higher sophomore return rates than nonparticipants (Fidler, 1991).

The University of South Carolina is not the only institution offering freshman seminars to support specific groups at their institution. Studies have indicated that the majority of freshman seminars in existence are targeted for specific populations of college students (Barefoot, 1992). Iowa State University, a public, land-grant, research university with an enrollment of 26,000 students, recently implemented a freshman seminar course to ensure the success of a group of freshman award winners.

Christina Hixson Opportunity Awards

In 1995, Christina Hixson, on behalf of the Lied Foundation, donated five million dollars to support scholarships for freshmen from each of Iowa’s 99 counties (Siebert, 1995, p. 1A). The awards were intended to assist Iowa high school students who, because of challenging environments or circumstances, may not have otherwise attended college. In addition, the recipients had to demonstrate financial need, be residents of Iowa, possess the ability to succeed, and meet the admission criteria for Iowa State University (Sanborn, 1996a, b; 1997a, b).
In the first year of the program, 612 Iowa high school students applied for the Christina Hixson Opportunity Awards. One hundred students received the awards. A review of the attrition rates indicated that 5 students withdrew during or after their first semester at Iowa State and 3 more students left during the Spring semester; however, 86 returned for their second year at Iowa State.

In response to the number of students who withdrew from Iowa State, Debra Sanborn, Director of the Hixson Opportunity Awards, designed a freshman seminar to address the attrition factors prevalent among the first year students. She identified these factors as: (1) isolation in a large academic community; (2) dissonance resulting from the new and different community; (3) boredom; (4) home-sickness; and (5) financial concerns (Sanborn, 1997b, c).

In 1996, a retention-based program called the Hixson Scholars Seminar: University 111 was implemented to acclimate the student with university services, to provide a structured weekly contact and an intrusive advising relationship with faculty members, and to establish relationships among the Hixson recipients (Sanborn, 1996a, b). The seminar meets once a week for one hour and is offered on a pass/not pass basis. Students learn ways to manage stress, interact with faculty and staff members, discuss leadership opportunities and learn university traditions in the seminar.

The seminar has structured activities and assignments designed to meet the stated objectives. For example, to become acquainted with campus, students left the classroom and spent a day at the Reiman Gardens, a showcase of the horticulture department. In another session, students were divided into groups and asked to construct a "Lego™ man" from a bag
of assorted Lego parts. Only one student was allowed to view the model at a time, and then reported to the group how to construct the “Lego man” in a specified time period.

In addition to the class activities, there are also class assignments in the Hixson seminar. The students must write a weekly letter to Debra Sanborn, the seminar instructor, on electronic mail discussing various topics. The students are also asked to write a letter to Christina Hixson and an essay to their hometown newspaper about the value of higher education. Getting involved in campus activities is another important aspect of the Hixson Seminar. The students are asked to attend “Clubfest”, an event in the student union where various clubs and organizations recruit new participants. A final assignment is to interview a faculty member and prepare an oral summary for the class.

Summary

Freshman seminars are designed to maximize students’ potential to achieve academic success, and to adjust responsibly to the individual and interpersonal challenges presented by collegiate life. Freshman students are much more diverse and institutions must take into account the racial, cultural, ethnic, age, and gender diversity of first year students. The freshman seminar is an opportunity for institutions to extend early orientation efforts beyond the first few weeks of classes and ensure students receive the guidance they need at the beginning of their college career.

University 101, at the University of South Carolina, has become a model program after fifteen years of research documented that participants have higher retention rates than nonparticipants. Based on the success of this program, other institutions such as Iowa State
University have implemented freshman seminars to ensure the success of a group of scholarship winners. The Hixson Scholars Seminar: University 101 was designed to help acclimate the students with university services, provide a structured weekly contact with a faculty member, and establish relationships among the Hixson students (Sanborn, 1996b). The next section discusses the theories that are used to design freshman seminars.

**Developmental Aspects of the Freshman Seminar**

Institutions that develop and implement freshman seminars refer to cognitive and psychosocial theories to explain the students’ developmental process. Institutional leaders realize if they can design programs to meet students needs, they will help freshmen succeed on their campus. Strange and King (1990) described the role of student development theories as “helping to explain the complexities of students’ behavior, change, and growth; these explanations, and the cumulative research that sharpens and validates them, constitute the science of student development” (p. 11).

Parker (1977) found three ways for using student development theory in higher education. First, theories can be used to make suggestions for improving teaching methods in the classroom. Second, “formal theory and data collection add to the body of knowledge common to the profession and help us work with groups of students” (p. 424). Finally, theories can help student affairs professionals understand and assist individuals through the development process. Parker, Widick, and Knefelkamp (1978) caution that it should not be assumed from reading student development theories that students are all alike. “For a theory to be useful it must always be modified to meet particular characteristics of the individuals
involved” (p. xiv). They also state that if educators and student affairs professionals are to encourage development: “... they need to know what development is- what changes can, do, and should take place in students and what particular factors serve to challenge and support them (p. xi).

This section will explore several cognitive and psychosocial theories that are the foundation of freshman seminars. The use of typological models for enhancing students’ success will also be addressed. Relevant theories will be explained and suggestions for applying them to the freshman year will be discussed.

**Cognitive development**

Cognitive development theories examine the process of college students’ intellectual development. These theories focus on “how people think, reason, and make meaning out of their experiences” (Evans, 1996, p. 173). Cognitive development theories are based on the notion that students pass through stages during their development process. In most cognitive theories, these stages are hierarchical, meaning that moving to one stage requires moving from another.

Cognitive development theorists emphasize that as individuals develop they encounter new information which may conflict with their current worldview. In order to deal with this cognitive dissonance, the individual must decide to “assimilate” the information, integrate it into their current way of thinking, or make “accommodations” and create a new way of thinking (Perry, 1970). The cognitive development theories discussed in this chapter include Perry’s scheme of intellectual and ethical development, Kohlberg’s theory of moral
development, and Gilligan’s “different voice” model. Insights into these theories will be
presented from King, Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, and Tarule (1986) as well as Baxter

Perry’s scheme of intellectual and ethical development is based on extensive
interviews with male students at Harvard from 1954 to 1963 (Evans, 1996). Perry developed
a theory of students’ cognitive development based on nine stages or positions.
The stages are organized into four levels—dualism, multiplicity, relativism, and commitment
in relativism. Dualism is characterized by students’ belief that right answers to their
questions exist and authority figures have the answers. Students in this stage prefer to be told
what to do and do not like to be given choices for dealing with issues on their own (Perry,

In the multiplicity stage, students begin to make decisions for themselves and rely
less on authority figures. Students also begin to recognize that there are multiple ways to
solve problems and that each may be equally valid. Relativism is the stage where an
individual begins to make decisions and judgments based on evidence. In the final stage,
commitment in relativism, students make commitments that help to establish values and an
identity (Perry, 1981).

The majority of students in their first year of college can be characterized as dualists.
Entering a new environment can be stressful and students often seek answers from those in
authority in an attempt to avoid making decisions on their own. The freshman seminar can
help students move to multiplicity by providing them information to make their own
decisions. King and Baxter Magolda (1996), suggested that to encourage students to move to
the next level of cognitive development, student affairs professionals and faculty should interact with students one level above their current level of cognitive development. This challenges students to learn to make decisions on their own and provides an important amount of dissonance needed for growth.

Because Perry’s theory was based solely on the interviews of male students, Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, and Tarule (1986) attempted to determine if the process of intellectual development differs for women. After conducting interviews with 135 women, they found that Perry’s scheme did fit the development of women very well. They suggested student affairs’ professionals and faculty should be aware of this and have respect for the impact of students’ personal experiences on their cognitive development.

Baxter Magolda (1988) also investigated the intellectual development of women. She described four ways of knowing (absolute, transitional, independent, and contextual) which characterize female’s cognitive development. Baxter Magolda also discussed three principles that should be used to support student learning including: “validating the student as a knower, situating learning in the students’ own experience, and defining learning as jointly constructing meaning” (p. 270). In addition to the structural differences in the ways of knowing, Baxter Magolda also asserted that there are gender-related patterns within the ways of knowing that were more often used by either men or women. Freshman seminars should be designed to meet the needs of both male and female participants.

Kohlberg’s theory of moral development, based on the work of Piaget, discussed the process by which individuals make decisions that affect themselves and others (Kohlberg, 1976). The theory, illustrated by three levels each containing two distinct stages, was
developed based on a study of seventy-two boys between the ages of ten and sixteen. The
first stage, preconventional reasoning, describes most children under nine years of age and
some adolescents. During this stage, individuals do not really understand society’s rules and
expectations or have not internalized them.

In the second stage, conventional reasoning, decisions are made to gain the approval
of others. Individuals may follow rules because they are perceived to be right. In the
postconventional level, right actions are determined by society’s standards rather than
individual standards. In the last stage of postconventional reasoning, the principals of justice,
equality and respect guide the individual’s behavior.

During their college years, students may fall along a continuum of moral reasoning
during their college careers. The ability to reason logically and to see others’ points of view
is necessary, but not sufficient, to achieve more advanced levels of moral reasoning
(Kohlberg, 1976). Freshmen are often at the conventional level when they first start college.
Their actions are guided by the need for approval and acceptance from their parents, peers
and university community.

Freshman seminars can help students develop their own set of moral principles by
addressing situations that have moral implications. For example, many seminars such as
University 101 at the University of South Carolina, ask students to clarify their feelings about
certain topics such as diversity and sexual behavior. Studies have shown that students alter
their sexual behaviors, become more open and respectful to others and make more
responsible decisions as a result of this course component (National Resource Center, 1996).
Gilligan (1993), interviewed twenty-nine women to determine if Kohlberg’s theory of moral development was applicable to women. Based on her findings, Gilligan proposed an alternative model with three levels and two transition periods. This research has led others to investigate Kohlberg’s model and its application to both males and females. As stated earlier, when applying student development theories, it is important to realize that each student’s development will be affected by their experiences. “Needs of individuals cannot always be deduced from general rules and principles. Moral choice must also be determined inductively from the particular experiences each participant brings to the situation” (Belenky et al., 1986, p. 8).

Freshman seminars help students’ cognitive development by helping them learn to make decisions and manage time and stress. In addition, freshman seminars can also provide students with skills and strategies for “learning how to learn” (Cuseo, 1990). Freshman seminar activities should be designed to help all individuals make decisions about their future career goals. The seminar should provide students with skills and support to help them reach these goals.

**Psychosocial development**

Psychosocial theories focus on the personal and interpersonal aspects of college students’ lives. These theories view individual development as a process of accomplishing a series of developmental tasks that vary according to the individual’s age and developmental status (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991). The work of Erikson, a sociologist interested in the development of children into adulthood, is the foundation of the psychosocial theories of
college student development. Erikson (1959) suggested that development occurs over a series of eight stages throughout an individual's lifetime.

According to Erikson (1959), each new stage occurs when internal psychological and biological changes interact with external social demands to create a turning point in the individual's life. For freshmen, entering college and experiencing a new environment as well as choosing a career path can be turning points in which development occurs. Resolving this internal crisis can lead to the development of new skills. Unsuccessfully resolving these issues can lead to poor self-esteem and a stagnation of development. Erikson noted that the individual will need to resolve these issues in order to move to the next developmental level. For college students, this next developmental level may be achieved before their senior year or after graduation.

Based on this notion to resolving developmental crises, Sanford (1967), asserted that a balance of support and challenge is needed for development to occur. The dissonance the individual feels is not enough for development to occur. "The institution which would lead an individual toward greater development must, then, present him with strong challenges, appraise accurately his ability to cope with challenges, and offer him support when they become overwhelming" (Sanford, 1967, p. 46).

If the challenge an individual experiences is too great, every attempt will be made to avoid the situation. On the other hand, if the individual does not experience enough challenge, they will not develop (Sanford, 1967). At a large institution it is easy for students to feel like no one cares about them. Freshman seminars can provide individuals with the
support and challenge they need to develop by providing a small class size where the instructor knows the students’ by name and is devoted to ensuring they succeed.

Another psychosocial theorist who has contributed to the literature on the study of college student development is Chickering. Based on Erikson’s concept of identity and intimacy, Chickering (1990, 1993) asserted that college student development is based on the establishment of identity. Chickering (1990) proposed seven vectors of development which contribute to the formation of identity during young adulthood. These vectors build on each other, but are not as rigid as Perry’s positions (Widick, Parker, & Knefelkamp, 1978).

The seven vectors, developing competence, managing emotions, moving through autonomy toward independence, developing mature interpersonal relationships, establishing identity, developing purpose and developing integrity, allowed Chickering to suggest ways for enhancing student development during college. Agreeing with Sanford’s (1967) concept of challenge and support, Chickering (1990) emphasized that one’s environment provides challenges which encourage new responses and bring about change or development.

According to Chickering (1993), certain experiences or tasks are central to student change. Development can occur when students are allowed to make their own decisions, interact with diverse individuals, explore new ideas, receive feedback from instructors, and self-assess their performance. Students should also participate in various experiences that involve the student in solving complex intellectual and social problems.

The freshman seminar is an opportunity for these valuable experiences to occur. Cuseo (1990) found that maintaining a positive self concept is critical for college freshmen because it is associated with high levels of academic achievement. Providing students with
information about the importance of self-esteem and strategies for maintaining a positive self-image can help students achieve success. Another way that freshman seminars can help students' psychosocial development is to provide an opportunity to improve interpersonal relations.

Freshman seminars that focus on verbal and nonverbal communication skills, friendship formation, and techniques for reducing ethnocentrism and discrimination encourage students to reach the next level of psychosocial development. Developing and establishing interpersonal relationships can be a major source of stress for college students, especially freshmen (Cuseo, 1990). Group activities in the freshman seminar promote sharing which enables students to learn about each other and develop friendships.

**Typological models**

Where cognitive and psychosocial theories focus on student development and change, typological models emphasize the differences and preferences among individuals. Typological models are based on the notion that at an early age individuals develop styles or preferences which remain relatively stable over time (Myers, 1980). Individuals can be classified into groups according to these differences. One of the most widely recognized typology models is the Myers-Briggs model.

Based on the work on Jung, Myers-Briggs added to the idea that “random behaviors are attributable to orderly and observable differences in mental functioning” (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991, p. 37). Differences occur in the way individuals prefer to receive information (the perception functions) and to make decisions (the judgment functions). In
using the perception function, an individual may prefer “sensing”—using using the five senses to receive information, or they may prefer to use “intuition” and rely on insight to gather information. In using the judgment function, individuals may prefer to “thinking”—using using logic, or “feeling”—relying on affective values (Myers, 1980). Individuals are also classified by the way they focus their attention: “extroversion”—focused at the external world, or “introversion”—focused on ideas and concepts.

Knowledge of an individual’s preferences within these categories permits the individual to be classified into one of sixteen types. Freshman seminar instructors that are aware of type preferences are equipped to plan activities to reach all members of the class. For example, if a large majority of the class has a preference for being extroverted, the instructor would want to plan group activities where individuals could learn from active participation. A lecture would not be a way to reach these students. For instance, at Elmhurst College, seminar leaders teach test taking techniques based on the students’ own learning styles and preferences. Studies have shown that students’ self-perceptions as learners improve as they gain confidence from the seminar (Barefoot, 1992).

Another way typology models can be incorporated into the freshman seminar is by administering the Myers-Briggs instrument in class. Students who are aware of their preferences can learn strategies to increase their less dominant functions and learn how to better interact with the different “types”. At Iowa State University, the Hixson Scholars are given an opportunity to learn about their type preferences. They report learning more about themselves and ways they can learn to deal with others (Sanborn, 1997b, c).
Summary

Cognitive and psychosocial theories are used as a foundation for designing freshman seminars. These theories add to the body of knowledge about students' developmental process and can help freshman seminar instructors understand and assist individuals through the development process. Cognitive theories examine the process of college students' intellectual development. Psychosocial theories focus on the personal and interpersonal aspects of college students' lives. For theories to be useful, they must be modified to address the particular characteristics of the group (Parker, Widick, & Knelfelkamp, 1978). Typological models can be used to help students learn their preferences for receiving information and decision making. These models teach students to interact with others and develop strategies to increase their less dominant functions.

Impact of the Freshman Seminar

What has prompted so many institutions to implement freshman seminar programs on their campuses? This section provides evidence of how freshman seminars impact first year experiences. Prior studies are reviewed to examine how freshman seminars increase retention and help students find success in higher education. Research questions for the current study were generated in part by reviewing these previous studies.

Retention

The most common measure of evaluation for freshman seminars has been the retention of students. For the purpose of this study, retention will be defined as the persistence of students from their freshman to sophomore year. Beal and Noel (1985) state
that despite years of research, it is still impossible to isolate a single cause for attrition.

Nevertheless, general conclusions from the research indicate that activities and programs which emphasize student involvement in extracurricular activities, student-faculty relationships, academic life, and meeting new friends, tend to influence students' decision to remain at an institution.

Lenning, Sauer, and Beal (1980) defined four types of students who attend institutions of higher education. The first is a "persister" who remains enrolled until degree attainment. The second type of student is a "stop-out" who enrolls and then leaves for a while and returns for his/her degree. The third type of student is an "attainer" who drops out of college to pursue another goal. The last type of student is a "drop-out" who leaves college and does not return. The freshman seminar is designed to help all of these types of students find success in college.

The majority of students who leave institutions make the decision to leave in the second to sixth week of classes during their freshman year (Levitz & Noel, 1989). "The majority of students who leave are not forced out because of academic deficiencies, personal problems, or financial difficulties rather, they are more likely to leave because of dissatisfying experiences with the institution they are attending" (Noel, 1985). Vincent Tinto's (1987) theory of student departure states that students enter a college or university with personal goals that are modified due to interactions with academic and social systems at the institution.

Positive encounters lead a student to "share the normative attitudes and values of peers and faculty at the institution" which leads to student retention (Pascarella & Terenzini,
Negative experiences at an institution can cause an individual to withdraw from school. To ensure that the student has an opportunity to connect to the institution in the first few weeks, Tinto (1990) suggests that “... frontloading of effort is the wisest course of action. The earlier institutions address the problem of student departure, the greater the results” (p. 44). Freshman seminars reach students during this critical period and can help them become acclimated to college life.

Retention rates of participants in University 101, the freshman seminar at the University of South Carolina, have been studied for over fifteen years. Fidler and Hunter (1989) found that each year participants had higher sophomore return rates than nonparticipants. The return rates for University 101 participants are particularly interesting considering that participants were less academically prepared and had a higher percentage of at risk students including minority students than nonparticipants.

Shanley and Witten (1990) studied University 101 participants to determine if differences existed between participants and nonparticipants on the variables of retention and graduation rates for seven years. They determined that the graduation rates for participants were higher (56%) than for nonparticipants (51%). Retention rates were also higher after three years. Another study conducted by Keenan and Gabovitch (1995) studied a freshman seminar at a large Eastern institution to determine if participants in the program would have higher retention rates between the freshman and sophomore years. Consistent with other research, they found that this freshman seminar did impact the students’ retention rates.

The literature provides ample basis for concern over student retention rates in institutions of higher education. The results reported in this section lend support to the
conclusion that freshman seminars are a positive influence on retention. Researchers clearly state that, although there is a positive correlation between attending a freshman seminar and choosing to remain at an institution, the seminar is not the cause of increased retention but offers components that lead to increased retention (Fidler & Hunter, 1989). Freshman seminars encourage students to become part of the campus environment, to interact with faculty and staff, and to get involved in campus activities. These three components of the freshman seminar have been shown to increase retention.

Integration into the campus environment

Students come to college today unsure of what to expect. Most are unaware of the campus culture and know few people. One of the important functions of the freshman seminar is to integrate students into the campus social system. Levitz and Noel (1989) found the “first freshman experiences may be the single largest determinant of whether freshmen feel successful or unsuccessful in college” (p. 71). Successful retention programs are the result of a variety of types of programs that seek, in different ways, to integrate and support students (Tinto, 1990). This integration process includes making the transition from high school to college, becoming familiar with campus services, and establishing student-faculty and peer relationships.

Tinto (1993) and Terenzini and Pascarella (1991) stressed the importance of helping students make the transition from high school to college. Most freshmen choose to attend an institution located outside their hometown. These students must face the stresses of becoming acclimated to a new environment. Tinto (1993) studied the development and
patterns of freshman students. Using the work of Anthropologist, Van Gennep, Tinto identified three stages in students' "rite of passage" into the first college year. The first stage, separation, is characterized by a decline in interactions with members of a former group. For many students, this stage characterizes a pattern of spending less time at home with family members and high school friends.

The second stage, transition, is a period during which the individual begins to interact with members of a new group. For students, this could be joining a fraternity or sorority or participating in an extracurricular activity. The final stage, incorporation, involves students taking on new patterns of interaction with members of the new group. This stage may be marked by rituals or ceremonies that celebrate the rewards of membership. Graduation or degree attainment are examples of ceremonies that might characterize attending college.

Realizing these "rites of passage" can be stressful for college students, Tinto (1993) stated that students may feel a sense of normlessness especially during the separation stage. "Having given up the norms and beliefs of past associations and not yet having adopted the appropriate membership in a new community, the individual is left in a state of a least temporary anomie" (p. 93). Freshman seminars are the perfect opportunity for students to make this transition and, thus, have a positive relationship to retention. Seminars help students become integrated into the campus by introducing them to campus resources, encouraging them to develop relationships with faculty members and establishing peer networks.

Fidler and Hunter (1989) determined "the freshman seminar is ideally suited to make full use of campus resources for retaining students" (p. 221). Because seminar participants
are exposed to information about campus resources and services, they may be more likely to receive essential information during the freshman year. Course activities designed to bring students in close contact with such crucial services as financial aid, counseling, and career development are incorporated into many freshman seminars.

Freshman seminars help students become integrated to their new environment by providing students with strategies-specific plans for finding success in college (Brown, 1989). For example, at North Carolina State University freshman seminar courses have been implemented to help freshmen make the academic and social transition to the large campus. During the first week of the seminar, instructors take students on a tour of campus and provide them a strategy for finding all of the important student services. A survey of the students found that students think the course is vital for becoming acclimated at North Carolina State University (Barefoot, 1992).

Studies have shown that proactive approaches with students help students adjust to college. Cuseo (1990) stated that

... discussing adjustment problems and solution strategies as they are being experienced should increase the likelihood that students will perceive the immediate relevance/usefulness of the information thereby increasing their motivation to attend to and master it. (p. 8)

Another important part of integrating students into the campus environment is to encourage them to develop relationships with faculty members.

Student-faculty relationships

Student contact with faculty members outside the classroom is the most powerful factor contributing to student retention and eventual degree attainment (Astin, 1977; Tinto,
Levitz and Noel (1989) agreed, and they found "the single most important step in establishing a connection to an institution is to ensure that every freshman feels attached to some person at the institution (p. 71). "All freshman should have the sense that someone at their institution knows them personally and cares about their academic and personal well-being" (p. 73).

The freshman seminar connects students with a faculty member who can answer their questions and provide a support network for them. Fidler and Hunter (1989) described the freshman seminar as a "course in which the instructor takes a personal interest in the students and structures the course to be a support system for them" (p. 221). Studies have shown that students who do not perceive they interact with faculty members may choose to leave the institution (Tinto, 1990). Barefoot & Fidler (1994) noted: "... interaction and mutual support comprise the essence of the seminar; without those essential processes, these courses lose their power to affect positively the success, satisfaction, and retention of first year students" (p. 14).

In many freshman seminars, a warm and caring relationship evolves between the freshman students and the faculty or staff leading the seminar. This relationship has been shown to influence retention, educational aspirations, career plans, satisfaction with the college and intellectual and personal development (Pascarella, Duby, Terenzini, & Iverson, 1983). Upcraft & Gardner (1989) noted: "students who find others care about them will succeed" (p. 4). For these reasons, the goal of many freshman seminars to be encourage the development of student-faculty relationships. For example, at the University of North
Carolina, one of the goals of the freshman seminar offered is the development of a close relationship with a faculty member.

The quality of the relationship between student and faculty or staff members is of critical importance to student satisfaction with the institution. University 101 participants have been found to be more likely than nonparticipants to develop strong relationships with faculty members (Barefoot & Fidler, 1994). This has been found to attribute to greater social integration among participants which increases retention. In addition, Elfner (1985) studied goal related outcomes attributed to specific programs and activities in higher education by issuing a survey to new students and a follow-up survey near the end of their educational experience. He found the amount and quality of faculty-to-student and student-to-student interactions resulted in an increase in goal related outcomes with respect to the students’ perceptions of their college experience.

In 1987, researchers at the University of North Carolina-Charlotte investigated the academic and social integration of freshman seminar participants and non-participants. They found that students who participated in the seminar had significantly higher grade point averages and more informal interactions with faculty than nonparticipants. Students indicated that the seminar provided academic support and faculty and peer interactions which they would not have received without the seminar (Barefoot, 1992).

In 1987, Seton Hall University introduced a program: “... to focus on the freshman only, to give them special emotional and academic support from the moment of their decision to attend Seton Hall, and to integrate them quickly and fully into the university community during their first few weeks on campus” (cited in Ketkar & Bennett, 1989, p. 33). The
program offered three opportunities for students to interact with faculty and peers. Six faculty members were assigned to serve as full-time mentors to the students and thirty peer counselors helped students make the transition from high school to college. In addition, a Freshman Studies center was established to provide a central location for students to ask questions and receive support. These features of the freshman seminar have helped the program retain students for over ten years (Ketkar & Bennett, 1989).

Developing peer groups

Another vital element of becoming integrated into the campus environment is establishing peer groups and developing new friendships. Most students who come to college will know few others on campus. For shy individuals, meeting new friends can be an overwhelming task. Establishing effective interpersonal relationships is an important element in college success (Upcraft & Gardner, 1989). Tinto (1990) stated that freshman programs should not only give students the information they need to manage college, but also should encourage them to develop friendships. He also indicated that a common feature of successful retention programs is an emphasis on building community. Freshman seminars can help students build community by developing peer groups and new friendships.

Peer groups, as defined by Astin (1993), are “any group of individuals in which the members identify, affiliate with, and seek acceptance and approval from each other” (p. 401). Examples of peer groups in college can include residence halls, student clubs and organizations, fraternities and sororities, or a group of students in the same class. To students, the peer group is the single most potent source of influence on growth and
development during the undergraduate years (Astin, 1993; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991). Programs that can encourage the development of peer groups will increase the students' satisfaction with the university and encourage their personal success.

Freshman seminars encourage the development of peer groups by establishing a small class of students who interact closely throughout the semester. Students who attend freshman seminars have reported developing friendships that extend beyond the classroom (Barefoot & Fidler, 1994). Another way freshman seminars develop peer groups in by encouraging students to become involved in extracurricular activities.

**Involvement in extracurricular activities**

Many researchers have studied the effects of student activities and other extracurricular activities on the cognitive and psychosocial development of students. Although the impact of out-of-class activities is difficult to evaluate and measure, Miller and Jones (1981) stated that these activities are an integral part of the students’ educational experience. They estimated that 70% of what a student learns takes place outside a classroom. Extracurricular activities are especially important for freshman students. Astin (1985) stated that the key to freshman success is involvement. To succeed, freshmen must be committed to involving themselves in extracurricular activities.

The more students are involved outside the classroom, the more they gain from the higher education experience. Astin (1984) noted that student learning will be significantly affected by levels of involvement in the college experience. For example, students are more likely to be successful academically and earn a degree when they are involved on campus-in
residence halls, student organizations, Greek life, student government—or working part time (Astin, 1977).

Astin's Involvement Theory emphasizes the importance of students' active participation in the learning process. Astin (1985) described involvement as "the amount of physical and psychological energy students devote to their academic experience" (p. 36). A highly involved student can be described as devoting considerable energy studying and spending a lot of time on campus participating actively in student organizations. In contrast, an uninvolved student may neglect studies, spend little time on campus and avoid extracurricular activities.

Research has shown that out-of-class activities are important to the college experience, particularly with regard to persistence and institutional satisfaction (Astin, 1993; Elfner, 1985; Kuh, 1995; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991; Pace, 1984). Institutional satisfaction is also related to the amount of time student invested in student clubs and organizations (Astin, 1993). Pace (1984) and Astin (1977, 1993) have researched and documented the positive correlation between student involvement and improved student retention. Both found highly involved students who interact frequently with faculty are more satisfied with the college experience than those who have not. Astin (1977) found

... virtually every significant effect on student persistence can be explained in terms of the involvement concept. Every positive factor is one that is likely to increase student involvement in the undergraduate experience, while every negative factor is one that is likely to reduce involvement. (p. 145)

Pascarella and Terenzini (1991) discovered: "The weight of evidence is quite clear that both the frequency and quality of students' interactions with peers and their participation
in extracurricular activities are positively associated with persistence" (p. 391). Hanks and Eckland (cited in Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991) suggest two important functions of extracurricular activities: (1) to expose students to other achievement oriented peers; and (2) to facilitate the realization of personal goals by allowing students to acquire skills. In studying college students from twelve institutions to determine the effect of out-of-class activities on various outcomes, Kuh (1995) discovered these activities increase students critical thinking skills, organizational skills, and are highly correlated with satisfaction and success after college.

Freshman seminars that encourage participation in extracurricular activities can increase students' success and satisfaction with the institution, which in turn, leads to higher retention rates of students. A component of the Hixson Seminar: University Studies 111 at Iowa State University asks students to attend “clubfest”, an informational meeting about getting involved on campus. Students are asked to learn more about at least one student organization and attend a meeting. Later in the semester, students are asked to give an oral presentation about the club or organization they attended. Debra Sanborn, Director of the Hixson Seminar, reported that the majority of participants join more than one student organization as a result of the class activity (Sanborn, 1997c).

Summary

The retention of students is one of the single most pressing issues facing higher education according to the Association for Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges (Ten public policy issues, 1996). Research has clearly demonstrated that, to improve
retention, programs must help students: "... connect to the campus environment, make the transition to college, work toward academic and career goals and succeed in the classroom" (Levitz & Noel, 1989, p. 71). Although no one type of program guarantees higher retention rates, freshman seminars do contain components that have been proven to keep students in college (Tinto, 1990).

Successful retention programs seek to integrate students into the campus environment by helping them make the transition from high school to college, become familiar with campus services, and establish student-faculty and peer relationships. In addition, freshmen who participate in extracurricular activities are more likely to remain at an institution and be successful.

Conclusions

Each year millions of freshmen enter colleges and universities with the goal of attaining a higher education. These students bring the new concerns and issues of an increasingly diverse population. Studies show that nearly half of the students will make the decision to leave college; the majority will leave in the first six to eight weeks. Tinto (cited in Keenan & Gabovitch, 1995) summarized:

... the success of institutional retention efforts ultimately resides in the institution's capacity to engage faculty and administrators across campus in a collaborative effort to construct educational settings, classrooms and otherwise, that actively engage students, all students not just some, in learning. (p. 11)

Information provided by cognitive and psychosocial development theories illustrate students need assistance dealing with the stress of living in a new environment and the
pressure of finding a major and success in later life. A balance of support and challenge is needed to help students develop. Typological models demonstrate that students vary in their preferences for how they receive information and make decisions. Providing this knowledge to students can help them find common ground with their peers and learn to celebrate their differences. These theories have helped institutions develop and implement programs to encourage students to remain in college where they can develop personally and academically.

In an attempt to retain these students, institutions have extended early orientation efforts throughout the first semester in the form of freshman seminars. The purpose of the freshman seminars is to help students make the transition from high school to college, become acclimated with university services, establish relationships with faculty and peers and become involved in extracurricular activities. Freshman seminars create an environment in which participants can face challenges of forming an identity, becoming socially and academically involved and of learning to think critically. Although the freshman seminar does not by itself increase student retention rates, certain components of the seminar have been proven to keep students in college.

Freshman seminars expose students to information about campus resources and services by bringing in speakers to discuss certain aspects of campus life. This information can be essential part of becoming integrated into the college community. Student contact with institutional leaders as well as faculty members has been found to be the most powerful factor contributing to retention and eventual degree attainment (Astin, 1977; Tinto, 1993). Many students develop warm, caring relationships with their seminar instructor. These relationships have been shown to influence students' retention, career plans and personal
development. Students who perceive that others care about them will be successful (Upcraft & Gardner, 1989).

Freshman seminars encourage students to develop friendships and build peer groups. Establishing these interpersonal relationships is an important element of college success. The small class size of the freshman seminar provides an opportunity for students to meet others who have similar ambitions and concerns. Many friendships can be developed through participation in extracurricular activities. The more students are involved in extracurricular activities, the more they gain from their higher education experience. Student participation in extracurricular activities can have considerable influence on an individual’s development.

Freshman seminars are the most common intervention being implemented on college campuses to improve the retention of first year students and encourage student success. Research has documented that certain components of the freshman seminar keep students in school. By examining student development theories and existing freshman seminars, researchers have suggested new activities for encouraging students’ intellectual and personal development in college. The literature supports the conclusion that freshman seminars should be implemented on campuses across the country to help all students succeed.

The remainder of this study explores the impact of attending the Hixson Scholars Seminar: University 111. Chapter 3 describes the research methods used to obtain the data in the study, and includes the research design, data collection methods, data analysis, establishing trustworthiness, and ethical considerations. A description of the subjects and the participant selection methods is also illustrated. Chapter 4 describes the results of the study and is organized by the five themes that evolved as a result of data analysis: (1) student
interaction with faculty/staff; (2) academic success; (3) transition from high school to college; (4) student interaction with peers; and (5) identity formation. Finally, Chapter 5 summarizes the findings in the study and discusses the implications of the information gained in the study. It also offers suggestions for future research on freshman seminars.
CHAPTER 3. RESEARCH METHODS

Introduction

The preceding chapter addressed several issues of concern for students in their first year of attendance at a college or university. It also discussed the benefits of freshman seminar courses. As stated in Chapter 1, the purpose of this study was to describe how attending the Hixson Scholars Seminar: University Studies III at Iowa State University impacted the students’ freshman year experience. This chapter outlines the research methods used to study the Hixson Scholars Seminar: University Studies III. An overview of the study, including the research design, data collection methods, data analysis methods, procedures for establishing trustworthiness, and ethical considerations, will be presented in this chapter.

Overview

To describe and gain understanding of how attending the Hixson Seminar: University Studies III impacted the participants’ freshman year experience, this researcher used qualitative research methods. Van Maanen (1979) defined qualitative research as:

at best an umbrella term covering an array of interpretive techniques which seek to describe, decode, translate, and otherwise come to terms with the meaning, not the frequency, of certain more or less naturally occurring phenomena in the social world. (p. 520)

More specifically, this study is an educational ethnography that will “... provide a description of the activities by which students unreflectively produce their own meaningful behavior and are able to interpret the behavior of others” (Patton, 1991, p. 395). In addition,
the purpose of an educational ethnography is "... to provide rich, descriptive data about the contexts, activities, and beliefs of participants in an educational setting" (Goetz & LeCompte, 1984, p. 17).

Qualitative methods were used in this study because: (1) the reader could uncover multiple meanings of phenomena from participants; (2) the study was intended to discover and explain the experiences of Hixson Seminar participants; (3) responses could be communicated in the respondents' own words; (4) the reader has the opportunity to develop an understanding of participants' experiences; and (5) the interests and skills of the researcher were congruent with qualitative methods.

Qualitative methods have the potential to more accurately describe and perhaps, help student affairs staff, faculty, and others better understand the behavior of individual students and groups of students (Goetz & Lecompte, 1984; Kuh & Andreas, 1991; Lincoln, 1986; Patton, 1991). In data analysis, thick, rich description is used to describe the respondents' views and experiences. Geertz (1973) defined thick description as a process of interpreting events in detail so that the reader can make sense out of the social interactions that are being described. This can be accomplished by using the respondent's exact words and providing information about the context under which the comments were made.

This study was intended to discover how the Hixson Seminar impacted the students' freshman year experience. In-depth, detailed descriptions from the students helped the reader accurately describe, understand, and explain these experiences. Patton (1991), suggested that qualitative interviews conducted with students permit them to "make clear what had happened to them by virtue of their participation and what positive and negative changes had
occurred as a result” (p. 394). Qualitative methods were determined to be the best way to secure rich description on which to base analysis for this study.

**Research Design**

The researcher gathered data about the Hixson seminar by: (1) interviewing Debra Sanborn, the Director of the Hixson Opportunity Awards; (2) observing three sessions of the Hixson Seminar; and (3) conducting three semi-structured focus group interviews. The researcher interviewed the director to determine her background in higher education, gather information about the Hixson Scholars, understand the purpose and intent of the Hixson Seminar, and discover Sanborn’s perceptions about how participation in the seminar impacted the students’ freshman year experience. The researcher conducted observations of the Hixson Scholars Seminar to learn more about the seminar and gain rapport with the students. Focus group interviews were conducted to gain information from the students about their participation in the seminar.

**Description of the subjects**

The respondents in this study were part of a group of scholarship winners from Iowa State University called Hixson Scholars. In 1995, Christina Hixson, on behalf of the Lied Foundation, donated five million dollars to support scholarships for freshmen from each of Iowa’s 99 counties (Siebert, 1995, p. 1A). The scholarships were intended to assist Iowa high school students who, because of challenging environments or circumstances, may not have otherwise attended college. In addition, the recipients had to demonstrate financial
need, be residents of Iowa, possess the ability to succeed, and meet the admission criteria for Iowa State University (Sanborn, 1997).

The scholarship offered the students $2,500 to be used for tuition expenses during their first year at Iowa State. In addition to the financial award, the students were also given the opportunity to register for classes before other freshman students—essentially guaranteeing that they would get the classes they requested. In return for the scholarship, the students had to sign a recipient’s agreement stating that they would:

1. Write a letter to their hometown newspaper discussing the value of higher education.
2. Do a presentation in their high school promoting higher education.
3. Mentor the next Hixson Scholar from their county.
4. Attend a special orientation program.
5. Attend monthly meetings for Hixson Students.
6. Attend special activities honoring Christina Hixson or scholarships.
7. Provide ISU permission to publicize their name among the list of Hixson Opportunity Award winners.
8. Enroll in the Hixson Scholars Seminar during the fall semester (Sanborn, 1997).

In 1996, Debra Sanborn developed a retention-based program called the Hixson Scholars Seminar: University Studies 111 to acclimate the students with university services, to provide a structured weekly contact and an intrusive advising relationship with faculty members, and to establish relationships among the Hixson recipients (Sanborn, 1996). In the seminar students learn university traditions, interact with faculty and staff members, discuss leadership opportunities and learn ways to manage stress.
Background data and statistics of the Hixson Scholars and the Hixson Scholars Seminar: University Studies 111, prepared by Debra Sanborn, are found in Appendix A. Also included in Appendix A are copies of the course syllabi for both years as well as summary statistics for the 1996 and 1997 academic years.

**Participant selection**

To describe how the seminar impacted the students’ freshman year experience, the researcher selected 27 Hixson Scholars using random and purposive selection methods. Purposive selection is described by Merriam (1990) as a method of selecting participants for a study “...based on the assumption that one wants to discover, understand, gain insight; therefore one needs to select a sample from which one can learn most” (p. 48). All of the Hixson Scholars were sorted by the categories of name, address, phone number, birth date, major, class section, and class rank in high school using the computer program, Excel.

After organizing the information, the researcher asked Debra Sanborn, Director of the Hixson Opportunity Awards, to identify any students belonging to a minority group. She identified six minority students out of the two hundred Hixson Students who attended the Hixson Seminar. The researcher wanted to invite all of these students because it would help create a sample group representative of the entire university population. The researcher also asked Debra to recommend some students who would be willing to participate in this study and would have information to share about how the seminar impacted their freshman year experience.
After receiving Sanborn’s input, the researcher randomly selected additional students for each group. Krueger (1994) suggested that randomization helps ensure that a nonbiased cross section will be selected. In selecting each focus group, a variety of students belonging to each section of the seminar were selected. This was important because Sanborn stated that one section of the seminar had met on Monday mornings at 10:00 but was it not as interactive as the other sections, so she no longer offered a section on Mondays.

Additionally, the researcher selected students based on their academic discipline. With students representing different colleges and majors, the study would be more representative of the student population at Iowa State. In addition, it was important to invite an equal number of male and female participants because, as Carol Gilligan (1983), pointed out, “... women and men have different voices or modes of thought” (p. 2).

After identifying potential respondents, the researcher contacted them by phone to see if they would be available to participate in this study. If they were available for the focus group, they were sent a letter outlining the purpose of the study and the procedure during the focus group interview. The researcher also discussed the confidentiality of the information collected and reminded them that participation in the study was voluntary. Out of 27 individuals who agreed to participate, 21 participated in one of the three focus groups.

The 21 participants represented each of Iowa State University’s seven undergraduate colleges. Fourteen of the participants were freshmen who had just completed the freshman seminar. Seven of the participants were sophomore students who had participated in the Hixson Scholars Seminar during their freshman year. Twelve of the focus group participants were male and nine were female.
Data Collection Methods

For the purpose of determining how attending the Hixson Scholars Seminar: University Studies 111 impacted the students' freshman year experience, this researcher gathered data about the Hixson seminar by (1) interviewing Debra Sanborn, the Director of the Hixson Opportunity Awards; (2) observing three sessions of the Hixson Seminar; and (3) conducting three semi-structured focus group interviews. Data collection methods in qualitative research, according to Patton (1991), permit detailed description and analysis of what it is persons know and accomplish as they interact with each other (p. 392).

Interview

Patton (1990) stated that the purpose of the qualitative interview is to "... find out what is in and on someone else's mind" (p. 196). By interviewing Debra Sanborn, the Director of the Christina Hixson Opportunity Awards, the researcher was hoping to learn about her background in higher education, gather information about the Hixson Scholars, and discover the purpose and intent of the Hixson Seminar. The data obtained in the interview were used to formulate research questions and to provide background information for the study. (See Appendix B for a copy of the letter requesting the interview and Appendix C for the interview questions that were asked of Debra Sanborn.)

Observations

The researcher conducted observations of the Hixson Scholars Seminar to learn more about the seminar and gain rapport with the students. The researcher attended three sessions of the seminar to gain greater understanding of the structure and format of the seminar.
Notes were taken throughout the session and observations were recorded at the end of the seminar. The notes assisted the researcher in understanding the comments made during the focus group interviews.

Focus group interviews

The researcher conducted focus group interviews to: (1) allow for group interaction that might uncover information that could not be gathered in an observation or interview; (2) enable greater insight into “why” opinions were held; (3) interview a large number of subjects in a short time; and (4) collect thick, rich data that could be described in the person’s own words.

Three focus group interviews were conducted to gain information from the students about their participation in the seminar. Glasner and Strauss (1967) determined that three focus groups usually leads to theoretical saturation—no new information was found to exist. Eight to ten Hixson Scholars were invited to attend each focus group (see Appendix D). Krueger (1994), found that smaller groups are preferable because they allow participants to share more information about the topic.

The first focus group was a pilot study designed to redefine the research questions and procedures. As suggested by Krueger (1994), the pilot study was conducted in three steps. First, the researcher asked a panel of experts to review the questions and research procedures. Second, several Hixson Scholars were asked to comment on the focus group questions (Appendix E). Third, the researcher conducted the first focus group to pilot test the interview. Following each focus group the researcher asked each respondent, “Have we
missed anything?" This allowed the respondents to comment on topics not addressed in the earlier questions. Because no significant changes were made after the pilot study, the data were included in the analysis of the study.

Focus group procedure

The researcher conducted focus groups on Sunday evenings from 5:00-7:00 p.m. at the student union building in the heart of the campus. A small room accommodating twelve individuals around a conference table was selected to conduct the focus group interviews. The students were given a pizza dinner in exchange for their participation in the project. Prior to the students arrival, the food and drinks were arranged on a table in the corner of the room. As the students arrived, the researcher greeted each one and invited them to help themselves to the pizza.

As the students enjoyed their dinner, they became acquainted with the researcher and other respondents by engaging in conversations about student life and current issues. The early conversations were intended to “break the ice” and establish rapport with the researcher. After one half-hour, the researcher informed the respondents that they would begin the focus group interview. Name tents were passed out to all of the respondents. Krueger (1994) suggested that this would help the respondents refer to each other by name and make the discussion seem more informal.

Each focus group began with an introduction/welcome from the researcher. The researcher explained the purpose of the study and the participation selection methods. In addition, the participants were informed that the focus group would be audio-taped and that
their participation in the study was voluntary. They were also informed that the researcher was here to learn from them about their experiences in the Hixson Scholars Seminar. Consent forms (Appendix F) were then passed out and signed by the respondents indicating that they wanted to participate in the study.

Prior to the start of the questions, the researcher established some ground rules for participation (Krueger, 1994; Morgan, 1997; and Stewart & Shamdasani, 1990):

1. Only one person speaks at a time.
2. No side conversations with other respondents.
3. All experiences are equally valid and important.
4. There are no right or wrong answers.
5. Please speak clearly, loudly and slowly so comments can be recorded.

The conversation opened with an icebreaker designed to further acquaint the respondents. The respondents were asked to introduce themselves by stating their name, major, and favorite activity or place on campus. After the introductions the focus group questions were introduced.

Focus group questions

Eleven focus group questions were used to gather data to answer the research questions. The rationale for each question is also listed as follows:

1. What is one thing you remember about the seminar?
Rationale: This broad-based question was designed to allow the students' to reach into their memories and focus their thoughts on the seminar. It served as an introduction to the interview.

2. Thinking back on your experiences in the Hixson Seminar, what did you learn?
Rationale: This question was general and asked to elicit feedback about the impact of attending the seminar.

3. What do you think are the reasons for having a freshman seminar?
Rationale: Intended to allow the students' to describe why the seminar was important or not important for them. Did they understand the seminars' objectives and purpose?

4. What did you find the most helpful about the seminar?
Rationale: This question allowed the students' to describe the positive aspects of the seminar.

5. What did you find the least helpful about the seminar?
Rationale: This questions allowed the respondents' to describe the negative aspects of the seminar.

6. Think back to your first semester at Iowa State when you attended the Hixson Seminar. What specific ways did the seminar help you make the transition from high school to college?
Rationale: The introduction to this question was intended to have the students' remember when they first started college. After recalling the experience, the students' could determine whether the seminar helped them make a transition from high school and provide specific examples. This question was designed to answer one of the initial research questions.
7. Did the seminar affect your approach to your coursework? Can you give an example?

Rationale: The respondents were given a chance to discuss whether the seminar helped them in the classroom. This question was designed to help answer one of the initial research questions.

8. If you were asked to write the syllabus for the seminar next semester, what is the one thing you would keep in the course?

Rationale: This question was intended to discover what the respondents’ felt was the most beneficial aspect of the seminar. It allowed them to choose the one thing that most impacted them.

9. What would you omit from the course?

Rationale: This question asked the students to identify what was the least beneficial aspect of the seminar. This answer would help the seminar designer to omit aspects from the curriculum.

10. What should be added to the seminar?

Rationale: This question asked the students to identify other ideas that could be included in the seminar. This information will provide freshman seminar administrators with new ideas and information about needs that are not being currently addressed in the seminar.

11. If you were not required to attend the freshman seminar, would you still want to participate in a freshman seminar program?

Rationale: This question asks the respondents to determine if the seminar impacted their freshman year experience. The question provides information about the
importance of the seminar in comparison to other efforts such as academic orientation courses.

At the conclusion of questions, the researcher summarized the main points of the discussion and then asked for comments or corrections. Each respondent was then asked to make a summary statement about participating in the Hixson Seminar. Finally, the researcher asked the participants, "Have we missed anything?" The respondents were then thanked for participating and informed that a summary of the findings would be made available.

**Data Analysis**

Data analysis is the "process of bringing order, structure, and meaning to the mass of collected data" (Marshall & Rossman, 1989, p. 112). Bogdan and Biklen (1992) defined data analysis as the process of arranging interview transcripts and field notes to better understand them and present the results to others. In this study, data analysis occurred concurrently with data collection. As Krueger (1994) asserted, "A distinctive feature of qualitative inquiry is that data inquiry and data analysis are simultaneous activities—they occur together" (p. 133). As a result, the design of this qualitative study was emergent.

A feature of the emergent research design was an inductive analysis process. According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), the inductive analysis arises "... from specific, raw units of information to subsuming categories of information in order to define local hypotheses or questions that can be followed up" (p. 203). The "raw data" in this study consisted of interview transcripts, observations, field notes and focus group interviews.
Prior to analyzing the data, the tape recordings collected in the interview with Debra Sanborn, Director of the Hixson Opportunity Awards, and the three focus group interviews with the Hixson Scholars were transcribed. Transcription establishes a permanent written record of the interviews and ensures that the responses will be in the students’ own words (Krueger, 1994).

There are many different methods of analyzing focus group data. Stewart and Shamdasani (1990) suggested, “... there is no best or correct approach to the analysis of focus group data. . .” and they stated the analysis methods should be “... determined by the research questions and the purposes for which the data are collected” (p. 102). After reviewing several approaches, this researcher decided to use the methods suggested by Lincoln and Guba in the book, *Naturalistic inquiry*. An inductive analysis process was completed using a comparative method which consisted of unitizing and categorizing data.

**Unitization**

Unitization reduces the data into manageable sections or bits of data. Eventually, the units will serve as the basis for defining categories (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Lincoln & Guba (1985) defined a unit as having two characteristics: “First, it should be heuristic, that is, aimed at some understanding or some action that the inquirer needs to have or to take. Second, it must be the smallest piece of information about something that can stand by itself” (p. 345).

In this study, a unit was defined as a single statement or phrase which was relevant to the Hixson Scholars’ freshman experiences. To complete unitization, the pages of the
transcripts were numbered sequentially. Each separate focus group interview was assigned a letter (Focus group one=A). Next, the researcher read through the data twice to get a sense of the information as a whole. As the data were read, the researcher developed a list of coding categories into which the units of data could fall.

**Categorization**

After all of the units were identified, categorization proceeded. Categorization is defined by Lincoln & Guba (1985) as the process of grouping units according to categories. The goal of categorization is the “. . . development of conceptual categories that interpret the data for the reader” (Merriam, 1988, p. 133). The categories are formed by constant comparison of the units to various categories. One unit of information was compared to the next to determine whether the content was similar; if perceived to be similar it was placed in the same category, if not, a new one was created.

Folders labeled with each category were used to organize and sort the units. The “cut-and paste technique” described by Stewart and Shamdasani (1990) was utilized to divide the units into sections. The transcripts were cut into units and coded with the focus group number (first, second, third) and transcript page number so that, if necessary, data could be tracked later when categorizing occurred.

After the first data set was established, the units were alphabetized as Bogdan and Biklen (1992) suggested. This ensured that each unit was listed only one time. The first data set contained 62 categories of data (see Appendix G). Next, each folder containing the items identified as belonging to a particular category was reviewed and subcategories of data were
assigned. In some cases, new names were assigned to clarify the categories. The second data set contained 13 categories of data (see Appendix H). When creating the third data set, the category numbers were removed because they were no longer useful. Again, the categories were reviewed and reorganized into 5 categories (see Appendix I). After several weeks, the researcher reviewed set three again and reorganized the data into a fourth set based on the organization established by the literature review and the desire to report the data in a logical manner (Appendix J). Descriptions of the set four categories appear in Appendix K.

A peer debriefer provided feedback on the way the data were categorized. After the debriefer reviewed the initial categories and made suggestions, revisions were made. These revisions included splitting data into additional categories and renaming categories to more accurately describe the data. Eventually, themes emerged from the constant comparative process which guided the rest of the study as the researcher used thick, rich description to address the research questions.

Establishing Trustworthiness

The following steps were taken to assure credibility, transferability, reliability and confirmability were ascertained to establish the trustworthiness of the data.

Credibility

Establishing credibility with the respondents can be the key to data collection (Whitt, 1991). In order to ensure that the researcher’s interpretations are credible to the respondents, the researcher took several steps, including triangulating research methods, interviewing the
Director of Christina Hixson Opportunity Awards, peer debriefing, performing member checks, and conducting multiple observations of the seminar.

Triangulation, using multiple sources and methods of data collection (Whitt, 1991), was used to ensure that the study is credible. Focus group interviews, interviews and observations were conducted to ensure that the data collected accurately reports the impact of attending the Hixson Scholar Seminar.

The Director of the Hixson Scholars Seminar, Debra Sanborn, was interviewed so the researcher could gain understanding about the structure, goals, purpose and evolution of the seminar. A research assistant, referred to as a peer debriefer, was utilized in the focus group interviews to ensure that the "researcher is aware of the influence of personal perspectives and perceptions on the study" (Whitt, 1991, p. 413). In addition, member checks, debriefing with the respondents after data analysis, allowed the respondents to test the data, analyze categories and make conclusions about the data (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Finally, observations of the Hixson Seminar were made prior to writing focus group questions and conducting any research. These observations helped the researcher establish rapport with the Hixson Scholars, understand the structure and intent of the seminar, and develop the research objectives used in this study.

Transferability

Lincoln and Guba (1985) described transferability as the assurance that the research is useful in another situation. Ensuring that this study can be easily applied to other campuses was essential for the success of this project. Although this study was conducted at a large,
public institution in the Midwest, the findings can be transferred to other campuses across the
country. Thick description of the findings was used to ensure that readers will be able to
apply the information to other freshman seminar programs.

Reliability

Reliability is the assurance that the data gathered will provide the intended results. It
can be established by providing evidence throughout the study that the appropriate decisions
of inquiry were made (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The researcher asked "experts" familiar with
focus groups procedures and qualitative research methods to review the research procedures.
The researcher also pilot tested the focus group procedure to ensure that the questions would
elicit the appropriate outcomes. In addition, prior to the first focus group, the researcher
asked a sample of Hixson Scholars to review the focus group questions, recruitment strategy,
and incentives of participation as suggested by Richard Krueger (1994).

Confirmability

It is important that the data obtained in this interview can be confirmed by someone
other than the researcher (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In this research an audit was conducted by
someone not involved in the research to ensure that the findings are based in the data and that
the interpretations made are logical. This ensures the research questions are consistent with
the purpose of the study and elicits significant conclusions about the impact of the Hixson
Seminar on the students' freshman year experience.
Ethical Considerations

Conducting qualitative studies places special ethical demands on the researcher (Lincoln & Guba, 1989). Dobbert (1982) described the ethical relationship of the qualitative researcher as imperative. Persons conducting qualitative research “... have a special obligation to work ethically because their research style brings them into very close, always personal, and often intimate contact with the research subjects” (p. 77). To elaborate on the importance of ethics in research, Dobbert (1982) defined four ethical criteria that should be taken into consideration when designing a qualitative study: (1) confidentiality; (2) honesty; (3) responsibility; and (4) fair return.

Confidentiality includes the obligation of the researcher not to disclose the names of the respondents in the study. The researcher also has an obligation to be honest about the nature and purpose of the research and to conduct studies in an ethical and professional manner. Because the respondents give much of themselves and their time to the study, they have a right to a “fair return” or a summary of the research results (Dobbert, 1982).

These ethical criteria were incorporated into the study using an introduction phone call, informational letter, informed consent, and human subjects review committee forms. The respondents in this study were called a week in advance of the focus group to ascertain if they would want to participate. They were informed of the purpose of the research, assured of the confidentiality of the data collected, and informed they would receive an informational letter in the mail providing more information about the study.

An informational letter was mailed four days prior to the focus group interview (see Appendix D). It discussed the purpose of the study, focus group procedure, confidentiality of
data collected, and the voluntary nature of study. It also provided the researcher's phone number in case participants wanted to withdraw from the study.

Prior to the start of the focus group, the research procedures and forms were reviewed and approved by the Human Subjects Review Committee (Appendix L). The respondents were given an informed consent form to sign which outlined the research procedures, purpose of study, confidentiality of data collected and voluntary nature of participation (see Appendix F). The students were also informed that the research results would be provided to them.

**Reporting the Data**

Chapter 4 of this thesis provides an account of the experiences, feelings and perceptions the respondents had about attending the Hixson Seminar: University Studies 111. The information is presented in a way that preserves the actual statements of the students as they described how attending a freshman seminar impacted their freshman year experience.

The chapter is organized by the five themes that evolved as a result of data analysis: (1) Orientation to campus; (2) impact of the seminar assignments/activities; (3) developing academic competence; (4) student interaction with peers; and (5) student interaction with faculty/staff. The final chapter summarizes the findings in the study and discusses the implications of the information gained. It also offers suggestions for future research on freshman seminars.
CHAPTER 4. RESULTS

In Chapter 3, a description of the data analysis procedures used to analyze the three focus group interviews illustrated the process of unitization and categorization. Five themes emerged as a result of this process: (1) orientation to campus; (2) impact of the seminar assignments/activities; 3) developing academic competence; (4) student interaction with peers; and (5) student interaction with faculty/staff. This chapter restates the research questions and indicates their relationship to the five themes. Then, the results of the three focus group interviews are organized according to these themes. Verbatim statements from the Hixson Scholars are presented to exemplify and describe each theme. The chapter is designed to present the information in the students’ own words. The statements made by the freshman students are not separated from the statements of the sophomore students. Confidentiality has been protected by removing the students’ names from the report. A summary of results follows the discussion of each theme.

Research Questions

The primary objective of this study was to identify the key components that impacted the students’ freshman year experience so they may be replicated in programs to assist every freshman student. Seven research questions guided the study:

1. What do the students feel are the reasons for having a freshman seminar?
2. What was the most helpful part of the seminar?
3. What was the least helpful part of the seminar?
4. How did the seminar affect the students’ approach to their coursework?

5. If the students were not required to attend a freshman seminar, would they still want to participate in a freshman seminar?

6. What specific ways did the seminar help the students make the transition from high school to college?

7. What do the students feel they have learned from participating in the freshman seminar?

The emergence of the themes following data analysis resulted in one or more questions being answered within a theme and its data categories.

**Orientation to Campus**

The theme orientation to campus includes seven categories of data: (1) transition from high school to college; (2) adjusting to life at college; (3) campus resources; (4) field trips on campus; (5) ISU history; (6) involvement in extracurricular activities; and (7) comparison to other orientation efforts. The Hixson Scholars were specifically asked in the focus group interview how the Hixson Scholars Seminar: University Studies 111 helped them make the transition from high school to college. Their responses to that question were coded into categories that comprised this theme. Other responses were spontaneously evoked throughout the focus group interviews.

**Transition from high school to college**

The responses in this category answered Research Question 6: *What specific ways did the seminar help the students make the transition from high school to college?* The
Hixson Scholars discussed how the attending the seminar impacted their transition from high school to college.

*I think that the seminar showed us our freedoms and responsibilities. When you first get to college, you don't have live under your parents anymore. This seminar really stressed your responsibility and how your new freedoms will impact you.*

*It helps ease the transition to college and I think that is one of the reasons the retention rate is higher for Hixson Scholars.*

*I think it is good that we had it first semester because it caught us all right away and they could show us what the university has to offer and gave us an opportunity to make friends.*

*It helped you grow up and it showed you the real world even though we're not necessarily in the real world yet. In high school you still live with your parents and you think you are all big and bad. I just look at my sister and brother and think, wait until you leave home. I thought, “Oh, it will be no big deal.” Then you have no money and no nothing.*

*It reminded us that this is a transition. We had somewhere to go for help. We were not going to be another number or just another freshman. We were going to have somewhere to go where people cared about us.*

**Adjusting to college life**

The responses in this category answered the second and first research questions: (2) *What was the most helpful part of the seminar?* and (1) *What do the students feel are the reasons for having a freshman seminar?* The need to adjust to college life was expressed by many students. Most felt attending the seminar aided them in the adjustment process.

*I found it to be a pretty helpful program. They did take us around and show us what was going on and how to deal with certain things. We just learned how to deal with our environment.*

*The seminar was all about how to survive on campus. It taught us stuff we would not know before coming here.*
It was a first semester guide on starting college and not screwing up too bad. It was real beneficial for us because there was somebody there showing us how to do it right.

College is not all fun and games. You have to buckle down. You are starting your career right here. It's not like high school anymore.

There are other adjustments that need to be made, like you were away from your parents and that kind of thing.

The seminar tells you where to get help when you need it. Just like everything you need to know to adjust. College life is just so much different than what we'd experienced or what I have experienced. It helped me adjust. It was the small things like where we can go for help and when to sign up for classes. It was also how to take care of stress, studying for tests and a bunch of other things.

It was beneficial for the time we spent there. It opened your eyes and pointed you in the right direction.

I think we should definitely all have to attend a freshman seminar because otherwise you get here and you are hit with everything all at once and you do not have time to figure out which way is up. It's nice to have a guide to the first few things and make you aware.

It made school much easier because you were aware of what was going on. Here you are just a number. Deb cared when nobody else did. The seminar taught us that it is not going to be handed out to you. You have to help yourself.

Campus resources

The first and seventh research questions were answered by the data in this category:

(1) What do the students feel are the reasons for having a freshman seminar? and (7) What do the students feel they have learned from participating in the freshman seminar? Locating campus services and opportunities was identified as an important role the seminar played in orienting the seminar participants to campus. Many of the Hixson Scholars expressed that Iowa State is very large and overwhelming.
The reason for attending this seminar is to welcome us to campus and make us aware of what is available at Iowa State. It told us where to get help and who to talk to if you are having problems. We should not be afraid to ask questions of instructors.

Eventually, we could have found things out ourselves but, it is better to be told right away and not miss out on opportunities. It would have taken a long time to figure out otherwise.

A campus tour should be added to the first day. The class could walk around campus and tour the library. That place is so intimidating. I don't know where half of that stuff is still. We should just walk around on campus and get to know the place. I still do not know where a lot of places are. I think it would be good to get to know the place so that when you wanted to do something, you would know where to go.

I liked finding out what is available. Oh, I didn't know you could do that.

One of the nicest things about being in college and one of the reasons you pay such high tuition is all the free resources on campus. The seminar made us aware of these resources.

I got really frustrated my freshman year. I was sent from building to building to try and find the answer to my question. They sent me to one building and they sent me to another, only to end up back at the first building. I know I got pretty mad and I told them "you just sent me in a loop." Please send me where I need to go. I tried very hard my freshman year and I paid all the money to come here and then I was treated like that. Then you start thinking that maybe if they cut you out of this loop and cut down all the paper work then we would not need to pay so much tuition. I was mad half the time freshman year. At least I had the seminar to ask questions. What did freshmen do that did not have the seminar? "I can't imagine why they stayed here."

The seminar leaves all of your options open. All of the opportunities are brought to you. Like, if you wanted to do something, all you would have to do is ask Debra and she would get you the information. She is always willing to do that.

Field trip

The data in this category answered Research Question 2: What was the most helpful part of the seminar? During the semester, seminar participants left the classroom and for a
day and toured the Reiman Gardens, a horticulture garden on the edge of campus. The students agreed that this was a relaxing experience that would not occur in most classes.

*I liked when we went to Reiman Gardens. We went at the wrong time because everything was dying. It was towards the end of the session.*

*I remember Reiman Gardens the best. I go there sometimes just on my own now. I don't think most people even know about it.*

*I liked the field trip to Reiman Gardens. If I was writing the syllabus I would go there every other week. I wished I had more time to go there.*

*I had a good time when we went to Reiman Gardens. It was totally laid back. There were no assignments.*

*I think they meant for it to be a relaxation hour but, looking at the friendships that developed in this class, that is the day when they kind of sparked.*

**ISU history**

The data in this category answered *Research Question 7: What do the students feel they have learned from participating in the freshman seminar?* One of the goals of the Hixson Seminar is to learn more about the history and recent accomplishments of Iowa State. The students shared their thoughts about learning this history.

*I liked learning about the history of ISU.*

*A whole day was spent on the history of Iowa State. There were lots of first here at Iowa State. I didn’t realize that. It was kind of interesting.*

*We learned why buildings were named the way they were. That was kind of neat because you would not find that in any other classes. Learning the ISU history made me proud to attend Iowa State.*
Involvement in extracurricular activities

One of the required assignments for the Hixson Seminar is to attend “Clubfest”, an informational fair in the student union where clubs and organizations promote their activities. Seminar participants are required to find an organization and attend one meeting or event. The students must then prepare an oral report about their club. The Hixson students also get together informally outside of class to socialize. Some have taken a trip to the Omaha Zoo or participated in intramurals on campus as a result of the friendships they established in the Hixson Scholars Seminar. The data in this category answered the first, second and seventh research questions: (1) What do the students feel are the reasons for having a freshman seminar? (2) What was the most helpful part of the seminar? and (7) What do the students feel they have learned from participating in the freshman seminar?

I think like you said before, you get out of things what you put in to them. There are so many things that you can do: You could go to the zoo, do the volleyball game, or other social things. You can do tons or very little and meet many people.

The Clubfest thing was good. It helped you find out how to get involved.

What I liked about this class was that sometimes it was academically geared and other times we discussed getting involved in organizations-going canoeing or backpacking. For the first time, someone required us to do that. That was kind of nice. I grumbled about having to make time to go to the fair and going to the union by myself. But, when I got there it was great. Sometimes you need someone to give you a shove. I found out what the bike club is doing this weekend. It was neat to have been made to do that.

If they had not required us to go to Clubfest, I would have never gone. There are a lot of things I found out.

I didn’t think that I would have time for the soccer club, even though I wanted to go. I found out that they are not strict about attending practices or games. Because of this class, I found out that I could enjoy and participate in soccer club.
I enjoyed the parts of the seminar that discusses getting involved, like the Clubfest thing. It is important to go out and see what is there and get involved.

I believe in the Clubfest thing. I think that really helped. People would hand out brochures on all these clubs and different activities.

One thing that was brought up in the seminar is that just going to school does not cut it. You have to be involved in activities or you get bored or tired of it. I think this is really true because during the first year I did not get involved with activities but, getting involved with the solar car my second year made school more fun. You just need to have a balance between school and activities.

Several students shared their experiences of joining fraternities and sororities.

Part of adjusting is living in a house with so many guys saying, “This is what you need to do and this is how to get things done.” If I had a question, there’s always someone there to help with a class and to answer questions. I had problems with math and I live in a house that is predominantly engineers so they can answer any math problem. If I needed help I usually asked some of them. Getting involved in activities such as my house really helped me adjust to college.

Comparison to other orientation efforts

The responses in this category answered Research Question 1: What do the students feel are the reasons for having a freshman seminar? The students reported that the freshman seminar supplemented their new student orientation to Iowa State.

The seminar is a chance for us who didn’t take freshman orientation too seriously. We came out here and went to all the classes and seminars the first day, but the second day decided to go bowling at the union or check out campus town instead of attending anything. It was kind of nice and meant a lot more, too.

I would include a tour of campus into the seminar. I know orientation showed you around, but I was still turned around. I was just thinking the other day about how confusing orientation is.

The Hixson Scholars compared their experiences in the seminar to their academic orientation courses.
I thought some of this stuff was a repeat from my orientation class in my major. Because we went over time management, clubs and organizations, and stuff like that. It was just a repeat of the same stuff.

The Hixson seminar was more geared toward learning about yourself. The letters and other activities were geared to help you understand how to think. In engineering seminar, you learned what was acceptable in the curriculum and what engineering firms want you to do. It is geared more towards grades than getting to know yourself.

I had an orientation class and I did not think they were similar at all. They generally covered the same things like study skills and things like that but, I never had the same things twice.

Mine were two totally opposite things. They were not similar so I enjoyed having them both. In academic orientation you only learned about determining our majors. The Hixson Seminar was a time where I could go and relax and find some helpful information.

This class overlapped with my orientation class quite a bit. It was very similar and went back and forth. They helped each other out. The orientation class had study habits, also and where to get help. It was based on my major.

We did a lot of the same things in both classes. We did more personal things in the Hixson Seminar. I think it would be have been better for me, time wise, to just have to attend one or the other. If I had to choose one, I would choose the Hixson Seminar.

The orientation class just told you things about Iowa State. There was no sense of community there.

Summary

The Hixson Students reported that the seminar helped them make the transition from high school to college. Many disclosed that the information about campus resources, and the activities such as the field trips and discussion of ISU history helped them adjust to life at college. Involvement in extracurricular activities was emphasized in the seminar. Many students reported that attending Clubfest helped them join a new club. Freshman orientation for new students was supplemented by many experiences in the seminar. The students
expressed the need to have orientation efforts continue throughout the first semester. The value of academic orientation classes was debated as many students found them to be similar to the seminar while others viewed them as very different.

Impact of the Seminar Assignments/Activities

This theme, impact of seminar assignments/activities, contains information about the seminar assignments and activities that impacted the students' freshman year experience. The four categories of data—(1) instructor letters; (2) letter to hometown newspaper; (3) high school visit; and (4) the Myers-Briggs typology model—are included in this theme. The responses in all four categories answer Research Question 7: What do the students feel they have learned from participating in the freshman seminar?

Instructor letters

Seminar participants are required to write weekly letters to the instructor discussing ISU History, time management, effective leadership, diversity of opinions, and community service. The letters are sent to the instructor via e-mail.

I think the weekly assignments, even though I didn't do one on time, are very helpful actually because they got me thinking about things that I don't want to think about like a person I admire. I don't ever think about people I admire. It helped me to process my thoughts on paper and I learned something.

The assignments would have been more useful if we discussed them in class. You did the assignments and nothing else was said about it.

I do not like to write at all so the e-mail thing was not my thing. It was almost a chore for me. But, I guess I learned a lot.

I liked writing the weekly letters. They were hard but, she gave us various topics to write about and it helped us get to know ourselves.
There are just some things you have to do. The weekly letters— I remember those. I am not the writer type so every week on Sunday night, I would write mine. I hated writing those letters but, I had to do it.

I don’t remember any of the topic of the letters but, I’m sure there were beneficial things among them.

A lot of subjects were about yourself. We had to write about the black security officer who beat himself up and claimed that he was attacked by white students. Those were the most interesting topics because they dealt with what is going on in campus.

The letter writing that we did makes you feel better. It is nice to sit down and write about what is going on in your life. I remember telling Debra things and she was always so interested.

Writing the letters taught me responsibility just because we had to send her a letter each week. It was important to get your assignment in on time. I remember some kids in my class did not get it them in. She was on their butts right away. “Why didn’t you get your stuff in?” It was not something you could blow off.

I think the assignments were intended to teach us responsibility. I liked that we had to e-mail our assignments to her. At ISU everything is electronic and she really made us get out and use e-mail. It forced some people to learn it and get used to it right away. It helped me.

Letter to hometown newspaper

Seminar participants are required to write a letter to the editor of their hometown newspaper on the value of pursuing a higher education. Although several students found it hard to know what to write, they all agreed that it was a valuable experience.

The only thing I would change about the article in the paper would be the topic—Why it is important to attend college. There are a lot of our parents who never went to college. I’m from a small town and I think a lot of people would look at that article and say, “Wow, I didn’t know that kid could do that. Is he putting me down?” I tried to write my paper real basic. I didn’t want to say if you don’t go to college you are going to fail because there are so many people out there who are really brilliant people and have made a wonderful life without going to college. But, I did want to encourage people to go. I’d like to see the subject changed to how to choose a college or what are the reasons for attending college.
I think the letter to the editor might actually think more about coming to Iowa State or getting a higher education. I think that would be very important.

I tried to gear mine to those who are still in high school now. I wanted to say things that they should look forward to and think about now before they go. I didn't think it would affect people who had already made their life decisions.

Writing the letter to our hometown newspaper was pretty good. We could have just written the essay and just turned it in but, we went the extra step and turned it over to our hometown newspaper.

We are just freshman and I'm thinking after I get my degree and get out into the real world then I will see why it is important to go to college. I had a problem writing that paper because of that.

It was hard for me to write too. I found out more about why I am here. It's helping me now because I realize why I am here and what I need to do. It was one of the most important parts of the seminar.

High school visit

Seminar participants are required to schedule a visit to their high school to speak about the value of higher education. They are encouraged to share their experiences as a new college student and encourage others to further their education. Many of the freshman students had not yet traveled to their high schools and were planning to speak over Thanksgiving vacation. They spoke about what they anticipated and expected to gain from the experience. For the students that had completed the assignment, not every student enjoyed having to go back to their hometown high school or speaking in front of a large audience. However, most agreed it was a valuable experience.

Going to talk to my school will be very useful.

The high school students do not have a clue how it will be like. I am sure they will ask me questions about what Iowa State is like and how they can apply for the Hixson Scholarship. Maybe it will be helpful for them.
In all my lifetime I have not seen anyone who went back to our high school and said this is what I did and this is how to do it. I think going back and talking to the kids who are going to be going to college next year, or in two years will be helpful. They are going to see someone who was the 4.0 student in class and now attends ISU on a full scholarship. I think I could open some doors for others. A lot of us will be going back and saying: keep doors open, don't always listen to people who you think would know because in some cases, they don't have a clue.

The students who come back to high school to talk about their experiences are the ones that you trust because they have similar backgrounds and you can trust them.

I would keep the high school visit. As much as I said it would be tough to take it seriously. Even if I go out there and convince 2 or 3 people out of 150 to go to college, I think it is worthwhile. It doesn't cost anything.

If we all swapped a high school with someone else and went to someone else’s school, I’d feel better about that. It would be real tough for me to sit back in high school and look at someone I played football with. I would know that we drank beer together and it would be tough to take him too seriously.

If you start talking about going to college they will just drown you out. A lot of people bugged me about college—my mom and dad, the dog and the cat. When it came down to college I just didn’t want to talk about it. It’s was a decision I had to make for myself. I just hope I can get a good response and it will be worth my time to go.

I think it will help that everyone knows me when I go back. They will see how much I have changed. They know me as the guy who was just a screw off. They will say, he is doing all right, he is more mature and he sounds educated. I think they will see a difference and will realize and will listen to me more and will respect my views because they know me instead of some guy from somewhere in Iowa. I think they will listen to me more because they know me and respect my ideas already.

I sat in last year and heard a recruiter speak. They don’t want to ask questions to people from the university staff. They’ll give you false answers. They’ll ask you what would you do if this happens. I know because I have done it before.

They know you will give a correct answer. You are from the same high school and have the same ideals they do.

Recruiters just seem fake. They always give the same answer to all your questions. You couldn’t believe a thing they said because they are trying to make the college look good.
Myers-Briggs typology model

Administering the Myers-Briggs typology model is a favorite class activity. A decision of each student's preferences for receiving information and making decisions helps them learn new study techniques and test taking methods. Another intent of the exercise was to help students learn about themselves and how to get along with others.

I would keep the personality test. I liked it a lot. I found out a lot about myself. I am not compatible with everybody.

I was amazed by the personality test. It pin-pointed who I am. I didn't think any test could do that. I was like whoa.

Mine was exactly right on. I couldn't believe how close it was. I read through mine twice and I thought, are they sitting here watching me? How did they know these things about me? I felt like a guinea pig. That was really neat. I think it was one of the best times I had in the seminar.

The personality test was interesting to me. It identified some questions and the results I got back were completely bogus. I guess they were just different that I thought.

We all know what our personality is like. We know who we are and how we need to study. Maybe there were some doors opened to us, but we can figure that out in college without taking a little test.

The personality test was the best part of the program. It identified some of the best ways for you to study.

Summary

This theme described the impact of various assignments and activities on the seminar participants' freshman year experience. Although a few students did not agree that the activities were important, the majority reported that writing letters to Debra, visiting their high school to talk about the value of higher education, and writing the letter to their
hometown newspaper helped them learn about themselves and inform others about the value of college.

**Developing Academic Competence**

Developing academic competence discusses the seminar’s impact on the students’ academic performance. The theme contains five categories which include: (1) academic pressures; (2) study skills; (3) time management; (4) goal setting; and (5) public speaking. The Hixson Scholars were asked in the focus group interview how the seminar affected their approach to their course work. Their responses became categories which comprise this theme. Other responses were spontaneously evoked throughout the focus group interview.

**Academic pressures**

The Hixson Scholars described the academic pressures they faced during their first year of college. Most agreed that the Hixson Seminar helped them develop academic competence by addressing and relieving these pressures. The responses answered the fourth and first research questions: (4) *How did the seminar affect the students’ approach to their coursework?* and (1) *What do the students feel are the reasons for having a freshman seminar?*

*I think a lot of freshman come to school thinking that their first year is going to be just like high school and it will be so easy. So they party their whole semester and then they get their final grades and think, I am failing, now what do I do? A lot of them do not wake up and they still think it will be easy to overcome. I know a lot of freshmen and I tell them to wait, it will hit them right in the face. You’ll cram the night before the test. I did last year. I thought, I am getting no where. It will not do me any good. Then I talked to Debra and everything started to improve.*
During midterm time, I was not doing real well. High school was so easy, especially at my high school. It was really small. I got midterms in every class. I will never forget getting those midterms. I just started bawling. I probably wasn't the only one and now I am glad that somebody cares.

I know on my floor last year there were many people having problems. After a while you get mad. I felt lousy and I would get mad. After that, you stop caring. That is when you grades start to fall. I know a couple of people who first would get mad and then they had it pretty hard. They did not have anyone here at the university who knew them and encouraged them to succeed. I am fortunate that Debra was here for support.

Some kids probably don't have a lot or some parents don't expect a lot from them. If people expect a lot out of you they are going to get more out of you. It think students try harder to get good grades when someone is pushing them to try.

I wish that they would help you calculate your GPA your freshman year. Tell us in order to get a 3.5 I need to get an A in this class a B in this class. I didn't catch on to this until the second semester that if you had a 5 credit course it would have count more toward your GPA.

I would definitely keep the stress thing. Managing your stress is a big part of going to college. Every student has different things that cause them stress. Like in class, we listed all the different things that cause stress. We came up with 20 or 30 things that stress us out: activities, classes and stuff. Stress can really harm you physically and mentally. So it's important to keep your stress level down. The class showed us ways to get rid of stress.

The stress management was great. I always get worked up before tests. I get so nervous that I shake uncontrollably. This really helped with test taking. After I got a few tests under my belt, I thought, this isn't so bad.

Study skills

The responses in this category answered first, second and fourth research questions:

(1) What do the students feel are the reasons for having a freshman seminar? (2) What was the most helpful part of the seminar? and (4) How did the seminar affect the students' approach to their coursework? One of the greatest problems the students discussed about
gaining academic competence was learning to study. The majority of students shared that they did not need to study in high school and so they had to learn when they arrived on campus. They agreed that the seminar helped them develop good study skills.

"I had no idea how to take notes or study for a test. I never did my homework in high school. I slept through all my classes and it was so much different. I would have probably dropped out of college because I had no idea how to do those things. The seminar showed me how to take notes and study for a test-things I should have learned four years ago. That was very helpful."

"I went to talk to Deb and told her that I did not know how to study. I never had to before. She showed me some ways."

"I never studied in high school so the seminar was very important."

"Deb mentioned not to take naps and I still take naps all the time. I limit the places I do because if you get in the habit of sitting at your desk at home and shutting your eyes, every time you open the book you will need to sleep. Deb gave us that tip and it really made sense. That's been a lot of help."

"Study habits are something I developed as a result of attending the seminar. I had no idea how to study or take notes. Who teaches the other students?"

"Because of my grades, I have to go in every week and talk to Deb. Now I study a lot more. The seminar teaches you how to study. Like I said, I had no study skills."

"It helped knowing that everyone was getting ready for the first tests and we could talk about it."

**Time management**

Learning to balance your time is an important part of succeeding academically. Many Hixson Scholars reported that the seminar helped them learn to balance their time between academics and extracurricular activities. The responses answered the second, fourth and first research questions: **(2) What was the most helpful part of the seminar?** **(4) How did the**
What do the students feel are the reasons for having a freshman seminar?

I have a time schedule on my test that I use. I am involved in a lot of activities and I have learned to balance my time from talking to Deb.

I found time management to be the most helpful part of the seminar. I was in all kinds of activities and I had to figure out what I had to do and what I knew I had to do. I had to learn to manage my time and to figure out what I had to do to do well.

I am pretty good at managing my time. The seminar just reinforced that.

I liked the advice that Deb gave us. I don't remember what session it was but, I know there was one thing that really stuck out in my mind. That was thinking about college as a career and trying to cram everything in from 8-5. She suggested that you try to get your work done during that time. I have breaks between my classes, so I try to study then. It really helps out.

The seminar gave us an idea of what to do with all our free time. In high school, I'd go to class from 8-3:15 and in my case after school, I had my sport, did my chores and if I got around to it, did my homework. If not, I went to bed. If I didn't do my work, I didn't worry about it. I wasn't in high school to be a scholar. I was there to wrestle, play football, and goof off. I guess the seminar has done a lot for me. It helped me learn to study, deal with stress, and deal with my free time so I didn't waste it.

Deb gave us the idea of trying to put everything from 8-4. College is like a career. Something else that was recommended that same day was to avoid taking naps. I always slept in high school. I was in so many activities that I always slept through class. I know I was not supposed to do that here and I try not to. I try to avoid taking naps too.

I have always been fairly organized before. I got a planner—We had to for the seminar. I would have never used it except that now I know I need to.

I learned to balance my time between homework and social activities. It was different from last year but I had to set up a schedule every week because of my grades. I now have a time schedule on my test that I use. I am involved in a lot of activities and I have learned to balance my time from talking to Deb. Last year I didn't have anything to do and I just sat there. I have learned to just get it done because you get it done a lot better.
Goal setting

Preparing for the duration of college and the future was identified by many scholars as a valuable part of the seminar experience. The responses answered Research Question 4: How did the seminar affect the students’ approach to their coursework?

It helped you focus on what you are doing. She helped us plan out what we would be doing for the next few semesters.

I thought the program taught us how to set goals and look at what you have to do to achieve the goal. A lot of times they say, set goals but they never emphasize what you have to do to achieve the goal. When I was in class, I was thinking to myself, I can’t wait until this semester is over because then I won’t have to go to this seminar and write these letters and speak in front of people. Now that it is over, I wish I had something like this again. The seminar just narrows in on yourself. I guess that is how a lot of things are. You don’t appreciate what you have until it is gone.

Public speaking

The responses in this category answered Research Question 2: What was the most helpful part of the seminar? Hixson participants are asked to prepare several oral reports for the class. For many students speaking in front of a group can be challenging and stressful.

I remember having to talk in front of everybody and I hated it. Sometimes it would be about an extracurricular activity or personal thoughts. Every time I got up there my palms would get sweaty.

I think the reports in front of the class are important and I would keep them in the seminar. Some people have stage fright, but a lot don’t. For those who do it can help them get over it.

I still hate talking in front of people, even after the seminar. I have to do it at work soon. This time it will be in front of my managers not my peers. I have to do it, so I will even though I will hate it. I guess the seminar prepared me for that.
Summary

This theme describes the seminar’s impact on the students’ academic performance. The students reported that learning study skills, time management, public speaking, and goal setting helped them develop academic competence and relieve academic pressures. Many of the Hixson Scholars reported that college is harder than they had anticipated and that they did not know how to take notes or study for tests. They agreed that the seminar met these voids and helped them succeed.

Student Interaction with Peers

The theme student interaction with peers includes five categories of data: (1) class format; (2) group activities; (3) peer interaction; (4) exposure to diverse student opinions; and (5) social interaction outside of class. The theme includes descriptions of how friendships developed as a result of attending the Hixson Scholars Seminar: University Studies 111. The responses in the first four categories answered the first and second research questions: (1) What do the students feel are the reasons for having a freshman seminar? (2) What was the most helpful part of the seminar? and the responses in the last (5th) category answered the first research question.

Class format

The seminar contained four sections of classes containing 20-25 students. The students agreed that the small class size helped them get to know their peers.

I liked the seminar because it was a small section and my other classes had 400 people in it. In this class you got to know other people.
I think the small setting was important for creating a small feeling. If you are in a fraternity, that's good. If you aren't it is harder to meet a small group of people who you will see over and over again.

I was nice to be in a small class. Since I kept changing my major each semester, I couldn't keep friends. My other classes are so big and you are just a number—nobody cares.

The size of the class really made a difference. It was like 25 or 30 people like high school. It is nice to have a little class to complement the large ones.

The students also commented that they enjoyed the informal structure of the Hixson Seminar.

It was really laid back. It wasn't really challenging work like college course work. The class was relaxing. There was no pressure.

It was a guaranteed hour a week to relax. Instead of going to class where we had to take notes and study, we could just sit back, listen and observe the people around us.

I thought it was pretty laid back. I liked that we just went in there. It was not like my other classes. All my other classes are kind of high stress like physics and calculus. You just walk into this class and kind of kick back. We just talk about nothing most of the time.

I enjoyed having an hour in the day or the week when you knew it was a class to go and it was important, but you didn't have tests. It was fun and you could relax.

Group activities

Many of the activities in the Hixson Seminar were completed in groups. One such activity involved constructing a “Lego man” without more than one group member looking at the model at a time. Several of the students remembered this activity and reflected on their experiences working together in small groups.

In class she would have us do something in a group each week. I think I was with different people each time. She did a really good job mixing us up and giving us time to talk in our groups.
I remember the Lego man. It is the only activity that sticks out for me. Four or five of us trying to put together something that we could not look at. We really had to work together as a team.

I remember the Lego man too. It was fun to watch people construct it and see who was going to get done. We were on teams trying to be the first to construct this Lego man. We were having a good time but, I'm not sure I understand the point of the activity.

We learned a lot. My group just went in and did it without much planning. We spent 30 seconds planning what to do and two minutes building it. We were done before everybody else was but, somebody still beat us because they spent 15 minutes planning. We learned that it is better to plan than dive right in.

I would like to see even more group activities so we could really get to know each other.

Peer interactions

Having an opportunity to make new friends and interact with their peers was one of the most widely reported themes in the focus group interviews. The students agree that the seminar is an opportune time to meet new people.

I think it's nice to meet some people so that you realize the campus is not so big.

It's important to me that I have a network of friends and when I came here I knew a few people already but, I wanted to meet more. The seminar helped me to right away meet lots of people.

I met a lot of people in the class. I'm still friends with a girl I met there. In fact, we decided to be roommates.

I met a lot of people that I would have never met. It was a good thing.

I enjoyed it because it was a class that you weren't working in every second. It was a lot of fun with a lot of different people.

I think the purpose of the seminar was to get acquainted with other students and learn what goes on at college.
It helped us get over the freshman jitters and meet other people on campus. To go up to people and introduce myself and say, "Hi, my name is ..." A lot of people have trouble with that. The seminar gave us a place to meet friends without having to make an effort.

The reason for having the seminar was to meet other people. I should have taken more advantage of that because I didn't get acquainted with anyone in my class except one person. It would have been beneficial if I would have gotten acquainted with more people in class.

I think it helped. You come and you don't know anybody and it gives you a chance to meet others. You walk on campus and you don't know anybody so it gives you a chance to meet others.

I was normally excited about the class. It was an opportunity to see different people, the way they work, how college goes on, and how you need to adapt to different things.

I realize that there are other people having the same struggles and doubts. You can talk about it in class. Like the first test and stuff. Everybody is getting ready for it and it helped.

I wish I would have gotten an opportunity to meet more people. I only really got to know about 15 really well from my class.

I enjoyed hearing about what the other students were doing and sharing ideas. There was a bond with this scholarship. Debra made it fun and worth while.

It is a good way to meet people and make the connections that will help us during our time at Iowa State.

You get to meet a class of 30 people and get to know them better. You don't feel so alone.

It is the only class where the students talk except for a one-word answer. Some classes the teacher asks you a "yes or no" question and then you respond. This class you sit and listen to other people. In other classes you have to make an effort to know people. In this class you have no choice. Even if you don't want to know someone, you are going to get to know them.
Meeting diverse peers

Part of meeting new people was being exposed to new viewpoints. A few students explained how the seminar exposed them to a diverse group of people and an opportunity to hear new ideas.

*We did talk to other people and that gives us a mind set that there are so many other people on this campus. It is nice because you can meet a lot of other people and understand the differences and similarities between everybody.*

*We were all really different and that makes it easier to accept other people’s ideas when we talked in groups.*

*You learn how to deal with different people and different leadership styles that you will have to deal with in the future. I’m from a small school and I have not been exposed to that many people different from myself. It is pretty interesting.*

*I think there are a lot of different ideas going around. Along with the student security guard and the racial thing, there are definitely a lot of ideas on this campus. There are so many people involved in so many areas. A lot of ideas from a lot of people.*

*At the end of the class you pretty much get to know everyone by listening to them speak and you have an idea where they stand on a lot of things.*

Social interaction outside class

The friendships developed in the seminar often lasted after the end of the ten weeks of the class. Debra Sanborn planned social activities for the entire group of Hixson Scholars to have a chance to meet each other. Many students expressed the desire to do more social activities outside of the class.

*The great thing about the seminar was meeting people. I met a few guys in my section and we have had pizza in my room. I have enjoyed getting to meet the other people and hanging out.*

*I wish they could have a huge party or dance for all the Hixson Scholars so we could meet more people.*
The whole class should get together more outside of class like we did on a few Wednesday nights. It would be tough to organize but, it would be fun.

We played volleyball and only ten people showed up. There were only two people that I didn't know so, our class showed up. I suggest that for next year they have an hour a week for Hixson Scholars to get together and interact...not a structured thing.

They could have kept it going for the whole first semester and made it more personal towards the end of the syllabus. It could have gone into more of a social time. More time to get together to get to know each other and talk.

Summary

Student interaction with peers was described as a major reason for having the seminar. The Hixson Scholars described the seminar's class format and group activities as an opportunity to make friends and have exposure to diverse student opinions. A few students expressed a desire to have more opportunity for social interaction outside of class.

Student Interaction with Faculty/Staff

The final theme, student interaction with faculty/staff, describes the relationship between Debra Sanborn, the Hixson Scholars seminar leader, and the seminar participants. It also describes the student/faculty relationships that evolved as a result of class assignments and activities. The students' relationship with their academic advisor is also discussed. This theme contains four themes—(1) faculty interview; (2) guest speakers; (3) academic advisor; and (4) Debra, seminar leader—which illustrate the students' interactions with faculty and staff members.
Faculty interview

Seminar participants were required to interview a faculty member of their choice and prepare a written summary of the interview. The responses in this category answered the second, fourth and third research questions: (2) *What was the most helpful part of the seminar?* (4) *How did the seminar affect the students’ approach to their coursework?* and (3) *What was the least helpful part of the seminar?*

*We had to go interview some professor in our major. That was by far the best thing for me. I went in and talked to one of my teachers and knew he was a really smart guy. He teaches some pretty hard classes. I went in and got to know the guy and it really helped make some good connections. I have class with him several times a week and he responds to you better after you have gone in and spent sometime getting to know him.*

*I really enjoyed the assignment too. I went in and interviewed my psychology professor. He was the nicest guy. When I was interviewing him, he seemed really interested in what I had to ask him. In his interview, he almost interviewed me. He wanted to know me better and get feedback from the class. It was a really good feeling because, well it was just a positive experience.*

*I interviewed my sociology instructor and now I sit up front in class and he comes in and says hi to me every time I come to class. Out of four hundred people, it is really cool that he knows me now.*

*We had to meet with one of our instructors. Everyone told me it was very important to get to know my professors. I put it off. I just didn’t want to go see someone who saw 500 people a day. Then I got to know one and we talk all the time. It’s easier than I thought to relate.*

*That kind of worked out opposite for me. I thought I was going to enjoy getting to meet this professor and it turned out to be....I was a 10 minute problem for him. That’s what it felt like. I was hoping for a better experience but, maybe it was my fault. I may have just chosen him on a wrong day or maybe I hit a busy day. I kind of worked it in on a Friday and called him on Thursday. So, it probably was more my fault but, I didn’t get as much out of it as I’d hoped for.*
I would keep the meeting of your instructors assignment. Because, then I will have the confidence to do it next time and maybe get to know all my instructors. It was very helpful.

The faculty interview was helpful. It was nice to make that connection. It was my first conversation with a professor. I had been intimidated before that.

Guest speakers

The responses in this category answered Research Question 2: What was the most helpful part of the seminar? One of the components of the Hixson Seminar was to introduce participants to institutional leaders. The first year of the seminar, Dr. Thomas Thielen, Vice President for Student Affairs, visited the class. The second year of the seminar, Laura Bestler, Student Activities Coordinator, and Professor Dr. Daniel Robinson visited the class.

I also liked the day that the Vice President for Student Affairs came into talk. It gave us an opportunity to hear speakers that we would never know.

You meet people that will be important for the rest of your life. You meet a lot of important people and get your foot in the door. We people around campus and we had a sack lunch with the president. Just meeting Ms. Hixson herself. That was pretty cool. I think we met the public relations director for Iowa State. Several faculty members came to class like the Myers-Briggs guy. I just tried to make a good impression for myself.

Academic advisors

Most of the seminar participants reported having an academic advisor to help the schedule classes and answer academic questions. Many students reported that this relationship was strained. The responses in this category answered Research Question 1:

What do the students feel are the reasons for having a freshman seminar?
I am taking 104 now because my advisor told me it would be fine for me to take 105 and that I did not need 104. I had to drop 105 half way through the semester and it was too late to start 104. So, I am taking English as a sophomore.

There was one kid in my English class that hadn't even had an advisor yet. That is pretty sad that they can't even get him an advisor even after he asked several places.

My advisor gets me confused with other people. “Did I talk to you about this or was that somebody else?” I wish I had somebody else.

My advisor I had the first major was really good but, the one I have now always asks me, “Have we met?” and I say, “yes.”

My advisor is good. He sent me the courses that I should register for at the beginning of the semester. But, he’s going to retire in April.

I guess if you ask for help they would help you. You would think that we don’t have many advisors in the Anthropology department but, actually we have six of them. There are only 8 people to an advisor. Which a lot of my friends are in bigger departments where there are several hundred students to each advisor. You would think I would get more help but, not really. Like, when I went in when I needed help getting into one of these classes and I couldn’t fit it in. He went and got me in after I asked him. If you ask for it, they are willing to help. I don’t know about anybody else but, my advisor is not good.

My advisor is good.

My advisor just doesn’t know anything. She takes care of all the athletes. All the athletes really do not have a major, you know. I’m not declared yet. I pretty much know what I want to do. Whenever I ask her, “Well, do I need this because I want to transfer from Iowa State?” She says, “I don’t know. Look on the sheet.” I know that I need it. It is so frustrating. She sends me somewhere else. Why do I have to have you as an advisor?

Interactions with Debra Sanborn, seminar instructor

The most predominant theme of all three focus group interviews was the relationship the Hixson Scholars have established with Debra Sanborn, the Director of the Hixson Opportunity Awards and the Hixson Seminar leader. The students also mentioned their
relationship with Leah, a graduate assistant co-facilitating two sections of the seminar. The responses in this category answered the first, second and sixth research questions: (1) What do the students feel are the reasons for having a freshman seminar? What was the most helpful part of the seminar? and (6) What specific ways did the seminar help the students make the transition from high school to college?

I think the teachers made a lot of difference for me. Deb and Leah made me want to come. I would do this again for nothing, it was definitely, I think a lot of them are what made class what it was. If you were going to offer another class, I’d probably jump in again if I had time. They were so awesome, just like your best friends. They are not teachers at all. They were just like people in the class.

I think it would be good for a freshman seminar thing to extend beyond ten weeks. It would be tough to get people to participate if they didn’t want to. Like he said, they really were good friends. The last week of the Hixson class, I had a friend killed in a car wreck over the weekend. I didn’t get my weekly assignment turned in. I went to explain that to Leah, she asked me if there was a reason for it. She sat and listen to me for a long time. It was really nice to have somebody up here to confide in and talk to a little bit. That meant more to me than anything they could have said. Just sitting there and listening. Just knowing she really cared. That’s the kind of person they are. I’m sure I would have said the same experience with Debra. Just their personalities make them and are what really make them who we like.

I agree. I found out a friend of mine had cancer. Instead of going to class or going home, I just called and talked to her. I went home and talked to him, skipped a class and e-mailed Debra. She completely understood. She asked me some of the details about it. I didn’t have to worry about missing a class. I just knew she would understand.

It’s nice to know that they are not professors. You don’t know if the professors really care, but you know for sure that they do.

Debra and Leah weren’t here just to make money, just for the job. They were here for us and that was nice to know.

The biggest thing I heard in HS is that once you get to college, no one cares what you do. But somebody does care. Christina and Debra care. They are looking at all our courses. They are looking out for us as much as we are looking out for ourselves. There is somebody to ask a question.
It's kind of like having a teacher again because once you get up here, everybody is a
professor. Like you said, they care what you are doing but the way they show they
care is by sending you a little grade slip half-way through the semester. Leah would
call some of us and ask us to come in and talk if we were having some problems. It
was like having a teacher again. Someone who would say, "Is there anything you
need, anything you need help with, or maybe you should do this. That's what High
school was. Your teacher knew your name, where you were from. Most of them knew
your parents. I understand Leah and Deb can't do that, but they would if they could.
They are there to help you and not just to send you a piece of paper saying "get in
gear."

They give us a lot of moral support which is very important.

The best thing was the reassurance that Debra and Leah were there and their job was
to focus on the Hixson Scholars. It was nice to have just those two people for
someone to turn who could help us.

It was nice to have Deb and Leah, two faculty members, to give us recommendations
and some advice on what to do here.

It was good because everyone was in the exact same boat as I was. We had no idea
what was going on. They made it clear that if we had any questions, over anything,
we could come to them. That was very helpful and they did give good advice since
they had been here a lot longer than we have. It was helpful having them around.

A lot of little things made the seminar awesome. It's like I said before, this is where
you can get help. It is the little things that matter.

It was nice having somebody you know who really cared about you. It was nice
having someone to go to if you had problems or who could give you
recommendations. Especially, when you did not know anybody and you don't know
where to go to get things done.

Deb really cares and she will not forget about you. It really helped me with the
transition and made college easier.
She helped make the transition. When midterms came out, she was going around, "I
need to see you in my office today." If it was not for this scholarship and seminar,
they wouldn't have anyone to do this for them. The seminar helped in that respect.
She helped them buckle down.

Debra was much more helpful than my advisor. If you had questions, just give her a
call; she will find the answer.
I think it's Debra that makes the difference. If she didn't say, "You have to get this done or you won't be on this campus", I would not still be here if it wasn't for her support.

I don't know. I asked my friend for help. But, nobody takes the time. There are so many freshmen with the same problems and no one seems to really care.

It really doesn't seem like some advisors really care like Debra cares. They have so many students. For some it seems that you are just a number. Debra knows us. She knows about you and is kind of your second mom. She cares.

She helped you by putting the pressure back on it. In high school there was always someone there pushing you along. Not in college.

Deb is probably the most single important person I've had on campus because of how she has helped me meet people and get my classes and stuff. She always makes sure my grades are good. She's always been like this even the first semester which was pretty rough. She gave me calls to see how things were going. I talked to her for two hours once. She kept me on track. She wanted to make sure I knew someone was there. She wanted me to know she wasn't too far away.

I thought it made you feel pretty good that Debra knew everybody's name and something about you. At the seminar she also made you have monthly checks with her and if I had not had that I would not have thought anyone really cared about me. I would not be doing as good as I am doing now. I would not be as involved as I am now. In high school I was not involved and she made you get involved.

She is somebody that cares about your grades because the teachers won't. You'll get something out of it. She makes sure you stay on task and she will give you a call if you need help.

The safety net. She was there if we needed anything. Just in case something was going wrong, we could go ask her and she would help us out.

There was a time when we had the Myers-Briggs night session and this girl wanted to miss. Debra said, "You have known about this for months and you need to be there. I never had a teacher say you have to be there for anything.

The day I found out I could not stop smiling. I was at work and Deb called me. I think this transaction has been easy because of Debra herself. She is so nice. She makes it an easy first semester for all the students.
I met her the first time in the Union and then about one week later we see each other and she says, Hi, __, how are you? I was so impressed. She knew my name.

I walked in during an orientation. Debra said, You must be __. I was so impressed. She knew my name right away. She knew everybody in the class in a matter of minutes.

She's definitely the right person to have heading the program.

She reads that little paragraph that you wrote for your application and she knows all about you.

Summary

Student interaction with faculty and staff was described as a benefit of participation in the Hixson Seminar. The faculty interview was an opportunity for the students to meet and gain rapport with a professor in their major. Guest speakers in the seminar allowed the students to meet leaders on campus. These were experiences that the seminar participants said would not have occurred outside of the seminar. Although some students reported having a good relationship with their academic advisor, many students reported that they had no relationship with their advisor or it was strained. The most prevalent theme of all three focus group interviews was the impact of the students’ relationship with Debra Sanborn. All of the students reported that Debra was the reason for the success of the seminar. The students questioned who was supporting students who were not in this seminar.

Concluding Thoughts

The information in this chapter described the five themes that emerged as a result of data collection. Verbatim statements from the students were presented to describe each theme in the students’ own words. The students’ responses offered insight to their
experiences in the Hixson Scholars Seminar: University Studies 111. Because the students were required to attend this seminar as a result of receiving the Hixson Opportunity Awards scholarship, their comments about the impact of receiving this scholarship are presented as part one of the summary in this chapter. The second part of the summary includes summary statements about the participants’ experiences in the Hixson Seminar.

Impact of receiving the Christina Hixson Opportunity Awards

In addition to the other five themes previously described, the respondents discussed how receiving the Hixson Opportunity Award has impacted their experiences at Iowa State. Although the scholarship was not the focus of this study, this researcher has included their comments because the scholarship is the reason the students are attending the Hixson Scholars Seminar. It is important to recognize that these students are motivated to succeed perhaps more than the average student, in part because they are receiving funding to attend Iowa State. They realize that if they do not meet the required grade point average, they jeopardize their chance to receive funding the following year.

_I try harder in my classes because I want to keep my scholarship. There’s expectations around home now that I have this opportunity._

_It really makes you want to get the best grades you can. You want her to feel good about the program and stuff. You also want her to renew the scholarship. It puts a little positive pressure on you. If I would have come to Iowa State on loans like a normal student, I don’t think I would have taken college seriously. Because of the scholarship, I felt responsible to go to class and make sure I get good grades. If felt responsible because I got this scholarship and all this money. I need to take care and make sure it is not wasted._

_Deb always reminds you that Christina gave you this opportunity and not to let her down. You have to prove that you are worthy of the scholarship. There are other_
students out there that would have like to have this opportunity but, you were chosen. Kick it in the butt and study!

I wouldn't be at Iowa State if I wouldn't have gotten this scholarship. I'd be at some rinky-dink college for two years or whatever to get things done. My plans before the scholarship were to attend Kirkwood Community College and work 30 hours a week.

Meeting Christina at the beginning of the semester is powerful. You look at someone who is giving you that much money and you don’t want to fail.

I think meeting Christina Hixson kind of brought everything into focus. She is expecting us to do good and be an example to other people. She expects us to get good grades and be part of our community.

Meeting her showed that she truly cared. Other people get scholarships and it’s like here is your check. She is going to keep tabs on us for four years. I think it was very good to make a good impression on her.

I think it makes you expect more of yourself. It makes you work harder. They instill in us that we expect this. I expect myself to get good grades too.

The money dangling over my head is what is driving me.

I put a lot of hours into it because I don’t want to let Christina or myself down.

I don’t think the scholarship really affected me that much. I know that if I get good grades I will help my class get the scholarship again, yet that thought is back pretty far in my mind. I never thought that I should spend another hour studying because I am a Hixson Scholar. It didn’t make that big of difference.

The scholarship gave me the desire to succeed and the seminar gave me the skills to reach my goals.

Overall impression of the Hixson Seminar

At the end of the focus group interview, the respondents were asked to summarize their experiences in the Hixson Seminar. The following are a few examples of how the participants viewed their experience in the Hixson Scholars Seminar: University Studies 111.
I think you got out of the program what you wanted to get out of it. Some people just went and fell asleep. This program really blows me away. I feel privileged for getting to participate in this seminar because not everybody on campus does.

Overall, I think it was a good experience. I was glad to be a part of something like this. I didn't get a lot out of it because a lot of things were covered in high school, but I think it was an opportunity to meet new people.

As far as the class goes, I definitely have to admit, I miss it. I miss having a day a week to just see people and have fun.

I was kind of neutral to the class. I don't know if I gained a whole lot out of it, but you do get to learn a few things. I don't think it will be my favorite class ever. It's just something you go to and hope you can get something out of it.

I was the only class I would rather go to than sleep.

I thought the seminar should be for the entire semester, not just half. I just remember when it was over thinking, hey, what about the rest of the semester? I liked going there. Our class was really great. It was definitely helpful and it wasn't all information it was relaxation and other fun activities too.

I enjoyed the class. It was laid back. It was a good experience.

It was so much different than the rest of my classes. It was a neat class.

I can't say that I was jumping around excited to go on Tuesdays. It was part of my responsibility to go. You could get little bits of information out of it and apply it to your own ideas. I thought it was a good class to have especially since it was the one we talked a lot in and it was a good experience for my first semester.

I applied for a lot of scholarships and this is the only one that I had to attend a seminar. I thought the assignments—writing the essay, giving presentations, and all this extra stuff was pretty important. I got to meet a lot of important people. That was cool.

For me attending the seminar was a responsibility type thing. I enjoyed hearing about what the other students were doing and sharing ideas. There was a bond with the scholarship that this class helped build. Debra made it fun. It was worth the time.

I am really fortunate that I got to go. It was a good time all around, I met lots of people. Even if it hadn't been for the money, I would have taken this seminar just to
learn some things about college—how to adjust to college, make friends. All around, it was a good time.

I really liked it. I thought it was so great that we could do something like that our first ten weeks of the freshman year. I had no bad feelings about anything we did. I thought it was all great and I'm glad I got to be apart of it.
CHAPTER 5. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In Chapter 4, the results of three focus group interviews were presented according to the five themes that emerged from the unitization and categorization process. In this final chapter, the results are discussed and interpreted through the review of literature presented in Chapter 2 as well as the researcher’s interpretation of the data. The conclusions are organized similarly to the presentation of the results of the study in Chapter 4. Implications for freshman seminar leaders are discussed and recommendations for future research are provided. The chapter concludes with final thoughts about the Hixson Scholars Seminar: University 111.

Conclusions

Several conclusions were made upon review of the results. They are organized by theme: (1) transition from high school to college; (2) adjusting to life at college; (3) involvement in extracurricular activities; (4) impact of the seminar assignments/activities; and (5) Developing academic competence.

Transition from high school to college

The Hixson Seminar participants reported that the seminar helped them make the transition from high school to college by providing an opportunity to learn about university services and make friends. They were glad they had the opportunity to attend the seminar during the first ten weeks of class. One seminar participant stated, “I think it is good that we had it first semester because it caught us all right away and they could show us what the
university had to offer and it gave us an opportunity to make friends." The students' feelings and perceptions were supported by the literature that found seminars help students become integrated into the campus environment by introducing them to campus resources, encouraging them to develop relationships with faculty members and establishing peer groups.

Adjusting to life at college

The need to adjust to college was discussed by the seminar participants. They acknowledged that college is very different from high school. In addition, they discussed having new freedoms and responsibilities as a result of not living at home. The Hixson Scholars felt that the seminar helped them adjust to college by discussing these freedoms and responsibilities. One student described the seminar as: "... a first semester guide on starting college and not screwing up too bad. The student also shared that the seminar was beneficial because... there was somebody there showing us how to do it right."

Several activities and assignments were identified as helping the students' adjust to life at college. The students were thankful that the seminar introduced them to resources on campus. One seminar participant described the purpose of the seminar as an opportunity for the university: "... to welcome us to campus and make us aware of what is available at Iowa State. It told us where to get help and who to talk to if you had problems." Other students felt that taking field trips on campus helped them adjust to campus by being aware of what the university had to offer. A few students mentioned that learning about the history
of Iowa State was a unique opportunity. A student said that this made her proud to attend Iowa State.

The literature supports the statements by the students. Having an opportunity to discuss adjustment problems and learn about campus resources helps students become acclimated to college (Barefoot, 1992). Cuseo (1990) stated that:

... discussing adjustment problems and solution strategies as they are being experienced should increase the likelihood that students will perceive the immediate relevance/usefulness of the information thereby increasing their motivation to attend to and master it. (p. 8)

Freshman seminars, such as the Hixson Seminar, help students adjust to the college environment.

Involvement in extracurricular activities

Having an opportunity to learn how to get involved on campus was important to the seminar participants. Many students stated that getting involved in activities helped them feel like a part of Iowa State and it helped them do better in their classes. A seminar participant felt that getting involved helped her meet new people and it made school more fun. She emphasized the importance of striking a balance between school and activities. The students indicated that the seminar helped them understand the need to balance their time.

One seminar participant stated, "I found time management to be the most helpful part of the seminar. I was in all kinds of activities and I had to figure out what I had to do. I learned to balance my time by talking to Deb." Many students recalled the advice that Debra Sanborn gave them in class about managing their time. She told them to think of college as a full-time job. If they get everything done between 8:00 and 5:00, they can have every
evening free. Some of the students purchased planners as a result of the time management session in the seminar.

The literature indicated that one of the most difficult parts of adjusting to college can be time management and finding time to participate in activities. Students that can learn to manage their time effectively are more likely to graduate and achieve good grades (Cuseo, 1990). Astin (1985) and others have indicated that the key to freshman success is involvement. The more students are involved outside the classroom, the more they gain from their higher education experience. The students indicated that the seminar helped them get involved in extracurricular activities and helped them fit the activities into their schedule.

Impact of the seminar assignments/activities

There were several required assignments and activities required for the Hixson Seminar participants. The first was to write a weekly letter to Debra Sanborn discussing various issues addressed during the seminar. Although the students acknowledged that the assignments were repetitive, most indicated that taking time to write the letters helped them learn about themselves. Some students thought the letters were busy work and taught them the responsibility of completing work, but they did not gain anything from the assignments. Many of the students wished that they could have discussed the letters in class.

The second assignment was for the students to write a letter to their hometown newspaper discussing the value of higher education. Although several students found it hard to know what to write, they all agreed that it was a valuable experience. One student shared: 

"It was hard for me to write, too. I found out more about why I am here. It's helping me
now because I realize why I am here and what I need to do. It was one of the most important parts of the seminar.”

The final assignment was to visit their high school to speak about the value of higher education and to encourage others to further their education. Not every student enjoyed returning to their high school or having to speak in front of a large audience. However, most agreed it was a valuable experience. The seminar participants were divided over whether the high school students would listen to them. Some felt that the high school students would listen to a college student more than a recruiter. Other students would have preferred to go to another high school to speak because they felt their own peers would not listen to them.

In addition to these assignments, there were also some class activities that the students discussed during the focus group interviews. One of the most debated topics was the benefit of the Myers-Briggs typology model. Some students found it to be “amazing” and “interesting”. Other students found the results to be “completely bogus.” The literature supported the notion that the test could help students learn more about themselves and develop techniques for studying, test taking, and getting along with others (Myers, 1980). Some students reported that the test was very beneficial for these exact reasons.

The majority of the seminar participants found the assignments and activities to impact their freshman year experience. Literature on successful freshman seminar models suggests that seminar assignments should be graded so that the student will know the activities will be beneficial for them (Cuseo, 1990; Gordon, 1984; Upcraft & Gardner, 1989). These activities aided the students’ psychosocial development by asking them to formulate answers to personal questions and discuss the issues with others.
Developing academic competence

The theme, developing academic competence, describes the seminar’s impact on the students’ academic performance. The students acknowledged that they receive pressure from themselves and their families to get good grades in college. The students felt new students do not understand what college will be like when they first arrive on campus. Most indicated that they were overwhelmed by stress during the first semester and were relieved when the seminar discussed stress management. The greatest sources of stress identified were learning to study and take tests.

Most agreed that the Hixson Seminar helped them develop academic competence by addressing and relieving these pressures. The students shared that they did not know how to study when they first came to college. They agreed that the seminar helped them develop good study habits. One seminar participant stated, "Study habits are something I developed as a result of attending the seminar. I had no idea how to study or take notes. Who teaches the other students?" The literature clearly stated that students will persist at an institution if they can be academically successful. Freshman seminars can provide students with the academic skills they need to find success (Cuseo, 1990).

Student interaction with peers

The seminar helped the students develop new friendships and learn about diverse viewpoints. The literature was again consistent with what the students reported. Establishing interpersonal relationships helped the students make the transition from high school to college and become acclimated with the university. One seminar participant explained that
the seminar helped her: "... get over the freshman jitters and meet other people on campus." The friendships extended beyond the classroom. A few students reported hanging out with other seminar participants outside of class. The students described situations where they got together for pizza on a Sunday night and played volleyball one Saturday afternoon with some students from their seminar.

The small class size helped the students get to know each other. Group activities encouraged everyone to interact and encouraged students to talk to students they had not previously met. Cuseo (1990) reported that small class size enables the discussion of sensitive issues and encourages students to interact more frequently. One student commented, "I liked the seminar because it was a small section and my other classes had 400 people in it. In this class, you got to know other people."

The Hixson Students enjoyed meeting new people and being exposed to new viewpoints. Hearing these new ideas helped them learn from each other. The students' aided their psychosocial development by being exposed to diverse student opinions. A student summarized the opportunity: "We did talk to other people and that gives us a mind set that there are so many other people on this campus. It is nice because you can meet a lot of other people and understand the differences and similarities between everybody."

**Student interaction with faculty/staff**

This theme describes the relationship between the seminar participants and faculty and staff members on campus. As Astin (1977) and Tinto (1993) stated, student contact with faculty members outside the classroom is the most powerful factor contributing to student
retention and degree attainment. The students agreed with this assertion and felt that interactions with faculty members influenced their freshman year experience. Many students discussed how much they enjoyed interviewing a professor on campus. They reported that the interviews helped them develop rapport with their instructors and gain confidence in themselves. The Hixson Scholars also enjoyed the opportunity to meet institutional leaders in the seminar. As the research indicated, students reported that making these connections helped them become acclimated to campus.

The relationship with their academic advisors was a point of stress for many students. They indicated that their advisors had too many students and did not know them personally. A few students stated that they had a good relationship with their advisors however, most felt that their advisors were not helpful. Academic advising on campus should be examined. Perhaps additional advisors are needed so students can spend more time with them. This study indicates that the quality of academic advising should be addressed.

All of the Hixson Scholars mentioned the impact of their relationship with Debra Sanborn, Director of the Hixson Opportunity Awards and Hixson Seminar leader. To them, this relationship was the most powerful component of the seminar. “All freshmen should have the sense that someone at their institution knows them personally and cares about their academic and personal well-being” (Levitz & Noel, 1989, p. 73). Debra was this person for the Hixson Scholars. She was there when they had questions or concerns. They felt confident that someone on campus knew them by name and cared whether they succeeded or failed. It is clear from the study that Debra has had a profound impact on these students. It
could be argued that her personable demeanor and enthusiasm are the reasons the seminar is successful.

Implications for Freshman Seminar Leaders

This study has implications for student affairs professionals and faculty members who design and implement freshman seminars. Although this study was conducted at a large, midwestern university, the information is valuable for individuals leading seminars at various sized institutions around the country. This study provides evidence that faculty-student interaction, developing academic competence, interacting with peers, and adjusting to college life are the most important components of the Hixson Scholars Seminar.

The students stated that having someone on campus who knows them by name and cares about them was the most powerful component of the seminar. Institutions should make every effort to connect each entering student with someone who can guide them at least through their first year of college. In many cases, students need someone other than their academic advisor. Freshman seminars should provide an opportunity for students to connect with a faculty or staff member. Students could be asked to interview a professor or faculty members could be invited to speak at the seminar.

Freshman seminars should provide information to help the student develop academic competence. The Hixson Scholars reported that they did not know how to study when they came to college. Study skills and test taking techniques should be implemented to freshman seminars. Time management is also helpful for students who have never lived away from
home. Participation in extracurricular activities should be stressed because it helps students relieve stress, meet new friends and succeed in the classroom.

Freshman seminars provide an opportunity for students to meet new friends. Many students do not know many people when they come to campus. The small class size of the freshman seminar provides a forum for students to interact with diverse people and learn from one another. Seminars should include no more than 30 participants in each section so that all of the students have an opportunity to interact (Upcraft & Gardner, 1989). Social activities should be balanced with structured activities to promote social interaction.

The freshman seminar is an opportunity for new students to make the transition from high school to college, become acclimated to college and learn about campus resources. Institutions should offer a full-semester freshman seminar course for all entering freshmen during their initial semester (Cuseo, 1990). The course should be a required part of the general education requirements or should be offered for academic credit. Gordon (1984) stated, “by giving academic credit for the class, the institution shows support and emphasizes the importance of educational planning and decision making” (p. 139).

**Recommendations for Future Research**

This study provides evidence for the need of additional research on freshman seminars. Since so much of the literature utilized in this study was from the 1980’s and early 1990’s, current research is needed to add to the existing body of knowledge. It would be wonderful if Gardner and Upcraft would publish a second edition of *The freshman year*
experience since it is the primary resource used for designing and implementing freshman seminars.

An interesting focus of study would be to conduct focus group interviews again with these students during their senior year to see how the seminar helped them throughout their college career. In addition, a quantitative study comparing the seminar participants to nonparticipants would provide further information about the value of freshman seminars. Qualitative questions could be asked to ascertain where students go for help, learn about campus resources, and meet new friends during their first year on campus.

The students shared a lot of advice for how a new student can succeed in college. It would be enlightening to follow-up with them in a few years and obtain more of their thoughts and advice. Research with additional students would be needed to gain insights from a wider representation of first year students. Focus groups could be conducted and the data could be used to publish a book for incoming freshmen. The book could be titled, *Advice from students who have found success in higher education.*

Final Thoughts About the Hixson Scholars Seminar

It is important to acknowledge that the Hixson Scholars were required to attend this seminar in order to receive a scholarship. Although the scholarship was not the focus of this study, this researcher included their comments because the scholarship is the reason that many of the students are attending Iowa State. These students may be motivated to succeed more than the average student, in part, because they are receiving funding to attend Iowa
State. They realize, and it is emphasized, that if they do not meet the required grade point, they jeopardize their chance to receive funding the following year.

For these reasons, the students may be more motivated to seek help or accept help than those who do not feel an obligation to succeed in college. The students also have a common bond as a result of receiving this scholarship which may influence their desire to build a community and interact with other seminar participants. The students were asked if they would want to participate in the seminar if they were not required to attend as a result of receiving the Hixson Opportunity Awards. The majority indicated that they would still want to attend the seminar and most mentioned that they would prefer attending the Hixson Seminar over their academic orientation course.

On January 26, 1998, Christina Hixson, on behalf of the Lied Foundation, announced that she would be donating another five million dollars to the Hixson Opportunity Awards (Siebert, 1998). The students’ scholarships will be renewed for another year. Because of this gift, more classes of Hixson Scholars will be coming to Iowa State, and more students will have the opportunity to participate in the Hixson Scholars Seminar. This researcher hopes this study will assist Debra Sanborn as she attempts to take this seminar to a new level. This study should also assist student affairs personnel and faculty members with implementing and designing new freshman seminars.

In their candor, the Hixson Scholars helped this researcher understand how participating in the freshman seminar impacted their freshman year experience. Their honesty and cooperation with this project allowed the results to be published in their own
words. Those that implement freshman seminars will have the benefit of hearing directly from the students what helped them find success during their first year of college.

After completing this study, this researcher is very enthusiastic about the value of freshman seminars. This study supports the need for freshman seminars to be designed for all first-year students. Institutions should consider implementing freshman seminars to increase every student’s chances of finding success in college.
APPENDIX A. HIXSON SCHOLAR DESCRIPTION, DEMOGRAPHICS, FRESHMAN SEMINAR SYLLABI AND STATISTICS

Hixson Scholars Description

1996
A total of 450 Iowa high school students applied for the Christina Hixson Opportunity Awards in 1996. Applications were reviewed by enrollment services professionals and 125 semi-finalists were reviewed by the Hixson Advisory Council for final selection. Ninety-eight finalists were chosen representing 95 Iowa counties. Attrition of the original finalists occurred throughout the summer and was countered with awards to semi-finalists at the discretion of the Advisory Council. Ninety-six students from 93 counties enrolled in the fall semester.

Hixson Scholar Seminar was implemented in the Fall 1996 semester as a component of the Christina Hixson Opportunity Awards. It was designated as a required course on the recipient agreement offered to Hixson Scholars with the 1996 awards. Ninety-one of ninety-six Hixson Scholars enrolled in the first seminars. The remaining five students were eligible for the Freshman Honors Program and were exempt from the Seminar. Four sections of the ten-week seminar were offered and class meetings were held at 9:00 AM and 2:00 PM on Mondays; 10:00 AM and 3:00 PM on Tuesdays. Class size ranged from 21-24 students.

Each of the ninety-one students enrolled in Hixson Seminar were able to satisfactorily complete the course requirements. Three students completed the course as independent study due to their individual circumstances. The seminar was offered on a Satisfactory/Fail grade basis.

Three students withdrew after the fall semester for academic and personal reasons. Ninety-three 1996 Hixson Scholars returned for the Spring 96 semester. One student withdrew in February due to personal circumstances. Ninety-two 1996 Hixson Scholars completed their first year at Iowa State University.

1995
Eighty-six 1995 Hixson Scholars (86%) returned for their second year at Iowa State University, a rate that was 45 above the university average. Each of these students completed the fall semester. One student was academically dismissed after the fall semester. Eighty-five 1995 Scholars returned for and completed the spring semester.

Two engineering students participated in a cooperative work program within the college of Engineering for the spring semester. Employer sponsors were Rockwell Collins, Cedar Rapids and Sundstrand Aerospace, Rockford, Illinois.
Demographics

The following tables indicate characteristics of the Hixson Scholars by college, gender, financial need, and quantitative admission data. Comparisons are made with the overall ISU population when information is available.

Table 1  Hixson Scholar Enrollment

![Graph showing Hixson Scholar Enrollment from Aug-95 to May-99 for '95 and '96 Scholars]
### Table 2 1995 Hixson Scholars Enrollment by College

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>AG</th>
<th>BUS</th>
<th>DES</th>
<th>EDU</th>
<th>ENG</th>
<th>FCS</th>
<th>LAS</th>
<th>Total</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fall 95</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>100</td>
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<tr>
<td>Spring 96</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fall 96</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spring 97</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>85</td>
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### Table 3 1996 Hixson Scholars Enrollment by College

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>AG</th>
<th>BUS</th>
<th>DES</th>
<th>EDU</th>
<th>ENG</th>
<th>FCS</th>
<th>LAS</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fall 96</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>96</td>
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<td>Spring 97</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>92</td>
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### Table 4 Gender Distribution of Hixson Scholars

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>FEMALE</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>MALE</th>
<th>%</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1995 Scholars</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>47%</td>
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<tr>
<td>1996 Scholars</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ISU Undergraduate</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>57%</td>
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### Table 5 Financial Need (96-97)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Average Need</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1995 Scholars</td>
<td>$7624</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996 Scholars</td>
<td>$7793</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ISU Undergraduate (Iowa)</td>
<td>$5988</td>
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### Table 6  
Class Rank and ACT Composite of Entering Students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Mean ACT</th>
<th>Mean Class Rank</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1995 Scholars</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>74%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996 Scholars</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ISU Freshman</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>75%</td>
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</table>

### Table 7  
Grade Point Average of Hixson Scholars by College

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>College</th>
<th>1995 Scholars</th>
<th>1996 Scholars</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agriculture</td>
<td>2.78</td>
<td>2.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business</td>
<td>2.42</td>
<td>2.80</td>
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<tr>
<td>Design</td>
<td>3.19</td>
<td>3.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>1.96</td>
<td>2.78</td>
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<tr>
<td>Engineering</td>
<td>2.67</td>
<td>3.15</td>
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<tr>
<td>FCS</td>
<td>2.81</td>
<td>3.08</td>
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<tr>
<td>LAS</td>
<td>2.60</td>
<td>2.52</td>
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<tr>
<td>Scholar Average</td>
<td>2.70</td>
<td>2.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ISU Average</td>
<td>2.65</td>
<td>2.39</td>
</tr>
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</table>

### Table 8  
Grade Point Averages of Hixson Scholars by Gender

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>1995 Scholars</th>
<th>ISU Sophomore</th>
<th>1996 Scholars</th>
<th>ISU Freshman</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>2.66</td>
<td>2.75</td>
<td>2.64</td>
<td>2.49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>2.75</td>
<td>2.58</td>
<td>2.62</td>
<td>2.32</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

prepared by  
Debra Sanborn, Director  
July 1997
HIXSON SCHOLARS SEMINAR  
University Studies 111X  
FALL 1997

Instructors:

Debra Sanborn  
Director, Hixson Opportunity Awards  
314 Alumni Hall  
294-0632  
E-mail: dsanborn@iastate.edu  
Office Hours: By appointment

Leah Bruns  
Graduate Assistant  
310 Alumni Hall  
294-6701  
E-mail: lbruns@iastate.edu  
Office Hours:  
Th: 9 a.m.-4:30 p.m.  
F: 9 a.m.-1 p.m.  
also by appointment

Course Goal:

Hixson Seminar is a course which, through a combination of group process and important content, has been carefully designed to increase the likelihood that your first and future years at Iowa State University will be successful, both academically and socially.

Objectives:

To develop among you and your classmates a community of learners who are also friends;

To help you balance the freedoms and responsibilities that are part of college life;

To assist you and your classmates in exploring the variety of campus issues that affect all students, but especially students in the first college year;

To explore higher education, its purpose and importance; to learn more about ISU—its history and present, its faculty and staff;

To introduce you to the many educational opportunities and resources at ISU;

To improve your critical skills in thinking, communicating, and learning.

Syllabus:

This syllabus is your agreement with the instructors about the purpose and direction of this course. Any changes in this syllabus will be communicated to you in writing.

Save this syllabus and all other syllabi. Make sure that you understand important course requirements and dates that assignments are due.
Texts/References

Summer Orientation Notebook
(If you did not attend orientation, these are available from the Orientation Office, 100 Alumni Hall)

Spiral: The Students Guide to Style at Iowa State University
(Available at University Bookstore, $9.95. Four copies are on reserve at Parks Library.)

Supplies:

Loose-leaf notebook or folder in which to keep course materials and syllabus

An Academic Planner calendar, available in the University Bookstore

Course Expectations:

Attendance is required. Attend all class meetings. Arrive at class on time. Renewal of your award for the second semester and any future award availability is dependent on you meeting these expectations. Emergency only absence arrangements must be made with the instructors to make up any missed assignments.

Freedom and responsibility. In this class you are free to express your opinions and share your ideas. With that freedom comes the responsibility to do your best work, to turn in assignments on time, and to treat other class members and guests with courtesy and respect.

Grading:

Hixson Seminar is offered on a pass-not pass basis. In order to complete the course and reserve your award you must fulfill the requirements listed below:

Attend all class meetings. One weekly for ten weeks, and one Sunday meeting.
Satisfactorily complete any assignments from your instructors.
Establish and effectively maintain a computer account and e-mail address.

Requirements:

You will need to turn in a weekly writing assignment via e-mail starting with the second class meeting. Your assignment must be transmitted by the meeting time of your Seminar section. The following is a description of each assignment:

Instructor letters (5 total) will be due the week of Sept. 1, Sept. 15, Sept. 22, Oct. 13 and Oct. 27. These letters must be sufficient in length to thoroughly address the topic. Topics will pertain to class discussion. Please send these letters to the instructors via e-mail. The following are the topics you should cover in each letter:

Sept. 1 Read p. 56-61 in your Summer Orientation Notebook. Do you feel it is important to learn about ISU history and traditions? Why or why not? Considering the information given in your text, what do you feel is the most fascinating part of ISU history/tradition and why?

Sept. 15 A big part of succeeding academically is time-management. How would you evaluate yourself as a time manager right now? What do you see as your greatest asset in terms of time-management? Your greatest hindrance? How might you use your assets to overcome your weaknesses?

Sept. 22 Think of a person whom you feel is an effective leader. What qualities does she/he possess? What leadership tactics does she/he use? What leadership qualities do you possess and how will they benefit you the next four years?
Oct. 13  Read the 17 essays by students in Spiral on pp. 87-103. Which identity do you relate to? Describe your identity. Describe your reaction to an essay by someone who is different from yourself. How do you deal with differences?

Oct. 27  Why is community service important? How could you use community service to reach your career and personal goals? What kinds of community service have you provided? How did it make you feel?

A thank you letter to Christina Hixson will be due on September 10. This letter should address any special thoughts you wish to convey to Ms. Hixson regarding your selection for the award and enrollment at ISU. I encourage you to use stationary or cards if you like, and to personalize this letter in any way that you see fit. These letters will be combined in a scrapbook and presented to Ms. Hixson during her visit to campus. Do not e-mail this assignment to the instructors. Please submit your letter at your regular class meeting time.

Get involved! Check out the over 500 clubs and organizations at Iowa State University! You are required to attend ClubFest on Wednesday, September 17 in the Great Hall of the Memorial Union from 10 AM-4 PM. Attend at least one meeting of a campus organization of your choice. Write a reaction paper (two pages, typed, double-spaced) and e-mail it to the instructors. Prepare an oral summary for presentation in class. Your reaction paper and presentation are due the week of September 29th.

An essay on the value of an education will be due the week of October 6th. You will submit this essay for publication in your hometown or county newspaper to encourage students to pursue higher education and the Hixson Opportunity Awards. Your essay should be approximately 700-800 words, typed, double-spaced. Information on how to send this essay to your hometown newspaper will be provided. This assignment will be completed when you submit a copy of the printed publication that includes your essay.

Interview a faculty member of your choice. You will schedule the interview, dress appropriately, prepare a written summary of the interview and e-mail it to the instructors by October 22. Additional information will be provided.

Reading assignments for each class will be indicated or distributed at a previous meeting. You are expected to complete assignments and participate in class discussion about the readings. Please read critically and ask yourself your thoughts and opinions on the readings.

Home Again! Serve your community by scheduling a visit to your high school to speak about the value of education. Your assignment is to share your experiences as a new college student and encourage others to pursue further education. Please attempt to complete your visit during your fall semester breaks if possible. Additional information will be provided.

Mid-semester interviews must be scheduled with Leah Bruns for between October 23 and November 6. An appointment sign-up sheet will be distributed in class.
### Class Overview:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aug. 26/27</td>
<td>Getting to Know You: Introduction; Course Objectives; How Is Your House Built? Creating Your Own Creed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sept. 2/3</td>
<td>Getting to Know ISU; History and Traditions; Instructor letter due</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sept. 9/10</td>
<td>Enjoying Your University: Reiman Gardens Tour Thank You Letter Due</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sept. 16/17</td>
<td>Test Taking and Tips for Better Study; Instructor Letter Due Attend ClubFest September 17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sept. 23/24</td>
<td>Becoming a Leader: Opportunities and Activities; Guest Speaker: Laura Bestler, Student Activities Coordinator Instructor Letter Due</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sept. 30/Oct. 1</td>
<td>Getting Involved: Oral Summaries Campus Organizations reaction paper due</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oct. 7/8</td>
<td>Managing Stress: Hints for the College Student Education Essay Due</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oct. 14/15</td>
<td>Developing Your Identity: Lego-Man Exercise Instructor Letter Due</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oct. 19</td>
<td>Sunday Evening 7-9 p.m.: Myers-Briggs Type Indicator Campanile Room, Memorial Union</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oct. 21/22</td>
<td>Adapting to Change: Attitude Adjustment; Ethics; Family Expectations Written Summaries from faculty interviews due</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oct. 28/29</td>
<td>Providing Opportunity: Community Service for Others Instructor Letter Due</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
HIXSON SCHOLARS SEMINAR:
University Studies 111: Mondays
Section 1: 9:00 AM, Carver 260
Section 2: 2:00 PM, Carver 274
FALL 1996

Instructors: Debra Sanborn
Director, Hixson Opportunity Awards
314 Alumni Hall
294-0632
E-mail: dsanborn@iastate.edu

Jennifer Montgomery
Graduate Assistant
310 Alumni Hall
294-5714 W
268-0792 H
E-mail: jenjen@iastate.edu

Office Hours: Anytime, by appointment

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To develop among you and your classmates a community of learners who are also friends;

To help you balance the freedoms and responsibilities that are part of college life;

To assist you and your classmates in exploring the variety of campus issues that affect all students, but especially students in the first college year;

To explore higher education, its purpose and importance; to learn more about ISU—its history and present, its faculty and staff;

To introduce you to the many educational opportunities and resources at ISU;

To improve your critical skills in thinking, communicating, and learning.

Syllabus:

This syllabus is your agreement with the instructors about the purpose and direction of this course. Any changes in this syllabus will be communicated to you in writing.

Save this syllabus and all other syllabi. Make sure that you understand important course requirements and dates that assignments are due.
Texts:
Summer Orientation Notebook (available from the Orientation Office, 100 Alumni Hall)

Supplies:
Loose-leaf notebook or folder in which to keep course materials and syllabus
An Academic Planner calendar, available in the University Bookstore

Course Expectations:
Attendance is required. Attend all class meetings. Arrive at class on time. Renewal of your award for the second semester and any future award availability is dependent on these expectations. *Emergency only* absence arrangements must be made with the instructor to make up any missed assignments.

Freedom and responsibility. In this class you are free to express your opinions and share your ideas. With that freedom comes the responsibility to do your best work, to turn in assignments on time, and to treat other class members and guests with courtesy and respect.

Grading:
Hixson Seminar is offered on a pass/not pass basis. In order to complete the course and reserve your award you must fulfill the requirements listed below:
- Attend all class meetings.
- Satisfactorily complete any assignments from your instructor
- Establish and effectively maintain a computer account and e-mail address

Requirements:
A weekly letter (9 total) to the instructors which must be turned in at the beginning of each class meeting beginning with the second meeting on September 9. This letter must be a minimum of one full page in length. Generally, letters can be on any topic, issue, or concern that you wish to write about. We may occasionally ask you to focus your letter on a specific topic. These letters will be returned to you for safekeeping. Letters may be handwritten, however, typed or computer generated is preferred if the legibility of your handwriting is questionable.

A thank you letter to Christina Hixson will be due on September 9. This letter should address any special thoughts you wish to convey to Ms. Hixson regarding your selection for the award and enrollment at ISU. I encourage you to use stationary or cards if you like, and to personalize this letter in any way that you see fit. These letters will be combined in a scrapbook and presented to Ms. Hixson during her visit in September.

An essay on the value of an education will be due on September 30. This essay will be for publication in your hometown or county newspaper and will be utilized to encourage students to pursue higher education, ISU and the Hixson Opportunity Awards. This assignment must be written using Microsoft Word, submitted in hard copy and on an IBM formatted disk (Power Macintosh is compatible.) Approximately 700-800 words, typed, double-spaced. The disk will be returned to you.

Get involved! You will be required to attend ClubFest on Wednesday, September 11 in the Great Hall of the Memorial Union from 10AM-4PM. Next, you must attend at least one meeting of a campus organization of your choice. Write a reaction paper (two pages, typed, double-spaced) and prepare an oral summary about the organization for presentation, both due on October 7.
You will be required to interview a faculty member of your choice. You will schedule the interview, dress appropriately, and prepare an oral summary of the interview (3 minutes) to share with the class on October 21. More on this later.

Reading assignments for each class will be indicated and distributed at a previous meeting. You are expected to complete assignments and participate in class discussion about the readings. Please read critically and ask yourself your thoughts and opinions on the readings.

Mid-semester interviews must be scheduled with Debra Sanborn for sometime between October 23 and November 6.

Overview:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aug 26</td>
<td>Getting to Know You: Introduction; Course Objectives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sept 2</td>
<td>Labor Day, no class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sept 9</td>
<td>Enjoying Your University: Reiman Gardens Tour; Instructor letter due; thank-you letter due; attend ClubFest on September 11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sept 16</td>
<td>Developing Your Identity: Lego-Man Exercise; Instructor letter due</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sept 23</td>
<td>Getting to Know ISU: University History and Traditions; Instructor letter due</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sept 30</td>
<td>Managing Stress: Hints for the College Student; Education essay due; Instructor letter due</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oct 7</td>
<td>Getting Involved: Clubfest; Oral Summaries from campus organizations; Instructor letter due</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oct 14</td>
<td>Becoming a Leader: Leadership Opportunities &amp; Activities; Instructor letter due</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oct 21</td>
<td>Adapting to Change: Attitude Adjustment; Ethics; Family Expectations; Instructor letter due</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oct 28</td>
<td>Providing Opportunity: Community Service for Others; Oral Summaries from faculty interviews; Instructor letter due</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nov 4</td>
<td>Instructor letter due</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Hixson Opportunity Awards
1997 Fall Semester Statistics

General background

*Students applying for admission to ISU must rank in the upper half of their high school graduating class or obtain an acceptable combination of high school rank and ACT score.*

The average high school graduating class percentile rank for 1997 Hixson Scholars students was 80%. The average high school graduating class percentile rank for 1996 Hixson Scholars students was 80%. The average high school graduating class percentile rank for 1995 Hixson Scholars students was 74%. The average high school graduating class percentile rank for new freshmen at ISU is 75%.

The percentage of 1997 and 1996 Hixson Scholars at or above a percentile rank of 50% (top half) in their high school graduating class was 100%. The percentage of 1995 Hixson Scholars at or above a percentile rank of 50% (top half) in their high school graduating class was 88%.

The average ACT composite (total) score for 1997 Hixson Scholars students was 24. The average ACT composite (total) score for 1996 Hixson Scholars students was 25. The average ACT composite (total) score for 1995 Hixson Scholars students was 24. The average ACT composite score for new freshmen at ISU is 24.

The percentage of 1997 Hixson Scholars obtaining equal to or greater than a 24 ACT composite score was 51%. The percentage of 1996 Hixson Scholars obtaining equal to or greater than a 24 ACT composite score was 61%. The percentage of 1995 Hixson Scholars obtaining equal to or greater than a 24 ACT composite score was 48%.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Mean ACT</th>
<th>Mean Class Rank</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1997 Hixson Scholars</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996 Hixson Scholars</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995 Hixson Scholars</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>74%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ISU Freshman</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>75%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Hixson Opportunity Awards
1997 Fall Semester Statistics

Academic progress

Midterm grade reports are issued after the eighth week of the semester to students receiving a C- or below in a course. The midterm grade report is not an official grade issuance and procedures are not consistent throughout the university. Some midterm grade statistics may not reflect courses that were recently dropped from the student schedule. The average percentage of new freshmen receiving midterm grade reports at ISU is 60%.

The percentage of 1997 Hixson Scholars receiving a fall midterm grade report was 60% (n = 59). The percentage of 1996 Hixson Scholars receiving a fall midterm grade report was 63% (n = 55). The percentage of 1995 Hixson Scholars receiving a fall midterm grade report was 44% (n = 36).

The following percentages are based on the number of Hixson Scholars receiving Fall 1997 midterm grade reports and are not percentages for the total population of Hixson students:

Percentage of 1997 Hixson Scholars receiving a midterm report for whom the lowest grade was a C- was 25%; 1996 Hixson Scholars: 20%; 1995 Hixson Scholars: 11%.

Percentage of 1997 Hixson Scholars receiving a midterm report for whom the lowest grade was a D was 39%; 1996 Hixson Scholars: 31%; 1995 Hixson Scholars: 53%.

Percentage of 1997 Hixson Scholars receiving a midterm report for whom the lowest grade was an F was 36%; 1996 Hixson Scholars: 45%; 1995 Hixson Scholars: 36%.

Percentage of 1997 Hixson Scholars receiving more than one midterm report was 42% (n = 25). Percentage of 1996 Hixson Scholars receiving more than one midterm report was 47% (n = 26). Percentage of 1995 Hixson Scholars receiving more than one midterm report was 50% (n = 18).
Hixson Opportunity Awards
1997 Fall Semester Statistics

These figures are an estimate of student progress by college and may not reflect recent student transfers between colleges.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 2</th>
<th>Percentage of Hixson Scholars by College receiving fall midterm grade report</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>97 Scholars</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AG</td>
<td>62% (n = 16 of 26)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BUS</td>
<td>77% (n = 4 of 6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DES</td>
<td>57% (n = 4 of 7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EDU</td>
<td>60% (n = 3 of 5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ENG</td>
<td>62% (n = 13 of 21)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FCS</td>
<td>75% (n = 3 of 4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LAS</td>
<td>55% (n = 16 of 29)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 3  
1995 Hixson Scholars Enrollment by College

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Semester</th>
<th>AG</th>
<th>BUS</th>
<th>DES</th>
<th>EDU</th>
<th>ENG</th>
<th>FCS</th>
<th>LAS</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fall 95</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spring 96</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fall 96</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spring 97</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fall 97</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4  
1996 Hixson Scholars Enrollment by College

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Semester</th>
<th>AG</th>
<th>BUS</th>
<th>DES</th>
<th>EDU</th>
<th>ENG</th>
<th>FCS</th>
<th>LAS</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fall 96</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spring 97</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fall 97</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5  
1997 Hixson Scholars Enrollment by College

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Semester</th>
<th>AG</th>
<th>BUS</th>
<th>DES</th>
<th>EDU</th>
<th>ENG</th>
<th>FCS</th>
<th>LAS</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fall 97</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6  
Gender Distribution of Hixson Scholars, Fall 1997

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1995 Scholars</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>49%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996 Scholars</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997 Scholars</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ISU Undergraduate %</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sanborn 10/97
Hixson Opportunity Awards
Fall Semester, 1997

Grade Report Analysis

Grade reports for the Fall 1997 semester were received for 268 Hixson Scholars; ninety-eight 1997 Scholars, eighty-nine 1996 Scholars, and eighty-one 1995 Scholars.

Two 1996 Scholars and one 1995 Scholar were on cooperative work/internship programs and did not receive semester grade reports. One 1996 Hixson Scholar and one 1995 Hixson Scholar withdrew from classes before the end of the semester.

1997 Hixson Scholars

The cumulative grade point average of 1997 Scholars is 2.69. The average freshman grade point at Iowa State is 2.44.

Eighty-seven percent of 1997 Scholars (n = 85) achieved a 2.00 grade point average or greater for the fall semester.

Forty percent of 1997 Scholars (n = 39) achieved a 3.00 grade point average or greater for the fall semester.

Two 1997 Scholars representing the College of Business received a 4.00 grade point for the fall semester.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 1</th>
<th>1997 Hixson Scholar Grade Point Average by College</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td># Students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agriculture</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Design</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engineering</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family &amp; Consumer Sciences</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liberal Arts &amp; Sciences</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
1996 Hixson Scholars

The cumulative grade point average of 1996 Scholars is 2.74. The average sophomore grade point at Iowa State is 2.65.

Eighty-one percent of 1996 Scholars (n = 70) achieved a 2.00 grade point average or greater for the fall semester.

Thirty-eight percent of 1996 Scholars (n = 33) achieved a 3.00 grade point average or greater for the fall semester.

Two 1996 Scholars representing the College of Agriculture and the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences received a 4.00 grade point for the fall semester.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>College</th>
<th># Students</th>
<th>Fall</th>
<th>Cumulative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agriculture</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>2.87</td>
<td>2.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>2.77</td>
<td>2.77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Design</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.11</td>
<td>3.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2.26</td>
<td>2.49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engineering</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>2.40</td>
<td>2.61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family &amp; Consumer Sciences</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3.26</td>
<td>3.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liberal Arts &amp; Sciences</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>2.53</td>
<td>2.68</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Five 1996 Scholars are on Temporary Enrollment and may face academic dismissal if unable to improve their academic status.

1996 Hixson Scholars on Temporary Enrollment by College:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>College</th>
<th># Scholar</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agriculture</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engineering</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liberal Arts &amp; Sciences</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
1995 Hixson Scholars

The cumulative grade point average of 1995 Scholars is 2.77. The average junior grade point at Iowa State is 2.77.

Eighty-six percent of 1995 Hixson Scholars (n = 68) achieved a 2.00 grade point average or greater for the fall semester.

Forty-four percent of 1995 Scholars (n = 35) achieved a 3.00 grade point average or greater for the fall semester.

Four 1995 Scholars representing the College of Engineering received a 4.00 grade point for the fall semester.

Table 3 1995 Scholar Grade Point Average by College

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>College</th>
<th># Students</th>
<th>Fall</th>
<th>Cumulative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agriculture</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>2.76</td>
<td>2.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>2.55</td>
<td>2.49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Design</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.93</td>
<td>3.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>2.68</td>
<td>2.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engineering</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>3.22</td>
<td>3.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family &amp; Consumer Sciences</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3.23</td>
<td>2.82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liberal Arts &amp; Sciences</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>2.65</td>
<td>2.72</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Three 1995 Scholars are on Temporary Enrollment and may face academic dismissal if unable to improve their academic status.

Business 1 Liberal Arts & Sciences 2

Ninety-nine percent of 1995 Scholars with renewed awards (n=74 of 75) were able to maintain the 2.00 grade point average necessary for continued award renewal. One student fell below a 2.00 GPA at the conclusion of the Fall 1997 semester and became ineligible for further awards.
Spring Semester, 1997
Christina Hixson Opportunity Awards
Grade Report Analysis

Grade reports for the spring 1997 semester were received for 175 Hixson Scholars; ninety-two 1996 Scholars and eighty-three 1995 Scholars. Two 1995 Scholars were on a cooperative work program and did not receive semester grade reports.

Three Hixson Scholars achieved a 4.00 grade point average for the spring semester. Each student is enrolled in the College of Engineering; two are 1995 Scholars, one is a 1996 Scholar.

1996 Hixson Scholars

Eighty-five percent of 1996 Scholars (n = 78) achieved a 2.00 grade point average or greater for the spring semester.

Thirty-five percent of 1996 Scholars (n = 32) achieved a 3.00 grade point average or greater for the spring semester.

The cumulative grade point average of 1996 Scholars is 2.69. The average freshman grade point at Iowa State is 2.39.

1996 Hixson Scholar grade point average and enrollment by College:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>College</th>
<th>Students</th>
<th>Spring</th>
<th>Cumulative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agriculture</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>2.70</td>
<td>2.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2.70</td>
<td>2.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Design</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.46</td>
<td>3.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.91</td>
<td>1.96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engineering</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>2.63</td>
<td>2.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family &amp; Consumer Sciences</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3.09</td>
<td>3.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liberal Arts &amp; Sciences</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>2.60</td>
<td>2.60</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Seven students are on Temporary Enrollment and face potential dismissal if unable to improve their academic status.

1996 Hixson Scholars on Temporary Enrollment by College:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>College</th>
<th>Agriculture</th>
<th>Education</th>
<th>Engineering</th>
<th>Liberal Arts &amp; Sciences</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
1995 Hixson Scholars

Seventy-eight percent of 1995 Hixson Scholars (n = 65) achieved a 2.00 grade point average or greater for the spring semester.

Thirty-seven percent of 1995 Scholars (n = 31) achieved a 3.00 grade point average or greater for the spring semester.

The cumulative grade point average of 1995 Scholars is 2.70 (includes the cumulative GPA of co-op students). The average sophomore grade point at Iowa State is 2.65.

1995 Hixson Scholar grade point average and enrollment by College:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>STUDENTS</th>
<th>SPRING</th>
<th>CUMULATIVE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agriculture</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>2.79</td>
<td>2.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>2.13</td>
<td>2.42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Design</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.91</td>
<td>3.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>2.91</td>
<td>2.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engineering</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>3.26</td>
<td>3.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family &amp; Consumer Sciences</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2.99</td>
<td>2.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liberal Arts &amp; Sciences</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>2.14</td>
<td>2.52</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Six students are on Temporary Enrollment and face potential dismissal if unable to improve their academic status.

Agriculture 1 Business 2 Liberal Arts & Sciences 3

Eighty-eight percent of 1995 Scholars (n=75) were able to achieve a 2.00 cumulative grade point average. Students below a 2.00 GPA at the conclusion of the Spring 1997 semester are ineligible for renewal of awards. Of these ten students, five are expected to continue their enrollment.
Christina Hixson Opportunity Awards
1996 Fall Semester Statistics

General background

*Students applying for admission to ISU must rank in the upper half of their high school graduating class or obtain an acceptable combination of high school rank and ACT score.*

The average high school graduating class percentile rank for 1996 Hixson Scholars students was 80%. The average high school graduating class percentile rank for 1995 Hixson Scholars students was 74%. The average high school graduating class percentile rank for new freshmen at ISU was 75%.

The percentage of 1996 Hixson Scholars at or above a percentile rank of 50% (top half) in their high school graduating class was 100%. The percentage of 1995 Hixson Scholars at or above a percentile rank of 50% (top half) in their high school graduating class was 88%.

The average ACT composite (total) score for 1996 Hixson Scholars students was 25. The average ACT composite (total) score for 1995 Hixson Scholars students was 24. The average ACT composite score for new freshmen at ISU was 24.

The percentage of 1996 Hixson Scholars obtaining equal to or greater than a 24 ACT composite score was 61%. The percentage of 1995 Hixson Scholars obtaining equal to or greater than a 24 ACT composite score was 48%.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 1</th>
<th>Class Rank and ACT Composite of Entering Hixson Scholars</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mean ACT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>96 Hixson Scholars</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>95 Hixson Scholars</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ISU Freshman</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Christina Hixson Opportunity Awards  
1996 Fall Semester Statistics

Table 3 1995 Hixson Scholars Enrollment by College

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>AG</th>
<th>BUS</th>
<th>DES</th>
<th>EDU</th>
<th>ENG</th>
<th>FCS</th>
<th>LAS</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fall 95</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 96</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fall 96</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4 Hixson Scholars Enrollment by College, Fall 1996

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>AG</th>
<th>BUS</th>
<th>DES</th>
<th>EDU</th>
<th>ENG</th>
<th>FCS</th>
<th>LAS</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1995 Scholars</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996 Scholars</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5 Gender Distribution of Hixson Scholars, Fall 1996

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1995 Scholars</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996 Scholars</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ISU Undergraduate</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Christina Hixson Opportunity Award
Grade Report Analysis, Fall 1996

Grade reports for the fall 1996 semester were received for 182 Hixson Scholars; ninety-six 1996 Scholars and eighty-six 1995 Scholars.

Five Hixson Scholars achieved a 4.00 grade point average for the fall semester. Each student is enrolled in the College of Engineering; four are 1995 Scholars, one is a 1996 Scholar.

1996 Hixson Scholars

Eighty percent of 1996 Scholars (n = 77) achieved a 2.00 grade point average or greater for the fall semester.

Thirty-three percent of 1996 Scholars (n = 32) achieved a 3.00 grade point average or greater for the fall semester.

The average (mean) grade point of 1996 Scholars is 2.60. The average freshman grade point at Iowa State is 2.39.

1996 Hixson Scholar Grade Point Average and enrollment by College:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>College</th>
<th>FALL</th>
<th>STUDENTS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agriculture</td>
<td>2.67</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Design</td>
<td>2.62</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>1.92</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engineering</td>
<td>2.53</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family &amp; Consumer Sciences</td>
<td>3.02</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liberal Arts &amp; Sciences</td>
<td>2.54</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Four students were placed on Temporary Enrollment for deficiency points in excess of 9.99 (i.e. a majority of grades received were below a C).

1996 Hixson Scholars placed on Temporary Enrollment by College:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>College</th>
<th>Agriculture</th>
<th>Design</th>
<th>Engineering</th>
<th>Liberal Arts &amp; Sciences</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Hixson Scholar Seminar was implemented in the Fall 1996 semester as a component of the Christina Hixson Opportunity Awards. It was designated a required course on the recipient agreement offered to Hixson Scholars with the 1996 awards. Ninety-one of ninety-six Hixson Scholars enrolled in the first seminars. The remaining five students were eligible for the Freshman Honors Program and were exempt from the Seminar. Four sections of the ten-week seminar were offered and class meetings were held at 9:00 AM and 2:00 PM on Mondays; 10:00 AM and 3:00 PM on Tuesdays. Class size ranged from 21-24 students.

Each of the ninety-one students enrolled in Hixson Seminar were able to satisfactorily complete the course requirements. Three students completed the course as independent study due to their individual circumstances. As the seminar was offered on a Satisfactory/Fail grade basis, no distribution of grades is available.
1995 Hixson Scholars

Eighty-five percent of 1995 Hixson Scholars (n = 73) achieved a cumulative 2.00 grade point average or greater for the fall semester.

Thirty-five percent of 1995 Scholars (n = 30) achieved a cumulative 3.00 grade point average or greater for the fall semester.

The average (mean) grade point of 1995 Scholars is 2.72. The average sophomore grade point at Iowa State is 2.65.

1995 Hixson Scholar Grade Point Average and enrollment by College:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>College</th>
<th>FALL</th>
<th>CUM</th>
<th>STUDENTS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agriculture</td>
<td>2.85</td>
<td>2.77</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business</td>
<td>2.42</td>
<td>2.47</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Design</td>
<td>2.48</td>
<td>2.63</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>2.87</td>
<td>2.68</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engineering</td>
<td>2.96</td>
<td>3.13</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family &amp; Consumer Sciences</td>
<td>2.80</td>
<td>2.71</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liberal Arts &amp; Sciences</td>
<td>2.51</td>
<td>2.60</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1995 Hixson Scholars on Temporary Enrollment for deficiency points in excess of 9.99 (i.e. a majority of grades received were below a C) by College:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>College</th>
<th>Agriculture</th>
<th>Business</th>
<th>Design</th>
<th>Liberal Arts &amp; Sciences</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: Any Scholar with a cumulative GPA below 2.00 is required to participate in Hixson Study Lab, a weekly program to monitor and facilitate academic progress.

dsanborn 12/96
APPENDIX B. LETTER TO DEBRA SANBORN

(date)

Debra K. Sanborn
Director of Hixson Opportunity Awards
Iowa State University
314 Alumni Hall
Ames, IA 50011-2010

Dear Mrs. Sanborn:

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this study examining the impact of participation in the Hixson Scholars Seminar: University Studies 111. The research being conducted is my thesis which is a requirement of a masters degree in Higher Education at Iowa State University. By gathering this data, I hope to identify key components that lead to student retention and academic successes so they may be duplicated in programs for every freshman student.

I would like to talk to you for about one and one-half hour on a date that is convenient for both of us. The topics addressed in the interview will be related to your background in higher education, the Hixson Scholars and the formation of University Studies 111. The interview will be audio taped and transcribed to insure accuracy and facilitate data analysis. After studying the information obtained in the interview, I may contact you by phone to seek clarification on one or more topics.

As we have discussed, you will be identified in the study as the Director of the Hixson Opportunity Awards and the facilitator of the Hixson Seminar. The information you provide in the interview will not be confidential. Any information that you can provide will add credibility to my research and assist the reader in understanding who the Hixson Scholars are.

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. You may withdraw at any time from the study. If you have any questions about the interview process please feel free to contact me at home 292-8442 or at work 294-4646.

Thank you for considering participating in this study.

Sincerely,

Kari Ditsworth
Masters Student in Education (Higher Education)
APPENDIX C. INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR DEBRA SANBORN

Background probe
- Why choose to work in student affairs
  - Educational background
  - Personal student affairs philosophy
  - Previous work experiences

Hixson Scholars
- Explain purpose and intent of Hixson Opportunity Awards
- Who are Hixson Scholars?
- How are they selected?
- What are the expectations associated with receiving scholarship?

Hixson Seminar
- How did idea evolve for creating seminar?
- What immediate needs did it serve?
- What were objectives of seminar?
- What research did you conduct when designing seminar?
- How does the Hixson Seminar compare with academic orientation courses?
- What changes have been made since first implementation?
- What changes do you envision in the future?

Impact of Seminar
- What elements of seminar do you feel have lead increased retention of students?
- What elements of the seminar do you feel increased the students’ academic success?
- What methods of evaluation seminar have been used and what were the results?
- Any surprises?
- Do you want to see similar seminars created for freshmen students
APPENDIX D. LETTER TO HIXSON SCHOLARS

November 12, 1997

Student’s Name
Address
Ames, IA 50014

Dear Hixson Scholar:

You have been selected to participate in a study to evaluate the impact of the Hixson Scholars Seminar: University Studies 111. This is my thesis which is a requirement for my masters degree in higher education at Iowa State University. This study is completely independent of the Hixson Scholars program and will be used to identify the key components that lead to student retention and academic successes so they may be duplicated in programs for every freshman student.

Should you choose to participate, you will be part of a focus group discussion related to your participation in the Hixson Scholars Seminar: University Studies 111. Eight Hixson Scholars will be invited to attend each session. The meeting will be held this Sunday, November __, from 5-7 p.m. in room 245 in the Memorial Union. Pizza and pop will be provided in exchange for your participation.

During the focus group, I will ask a series of open ended questions related to your participation in the seminar. You were selected to be a part of this study because of the important information you have to share. The focus group will be audio taped and transcribed to ensure accuracy and facilitate data analysis. The information gathered during the focus group will be confidential.

Participation in this study is voluntary and will not affect your status or funding as a Hixson Scholar. If you decide to participate, you may withdraw at any time by speaking to me about your decision and any information collected will not be used in the interview.

Again, thank you for agreeing to participate in this study. Your input is crucial to the success of my project. I look forward to seeing you Sunday night. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at home (292-8442) or on e-mail (kditw).

Sincerely,

Kari Ditsworth
APPENDIX E. FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS

1. What is one thing you remember about the seminar?

2. Thinking back on your experiences in the Hixson Seminar, what did you learn?

3. What do you think are the reasons for having a freshman seminar?

4. What did you find the most helpful about the seminar?

5. What did you find the least helpful about the seminar?

6. Think back to your first semester at Iowa State when you attended the Hixson Seminar, What specific ways did the seminar help you make the transition from HS to College?

7. Did the seminar affect your approach to your coursework? Can you give an example?

8. If you were asked to write the syllabus for the seminar next semester, what is the one thing you would keep in the course?

9. What would you omit from the course?

10. What should be added to the course?

11. If you were not required to attend a freshman seminar, would you still want to participate in a freshman seminar program?
November 16, 1997

The purpose of this study is to determine how the Hixson Scholars Seminar: University Studies III impacts the students’ freshman year experience. By gathering this data, I hope to identify the key components that lead to student retention and academic success so they may be duplicated in programs for every freshman.

You are invited to take part in a focus group discussion related to your participation in the Hixson Scholars Seminar: University Studies III. The focus group interview will take approximately two hours. After studying the information obtained in the interview, I may contact you by phone to seek clarification on one or more topics.

I, ________________________, understand that:

(Please Print)

a. the information obtained during this project will be summarized for the purposes of writing a thesis project.

b. the recordings and notes obtained in this interview will remain confidential.

c. I will be identified in the study as a student or as a Hixson Scholar and my real identity will not be disclosed.

d. my participation in this study is voluntary. I may withdraw at any time by speaking to the investigator and any information collected from me will not be used in the study.

I agree to participate in this research according to the preceding terms.

__________________________  _______________________
(Respondent Signature)        (Date)

*****************************************************************************************
I agree to conduct this research according to the preceding terms.

__________________________  _______________________
(Investigator Signature)      (Date)
APPENDIX G. CATEGORIES OF DATA SET ONE

1. Academic concerns
2. Acclimation with the university
3. Adjustment
4. Advisor role
5. Building responsibility
6. Bureaucracy on campus
7. Campus resources
8. Citizenship
9. Clubfest
10. Community building
11. Community service
12. Current issues on campus
13. Diverse student population on campus
14. E-mail/technology
15. Expectations
16. Faculty interaction
17. Field trips on campus-Reiman Gardens
18. First semester guide
19. Fraternity life
20. Freedom to make own decisions
21. Frustrations
22. Fun in classroom
23. Goal setting
24. Group activities
25. Guest Speakers
26. High School visit
27. Involvement
28. ISU history
29. Laid-back class structure
30. Leadership
31. Learning to deal with other people
32. Letter to hometown newspaper
33. Long term planning
34. New student orientation
35. Opportunities
36. Organization
37. Orientation class
38. Make friends
39. Meet other students
40. Myers-Briggs Type Indicator Test
41. Pride and ownership in the university
42. Professor interview
43. Public Speaking
44. Relaxation techniques
45. Retention of students
46. Hixson Opportunity Scholarship
47. Similarities with other students
48. Small class size
49. Social interaction
50. Stress Management
51. Student hardships
52. Student interaction with other students
53. Student success
54. Study skills
55. Support and challenge
56. Team Building
57. Test preparation
58. Time Management
59. Transition from high school to college
60. Value of obtaining a higher education
61. Weekly assignments
62. Willingness to help students-Descriptions of Deb
APPENDIX H. CATEGORIES OF DATA SET TWO

01 Academic Skills

23 Goal Setting
33 Long Term Planning
44 Relaxation Techniques
50 Stress Management
54 Study Skills
57 Test Preparation
58 Time Management

02 Faculty Interaction

04 Advisor Role
15 Expectations
16 Faculty Interaction
55 Support and Challenge
62 Descriptions of Debra Sanborn, Director of Hixson Opportunity Awards

03 Transition from High School to College

03 Adjustment
18 First Semester Guide
20 Freedom to Make Your Own Decisions
59 Transition from High School to College

04 Student Interaction

10 Community Building
24 Group Interactions
38 Make New Friends
39 Meet Other Students
49 Social Interaction
52 Student Interaction with Other Students
56 Team Building

05 Class Description

22 Fun in the classroom
29 “Laid back” class structure
35 Opportunities
46 Scholarship: Christina Hixson Opportunity Awards
48 Small class size
06 Acclimation with the University

02 Acclimation with the University
07 Campus Resources
28 ISU History
34 New Student Orientation
37 Academic Orientation Course
41 Pride and Ownership with the University

07 Class Activities

09 Clubfest
17 Field trips on Campus
25 Guest Speakers
40 Myers-Briggs Type Indicator Test

08 Class Assignments

26 High School Assignment
32 Letter to Hometown Newspaper about Value of Higher Education
42 Professor Interview
61 Weekly Assignments

09 Skills Learned in Seminar

14 E-Mail/Technology
36 Organization Skills
43 Public Speaking

10 Sources of Stress

01 Academic Concerns
06 Bureaucracy on Campus
21 Frustrations
51 Student Hardships

11 Goals of Seminar

05 Building Responsibility
08 Citizenship
11 Community Service
27 Involvement in Extracurricular Activities
30 Leadership
45 Retention of Students
53 Student Success
12 Diversity

13 Diverse Student Populations
31 Learning to Get Along with other Students
47 Similarities with other Students

13 Points of Discussion

12 Current Issues
19 Fraternity Life
60 Value of Higher Education
64 Academic Advisors
APPENDIX I. CATEGORIES OF DATA SET THREE

01 Student Interaction with Faculty/Staff

04 Advisor Role
15 Expectations
16 Faculty Interaction
42 Professor Interview
53 Student Success
55 Support and Challenge
62 Descriptions of Debra Sanborn, Director of Hixson Opportunity Awards

02 Academic Success

1 Academic Concerns
14 E-mail
21 Frustrations
23 Goal Setting
33 Long Term Planning
36 Organization
37 Academic Orientation Class
43 Public Speaking
44 Relaxation Techniques
50 Stress Management
54 Study Skills
57 Test Preparation
58 Time Management
60 Value of Obtaining a Higher Education

03 Transition from High School to College

02 Acclimation with the University
03 Adjustment
06 Bureaucracy
07 Campus Resources
09 “Clubfest”- Involvement in Campus Activities
12 Current Issues on Campus
17 Fieldtrips on campus-Reiman Gardens
18 First Semester Guide
20 Freedom to Make Your Own Decisions
25 Guest Speakers
27 Involvement
28 ISU History
34 New Student Orientation
41 Pride and Ownership with the University
58 Time Management
59 Transition from High School to College

04 Student Interaction with Peers

10 Community Building
13 Diverse Student Populations
22 Fun in classroom
24 Group Interactions
29 “Laid-back” Class Structure
31 Learning to Get Along with Other People
38 Make New Friends
39 Meet Other Students
44 Relaxation Techniques
47 Similarities with other students
48 Small Class Size
49 Social Interaction
52 Student Interaction with other students
56 Team Building

05 Identity Formation

05 Building Responsibility
08 Citizenship
19 Fraternity Life
23 Goal Setting
26 High School Visit
30 Leadership
32 Letter to hometown newspaper about value of higher education
33 Long term planning
35 Opportunities
40 Myers-Briggs Test
46 Scholarship-Christina Hixson Opportunity Scholarship
51 Student Hardships
61 Weekly assignments
APPENDIX J. CATEGORIES OF DATA SET FOUR

1 Orientation to Campus

Transition from High School to College
Adjusting to Life at College
Campus Resources
Field Trips to Campus Locations
ISU History
Involvement in Extracurricular Activities
Comparison to other orientation efforts

2 Impact of Seminar Assignments/Activities

Weekly Assignments
Letter to Hometown Newspaper
High School Visit
Myers-Briggs Typology Test

3 Developing Academic Competence

Academic Pressures
Study Skills
Time Management
Goal Setting
Public Speaking

4 Student Interaction with Peers

Class Structure
Group Activities
Peer Interaction
Exposure to Diverse Student Opinions
Social Interaction Outside Class

5 Student Interaction with Faculty/Staff

Faculty Interviews
Guest Speakers
Academic Advisor
Debra-Seminar Instructor
APPENDIX K. DESCRIPTIONS OF SET FOUR CATEGORIES

1 Orientation to Campus
   Description of students transition from high school to college and process of adjusting to college life. Seminar activities are

2 Impact of seminar assignments/activities
   The impact of seminar assignments and activities, weekly letters to Debra, editorial in hometown newspaper, high school visits, and Myers-Briggs, on the students' development is described.

3 Developing Academic Competence
   Students' academic pressures are described. The skills gained in the seminar, study skills, time management, long term planning, and public speaking are illustrated.

4 Student Interaction with Peers
   Descriptions of the class format and group activities are included. Students' interaction with peers inside and outside of the classroom is detailed.

5 Student Interaction with Faculty/Staff Members
   Descriptions of interactions with faculty/staff through seminar activities such as professor interviews and guest speakers. Perceptions of the relationship between the students and their academic advisor is included. The students' relationship with Debra is illustrated in great detail.
APPENDIX L. HUMAN SUBJECTS APPROVAL

Last name of Principal Investigator  Ditsworth

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Checklist for Attachments and Time Schedule. The following are attached (please check):</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>12. <strong>Letter or written statement to subject indicating clearly:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a) the purpose of the research</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b) the use of any identifier codes (names, numbers), how they will be used, and when they will be removed (see item 17)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c) an estimate of time needed for participation in the research</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d) if applicable, the location of the research activity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e) how you will ensure confidentiality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f) in a longitudinal study, when and how you will contact subjects later</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>g) that participation is voluntary; nonparticipation will not affect evaluations of the subject</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. <strong>Signed consent form (if applicable)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. <strong>Letter of approval for research from cooperating organizations or institutions (if applicable)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. <strong>Data-gathering instruments</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

16. **Anticipated dates for contact with subjects:**
   First contact: 10-27-97 interview 11-5-97 focus  Last contact: 2-2-98
   groups

17. **If applicable: anticipated date that identifiers will be removed from completed survey instruments and/or audio or visual tapes will be erased:**

18. **Signature of Departmental Executive Officer**

   ____________________________  10/20/97  Department or administrative unit

19. **Decision of the University Human Subjects Review Committee:**
   - **Project Approved**
   - **Project Not Approved**
   - **No Action Required**

   Patricia M. Keith, Committee Chairperson  10/24/97  (signature of committee chairperson)
REFERENCES


ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The support of many people enabled me to complete this research study. I am greatly appreciative of Dr. Daniel Robinson, my major professor, who has been encouraging and supportive throughout this process. My other committee members, Drs. Anne Ahrens, Carolyn Payne and Erik Hoiberg, provided valuable feedback that helped me take this research to the next level.

A special thanks to the Hixson Scholars who ventured out in bad weather so that I could interview them. I am very grateful they decided to participate in this study. Their honest responses enabled me to provide the thick, rich description that appears throughout this thesis.

This research study would not have been possible without assistance from Debra Sanborn. I am grateful for her willingness to be interviewed. I have learned a lot from observing her seminar and watching her interact with the Hixson Scholars. She has created a program that should be replicated for every first year student.

Christana Johnson, my peer debriefer, was an asset to this study. She observed the focus group interviews and spent many hours debriefing my work. I appreciate her feedback and support on this project.

I would like to thank my parents for their support throughout my life, especially during this past year. They helped transcribe my focus group interviews and listened for hours to my thoughts about this research.
Finally, a special *Thank You* to my fiancé, Andrew Hensen, for his encouragement and support during the past three years.