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UMI
ADVISING LEARNING METHOD OF ANDRAGOGY (ALMA):

OR UNIVERSITY SOUL

by

Larry David Espinoza

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A Dissertation Submitted to the Faculty of the
DEPARTMENT OF LANGUAGE, READING AND CULTURE
In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
For the Degree of
DOCTOR OF EDUCATION
WITH A MAJOR IN LANGUAGE, READING AND CULTURE
In the Graduate College
THE UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA

2001
As members of the Final Examination Committee, we certify that we have read the dissertation prepared by Larry David Espinoza entitled Advising Learning Method of Andragogy (ALMA): or University Soul and recommend that it be accepted as fulfilling the dissertation requirement for the Degree of Doctor of Education.

Dr. John Bradley

Dr. Anita Fonte

Dr. Richard Ruiz

Final approval and acceptance of this dissertation is contingent upon the candidate's submission of the final copy of the dissertation to the Graduate College.

I hereby certify that I have read this dissertation prepared under my direction and recommend that it be accepted as fulfilling the dissertation requirement.

Dissertation Director

Dr. John Bradley
STATEMENT BY AUTHOR

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SIGNED:
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I want to say "muchas gracias" to my gente in mi barrio loco and to my young hermanitos y hermanitas still struggling to stay in school. "Si se puede!" "Keep hope alive!"

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Dedication

I would like to dedicate this work to my daughters Kayla and Pita who are the center of my universe and my late mother, Guadalupe Espinoza, father, A.B. Espinoza and grandmother, Emilia Gonzales. "In dreams of manual laborers lie the future of their children."
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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to investigate the hypothesis, can academic advising, based on the adult learning characteristics of andragogy, be an effective advising approach in assisting undergraduate students in their developmental learning, decision making strategies, and transition and adaptation into a university.

This study examined two groups, each with ten graduating seniors, who were advised in the advising center of a large public institution of higher education in the Southwest. One student group was advised in the university's conventional advising manner; the second group was advised using the Advising Learning Method of Andragogy or ALMA.

The methodology used to examine the hypothesis was done in the following manner: The quantitative stage, consisting of the ALMA Likert student survey and ALMA and Non-ALMA student group grade point average chart. These findings demonstrated an initial grade point average difference between the ALMA and Non-ALMA groups favoring the Non-ALMA group. While both groups improved their mean grade point average, the ALMA group's grade point average improved at a consistent pace as these students transitioned into the university, with both groups' mean grade point average reaching near convergence after five years.
The qualitative stage, the survey and interview findings revealed that the ALMA and Non-ALMA groups were similar in their views that the university's large size, bureaucratic complexity, and limited advising resources had adverse effects on their success and sense of participation within the university community.

The ALMA and Non-ALMA groups differed in several respects. The Non-ALMA group frequently mentioned the importance of outside support of family, friends, high school advisors, the use and retrieval of prior learned skills, and peer competition, while the ALMA group did not.

The ALMA group frequently mentioned the importance of university OAS advising, technology, and study skills acquired at the university, while the Non-ALMA group did not.

ALMA advising is not merely a change in the perspective method undergraduates use to access advising. ALMA represents a shift in the paradigm and approach taken in advising, which focuses on facilitating the development of the student's problem-solving skills and decision-making strategies.
CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Little was written about the development and growth of adult learners in college before the decade of student unrest in the 1960's (Upcraft, 1995). Until then advising typically consisted of supplying a student with a list of courses by an advisor or faculty member. The universities also assumed the role of in loco parentis. In addition, this limited role of advising charged the university advisor with the responsibility to act on the behalf of the parents of the student and provide general rules and regulations designed to develop good moral character. The influence of the university in the learning and decision making development and growth of students was perceived as being accidental, meaning that no set strategy was in place to help students evolve as learners and as adults.

The first secular influence on our thinking about adult student development emerged in the late nineteen century when psychological theorists, such as Sigmund Freud and Karl Jung, began to write about individuals from perspectives that differed from those of theologians and philosophers. Twentieth century psychologists, such as behaviorist B. F. Skinner, social psychologist Erik Erikson, client-centered therapist Carl Rogers, and developmentalist
Jean Piaget, also influenced our perspectives on human development and behavior. After the 1960s, professionals involved with advising in higher education began to make use of the work of a number of psychologists.

The 1960s also marked a turning point in the way we studied and theorized about adult student development in college. This turbulent decade was marked by student activism in higher education; it also included the first efforts to explain the growth and development of adult students in college. It was not until the publication of Stanford's (1962) *The American College* that serious scholarship was applied to adult college student development in the context of the university environment and advising in higher education. Stanford postulated the concept of support and challenge. He argued that students attempt to reduce tensions or the challenges of collegiate life by striving to restore equilibrium as they progress through the higher education system. Stanford held that the extent to which students are successful at this task depends on the degree of support, inclusive of the advising approaches or ideologies, that students experience at this critical time in their education. Too much of a challenge can be overwhelming. On the other hand, too much support can be debilitating and may lead to dependance. The challenge-support cycle results in the growth and development of the
adult student learner and directly impacts the manner in which advising services are delivered to the student.

Stanford's writings were supported by the studies of William Perry on the development of college students. Perry (1970) developed a theory of intellectual and ethical development which suggested that students move through nine stages from a simplistic, categorical view of the world to a more relativistic, committed view. At various stages of their development, students will respond to advising, university policies, and the university environment in different ways. The university and advising staff, as Perry postulates, should be conscious of the intellectual and ethical developmental stages through which students move. According to Perry, first year students start out with an unquestioning dualistic conceptual framework (right-wrong, good-bad, beautiful-ugly) and grow to the realization of the contingent nature of knowledge, values, and truth. As students move through these stages of development, they integrate their intellects with their identities, gain a better understanding of the world, and find personal meaning through an affirmation of their own commitments (Upcraft, 1995).

It is this process of assisting the adult student learner in understanding the world and the evolution of their intellectual identities that must be addressed by
universities in general and their advising services in particular. As adult student learners transition to the university, they experience what Schlossberg (1984) terms "role change." Their role as a learner changes as does their learning environment. The adult student learner's structured, supportive, family-based learning environments of high schools or community colleges are often replaced by the impersonal, self-directed, stress-filled learning environments of larger universities. Advising is tied to the adult student learner's development as it is critically involved with the students during this initial transition period as well as later throughout their education at the university.

According to Schlossberg (1984), as well as Gordon (1995) many students entering college are overwhelmed with the prospect of making correct educational and career decisions. To the adult learner, advising at the university is as much about providing assistance with decision making skills as it is about course selection. Some students consider these initial choices as "permanent" life decisions. Many adult student learners are the first in their families to attend a university, and for these students, their academic choices can influence the education of peers and siblings. A poor choice could negatively impact any future university experience for an entire family. For
this reason, many adult student learners feel significant pressure to choose a major that leads directly to an occupation. While academic and career counselors know this is an unrealistic perspective, the pressure to make early choices regarding a major exerted by parents, peers, society, and sometimes institutions often prevails.

Students face a dual set of problems related to perceived pressure regarding decision making and adaptations to an unfamiliar learning environment. To adult student learners, challenges such as transitioning into a university setting and the perception of needing to make early academic decisions will shape and give direction to their education and life (Gordon, 1995).

During a student’s undergraduate experience, many issues of a personal nature occur that are beyond the expertise of the academic advisor. Assisting adult student learners with these personal decisions should be assigned to professionals in counseling services. It is important, though, that academic advisors be aware that many personal events and changes occur during the student’s university experience. Too many students’ academic decisions are based upon the pressure of personal events. Students feel pressured in decision making at the same time that they are experiencing the development of intellectual growth as well as moral judgement.
The advisor on today's university campus is often a sounding board and safety valve for students who find themselves in these various stages of personal development. Advisors serving as front line staff in many educational institutions must know their limitations in dealing with advisee's personal problems and also, if need be, refer the student as necessary to other qualified professionals on campus. In this age of liability concerns and litigation, this makes good professional sense for the advisor and institution.

The Problem

Can Advising Learning Method of Andragogy (ALMA), an advising learning method based on Malcolm Knowles' theory of andragogy, assist students in meeting their academic objectives? (See Appendix A.)

ALMA will be studied regarding its effectiveness in promoting student decision making and problem solving skills and its usefulness in assisting with the inclusion of undergraduate students as part of the larger university's community. (See Appendix B).

Introduction to Problem

Malcolm Knowles proposed his hypothesis of andragogy in 1960. This singular hypothesis addressed the distinction between how adults and children acquire information and make decisions by outlining four basic commonalities that he
termed andragogical assumptions. Knowles contended that adults approach the decision making process in a very unique manner and they do so in terms of: (a) a desire and tendency toward self-directedness; (b) greater use of experiences as a resource for learning; (c) the need for more hands on decision making; (d) a shift in perspective from one of postponed application of knowledge to immediacy of application, and (e) accordingly, their orientation toward learning shifts from one of subject-centeredness to one of problem-centeredness. This study attempts to investigate the extent to which the use of the advising learning method of andragogy (ALMA) assists students to become self-directed learners and enables them to obtain their academic goals. For the purposes of this paper, I will use the term hypothesis when referring to Knowles' andragogical assumptions.

Guiding Research Questions

1. To what extent do students see the advising process to be of value to them?

2. What are the strengths of ALMA's advising techniques?

3. What are the weaknesses of ALMA's advising techniques?
Justification

The Digest of Educational Statistics, 1994 (U.S. Department of Education, 1994) suggests an alarming dropout rate for college students. For the period of the last two decades, the national rate of graduation for American higher education has been stagnant at approximately fifty to sixty percent. The problem of consistently high university dropout rates has been a priority to those in higher education for the past two decades. Universities continue to devote a large amount of resources toward reversing this trend. Efforts by higher education to improve retention and graduation range from increasing student aid to purchasing the state of the art computer systems designed to track the latest statistics.

A critical factor in student retention and graduation that is frequently overlooked is the importance of college advising. Studies conducted by Schlossberg and Lynch (1984), Chickering and Havighurst (1985), Astin (1991) and Upcraft (1993) demonstrate a direct relationship between college advising and increased undergraduate student retention and graduation. The nature of the advisor-student relationship that frequently begins with freshman orientation and runs throughout an undergraduate student's academic career can provide an important connection between the college and the student. Studies by the National Academic Advising
Association (NACADA) (1994) have also shown that advising serves as a connection between the student and the university, and this student/university link greatly improves the likelihood of graduation. Despite the important link between college advising and student retention and graduation rates, the integration of adult literacy theory (how adult students learn and use information in academic decision making) and new approaches and techniques in improving college advising may be overshadowed by a universities' latest efforts to reduce student dropout rate. University advising departments have sought to improve the student-university connection in several ways; among the most promising is in assisting students through advising. Studies by NACADA have shown that students who are actively involved in decision making and self-directed learning transition better into higher education and experience more academic and personal satisfaction with their education. It appears that advising is an important link in assisting students to develop decision making skills. Among the most under-utilized yet practical tools for college advising is the adult literacy theory of andragogy.

Assumption

The following assumption was necessary to conduct this study.
The students who participated in this study have the basic verbal, reading, and writing skills needed to read, comprehend, and respond to the survey and other written materials used to gather information.

Limitations to the Study

It is doubtful that a phenomenon as complex as adult learning will ever be explained by single theory, model or set of principles (Knowles, Holton, & Swanson, 1998). It is equally as difficult in one study to examine all the elements of andragogy as a theory of adult literacy or all its effects and implications for an adult learner attending the university. It is because of the vast complexity of this theory that I limit my research to the examination of the aforementioned self-directed adult learning characteristics of andragogy (p. 19).

My study cannot chronicle all events in the academic development of students nor will it be a definitive investigation of the value of the method and delivery of ALMA advising. My dissertation will be limited to the evaluation and examination of the advising methodology of ALMA at the University of Arizona. By studying ALMA's student learners enrolled in the University College's undergraduate degree programs and their perspectives on higher education, I studied ALMA's impact in assisting
students to acquire decision making skills and develop a sense of belonging to the university’s academic community.

This study recognizes that advising is a critical component in the academic success of the adult learner, and because of this, advising services need continued evaluation to determine strengths and weaknesses. Improvement in advising can come in many forms, including new techniques that utilize the self-directed learning tendencies of the student.

As students transition into higher education, they make choices based on many changes that have occurred in their lives; this in turn allows for them as adult learners to grow and evolve within the higher educational system. This transition consists of numerous events and activities that are critical to a student’s academic success. When the advising of adults employs the use of self-directed learning, how does this change an advisor’s approach? Student development theory emphasizes the centrality of life events and transitions of adult learners into higher education. Such events shape and give direction to one’s life and education. It is almost universally accepted (Kasworm & Blowers, 1994) that entering or re-entering the higher education environment involves transition. The impact of the transition will be dependent in important ways on how successfully the institution’s personnel (academic advisors)
and services recognize and respond to the needs of the adult learner. However, by examining students' perspectives on available advising services and their own student development as they progress through the University, a more complete picture can be drawn of the adult learner's odyssey through higher education.

Definition of Terms

The following terms are defined to give clarity to their use in this study.

Student. College-aged adult student learners enrolled in a higher education institutions possessing the basic literacy skills necessary to read, write and verbally respond to student surveys, narratives, interviews and journals.

Andragogy. The theory of adult literacy which defines the distinction between adults and children regarding how they learn and apply knowledge to decision making.

Advising. The process, techniques, and strategies used to provide academic and career information to undergraduate students.

Likert Scale. Type of measurement response format that gages the magnitude of student response to a set of survey questions ranging
(numerically) from "agree strongly to disagree strongly".

Reliability. The correlation between two or more forms of the same test and/or the analysis of the consistency of items or themes that emerge within one test form.

Validity. The extent to which a test measures what it purports to measure.

OAS. The University of Arizona's Office of Academic Services. This is the university department that administers undergraduate general education advising.

Dual Model of Advising. This is the organizational model of advising used by the University of Arizona Office of Academic Services. This advising model assigns undergraduate advising responsibilities between professional advising personnel and faculty.
CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Advising Assessment

Assessment is the most ignored aspect of academic advising. Assessment is particularly neglected regarding the academic advising of undergraduate students attending large public universities (Habley & Morales, 1998). The most prevalent reason for the lack of ongoing assessment being conducted in large public institutions is the over extension of available advising resources needed to conduct assessments (Habley & Morales). The results of the first National Survey of Academic Advising conducted by the American College Testing Program in 1979 (Carstensen & Silber, 1979) indicated that approximately 75% of the responding institutions had no formal assessment for their academic advising program. Subsequent national surveys (Crockett & Levitz, 1983; Habley & Crockett, 1988; Habley & Morales, 1998) indicate that the amount of advising assessment has improved somewhat but more than half of the institutions sampled conducted no formal assessment of academic advising. This study used a qualitative (see Appendix D) and a quantitative student-centered survey (see Appendix E) to assist in assessing advising.
More assessment across the country is needed to provide information regarding the efficiency of college level advising programs. It has been short-sighted on the part of universities to do so little to assess and validate the positive results of their advising programs. The collection of such data could possibly lead to improved programs and increased funding (Chernin & Goldsmith, 1986; Pascarella & Terenzine, 1991; NACADA, 1998).

Although this research and numerous studies conducted by various task forces on campus demonstrate the undisputed value and benefit to the student that advising provides, it is not clear what methods of advising are effective, or what specific advisor skills result in student success. This study examines the advisor's skills, the advising techniques, and methods of the ALMA advising program by comparing the performance of the ALMA advised group with a Non-ALMA test group advised in the standard advising manner used by the Office of Academic Services.

The significance of assessing academic advising programs at all levels is critical to the overall effectiveness of the university or college for the following reasons:

1. A comprehensive and well-constructed assessment program can provide a basis for identifying the weaknesses of an advising program and how that program might be improved to
benefit undergraduate students. This is particularly important for students who attend a large public institution where individual one-on-one advising may not always be immediately available to the student.

2. Effective advising assessments can provide a basis and justification for maintaining and expanding advising resources at a time when resources in higher education are becoming more scarce.

3. A well administered assessment program can provide useful feedback to individual academic advisors, can become part of the overall evaluation of advisor and faculty performance and can be used in promotion and tenure reviews.

4. Comprehensive assessment results are an important component of institutional and departmental strategic planning, making sure that advising is a central part of such efforts.

5. Assessment can provide useful information to increase efficiency and cost-effectiveness of an advising program.

6. A good assessment program focusing on outcomes can test and perhaps duplicate, at the local level, what the above national studies have found that effective academic advising can have a powerful influence on grades, retention, and other indicators of student success (Upcraft, Srebnik, & Stevenson, 1995).
A major consideration in developing an advising assessment program is the model of the advising system employed by the university or college. For many years little attention was paid to organizational models of academic advising (King & Kerr, 1995). This was due in part to the belief that institutions are unique and, as a result, similarities would be limited. It was also due to a blurring of the distinction between organizational models of advising and the delivery of the advising services. In the 1980’s, research by Habley identified seven organizational models of advising (Habley, 1981; Habley & McCauley, 1987).

Habley’s research was expanded upon in the American College Testing Programs (ACT) Third and Fourth National Surveys on Academic Advising (1993, 1994). According to the survey assessment by ACT each of the organizational models currently in existence in two and four year institutions and collectively represent the majority of all the colleges surveyed. The ACT survey assessment determined that most institutions used one of the following models of academic advising. Seven advising models were identified through the ACT survey. Each model has its own unique strengths and weaknesses. Some models are more popular than others. The following ACT-based discussion describes the models and highlights the strengths and weaknesses of each.
According to ACT (1993-1994), the seven models are as follows: First, Faculty-Only Model has each student assigned to a specific faculty member for advising. This model has many strengths, not the least of which is the value of strong student/faculty relationships in terms of student growth and faculty mentoring. However, when all faculty members are required to advise, there can be varying levels of commitment, resulting in inconsistent quality of advising. In addition, faculty may not have the interest or the skills necessary to advise students who are undecided, under-prepared, or have special learning needs. It is important in the Faculty Model of advising to increase faculty knowledge and skill levels in overall coordination by comprehensive, regular training.

Second, the Supplementary Model involves having faculty serve as advisors for all students. This model also has an advising office that serves as an information clearinghouse and referral resource but lacks original jurisdiction for approving advising transactions. This advising office may also provide resources, implement advisor training and develop, maintain, and update information systems. This model has the advantage of providing coordination of advising through a central office where coordination may not exist in the Faculty-Only Model. The disadvantage of this model is the advising office has no
jurisdiction for monitoring or approving academic transactions and its credibility with faculty may be an issue at times.

Third, the Split Model of advising divides advising between faculty members in sub-units and an advising staff in a central advising office. The advising office typically has original jurisdiction for advising a specific group of students such as undecided students, under-prepared students or student athletes. Once specific conditions have been met, such as declaring a major, students are then assigned to faculty advisors in their respective academic sub-units. The advising office has a coordinator or a director and may have a campus-wide coordinating responsibility for student assignment to academic sub-units. Its advantage involves providing advisors who have the skills necessary to advise. In addition, at-risk students can be matched to their academic sub-units with their faculty advisor. The disadvantage of this model is that it demands very close coordination between the central advising office and the university’s academic sub-unit faculty because of the special needs of the student population.

Fourth, the Total-Intake Model involves having all initial advising of students done by advisors in an advising office until a set of institutionally predetermined conditions have been met. At that time students may be
assigned to a faculty advisor in their appropriate academic subunit. In this model, the dean of the advising office may have responsibility for the development and administration of all curriculum and instruction and the development and enforcement of policies and procedures. One of the advantages of the Total-Intake Model is that it provides continuity in student advising and academic decisions. The dean of the advising office may also have responsibility for campus-wide coordination of advising. One disadvantage of the Total-Intake Model is that special care must be given to students as they make the transition into their major department and to their faculty advisor. Problems may also occur when students change majors after transition. The advising office staff must work closely with the major faculty advisor to assure a smooth transition.

Fifth, the Self-Contained Model involves having all advising conducted and administered in a central unit. A dean or director of advising has the responsibility for all advising functions on campus. The advantages of this model are that a trained group of advisors, who have advising as a sole priority, at a central location, with easy accessibility to all students, make all advising related decisions. The disadvantage of this model is that it does not take advantage of faculty expertise nor does it seem to promote student-faculty interaction.
Six, the Satellite Model of advising is used primarily in advising offices at large multiversities that have multiple campus universities. Advising satellite offices are maintained, controlled, and structured in academic advising sub-units usually spread throughout a large community. These satellite advising offices provide advising for all students whose majors are within a particular college or school. The advantage of this model is the convenience for the students attending that particular campus in which the satellite advising office is located. The disadvantages are that overall coordination of advising services becomes a special concern because of its decentralized nature, as does advising consistency which impacts the quality of advising.

Seventh, the Dual Model of advising consists of assigning two advisors to each student. Faculty members provide advising related to the student’s major and perhaps minor programs of study. Advisors in an central office provide advising related to academic policies, general education requirements and registration procedures. The advising office also generally advises undecided students. Typically, this model has a coordinator with campus-wide coordinating responsibilities. The major advantage of this model is that it has two advising delivery systems, a major faculty advisor and professional academic advisor, with the
corresponding strengths of each: a major faculty advisor and professional academic advising. In addition it promotes strong faculty/student/advisor interaction. Its disadvantage is that to be successful, the advising responsibilities of faculty and those of advising office must be clearly articulated. Students must be made aware of whom to see for what, and, as in parenthood, the faculty member and the advising office staff member must be careful that they are not "played off" one another. In the ideal situation, both faculty and advising staff members meet regularly to discuss concerns related to advising and advisees. The University of Arizona employs a variation of the Dual Advising Model (American College Testing Programs, 1993, 1994).

Regardless of the advising model used by the university or college, developing a solid advising assessment program is critical to the delivery of all advising services. There are three general approaches for developing an advising assessment system. First is the quantitative approach, which involves the use of standardized measures so that the varying perspectives and experiences of people can be fit into a limited number of predetermined response categories to which numbers are assigned (Patton, 1990). Instruments are used to collect data; statistical methods are used to analyze this data, and conclusions are drawn.
The second approach involves the use of qualitative methods that provide detailed descriptions of situations, events, people, interactions, and observed behaviors, most typically derived from individual journals, interviews, focus groups, document analyses, and direct involvement and observation (Patton, 1990).

The third approach involves the use of both quantitative and qualitative methods of research, depending upon the purpose of the study. The study presented here utilized the third method of assessment and employs both a quantitative method and qualitative method to examine in greater depth advising at the University of Arizona.

Although the ALMA advising study was designed to examine a specific theory of the adult literacy, andragogy and its application in academic advising, it is helpful to research the student evaluations of other advising systems at various institutions of higher education. Because of this, I specifically reviewed "student-based assessments methods," employed by other institutions to evaluate advising systems. My focus was to gather ideas on structuring effective assessment methods, student questionnaires, surveys and student-based self-directed advising assessment approaches. These institutional research studies included: The Academic Advising Survey from The University of Texas at Austin (Hartman, 1981), Rush Medical
College Advising Questionnaire (Eckenfels, Blacklow, & Gotter, 1984), and the John Abbott College Student Questionnaire on Academic Advising (Neale & Sidorenko, 1990).

One study, Advising Evaluation Survey (Kapram & Coldren, 1990), conducted at Pennsylvania State University (Fayette Campus) seems to mirror my research interest in the ALMA advising study. This institution has several similarities with the University of Arizona, including the size of its student population, the status of being a large public university, and a similar advisor to student ratio.

The Pennsylvania State University study was structured as a student-directed narrative response survey with a smaller longitudinal case study component. The study was administered to a random sample of students from the general student population. This nine-item survey measured student satisfaction with advisor behaviors. Students responded to statements on a rating scale from 0 (needs improvement) to 4 (excellent). Students were also encouraged to expound in a narrative manner in both the survey and interviews/journals. Statements included student comments on advisor behaviors, such as availability and keeping office hours, giving accurate information and referrals, discussing long-range goals, decision-making and developing a personal and congenial rapport with students.
An additional narrative questionnaire in this study asked whether the students felt their advisors and advising center had positive, constructive attitudes toward advising in general. The attitude of the advisors frequently reflected the environmental attitude of the advising office.

In general, the results of this study gave various advisors and advising at Pennsylvania State University a positive review. While students gave the advisors and advising office favorable ratings, they also suggested some changes they would like implemented to improve the delivery of services.

Among the students' suggestions were that the advisors provide more personalized attention to their advisees and that the advising office needed to spend more time assisting students in their transition to the university.

In addition, the case studies provided the advisors and the advising center valuable information that allowed for institutional adjustments to meet the student's changing needs and concerns. This study examined the manner in which the delivery of advising and the quality advising was provided to the students by the advisors and the advising center. The students suggested smaller groups at campus orientations on advising. In addition, students suggested that advisors spend more quality time getting to know them.
as people. Students also said they felt overwhelmed by the volume of information provided to them during these brief advising orientation sessions.

This student based assessment of advising services assisted this institution to improve its advising services. It also gave the students the opportunity to assist in determining the direction and the manner that advising services were delivered.

There are a number of articles and publications on the evaluation of advising services on college campuses. Two significant publications are: Assessment of Academic Advising (Upcraft, Srebnik, & Stevenson, 1995). A Compendium of Evaluation Instruments (Srebnik & Stevenson, 1995) provides suggestions on qualitative and quantitative methods of evaluating advising services. Earlier research also included studies sponsored by advising organizations or associations such as the American College Testing Program (1989) Survey of Academic Advising, and the Association of Professional Advisors and Counselors’ (1978) which produced a format for advisor self-assessment with the Advisor/ Counselor Self-evaluation Questionnaire.

The aforementioned articles and publications stress the need for on-going assessment of advising services. As student demographics change and technology increases, it is critical for advising to respond to these changing
conditions on campus. Regular assessment is the most effective manner for addressing and planning for these changes.

Assessment of advising services can take many forms. Many advising models are assessed based upon the Upcraft and Schuh (1995) six point comprehensiveness scale. This, in turn, lead to the following six elements of the advising assessment survey by the American College Testing (ACT):

1. assess the student learners' needs;
2. assess and track the adult student learners use of advising services;
3. assess the student learner's satisfaction with advising;
4. assess the first year student learner's academic outcome;
5. assess and compare advising services with other institutions or various approaches to advising;
6. use national or common standards to assess advising services.

Student Learner Development

To fully understand student development, an awareness of its historical and theoretical foundations in critical literacy and adult learning is needed. My approach to this study is to examine student development. One can see the roots of student development in the twentieth century field of critical literacy. Freire (1972) proposed that critical literacy can be seen as change in the adult practice of
learning. Rapid economic and social changes motivate this variation in approach in adult learning. Consequently, the nature of adult learning and the occupations of advising and teaching adults encounters the status of being in permanent review (Griffin, 1991). To many advisors in higher education, adopting elements of critical literacy, such as Freire's five phases of adult learning, provides historical grounding and allows one the creativity to address the complex problems facing our present day adult learners. As advisors, history and philosophy shape our professional practice by providing a set of historical values and philosophical concepts (Delworth & Hanson, 1989).

In *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1972), Freire proposed that conventional education did little to allow the student to develop and grow as a learner. Freire's approach took the form of identifying the pedagogy of "conscientization" (*conscientizacao*), and methodology (*metodo*).

Freire (as cited in Youngman, 1986) states that conscientization is the process of development within the learners' critical understanding of society and an awareness of their capacity to change their societal environment. In Freire's books *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1972) and *Culture Action for Freedom* (1976), he championed a critical literacy agenda that proposes identifying learning abilities with a critical conscious of the social conditions in which they
the students find themselves, recognizing the extent by which people with authority name the world and dominate others whose voices they have been able to suppress (Youngman, 1986).

Freire (cited in Youngman, 1986), aforementioned problem-solving approach directly contrasts with "the banking approach" as he called the current method used to educate adults. In the banking approach, the teacher deposits ready-made bits of knowledge in the students’ minds, which they have to memorize and repeat. The students are reduced to passivity and encouraged to adapt to the world as it is rather than question it. Hence, it is a process of "domestication" and exercise in domination. In contrast Freire suggested that critical literacy for the student learner constitutes a means to power and, most importantly, self-directed participation. It is a way to seek political enfranchisement—not with the naive expectations that merely being literate in their environment is sufficient to change the distribution of options—but with the belief that the ability to speak alone enables one’s entrance into the areas of decision-making and where learning direction and power are contested (Knoblaunch, 1990).

Using Freire, methodology education and student learner development are designed to allow students to be
self-directed in their education goals and objectives.
Freire outlined his educational program and self-directed learning approach in a program of adult education that was staged in a series of five steps. He called this five phases of adult learning. In Freire's five phases of adult learning, students develop by using their own viewpoints or thematic realities. This procedure of self-directedness is also mirrored in the ALMA advising strategy (see Appendix C). Freire's first phase is to allow students to discover their own "thematic universe" or the main issues in their lives. This is done in the ALMA advising program during the self-directed learning stage of major and career development (see ALMA Advising Strategy, Appendix C). During this stage on ALMA advising, students begin the process of clarifying their academic and career interest. This can be done by using the Strong Interest Inventory assessment as well as major exploration within the student's field of interest. Freire's second phase "Generative words" involves the selection of certain themes for discussion, words or study topics for analysis that would generate critical debate and language development. In ALMA advising, this stage of student development is included in a course selection dialogue between the advisor and the student (see ALMA Advising Strategy, Appendix C). In ALMA advising generative words such as self-directed learning become important issues
of discussion. In ALMA advising, students analyze their own role in directing their education and do self-assessment in regards to their abilities to meet their goals. Freire’s third phase is "codification" which makes use of these generative words. These are visual representations (in drawing, posters, or journals) of typical existential situations in the area which could pose problems for discussion. This is reflected in the ALMA student surveys and ALMA student journals. Freire’s fourth phase involves the development of agendas that acts as guidelines for the facilitator and the student. In ALMA advising, the advisor and student work toward the student’s major project, which is the successful completion of the student’s graduation audit. This will culminate in the student’s graduation. In Freire’s fifth phase, various kinds of educational material are produced for the student learner’s development. In ALMA advising, this is done by advisor and student development of educational materials that incorporate both conventional learning and the use of a variety of out-of classroom learning activities (see ALMA Advising Strategy, Appendix C).

The end results of these efforts are as Freire (1970) states:

... the team of facilitator and student are ready to represent to the learner their own thematic, in
systematized and amplified form. The thematic which has been derived from the learner is returned to them—not as contents to be deposited, but as problems to be solved. (p. 16)

For Freire, the unique attribute of human consciousness and self-directed is what makes it possible for people to change and improve their situations. It is the philosophical basis of the very nature of conscientization. Until students realize their capacity to make their world by becoming self-directed, they will continue to be dehumanized by the banking approach to education. Once they have become conscious of this, the possibility of humanization is opened up to them.

There are several articles and publications that examined student development in higher education, such as Astin (1985), Boyer (1990), Cross (1981), Feldman and Flower (1981). As with Freire, the goal of allowing students to research their educational objectives and develop and grow as decision makers is the common ground motivating these studies. As adult student learners progress through developmental stages, understanding the theory of adult literacy and the application of learning strategies becomes an important tool to the advisor in assisting students in developing their self-directed strategies.
The examination of student learning skills such as *Internalized Learning* by Loacher and Doherty (1984) provides insight into the developmental stages that students encounter while adjusting and making important decisions about educational objectives. Loacher and Doherty describe two phases of student development. The first is that students come to see that the locu of learning is with the self and that information or processes are important in learning only after they are taken in and altered to the learner's perceptions and abilities. Once students internalize this learning process, they see the importance of this approach to learning and decision making.

The conceptualization of student development and its relation to self-directed learning as a psychological construct has also been outlined by Knowles, (1975), Rogers, (1983), Brookfield, (1987, 1988). The aforementioned authors are discussed later in the section of andragogy and student development.

Another author who contributed to learner development is Erik Erikson. He regarded psychosocial learner development as epigenetic. That is, there is an underlying structure to the learner's development through the lifespan. This structure unfolds in a series of predictable stages. Erikson's epigenetic principle states that anything that grows has a ground plan, and that out of this ground plan
the parts arise, each part having its time of special 
ascendancy, until all parts have arisen to form a 
functioning whole (Erikson, 1968). Development therefore 
ocurs due to this epigenetic unfolding. Internal changes, 
both biological and psychological, interact with 
environmental roles and other cultural expectations to 
initiate the changes. Early and late in life biological 
changes dominate the initiation of change. During mid life 
psychological and environmental factors are more 
influential. Each stage is characterized by an issue or task 
that is qualitatively different from the issues or task of 
other stages.

In AMA advising, the psychosocial stage of student 
development is linked to the college experience and is seen 
as a process of learning to think in new ways and that 
college learning experiences can be evaluated and discussed 
with the student’s advisor. This allows students 
(particularly at larger institutions) to make connections 
between their education and their personal development. This 
process is aimed at allowing the students to become an 
autonomous, responsible, self-directed learner (see ALMA 
Preface, Appendix B). ALMA advising combines Erikson’s 
psychosocial stage development with Gugliemino’s Learning 
Readiness Scale to direct advisees as they progress through 
their undergraduate experiences.
In Gugliemino's Self-Directed Learning Readiness Scale (1977), student development is based upon psychological attributes, both cognitive- and personality-based. Such a self-directed mode of learning and student development was defined as being attributed to one's whole personality.

Taking Gugliemino's theory that self-directed learning is psychologically based in the cognitive and personality of the individual, there must be elements working within each student that govern and direct the acquiring of learning and development. Long and Ross (1984) have conceptualized self-directed learning in terms of forces. Four distinctive forces that influence self-directed learning are believed to exist: personality, social, situational, and contextual. Personality forces are conceived of as psychological attributes. Social forces are identified as being related to one's position in the society and relationships with other human beings. The third and fourth forces are environmental in nature. Contextual variables are related to the milieu in which the individual lives, works, attends school, and plays. These contexts may provide much or little stimulations and opportunities to develop as learners.

It is important that in the administration of a self-directed student development orientated advising program
such as ALMA that the holistic approach to student development not be lost.

The ALMA advisor has a dual role in assuring that the holistic approach to learning development is maintained. The ALMA advisor's dual role is to insure the students be connected to as many learning experiences on campus as possible. The role of the ALMA advisor is primarily the role of designer and manager of processes or learning procedures that will facilitate the acquisition of content by the learner and only secondarily, the role of content resource. The ALMA advisor recognizes that student development is influenced by many internal and external sources. The ALMA advisor's strategy assumes that there are many additional resources other than the advisor, including peers and individuals with specialized knowledge and skills in the academic community available to the student. The principle responsibilities of the ALMA advisor are to be highly knowledgeable about all these resources and to link the student with them. In turn, students are expected to be actively involved in all aspects of their learning from mutual planning to evaluation of their learning experience with their advisor.

Gardner (1993), and Kramer and Spencer (1994) demonstrate trends and themes that emerge from previous and on-going studies on student development and learning.

The trends and themes that emerge from the aforementioned studies have illuminated the complexities in manner and levels of learning that students experience as they transition into college. These studies and publications paint a picture of students needing to develop intellectual, physical and manual interpersonal competence as well as learning to manage emotions, such as anxiety, anger, depression, sympathy, yearning, worship, wonder, and awe.

In addition, students move through emotional and instrumental autonomy toward interdependence and establishing for themselves a sense of identity in a social, historical, and cultural context, including gender and sexual orientation, clarification of self-concept, sense of self in response to feedback from valued others, self-acceptance, self-esteem, and personal stability and integration.

Tinto (1993) suggested that this process of student transition can be conceptualized into three distinct stages of separation, transition, and incorporation. In separation, students separate from their previous life experiences and enter the collegiate environment. Students progress to the transition stage in which they have not yet acquired the
norms or established the personal bonds needed for full integration into collegiate environment and are often torn between their old environment and the new one. To negotiate the incorporation stage successfully students must establish full membership in both the social and academic communities of college life. Social interactions are the primary vehicle through which such integrative associations occur. Entering students need to establish contact with other members of the institution, students, and faculty alike. Failure to do so may lead to dropping out.

**Andragogy**

Generally the concept of andragogy can be interpreted in several ways. To some it is an empirical descriptor of adult learning styles, to others, it is a conceptual anchor from which a set of appropriately "adult" teaching behaviors can be derived (Brookfield, 1986). Knowles (1980) described andragogy as a conceptual anchor rooted in a set of learner assumptions. These four main assumptions as outlined by Knowles are as follows:

1) Adults both desire and enact a tendency toward self-directedness as they mature though they may be dependent in certain situations;

2) Adults experiences are a rich resource for learning;
3) Adults learn more effectively through experiential techniques of education, such as discussion or problem solving;
4) Adults are aware of specific learning needs generated by real life tasks or problems.

Therefore, Adult education programs, such as ALMA advising, should be organized around "life applications" categories and sequenced according to the learner’s self-directedness to learn. Adults are also competency-based learners in that they wish to apply acquired skills or knowledge to their own immediate circumstances.

The application of andragogy in adult learning is not a new idea. Andragogy is for many educators, advisors, and trainers of adults, a badge of identity. Such individuals frequently describe themselves as "andragogues," and declare that the concept represents a professionally accurate summary of the unique characteristics of adult education practice (Brookfield, 1986).

Cross (1991) explained why andragogy has gained such a following in the discipline of adult literacy. Cross noted that andragogy has been much more successful than most theories in gaining the attention of practitioners, and she credited Knowles with sparking debate on educators' assumptions regarding the adult processes and with a plan for critiquing and testing in an otherwise barren field.
The role that andragogy plays in defining adult learning is underscored by authors, such as Day and Baskett (1982), and Pratt (1984). For the moment, it is important to note that at the time of this writing, this concept is among the most popular ideas in the education and training of adults for the way in which it grants to educators, advisors, trainers, and teachers of adult learners, a sense of their distinct professional identity (Brookfield, 1986).

Despite andragogy's popularity as cited by both Cross (1981) and Brookfield (1986), this pedagogy has its detractors who question the very nature of this theory's empirical basis. Indeed, it has been pointed out that the theory of andragogy has "acquired" the status of an established doctrine in adult education without being grounded in sufficient empirical research (Jarvis, 1984). Of those critics of andragogy who say it lacks empirical value, Long (1986) is among the most vocal.

Long (1986) criticized andragogy as stretching to draw the distinction between adult and children's learning. Long feels that the need to prove this difference between adult and children's learning is at the heart of the andragogical theory. The wide acceptance of andragogy is an important step in differentiating the education of adults and children. Adult educators need tangible rationale for their argument that the education of adults differs in
important ways from the education of children (Long, 1986). Long further supported his theoretical position by citing past publications that refuted andragogy, such as Jensen, Liveright, and Hallenbeck's (1964) critique of andragogy and the learning methods of adults and children, and Kidd's (1973) critique of andragogy and the adult learner's approach to developmental tasks.

The aforementioned authors critical of andragogy have made some valid points regarding its weakness. In rebuttal I cite Knowles (1960) because he defines the term andragogy as meaning the art and science of helping adults learn. The classification from Knowles' (1980) definition of andragogy, "as the arts and sciences of adult learning" is based upon a broader social science perspective. This broader approach would allow for the combination of both qualitative and quantitative research in evaluating andragogy. Knowles is very careful to define andragogy as a set of assumptions that are based upon generalizations that assist in increasing levels of sophistication and abstract applicability when applied to adult literacy and education. Rather andragogy should be measured by broader standards (Knowles, 1980). As a researcher of andragogy, I have attempted to incorporate both qualitative and quantitative measures into this study. As a researcher, I respect both positions in this debate. As an advisor, I find that the use
of andragogy offers both challenges as well as the prospects of vast rewards in the form of student retention and academic success.

I have found the stability of the advisor-student relationship and long term influences that result from this relationship make the use of the adult literacy theory of andragogy an important part of college advising. The significance of using andragogy as an advising tool is that its theoretical grounding is in adult learning. The definition of andragogy as an empirical descriptor of adult learning styles or its definition as a conceptual anchor in which a set of appropriate adult teaching behaviors can be derived has little impact on its proven success in student development.

The major hypotheses of andragogy is that as adult student learners mature, they develop distinctive learning approaches to problem solving. Andragogy values the adult learner's life experiences and needs to be self-directed, draws upon the learner's needs, and involves the learner in directing the content and process of learning. Learners in an andragogical advising program become more competent and confident by being self-directed in their decision making processes. The collaborative nature of andragogy's learning design, as used in ALMA, promotes the efficient use of individual and organizational resources. An important
element to student success is the student-university relationship; in this, ALMA uses andragogy to promote an organizational climate of oneness, collaboration, inquiry, creativity, competence, and, ultimately, success (Knowles, 1984).

The role that andragogy plays in assisting the student learner in decision making has been investigated by authors and researchers, such as Day and Baskett (1982) and Pratt (1984). Andragogy is a popular educational and training theory which helps educators, teachers and advisors as they effectively assist students in the decision making process. The primary and immediate mission of every educator is to help adult student learners satisfy their educational needs and goals (Knowles, 1970). Brookfield (1982) cited andragogy's utilization and application in adult student learning and decision making. Self-Direction In Adult Learning (Brockett & Hiemstra, 1991) provided a perspective on theory, research, and practice and views the dilemmas involved in adult student learners' decision making and the advisor's role in assisting students in this area.

In ALMA advising the advisor recognizes that there are consequences to the decisions that students make. These consequences can have long range effects on the student's academic future (see Appendix C). As students confront the dilemmas in making choices in their education, it is
important that they be aware of what these decisions can mean to their future academic endeavors and goals.

According to Knowles (1984), the psychological definition of an adult is one who has arrived at a self-concept of being responsible for one's own life, of being self-directed. When students arrive at the university, they have a deep psychological need to be perceived and treated by others as capable of taking responsibility for themselves. Without this acceptance of students as self-directed adults, they begin to feel that the university, through its policies, procedures and institutionalization, imposes its will on them without their participation in decision making. This leads them to experience deep feelings, often subconsciously, of resentment and resistance (Knowles, 1984).

This sense of institutional resentment impacts nearly all students at one point or another in their academic career. However, it is the non-traditional student defined as undergraduates who are 25 years old or older who are either entering college for the first time or returning to college after an absence who are more prone to sense this negativity (Greenfeig & Goldberg, 1984). The size of this group of non-traditional students has grown dramatically in higher education. A study by Kasworm and Blowers (1994) has shown that this group represents 44% of the undergraduate
student population in higher education. Non-traditional students bring life circumstances, expectations and needs to their college experience that often differ from those of the younger, more traditional university students (Kuhn & Sturgis, 1990). The distinct characteristics and diverse nature of adult students have significant implications for the ways in which advising and orientation services should be delivered to enhance the academic success of this rapidly growing segment of the student population.

The image of the non-traditional student as a returning woman dealing with divorce or the empty nest syndrome no longer captures the diversity of this student population (Creamer, Polson, & Ryan, 1995). When the non-traditional students of today are compared to the image of their predecessor in the 1970’s, the female non-traditional student in the year 2000 is more likely to be younger, from a variety of racial and ethnic groups, employed and unmarried (Chamberlain, 1998) and is frequently enrolled part-time, has family responsibilities, is employed, and commutes to campus (Kasworm, 1990).

In ALMA advising these characteristics and the wealth of life experiences and variety of family, community, and work responsibilities can provide the basis of important transition skills into the university. However, it is equally important for the ALMA advisor to recognize that the
role of "student" to non-traditional students is likely to be marginal to their identity and their involvement on campus outside of class is generally limited (Breese & O'Toole, 1994). This, in turn, suggests that well-known retention models that underscore the importance of academic and social integration into campus life may not be fully applicable to the non-traditional student population (Harrington, 1993). Because of the aforementioned factors, it is critical for the ALMA advisor when advising non-traditional students to base retention and graduation strategies upon the principle of self-directed student-center learning.

Because the majority of non-traditional students will use, or in some cases, are required to use advising to complete registration, advising provides an important link between the non-traditional student, the classroom teacher, and the wider campus community.

All college students are in transition but for some, the transition process is more difficult than for others. Regardless of age or personal situation, some students are acutely aware of the process of integration into college life while others seem to adjust without effort. Perceptive academic advisors can help students make transitions if they encourage students to focus on exploring self-directed learning strategies, career, and educational goals. By
stressing the value of the above, the students seem to be better equipped to select educational programs, choose courses, establish academic schedules and transition easier (Frost, 1989; Polson, 1986; Tinto, 1987).

In addition to understanding the transition of the student, the ALMA advisor acknowledges and recognizes the stages of institutional acceptance of the student by the college itself. It is important when using developmental advising to consider the match between the institution’s goals and the student’s. If colleges and universities have as a goal to plan and implement campus-wide student-centered systems of advising, certain practices can contribute to this success. These practices center around shared planning and self-directed learning as well as focusing on the potential relationships between the student and the college that will contribute to positive outcomes for student retention and graduation.
CHAPTER 3
METHODOLOGY

The purpose of my study has been to investigate the effectiveness of The Advising Learning Method of Andragogy (ALMA) as a method of advising undergraduate students enrolled at the University of Arizona. The methodology used in this study was based on two research stages using two methods of data collection: student surveys and longitudinal case studies. The first of these data collection methods consisted of two student surveys: the ALMA Likert survey and the ALMA student survey on decision making. The second stage of data Collection consisted of four longitudinal case studies involving students who had participated in ALMA during the course of their undergraduate education at the University of Arizona.

Description of the University of Arizona

The University of Arizona is a large land grant public institution located in Tucson, Arizona. Because of the University of Arizona’s status as a public institution, a large part of its mission is devoted to providing a broad range of academic programs to the general public. The total student enrollment at the University of Arizona at the time of the study was approximately 36,000.
Context and Setting

The setting for my research is the University of Arizona Office of Academic Services (OAS) which provides undergraduate general education advising, retention, disqualification and readmission services for the colleges of Humanities, Social and Behavioral Sciences, Sciences, and University College.

There are seven standard organizational models of advising used across the nation: faculty-only, supplemental, split, dual, total-intake, satellite and self-contained (King & Kerr, 1995). The Office of Academic Services utilizes the Dual Model of academic advising. In the Dual Model of advising, OAS staff advises students on general education requirements, and faculty advise students on coursework in their major and minor.

The university’s organizational model of advising is important because it allows for the degree of advisor student contact. The Dual Model of advising used at the University of Arizona provides an opportunity for long-term and consistent student/advisor contact throughout the period of a student’s undergraduate education. This makes it possible for ALMA to be used as a tool for the successful transition of students into the university and develops a forum for the student’s self-directed learning program.
My study addressed the strengths and weaknesses of the advising model that is utilized by the University College at the University of Arizona. University College (once called the College of Arts and Sciences) advises all majors in the disciplines of science, social sciences, and humanities as well as interdisciplinary studies majors which includes the largest segment of the undergraduate population of approximately 16,000 students at the University of Arizona. The advising staff operates in the Office of Academic Services and has jurisdiction for all advising issues such as general education requirements, readmissions policies, academic disqualification, career and major selection, new transfer student orientations, retention issues, all undergraduate petition concerns, referral resources and final graduation degree audits. The faculty is responsible for advising undergraduate courses required for the student's major and minor.

Treatment

Learning Method of Andragogy: ALMA

For the past six years I have used Knowles' hypothesis of adult student learning to guide my advising at the University of Arizona. I have developed and implemented a methodology for advising college students that focuses upon the andragogical uniqueness of adult student learners. My advising services have been provided to college students
consistent with the andragogical manner in which adult student learners acquire information. This adult literacy-based methodology on academic advising has been provided to students on both a one-on-one advisory tutorial manner as well as in orientation and retention courses. The objective of this advising methodology has been to improve the delivery of advising services, assist in academic decision making, and assist in building an inclusive relationship between the university and the student. During the past six years, I have developed and put into place the Advising Learning Method of Andragogy (ALMA). ALMA consists of a set of written materials designed to assist college advisors to incorporate the adult learning strategy of Knowles’ andragogy into their advising practice (see Appendix C). In my advising and teaching, I have modified and developed written material and adjusted my advising techniques using the andragogical hypotheses on adult learning as a foundation.

My research was based on four longitudinal case studies, together with the use of ALMA surveys given to a sample of twenty students. The ALMA survey also included a student narrative section. This case study methodology was put into context ALMA advising by comparing how those students advised by using ALMA differed in their approach to academic decision making and their development of a sense of
belonging to the university community compared with those students who were advised by colleagues who did not use ALMA advising.

ALMA also examined how students reacted to changes that occur in their lives during transition to the university. Students experienced change in prioritizing their life-tasks. This developmental process included using personal experiences, a desire toward self-direction and shift toward problem-centeredness in making decisions. My research on ALMA also examined how even at a large structured public university, students were self-directed in their educational objectives and benefitted from the support of an advisor and the support of university services. Using ALMA, the advisor acted as a educational facilitator to students and allowed students to develop self-directed learning skills that enabled them to accomplish their educational objectives.

Included in the appendices is the ALMA preface, outline, and general advising strategy that an advisor and student worked from throughout a student's undergraduate program. Each ALMA packet was individualized and learning materials represented the student's academic needs and educational objectives. In the ALMA program, a student and advisor met routinely once each semester, or the frequency
of advising sessions were increased depending upon the needs of the student and the availability of the advisor.

ALMA was designed to enhance the undergraduate student's educational experience by setting collaborative learning objectives with the advisor and frequently reviewing when, and how, these objectives were being met.

Theoretical Framework of ALMA

The stability of the advisor-student relationship and long term influences that result from this relationship make the use of the adult literacy theory of andragogy an important part of college advising. The significance of using andragogy as an advising tool is that its theoretical grounding is in adult learning. To some, andragogy is an empirical descriptor of adult learning styles; to others it is a conceptual anchor in which a set of appropriate adult teaching behaviors can be derived (Brookfield, 1986).

Advising, which uses the ALMA approach, begins by recognizing that to varying degrees students will experience a stage of institutional resentment as they transition into higher education. As advisors become aware of this transition problem, they begin devising strategies for helping students make the important transition from being dependent learners to being self-directed learners within an institutional environment. Advising through ALMA begins with the advisor including an orientation to self-directed
learning at the beginning of each educational activity or program.

In my study, advising services have been provided to college students consistent with the andragogical manner in which adult student learners acquire information. This adult literacy-based methodology on academic advising has been provided to students on both a one-to-one advisory tutorial manner as well as in orientation and retention based courses. The objective of this advising methodology has been to improve the delivery of advising services, assist in academic decision making and assist in building an inclusive relationship between the university and the student.

**Instruments**

**Interviews and Journals**

My study used four randomly selected students drawn from my pool of ALMA advisees. (Case study students also participated in the ALMA student surveys). In these longitudinal case studies, participating students had been advised using ALMA’s advising methodology throughout their years of higher education. The ALMA research methods were aimed at testing andragogy-based advising methodology as it applied to the student learners’ decision making process. The data derived from this study were viewed and coded for the following andragogical assumptions: adult self-directness in learning, life experience as a learning
source, experimental learning in problem solving and
decision making, and a shift from subject-centeredness to
one of problem centeredness—learning. It was hoped that
students who had been advised based upon ALMA’s methodology
used andragogy’s hypotheses on self-directed learning as a
basis for approaching decision making and problem solving.

The student interviews and journals used for these
case studies provided data for my dissertation research, and
direct student quotes were cited to support or question the
influences of ALMA’s andragogical hypotheses. The students
chronicled their views and experiences of university life by
writing in their journals. In the student journals, the
students were free to express themselves on any topic they
choose. The journals provided information on the connections
the adult student learners observed in their student
development, growth and decision making processes and
whether the hypotheses of andragogy were reflected in this
process. The journals allowed students to determine what
factors, as they perceived them, impacted their formal and
informal decision making development as students at the
university.

The student journals were a source for the researcher
to derive themes that marked the development of the students
as learners in a higher educational setting and provided
data to examine ALMA’s adult literacy theory.
Student Surveys

The students drawn for the surveys were selected by OAS co-workers and me in the following manner: I conducted the ALMA student survey with ten students randomly drawn from among my ALMA advisees. My advising colleagues in OAS conducted the ALMA student survey with ten students randomly drawn from the advisees of advisors who did not use ALMA as an advising methodology. The survey required the students to provide information regarding ethnicity, gender, major, grade point averages and academic status (good academic standing to academic disqualification pending re-admittance to the university).

Pilot studies that have included similar methods for the research on advising have been conducted by Bowling Green State University (Wood & Wood, 1989) and the University of Texas at Austin (Hanson & Raney, 1993). In each of the aforementioned studies, student input was included in a manner allowing for a range of responses using several data sources, such as a general student survey to a narrative in which the students were encouraged to comment at large on their university experience. This data source structure allowed for students to go into depth in discussing the manner in which higher education has affected their approaches to learning and literacy.
Both of the student surveys used in this study were designed to provide a broader perspective on the student's view of advising, higher education and adult literacy development and provide a context for the case studies.

**Procedures**

The students who were given the survey were randomly selected from among OAS advisees. Ten students were drawn from among ALMA advisees and ten were drawn from the advisees of other advisors who did not use ALMA as an advising methodology.

**Case Studies**

I collected the data used for this study over the period of the last four years (1995-1999) in the following manner. A reflective journal done by ALMA participants provided the foundation for my study. Additional data for the longitudinal case studies was acquired by conducting interviews with case study participants, and these interviews were documented by field notes. (Case study students also participated in the ALMA student surveys).

The student interviews and reflective journals also allowed for a detailed and in depth investigation of each student's view of university life. In addition, the journals and the interviews were examined to determine if information regarding student responses corresponded to the four andragogical hypotheses that made up ALMA's advising
strategy. From the students' reflective journals, I coded and highlighted references and perceptions related to ALMA. Examples of this were based upon the students' reflective journals entries:

(1) Has the student shown any tendencies toward being self-directed?

(2) Have life experiences provided a rich resource for learning in higher education or have negative experiences hindered learning?

(3) Has the student's journal indicated any changes to approaching problem solving?

(4) Has the adult student learner developed orientations toward problem-centeredness?

(5) What resources and or events in college have the student seen as being significant to their decision making?

(6) What elements within the university, if any, have given the student a sense of community with the university?

The four participants chosen for my ALMA case studies were randomly selected from my pool of regular advisees. These ALMA case studies participants were drawn from undergraduate students pursuing majors in the Colleges of Science, Social and Behavioral Science, University and Humanities.

The following are brief summaries of the four students selected for my in depth case studies.
Pseudonyms were assigned to maintain the confidentiality of the participating students.

**Sue:** Arrived at the university with a clear career objective in mind. What she found was that there were several approaches to reaching her goal. Growing up locally she believed she was better prepared for the university than her out of state transfers peers. Despite this confidence and home court advantage, she was overwhelmed by the university's size and the number of alternatives presented to her.

**Ramon:** Is a non-traditional older student who is from Tucson. His life experience enabled him to decide on the direction of his education and career. Spanish was Ramon's first language. His writing skills were weak and he also had a math learning disability. Ramon's language and math problems limited him in his selection of majors.

**James:** Is a Tucson native who has been described as a quiet leader. He married after high school and attended the university with his wife while sharing the responsibility for caring for two small children during their college education. While most universities seem designed to best meet the educational and social needs of 18 year old single college students, The university's "one-size fits all" approach to education resulted in several levels of difficulty for James.
Liz: Is a non-traditional student. After high school she took four years off from school before enrolling at the University of Arizona. She took this time out to find herself and the career direction she wished to pursue. Liz found that this period of freedom outside of school helped her but created new problems for her when she returned as a student in a large university.

To further ensure that my research participants were at the same relative level of competency, all students selected for this study were graduating seniors who completed the University’s writing proficiencies examination or the supplemental writing workshop required of all students who have failed that examination.

ALMA Student Surveys

The ALMA student surveys were conducted at the end of the academic semester by OAS advising staff. In the ALMA student survey the participants had been asked seven general questions. The ALMA student survey provided statistical data on means, medians, and frequency distributions; these data were collated and used to test the ALMA’s hypotheses. Some examples of the student survey questions are:

(1) Do you find that past learning experiences have guided your adjustment to university life?

(2) To what degree do you find self-direction of your academic choices important?
(3) Would you say your approach to problem solving has changed since high school?

(4) When registering for classes do you think more about the routine of your schedule than about the actual course content?

(5) Have university sponsored resources assisted you in making decisions?

(6) Did you feel that the university allowed you access to information necessary to make decisions and choices?

(7) As a student I have found someone I can speak to regarding problem-solving and making important decisions?

Using a Likert Scale (Appendix D), students were asked to indicate their level of agreement or disagreement to each specific question. A numerical value was assigned to the student's response ranging from 10 for "strongly agree", to 1 "strongly disagree". A response of "agree" to "strongly agree" supported the ALMA's hypotheses, a response of "uncertain" was neutral, and a "disagree" or "disagree strongly" questioned the effect of ALMA's hypotheses.

Included in the ALMA student survey was a set of nine student narrative questions. Responses from this narrative provided a more in depth personalized source of the student perceptions to Non-ALMA and ALMA advising. Some examples of questions from the student narrative are:
(1) What experiences have assisted you in making decisions concerning your education?

(2) How have these experiences guided your academic choices at the university?

(3) Has your approach toward problem solving changed since attending the university?

(4) If so, how has this problem solving process changed?

(5) As a college student do you feel more of a performance-centered pressure than you felt when in high school?

(6) What university departments have influenced your decisions during your education?

(7) Have you encountered institutional limitations?

(8) Have these limitations influenced your sense of participation within the university community?

(9) If so, describe them and how?

The student narrative (see Appendix E) responses of the ALMA student survey allowed for more involved detailed descriptions of university situations, events, people, interactions, advising and observed behaviors derived from the individual view as expressed by the ALMA surveyed student. It was also less controlled and more open to student direction. In this element of my study, I analyzed the narratives for themes that the students cited as being
significant in their educational experiences. I looked for and coded the narrative responses for descriptions and written interactions expressed by the students that supported or questioned ALMA's hypotheses on adult learning.

**ALMA and Non-ALMA Student Selection for Surveys**

The Office of Academic Services employs six full time advisors and a three quarter part-time advising position. These seven advisors provide advising services for approximately 16,000 students enrolled in majors within the Social and Behavioral Sciences, Humanities, Sciences, and University Colleges. The OAS advising staff advises students during half-hour appointments scheduled each day. These advisors also assist with new-student and transfer student orientations, process readmitted students, and sit on various academic review committees. OAS advisors are also assigned special projects involving specific student populations such as at-risk, pre-law, and pre-medical students.

The ALMA group was comprised of a higher number of academically at-risk students than the Non-ALMA group because the focus of my job-assignment is working to facilitate at-risk student retention. An academic comparison of both groups showed that six of the ten ALMA students selected for the student survey had been on academic probation, while only one student from the Non-ALMA group
had been on academic probation. Included in the students who participated in the Non-ALMA group were pre-medical and pre-law students. The pre-medical and pre-law students normally represent a higher point on grade-point average continuum. The extent of this initial difference in grade point average between the ALMA and Non-ALMA groups appears outlined in a table of important data in the Findings section of this paper.

Although students were directed to their specific OAS advisor by nature of their career interest or academic needs, they were generally free to self-select any advisor from OAS with whom they choose to work. In general, Non-ALMA students selected Non-ALMA advisors and consistently met with those advisors on a regular basis throughout their undergraduate careers. The students who participated in ALMA agreed to be consistently advised by the ALMA advisor. Students routinely established relationships with their respective advisors in OAS, scheduling appointments with their chosen advisors except for the rare exception when their advisor (ALMA Non-ALMA) was not available.

The five Non-ALMA advisors who participated in this study were each requested to identify two students from their respective pools of advisee. The only selection criterion given to the Non-ALMA advisors regarding participation in the student survey was that the advisor
must have worked with the student on a regular basis throughout the student's undergraduate career. I selected ten of my ALMA students in the same way to take the student surveys. The ten students were chosen based upon their participation on a regular basis throughout their undergraduate education in the ALMA advising program. These ten ALMA students were selected from my pool of advisees. Non-ALMA advisors and I selected participants for the student surveys based solely upon the regularity and consistency of the advisor-student relationship and advising history.

All of the students (ALMA, Non-ALMA) who participated in this study were advised on a long term basis by six of the seven advisors in The Office of Academic Services. ALMA students were compared with their Non-ALMA counterparts in terms of their responses to surveys and narrative responses. The ten ALMA students were all advised by me. I consistently used ALMA grounded techniques with 10 of them throughout their university experiences from their first year until graduation. The ten Non-ALMA students who were used as the comparison group were advised by five of the six remaining full-time advisors in The Office of Academic Services. The decision to use only five of the six available Non-ALMA full-time advisors was based upon the newly hired status of the sixth advisor who had not yet had the opportunity to
acquire and maintain a consistent pool of advisees.

Data Analysis

QRS NUD*IST 4

A computer program intended for qualitative research was evaluated for its use in identifying themes from the student’s reflective journals and ALMA student survey. Qualitative Solutions Research Nonnumerical Unstructured Data-Indexing, Searching and Theorizing (QRS NUD*IST 4) is a software program designed to support the data analysis process by managing high volumes of data and allowing in-depth examination of the data through coding and indexing (Qualitative Solutions and Research, 1997). The use of this software was reviewed for its applicability and was found to be inadequate for the analysis needs of this study and its questions.

Because of the inadequacy of QRS NUD*IST 4, a hand/sort method of data analysis was used. The hand/sort method of data analysis used for this thesis has been recommended for use in student response data analysis by the National Academic Advising Association NACADA (1996) and a similar method of manual analysis of student survey data has been employed by Auburn University (1990) and the University of Ontario (1993).

The hand/sort method involved the following procedures: 1. The advisor reflectively read the question
response of the student sorting out and making general notes on his/her observations. 2. The advisor re-read the question again identifying reoccuring or similar statements made by the students which were then noted and grouped into categories by the advisor. 3. The advisor read the question again specifically seeking words that fitted into the established categories and coded these words. 4. From these categories of coded words the advisor then looked for similar themes that emerged from the data. Lastly, the themes were then labeled and grouped.

The reliability of the hand/sort method was assessed using an inter-rater method. One of the ALMA Student Narrative Survey questions was selected randomly and two raters used the hand/sort method independently to list, group and label all the student responses. The two independently reviewed sets of data analysis were then compared for the extent of agreement using an adaptation of Candy's (1991) comprehensive survey analysis. This survey analysis is based upon the constructivism philosophy dealing with personal systems of meaning (i.e., with how people make sense of their world and create personal construct systems which guides them throughout their lives). The student survey question was reviewed for general themes and comments as they apply to developing student autonomy and self-direction in learning in higher education as well as
personal growth and organizational effectiveness. The results of the inter-rated reliability analysis are provided in the Findings section in Chapter 4.

**Measuring The Student's Academic Status**

A student's academic status provided insight into how successfully the student learner coped in the environment of higher education. In addition the student's academic status told a great deal as to how effective ALMA advising had been. The ALMA student survey, narrative, reflective journal, and student responses assisted in learning if advising using ALMA assists students in decision makings. If a student was academically disqualified due to reasons beyond university control, the student's academic status also identified the limitations that advising in general may have had in addressing the developmental growth in the student learner.

**Additional Data Sources**

Data sources also included each student's GPA and test score on the student's writing proficiency examination. Student's case studies included SAT and ACT scores and transfer GPA grades from previous colleges as well as CLEP and AP scores. The research also documented in the ALMA case studies any academic difficulty the student had encountered toward graduation, such as academic probation or disqualification as well as any academic merit status, such
as honorable mention and making the Dean's list for exceptional academic performance.

In addition, a detailed student profile chronicled the histories of the students participating in the ALMA case studies. This student profile assisted in putting into context the ALMA students' academic progress and how students had responded to life changes that occurred during their education, and the impact these events had on the students' decision making skills and approach toward problem solving.

**Summary**

Few experiences in the adult student learner's post secondary career had as much influence on the student's development as advising (NACADA 1997). NACADA demonstrated through previous studies (1993, 1994, 1995) that there was a direct connection between advising and student development, personal growth, satisfaction with their undergraduate education as well as increases in graduation and retention rates. In the NACADA studies, advising was seen as one of the most effective means to stem the tide of student dropouts. The high rate of student drop-out among university students despite years of retention efforts, resources, and advising demonstrated a need for continued evaluation and research in making advising more student directed. On many campuses the prevailing concept has been that students
arriving at the university must change their ways of learning to suit the institution rather than the concept that the university adopt methods of taking advantage of the student’s self-directed learning style. ALMA emphasizes student self-directed learning by using advising methods that set a climate which focuses on mutual respect, collaborativeness, mutual trust, supportiveness, authenticity, humanness, and mutual planning that involves students in diagnosing their own advising needs, formulating their learning objectives, designing their own learning plans and evaluating their own progress. An important element of ALMA is the stability of the advisor-student relationship and long term influences that result from this connection. By viewing the student development of adult learners through these lenses, both the advisor and university approach advising in a practical and humanistic manner and improve the delivery of advising services.

It was important to keep this dissertation topic and research grounded in the student’s view of higher education. In particular, what were the strengths and weaknesses of advising services at the university, and ALMA, as they were perceived by students and most importantly what areas did students see as needing improvement? Student satisfaction with advising is important because if students are not satisfied, they do not use the advising services (Upcraft,
Srebnik, & Stevenson, 1995). Undergraduate students perform better academically and are more satisfied with their educational experience when they feel a connection with their university community. Advising from the beginning in orientations and throughout a student’s academic experience acts as a doorway that opens up the university community for them. Getting students to use advising services is the first step; providing advising services in ways that satisfy a student’s needs is critical to building effective advising programs and empowering student developmental growth.
CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

The purpose of this chapter is to present the findings of the study. The study is presented in three sections: Section one includes analysis adjustments and inter-rater reliability; section two includes the ALMA Student Survey Likert Scale results and ALMA Non-ALMA student academic comparison charts; section three includes the ALMA Student Narrative Survey Responses, and ALMA Case Studies.

Section one preliminary considerations includes the following headings: (a) Data Analysis Adjustments, and (b) Inter-rater reliability. The findings in section two are listed under the following headings: (a) Introduction, (b) Grade point averages of ALMA Non-ALMA students, (c) ALMA Student Survey Likert Scale regarding Andragogical characteristics, (d) ALMA Student Survey Likert Scale questions regarding the student/university relationship. The findings in section three are presented under the following headings: (e) ALMA Narrative Student Survey regarding Andragogical characteristics, (f) ALMA Narrative Student Survey regarding the student’s relationship with the university, (g) Four ALMA longitudinal Case Study Journals.
Section One: Preliminary Considerations

Before presenting the findings on this paper, it is important to note a change in the procedures used for data analysis. In chapter three I proposed testing the use of NUD*IST 4 as a means of evaluating the narrative data from my research. QSR NUD*IST 4 is an abbreviation for Qualitative Solutions and Research Non-numerical Unstructured Data Indexing Searching and Theorizing. The QSR NUD*IST 4 computer package is designed to aid users in handling Non-numerical and Unstructured Data in qualitative analysis.

When using the QSR NUD*IST 4 to code data and search text for patterns regarding andragogy and advising, I found that the patterns of returned data were fragmented and inconclusive. To a great degree, the study of andragogy has historically defied any type of qualitative analysis. It has been extensively analyzed and critiqued and been alternatively described in theses studies as a set of guidelines for adult learning by Merriam (1993), a philosophy by Pratt (1993), a set of assumptions by Brookfield (1986) as well as a theory by Knowles (1989).

The final measure of the value of the assessment of the findings of any educational program based on andragogy is the actual changes in behavior it helps the participants to accomplish. This is where the complexity of human nature
causes so much frustration. For a person might learn a great deal from advising (such as knowledge about the university's educational process) and behave no differently in important respects (such as not registering for required classes till the last moment). The evaluator can easily be trapped into assuming that because he can demonstrate that students acquired substantial quantities of new knowledge, there have been behavioral changes. Evaluators using andragogically based research programs therefore cannot be satisfied with measuring changes in knowledge, understanding, attitude, skill, values, and interests. They have to be concerned with what Miller (cited in Knowles, 1970) calls the "ability to do" (p. 433) by transferring these kinds of learning into behavioral performance. This behavioral performance materializes itself in ALMA assessment by the use of the student's final graduation audit. This final graduation audit (see Appendix C) of the ALMA program is the application of all learned knowledge into the successful completion of the student's undergraduate program. This document signals that the student has completed all the university's requirements toward his/her degree.

In my study, andragogy was used to examine and help explain the decision making strategies of adult learners.

The issues that influence student's decision making strategies were complex, and they were expressed through
their written narratives in a manner that eluded NUD*IST 4. After consulting with two professors with backgrounds in computer science regarding the NUD*IST 4 method of analysis and the limits of a NUD*IST 4 analysis in terms of my respective questions and data analysis needs, I decided to select a hand/sort method of list/group/label/coding data analysis. Using the hand/sort method of data analysis, I examined each narrative statement, sorted responses, labeled and coded the data, and identified connections. The list group labeling techniques that I used paralleled those used by Auburn University (1990) and the University of Ontario (1993).

**Inter-rater Reliability.** When conducting a qualitative data analysis such as grouping using a hand/sort list/group/label method, the problem of evaluator subjectivity arose. It was important that research methodology, including data analysis, was replicable. It followed that other researchers should be able to conduct the same study, employ the same methodology and data analysis to obtain reliable or comparable results. Therefore, I conducted an inter-rater reliability study within my data analysis procedures. To this end, I had a colleague from The Office of Academic Services do an independent analysis of the students' responses to one randomly selected ALMA Student Narrative Survey question.
The person chosen as the independent rater was Kathleen, who is a six year veteran of academic advising employed by the Office of Academic Services. In her position as a senior academic advisor, she has been responsible for several student programs within the advising departments and was familiar with all aspects of advising offered by the Office of Academic Services.

One question from the nine on the ALMA Student Narrative Survey was randomly selected for review by Kathleen. The numbers 1 through 9 were written on slips of paper, placed in a container, and one was drawn. The first of the nine survey questions was randomly selected in this manner. Question 1, "What experiences have assisted you in making decisions concerning your education?" All of the student written responses to this item were photo copied and one copy was given to Kathleen for independent analysis while I retained one copy.

Kathleen was given up to five days to analyze the data using the step by step process of data analysis outlined in Chapter 3. At the same time, I independently employed the same data analysis procedures. During this period, there was no contact between Kathleen and me regarding this task. At the end of the five day period, both sets of hand/sorted data ratings were reviewed to determine the extent of agreement between the two raters using Candy
(1991). In Candy's analysis approach, he compares both the human behaviors and reasoning and adaptive skills of the students being surveyed which is used as the basis for the inter-rater reliability.

ALMA group findings: In the inter-rater reliability, I found similar conclusions in four of the six findings. (1) Kathleen found six of ten ALMA students responded that they did not feel prepared for their undergraduate experience. I found six out of ten ALMA students responded that they had to rely on the process of institutional trial and error in adapting to the university. (2) Kathleen found only two of ten ALMA respondents cited having a support system in place that they could rely upon to assist them maneuver through their undergraduate experience, I found seven out of ten ALMA students responded that the lack of support systems in place initially hindered them in their undergraduate education.

Non-ALMA group findings: (3) Kathleen found eight out of ten Non-ALMA students responded that past mentoring experiences aided in their college decision making. I found that eight out of ten Non-ALMA students responded that past mentoring experiences impacted their decision making in college. (4) Kathleen found eight out of ten Non-ALMA students responded that familiarity in working within past mentoring relationships assisted with establishing faculty
mentoring connections early as an undergraduate. I found that eight of ten Non-ALMA students cited previous mentoring experiences led to their initial undergraduate college mentoring relationship with a faculty mentor.

This adaptation of Candy’s comprehensive survey and inter-rater reliability analysis fits well into the methodology of this study’s data evaluation. In this method of inter-rater reliability human behavior and achievement in response to stimuli from the outside, and the cognitive responses, those that focus on cognitive structures, reasoning and adapting processes are considered in the evaluation of question #1 of the ALMA student narrative survey. "What experiences have assisted you in making decisions concerning your education? "This inter-rater reliability process would suggest that in the data analysis of this study that both the behaviorist and cognitive strategies have bearing on student development and the student’s transition to the university. In the field of student developmental research, the behaviorists and cognitivists theories need not be seen as unilaterally and exclusive of each other but are dialectical and can complement each other (Zuber-Skerritt, 1992).

I found similar conclusions in four of the six findings from the ALMA Non-ALMA group responses for question #1. From the similarities in these responses, the students’
use of behaviorist and cognitive strategies in their development and transition to college seem to materialize itself in the manner in which students make decisions. Research by Chickering and Reissner (1993) also confirm the important of this connection.

The significance of this is that ALMA advising focuses on establishing a forum for the student's behavioral responses to the university as an environmental stimuli as well as promoting the student's use of reasoning and adoptive strategies in decision making (see Appendix C). The comparison in inter-rater findings is examined in further detail in the Conclusions section of Chapter 5.

Section Two: Quantitative Findings

Introduction

From a student's first contact through the fulfillment of self-directed learning, ALMA advising seeks to provide students with the strategies and knowledge to effectively make important academic and personal decisions. As the realization of self-directed learning takes place, students want to take active roles rather than passive roles in their education. This, in turn, should enable the ALMA student to perform better academically and cope with the changes that accompany university transition.

This research tracked the grade point averages of two student groups as they progressed through their
undergraduate education. One group of students received ALMA advising and a second group, the Non-ALMA group, received traditional academic advising. This study examined the extent to which the two student groups demonstrated andragogical characteristics of self-directed learning. The study also analyzed how members in both student groups perceived their relationship with the University of Arizona.

The design of the ALMA student surveys were based upon two key issues in the study of andragogy. The first key issue was to ascertain if adult student learners participating in the ALMA student survey had exhibited tendencies that Knowles (1987) described as the development of andragogical self-directed learning characteristics. These characteristics are represented by the four points in the theory of the study of andragogy: (1) adults desire more freedom toward self-directedness; (2) adults value greater use of experience as a learning resource; (3) adults need more hands-on decision making involvement; and (4) adults shift their decision making from postponed application of knowledge to an immediate application of knowledge moving from subject-centered learning to problem-centered learning. Developmental psychologists have suggested that there are predictable developmental stages in learning during the adult years and that the transition from one stage to
another is one of the chief triggers in the readiness of adults to learn.

The above four characteristics were studied to determine if self-directed andragogical characteristics were present during the students' undergraduate years. The extent that the students applied these andragogical strategies during their undergraduate education, and the impact that these strategies had on their academic performance were also studied. Knowles (1989) stated that the adult learner is self-directed and the psychological definition of an adult is, "One who has arrived at a self-concept of being responsible for one's own life, of being self-directing" (p. 9). This fact about adult learners presents educators and advisors at the university with a special problem. For even though adults may be totally self-directing in every other aspect of their lives—as workers, spouses, parents, citizens, leisure-time users, the minute they walk into a situation perceived to be related to "education" they often tend to regress back to their prior conditioning in school, assume a role of child-like dependency, and demand to be taught. However, if they really are treated like children, this conditioned or learned set of school-related expectations conflicts with their much deeper psychological need to be self-directing, and their energy is diverted away from learning to deal with this internal conflict (Knowles,
The development of a student’s andragogical self-directed learning characteristics and the resulting interaction to the expectations of the educational institution were the issues that the ALMA Student Survey examines (see Appendix D and E).

The second key issue that the ALMA Student Survey was designed to test was how student participants interacted as adult learners with their educational institution. Learning was the process of change in an individual’s environment which filled a need and made the individual more capable of dealing adequately with his/her personal and academic environment (Burton, 1963) (see appendix D and E).

On the second part of the ALMA Student Likert Survey, students responded to questions related to their interactions with advising and the university as an institution. Sociologists have added to our knowledge about how institutional policies and procedures concerning, admissions, registration, financial aid, advising, curriculum and reward systems affect learning in adults (Knowles, 1984).

Grade Point Averages of ALMA and Non-ALMA Students

Tables 4.1 and 4.2 provide information about the student participants' academic performance throughout their undergraduate education. Students who were referred to the ALMA program were generally experiencing some degree of
academic difficulty. The ALMA program's academic performance enhancement plan (see Appendix C) began with students realizing that they had to assume active roles in their education. During ALMA advising, students developed strategies at self-direction which included seeking out tutoring, learning study skills, and engaging in a major exploration resulting in an improvement of their academic performance. Tables 4.1 and 4.2 present university grade point averages of ALMA and Non-ALMA students, respectively.

Table 4.1 presents the GPA's of the ALMA advisees, (students A-J.) while Table 4.2 presents GPA information regarding Non-ALMA advisees, (students K-T.). All the students chosen for this survey study were graduating seniors.

It can be seen that the ALMA and Non-ALMA groups were initially different in terms of GPA with the Non-ALMA group earning a first year average GPA of 3.04 versus an average GPA of 2.28 for the ALMA group. The ALMA 1st year GPAs ranged from 1.29 to 3.75 while those of the non ALMA group ranged from 1.55 to 4.00. This initial inequality was probably an artifact of the selection process of this study. Students on probation or those in danger of academic probation were typically referred to the ALMA advisor. Therefore, the first year GPAs of the ALMA group tended to
## Table 4.1

Grade Point Average of Alma Students Over Their Undergraduate Experience

<table>
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<th>STUDENT</th>
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<th>YEAR 1</th>
<th>YEAR 2</th>
<th>YEAR 3</th>
<th>YEAR 4</th>
<th>YEAR 5</th>
<th>OVERALL GRADUATING GPA</th>
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<td>2.13</td>
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<td>2.05</td>
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</tr>
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<td>2.03</td>
<td>1.75</td>
<td>2.08</td>
<td>2.21</td>
<td>2.32</td>
<td>2.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>3.23</td>
<td>3.58</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>3.82</td>
<td>3.75</td>
<td>3.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>1.93</td>
<td>1.90</td>
<td>1.80</td>
<td>2.30</td>
<td>2.17</td>
<td>2.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>3.75</td>
<td>3.65</td>
<td>3.76</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>3.86</td>
<td>3.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>1.29</td>
<td>2.01</td>
<td>2.46</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>3.14</td>
<td>3.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>2.60</td>
<td>2.70</td>
<td>2.89</td>
<td>2.92</td>
<td>3.18</td>
<td>3.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>1.80</td>
<td>1.92</td>
<td>2.62</td>
<td>2.41</td>
<td>2.25</td>
<td>2.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>MEAN</td>
<td>2.28</td>
<td>2.65</td>
<td>2.73</td>
<td>2.84</td>
<td>3.22</td>
<td>2.82</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
TABLE 4.2
GRADE POINT AVERAGE OF NON-ALMA STUDENTS
OVER THEIR UNDERGRADUATE EXPERIENCE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STUDENT</th>
<th>GENDER</th>
<th>YEAR 1</th>
<th>YEAR 2</th>
<th>YEAR 3</th>
<th>YEAR 4</th>
<th>YEAR 5</th>
<th>OVERALL GRADUATING GPA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>K</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>3.98</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>3.96</td>
<td>3.87</td>
<td>3.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>3.50</td>
<td>3.96</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>3.98</td>
<td>3.98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>3.70</td>
<td>3.79</td>
<td>3.80</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>3.86</td>
<td>3.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>2.97</td>
<td>2.98</td>
<td>2.73</td>
<td>2.92</td>
<td>3.41</td>
<td>3.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>O</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>3.89</td>
<td>3.89</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>3.93</td>
<td>3.93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>2.64</td>
<td>2.57</td>
<td>2.16</td>
<td>2.74</td>
<td>2.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>2.68</td>
<td>2.54</td>
<td>2.40</td>
<td>2.51</td>
<td>2.64</td>
<td>2.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>2.40</td>
<td>2.46</td>
<td>2.11</td>
<td>2.78</td>
<td>2.68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>1.55</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>2.04</td>
<td>2.61</td>
<td>2.15</td>
<td>2.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>3.20</td>
<td>3.85</td>
<td>3.52</td>
<td>3.36</td>
<td>3.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>MEAN</td>
<td>3.04</td>
<td>3.38</td>
<td>3.17</td>
<td>3.17</td>
<td>3.27</td>
<td>3.24</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
be relatively low in comparison to the Non-ALMA group. For those ALMA students on academic probation, establishing good academic standings in their colleges was the first step toward applying self-directed learning strategies in their education.

On the other hand, the five Non-ALMA advisors tended to work to a much lesser degree with academically-at-risk students due to their job and program assignments. The non-ALMA advisors were asked to select two of their advisees for participation in this study from their pool of graduating advisees. Therefore, it is conceivable that the Non-ALMA advisors tended to choose successful students with relatively high GPAs. Since the Non-ALMA students were all selected post hoc, it is reasonable to assume that their respective advisors choose them because they had established successful academic records reflecting favorably on their advisors' services. Consequently, it might be better to view the Non-ALMA group more as a criterion or validation group rather than a comparison group for the purposes of analysis.

It is likely that part of the initial academic success of the Non-ALMA students was due to their employment of self-directed learning strategies regarding their academic pursuits earlier in their academic careers. They had already learned how to be self-directed in their university work, while the lower achieving ALMA students had greater need of
advising or directed guidance in this area. Again, given this initial advantage in favor of the Non-ALMA group, it is probably better to view them as a validation/criterion group rather than a comparison group.

**Student Survey Results Regarding Andragogical Characteristics**

The following is a guide to the interpretation of the Likert scale ALMA Student Survey. Students were asked to indicate their level of agreement or disagreement to each of the seven questions on the ALMA Student Survey. Numerical values were assigned on a continuum to the student's responses ranging from 1 "strongly disagree" to 10 "strongly agree". The survey was scored/interpreted using the following guidelines. A response of "agree" to "strongly agree" (6-10) was considered to be an affirmative response. A response of "uncertain" (5) was neutral. A response of 1-4 meant "disagree" to "strongly disagree" and was considered a negative response.

The first section of the ALMA Likert Student Survey Part A, questions 1-4, was concerned with identifying if the student participants expressed what Knowles (1984) described as andragogical characteristics in their learning. These characteristics of andragogical learning are linked to how students internalize the learning process. Each of the ALMA Student Survey questions 1-4 dealt with how the students
perceived their learning process and if andragogical characteristics were demonstrated in their learning experiences.

Internalized Learning according to Loacher and Doherty (1984) takes place in two phases. First, the student comes to see that the locus of learning is within the-self and that information or processes are important in learning only after they are taken in and alter the learner’s perceptions and abilities. Second, as a result of the first kind of internalizing, students begin to consider this approach to learning as an important issue, and they begin to rely upon this method of learning in decision making and setting major academic goals and objectives. Table 4.3 examines the results of questions regarding student andragogy throughout their undergraduate experience.

On question 1 regarding the influence of past learning experiences on the student’s adjustment to university life, the mean score on the ALMA Student Survey was 7.4 for both groups which fell well within the positive range for agreement/disagreement on the Likert scale (6-10). It was interesting to note that they showed lower agreement than the mean scores on the other three andragogically related questions. The standard deviation was slightly higher for the ALMA respondents (1.96 compared to the Non-ALMA group of 1.65). This means that ALMA students had shown somewhat
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LIKERT SCALE QUESTIONS 1 - 4</th>
<th>ALMA GROUP MEAN</th>
<th>ALMA GROUP STANDARD DEVIATION</th>
<th>NON-ALMA GROUP MEAN</th>
<th>NON-ALMA GROUP STANDARD DEVIATION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1) Do you find that past learning experiences have guided your adjustments to university life?</td>
<td>7.40</td>
<td>1.95</td>
<td>7.40</td>
<td>1.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2) To what degree do you find self-direction of your academic choices important?</td>
<td>8.91</td>
<td>1.10</td>
<td>9.20</td>
<td>0.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3) Would you say your approach to problem solving has changed since high school?</td>
<td>8.60</td>
<td>1.78</td>
<td>7.80</td>
<td>1.93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4) When registering for classes do you think more about the routine of your schedule than about the actual course content?</td>
<td>7.64</td>
<td>2.07</td>
<td>8.40</td>
<td>2.01</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
greater variation in their response to the question of using past learning experiences as a guide to adjusting to university life. This might be accounted for by the fact that ALMA students probably began using andragogical oriented self-directed learning strategies at a later stage of their undergraduate experience than the Non-ALMA validation group. Therefore reported levels of use would vary to a greater degree as some ALMA students would be more advanced at using this strategy than others.

In response to Question 2, both groups of students indicated that self-direction was a very important part of realizing academic choices. There was little difference between the ALMA and Non-ALMA groups on this item, with the Non-ALMA group exceeding the ALMA group by 0.3 mean points (9.2 versus 8.9). The standard deviations for both groups were relatively small due to pronounced restriction caused by a ceiling effect. It is important to point out that the process of using self-direction in making academic choices is a core fixture of andragogy. The process of developing a realistic self-direction strategy and approach in making academic choices is a key step in the ALMA General Advising Strategies Program (see Appendix C). It would appear that the ALMA group again caught up with the Non-ALMA group once the level of confidence grew in their decision making skills.
Question 3 asked if the student’s approach to problem solving had changed since high school. The ALMA group mean score was higher than the Non-ALMA group (8.6 versus 7.8) and the standard deviation for the ALMA group was slightly lower than that of the Non-ALMA group (1.78 versus 1.93). This indicated that the ALMA students felt to somewhat greater degree than the Non-ALMA group that a pronounced shift in their approach to problem solving had changed since high school. This suggested that both groups agreed they had altered or changed their approach to problem solving since high school, with the ALMA group expressing slightly higher agreement. This would seem to support the contention that ALMA students had altered their approach in dealing with the problems and obstacles faced during their undergraduate experience. The ALMA General Advising Strategy stressed that a priority for the ALMA student was to develop problem solving skills by understanding the ongoing process of academic and career choices (see Appendix C).

Question 4 asked students if routine of schedule was more important to them than course content when registering for classes and formulating a course schedule. The ALMA group scored lower (7.6 versus 8.4) than the Non-ALMA group. The difference in mean group scores (0.8) was among the highest of any of the items included in the ALMA Student Survey. This difference was likely attributable to the fact
that the ALMA General Advising Strategy (see Appendix C) stresses the process of course selection by the advisor and student well in advance of their registration process. During these ALMA advising discussions ALMA students decided in advance which courses best met their self-directed learning objectives. Advanced course selection discussions were a means of advancing ALMA students through the general education criteria as well as a means of building the mutual respect relationship between the ALMA advisor and the ALMA students.

The mean scores for all four questions were positive with variations restricted somewhat by a ceiling effect. Students in both groups responded that andragogically related factors were present and important in their academic lives.

**Student Survey Questions Regarding the Student/University Relationship**

In the ALMA Student Survey items 5-7 was designed to examine the nature of each student's relationship with the university. This section of the student survey examined responses to questions involving the effectiveness of university services and the students perceptions of the accessibility of these services and how they impacted their relationship with the educational system. Table 4.4 from the ALMA Student Survey also, presents information regarding the
student's use of university sponsored resources in assisting them in the decision-making process.

Students were asked by Question 5 to rate the extent to which the university sponsored resources assisted them in making decisions. Both groups scored positively on this item with the ALMA group showing slightly lower agreement than the Non-ALMA group (7.6 versus 8.4) regarding the value of the assistance to them of university sponsored resources. Both groups rated this question with a similar indication of (ALMA 1.874 versus Non-ALMA 1.932).

Students were asked by Question 6, if they felt that the university allowed easy access to information necessary in making appropriate academic decisions. The ALMA groups mean score was slightly lower that the Non-ALMA group (6.8 versus 7.3) on this item. Even though the ALMA and non-ALMA groups means fell within the "agreement" or positive range, these two mean scores were the lowest obtained in the survey. This suggested that both groups were similar in their relatively low positive perception that the University had afforded them access to information needed to make appropriate academic choices.

Students were asked by Question 7 if they had found a person on campus with whom they could speak regarding problem solving and decision making strategies. The ALMA group showed somewhat higher positive agreement than the
**TABLE 4.4**

ALMA AND NON-ALMA GROUP RESPONSES TO THE STUDENT SURVEY MEASURING THE STUDENT-UNIVERSITY RELATIONSHIP

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LIKERT SCALE QUESTIONS</th>
<th>ALMA GROUP MEAN</th>
<th>ALMA GROUP STANDARD DEVIATION</th>
<th>NON-ALMA GROUP MEAN</th>
<th>NON-ALMA GROUP STANDARD DEVIATION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5) Have university sponsored resources assisted you in making decisions?</td>
<td>7.64</td>
<td>1.87</td>
<td>8.40</td>
<td>1.93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6) Do you feel that the university allowed you access to information necessary to make decisions and choices?</td>
<td>6.80</td>
<td>1.32</td>
<td>7.32</td>
<td>1.49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7) As a student, have you found someone you can speak to regarding problem-solving and making decisions?</td>
<td>9.10</td>
<td>1.29</td>
<td>8.40</td>
<td>1.43</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Non-ALMA group (9.1 versus 8.4) that they felt they had found someone they could speak to regarding academic matters and decision making. It was interesting to note that the ALMA group’s mean 9.1 score on the Likert scale (out of a possible high score of 10) was the highest score recorded on the entire ALMA student Survey. The mean scores for all three questions regarding the student/university relationship were positive with variation restricted somewhat by ceiling effects. Students in both groups responded that, for the most part, their relationships with the university had been positive. The one distinctive factor to consider again was that the expectations of members in the academically better performing non-ALMA group were expected to reflect a higher positive relationship score with the university than the academically at-risk orientated ALMA group. Nonetheless, the ALMA groups responses to all three questions were within the positive range, and their response to the questions were extremely high, suggesting that they felt that they had identified someone at the university whom they could go to for advise. By using the non-ALMA group as a validation or criterion group this indicated that the ALMA students progressed not only in catching up academically (see table 4.1 and 4.2) but also in how they noted the effectiveness of their decision making strategies.
It has long been proposed that integrating students into the social and academic fabric of a college or university is the key to their retention and success (Tinto, 1987, 1993). ALMA advising went further by taking these theories of holistic student development and establishing a network that supported and challenged the student in self-directed learning both in and out of the classroom. Student involvement in self-directed learning and in the quality of their educational endeavors were key concepts in not only understanding student development but also enhancing it (Astin, 1984; Pace 1980). Although these concepts of developmental advising have dominated the literature and profoundly influenced thinking about student learning and development, a divide remained: Intellectual development is seen as occurring primarily in the classroom while other types of development are seen as occurring out of the classroom. The unintended and unfortunate result is that advising comes to be viewed as something outside the boundaries of classes and thus associated less with intellectual development than with social or personal development.

Section Three: Qualitative Findings

Narratives Regarding Andragogical Characteristics

In the early 1970s much research and controversy was sparked when andragogy and the groundbreaking concept that
adults and children learn differently was first introduced in the United States by Malcolm Knowles. Spurred in large part by the need for a defining theory within the field of adult education, andragogy has been extensively analyzed and critiqued since then. It has been alternatively described as everything from a set of guidelines by Merriam (1993) to a theory by Knowles (1989). The disparity of these positions is indicative of the perplexing nature of the field of adult learning. Because of the complexity of this field of study, it was appropriate to check the validity of the qualitative survey findings with an analysis of student narrative responses to determine the presence of andragogy and how this presence might affect a student’s decision making approaches and the student’s relationship to the university.

The ALMA (A–J) and (K–T) Non-ALMA student participants responded in writing to questions that probed the influences of andragogy while developing decision making strategies during their undergraduate experience as well as the students’ perception or awareness of how decision making skills development influenced their relationship to the university.

I used a hand/sort method of coding the written student responses for questions 1-9 of the ALMA Student Narrative Survey to obtain descriptions of the university students’ views of their decision making approaches and their
relationships with the university. In my data analysis, I have identified themes that emerged from the written responses during my list/sort analysis. It was necessary at times to correct spelling errors from the student narrative responses other than these minor corrections all students are quoted verbatim.

In question #1 students were asked, "What experiences have assisted you in making decisions concerning your education?" The ALMA group responses were as follows:

ALMA student A wrote, "The experiences that have assisted me in my decision-making are the same ones that helped me grow up while attending the U of A. Life experiences such as becoming a father for the first time and the responsibility helped me set priorities and make decisions regarding my higher education."

ALMA student B wrote, "The experiences that have assisted me in making decisions was getting on academic probation lead me to getting OAS advising this helped me in being guided through the university."

ALMA student C wrote, "It was always expected of me to get a college degree but I had to learn how to approach professors and the university and the OAS advisor showed me how to accomplish this."

ALMA student D wrote, "What assisted me in making decisions was being advised for my gen eds with the OAS
advisor the classes turned out to be interesting and I would not have taken Ling 101 (Intro to Linguistics/Languages) and never considered becoming a language major." "After arriving at college I found that advice from friends who have had similar good and bad experiences to be highly valuable especially in terms of getting through much of the red tape that hinders the university process."

ALMA student E wrote, "The experiences that have assisted me in decision-making have been from my past as well as what I learned here."

ALMA student F wrote, "The experiences that helped with decision-making I had to learn on the job at the U of A."

ALMA student G wrote, "This question does not really apply to me. My experiences at the U of A have been learn-as-you-go."

ALMA student H wrote, "No experiences have assisted me in making decisions."

ALMA student I wrote, "This question does not apply to me."

ALMA student J wrote, "The experience that most assisted me in making decisions concerning my education were ones I picked up from the university itself."

The theme that emerged from the review of the student narratives for ALMA advisees was that the ALMA students initially experienced the development of a student-advisor
mentoring relationship first through the Office of Academic Services which then lead to further student-advisor mentorships with various other departmental and major advisors across campus (see Table 4.5).

Question #1: The Non-ALMA student responses were as follows:

Non-ALMA student K wrote, "My career goal of becoming a doctor and early experiences with my parents, their friends in their work place (both are in the medical field profession) helped me in my decision making skills."

Non-ALMA student L wrote, "My parents had a big influence in my decision making skills and also talking to teachers and professionals during high school."

Non-ALMA student M wrote, "My high school guidance counselor and a few teachers helped me in my decision-making."

Non-ALMA student N wrote, "Financial stresses always played a part in learning to make decisions regarding my higher education. The consideration of financial circumstances assisted in my decision-making by making some plans not possible. Making correct decisions means I'd graduate faster, and save my parents tuition costs."

Non-ALMA student O wrote, "What experiences assisted me in making decisions was speaking to and old family
TABLE 4.5

Question #1: "What experiences have assisted you in making decisions concerning your education?"

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ALMA GROUP RESPONSES</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>C</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>E</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>G</th>
<th>H</th>
<th>I</th>
<th>J</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>General Education courses influence student decision making</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Initial student mentoring built on OAS/ALMA advising</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Past mentoring &amp; support systems (family/friends) impact student decision making</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decision-making based upon institutional trial and error</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NON-ALMA GROUP RESPONSES</th>
<th>K</th>
<th>L</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>O</th>
<th>P</th>
<th>Q</th>
<th>R</th>
<th>S</th>
<th>T</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Initial student mentoring built on faculty major advisor</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Past mentoring &amp; support systems (family/friends) impact student decision making</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decision-making based upon institutional trial and error</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
friends ahead of me in school have been very helpful in assisting me in making decisions."

Non-ALMA student P wrote, "I make up my own mind but I did get counseling from relatives who attended school before."

Non-ALMA student Q wrote, "I used the past experiences taught to me by my religion and my pastor."

Non-ALMA student R wrote, "My family experiences assisted me in making decisions and using my learned values."

Non-ALMA student S wrote, "This question does not apply to me."

Non-ALMA student T wrote, "Only my experiences with good friends and family have influenced my decision-making. Learning how to be self-taught and self-directed including the process of trial and error and depending upon family that had been through the university before me assisted in this process."

Family influences were cited by both groups; however, the theme of non-university academic support systems was stressed more frequently by the Non-ALMA students. These advisees stated that high school and earlier family experiences played an important role in developing their decision making skills. Family members and high school counselors directed Non-ALMA students in establishing
academic networks of support that carried over into their university experience.

The theme common to both ALMA and Non-ALMA groups was that after arriving at college, their life experiences and a process of university or institutional trial and error were important in developing decision making skills. ALMA student A wrote, "Life experiences such as becoming a father for the first time and that responsibility helped me set priorities and make decisions regarding my higher education." Non-ALMA student N wrote, "Financial stress always played a part in learning to make decisions at the university. Making correct decisions means I'd graduate faster and save my parents tuition cost." ALMA student D wrote, "After arriving at college I found that the advice of friends who have had similar good and bad academic experiences to be highly valuable especially in terms of getting through much of the red tape that hinders the university process." Non-ALMA student T wrote, "Learning how to be self-taught and self-directed included the process of trial and error and depending upon peers and family that had been through the university before me assisted in this process."

The findings in comparing of the ALMA and the Non-ALMA groups suggested that Non-ALMA students often began developing their self-directed learning skills during high school. This process began with the Non-ALMA students by
observing their parents and high school teachers and learning early the significance of developing mentor relationships. Non-ALMA students typically arrived at the university knowing about the value of establishing mentoring relationships to promote their academic success. Non-ALMA students actively sought out mentor relationships and had informally established support systems before arriving on campus or as soon as they arrived either through existing organizations or freshman orientation programs (see Table 4.5). The findings from the Non-ALMA students stressed their previous relationships with professionals outside the university and learning from family and friends who had already been through college (see Table 4.5). In turn, using these past mentoring experiences seems to be reflected in the fact that only two of the ten Non-Alma students felt they had to rely on learning from institution trial and error at the university as opposed to six of ten ALMA students who felt that they had to learn through the process of trial and error.

The ALMA group appears to have began the development of their self-directed skills later in their educational process after their arrival on campus. This was illustrated by the ALMA students' references to developing mentoring relationships first through the process of general education advising, which is primarily the first stage of academic
advising, after the students arrival on campus or after being administratively required to seek academic advising because of their probationary status with the university. To many of the ALMA students, the OAS advisor was their first mentoring experience on campus.

The findings from the ALMA group indicate that ALMA students also found the selection and content of general education courses important in making academic decisions. The ALMA group also indicated that they had little if any past mentoring experiences that guided them through their undergraduate experience. Only two out of ten ALMA students stated the importance of pre-university mentoring as being a factor in making educational decisions as opposed to all the Non-ALMA group.

Only after learning how to establish workable mentoring relationships with their OAS advisor did the ALMA students feel confident enough to go on to develop mentoring relationships with faculty and departmental major advisors and become more active as members of the university community. The initial development of the ALMA groups self-directed skills after arriving on campus could also account for the ALMA students slower academic start. The ALMA group initially had a lower GPA than the Non-ALMA group (ALMA 2.28 versus Non-ALMA 3.04 mean GPA during year one); however, this disparity in GPA decreased as the ALMA group became
more involved and knowledgeable about their university experience (ALMA 3.22 versus 3.27 Non-ALMA mean GPA during year five) (see Tables 4.1 and 4.2).

In question #2 students were asked, "How have these experiences guided your academic choices at the university?"

The ALMA group responded to this question in the following manner.

ALMA student A wrote, "I was guided by all those events that I experienced since I started at the university. The university process changes you."

ALMA Student B wrote, "Personal experience guided me and is important but finding university personnel who understand and used my own life experiences to teach me how to cope was the difficult part of my college experience."

ALMA student C wrote, "Developing good study habits assist me in making my academic choices the experience of being self-sufficient and knowing were and who to approach for help is important also."

ALMA student D wrote, "What has influenced my academic choices is using advisors as guides and benefitting from official university personnel having these people in these advising positions share their undergraduate mistakes and successes with me showed me I wasn't such a goof after all."
ALMA student E wrote, "Past experiences have had some effect on my university choices but not much."

ALMA student F wrote, "The experience that most guided me through my education was understanding that if I am confused and overwhelmed by the U of A at times its ok, as long as I actively seek assistance and be persistent."

ALMA student G wrote, "What experiences guided my academic choices were depending upon myself but knowing my limitations also. Understanding that trial and error in major selection is part of the colleges hard knocks you have to go through."

ALMA student H wrote, "It's more a matter of using experiences to guide me than directly teach me at this stage of my education."

ALMA student I wrote, "All my past experiences have assisted or directed me in decisions to some degree."

ALMA student J wrote, "The experience that most influenced my academic choices was that you have to be disciplined enough to know that you can not graduate by just taking the courses that interest you, you must find out what the prescribed program is and begin planning on how to complete it."

The theme that emerged from the ALMA groups responses tended to support the ALMA program's emphasis on student-centered advising (see Appendix C). ALMA advising stresses
that advisors can be more effective facilitating the
student's learning rather than trying to teach the student.
Every student exists in a continually changing world of
experiences of which he/she is the center. Because of this,
the student as an organism within this environment reacted
to the field as it was experienced and perceived. This
required a shift in focus from what the advisor/teacher does
and feels was important to what was actually happening with
the student. What triggered a student's learning was what
the individual perceived as being involved in the
maintenance of, or enhancement of, the educational structure
that the students themselves were participating within. The
ALMA students struggled with participatory involvement in
the university community.

The ALMA group's findings demonstrated that nine of
ten ALMA students stated that institutional trial and error
guided their academic choices, four of which stated that
negative academic factors, such as academic probation, were
important influences in their academic decision making and
choices. Only six ALMA students felt that they alone
controlled their own academic self-direction.

ALMA advising underlines the importance of making
learning relevant to the learners. This approach to student-
centered advising has been re-enforced by Carl R. Rogers'
client-centered therapy approach to learning (Rogers, 1951).
The Non-ALMA group response to question #2 was as follows:

Non-ALMA student K wrote, "No experiences have guided my academic choices I used my own free-will to make my decisions regarding my academic choices."

Non-ALMA student L wrote, "What guided my academic choices was learning time management and understanding how to deal with my scheduling demands."

Non-ALMA student M wrote, "Past experiences did not have that much of an influence on my decision-making or choices."

Non-ALMA student N wrote, "The experience that guided my academic choices was reading the U of A catalogue and making my decisions in that manner."

Non-ALMA student O wrote, "The experiences that guided my academic choices was looking for challenges, setting higher goals for myself."

Non-ALMA student P wrote, "What guided my academic choices was aided by what I learned in class and schedule making so I could include extra curricular actives."

Non-ALMA student Q wrote, "This question does not apply to me."

Non-ALMA student R wrote, "Past experience itself has given me the tools to make decisions."
Non-ALMA student S wrote, "The experience that guided my academic choices has been what I have learned from professionals outside the university."

Non-ALMA student T wrote, "What guided my academic choices was what I learned from family and friends who had already been to college and who knew how to be successful."

The theme that emerged from the Non-ALMA group was that the students in this group seemed to have a better understanding of the what is referred to as the successful mechanics of university life. In the field of college academic advising these successful mechanics of university life are considered to be all the strategies that the self-motivated or the more experienced student acquires as they progress through his/her university experience.

In the findings for the Non-ALMA student group, eight mentioned learning strategies that they developed early in their academic careers. Three specifically mentioned time management strategies; four mentioned academic survival skills, and six mentioned having support services in place from the onset in their academic.

These self-directed learning strategies enable these students to do well in higher educational settings. It is important to stress again that the Non-ALMA group of students used for this study consisted of pre-law, pre-medical and honors students. These students initially
preformed better academically than their at-risk ALMA counterparts in their undergraduate experience and seemed overall better prepared for college. Non-ALMA student N wrote about reading the university catalogue; Non-ALMA student L wrote of the importance of understanding time management and developing scheduling skills to accommodate extra curricular actives. Again the Non-ALMA students stressed their previous relationships with professional outside the university and learning from family and friends who had already been through college (see Table 4.6).

Carl Rogers' (1951) research regarding client centered therapy found, as did the ALMA group student survey, that individuals may remain dependent because they have always been so, may drift into dependence without realizing what they are doing, or may temporarily wish to be dependent because their situation appears desperate. In ALMA advising, as is the case with Carl Rogers' client centered therapy, I have yet to find an individual who, when they examined their situation deeply and perceived their education as being important, deliberately chose dependence or deliberately chose to have the integrated direction of himself or herself undertaken by an advisor. When all the elements are clearly perceived, the balance seems invariably in the direction of the painful but ultimately rewarding path of self-actualization and growth. ALMA students appear
## Table 4.6

**Question #2:** "How have these experiences guided your academic choices at the university?"

### Alma Group Responses

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<td>Student’s self-direction influences academic choices</td>
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<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student’s choices made by trial &amp; error</td>
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<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
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<td>X</td>
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<tr>
<td>Student’s choices influenced by negative academic factors probation/disqualification</td>
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### Non-Alma Group Responses

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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Students demonstrate self-direction in univ. survival skills; reading catalogue, schedule making skills to influence academic choices</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
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<tr>
<td>Students develop self-directed learning strategies early in their education</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
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<tr>
<td>Students develop support systems early in education that influence academic choices</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
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<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
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<tr>
<td>Students demonstrate high levels of time mgt &amp; study skills that influence academic choices</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
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to begin development of self-directed learning strategies later in their education but are no less motivated toward self-actualization than their Non-ALMA counterparts.

Question #3, asked: "Has your approach to problem solving changed since attending the university?" The ALMA students responses to this question were as follows:

ALMA student A wrote, "Yes, my approach to problem solving still continues to change as I mature in life and in school."

ALMA student B wrote, "Yes, my approach toward all the problems solving aspects of my life has changed. Among these changes is following a twelve step program which gives me the tools to cope with pressure."

ALMA student C wrote, "Yes, my approach to problem solving has changed. Its more refined since I began attending college, my options vs. solutions vary greatly as opposed to when I was in high school. Its hard to do but I am in more control of my life now."

ALMA student D wrote, "My approach to problem solving has changed. I would have to say my problem solving abilities have markedly changed. Changed from a let's see what happens approach to a more of a let's plan for problem solving in advance. Maturity has a big role in my problem solving equation now."
ALMA student E wrote, "Yes, my problem solving skills have changed. I believe I take my time, think toward the future with almost every serious decision I make now. I feel if I don’t, I’ll miss the small print in problem solving. Being on academic probation really opened my eyes to what can happen if you don’t take decision making seriously."

ALMA student F wrote, "My approach to problem solving has most definitely changed but I can account this change to just growing up and by experiencing life. However I credit my college experience for teaching me the necessary library and writing skills which correlates with improving my academic problem solving skills."

ALMA student G wrote, "My approach to problem solving has not necessarily changed, but I have matured and experienced much more growth, emotionally, physically in the years I have attended college. I have a more logical and thought-out approach to problem solving."

ALMA student H wrote, "Yes my approach to problem solving since attending the U of A has changed considerably. Simply attending the U of A I have grown and I have changed. The biggest change has been within my thought process. I have found different dilemmas at the U of A, hence it requires different approaches to problem solving."

ALMA student I wrote, "Some what but I still try to approach problems with the skills I learned early in life."
ALMA student J wrote, "Yes my approach to problem solving has changed and continues to do so as I grow and learn more."

The ALMA advising strategy approaches student problem solving as an information processing activity. Information processing theory suggests that prior knowledge acts as a filter to learning through attentional processes. That is, learners are likely to pay more attention to learning as it applies to problem-solving if it fits with their prior knowledge schema and conversely, less attention to learning that does not fit. The predominate model of human memory as it relates to the problem-solving process divides memory into three components: sensory, short-term and long-term memory (Huber, 1993). Experience affects sensory memory through the process of attention and selecting what information to process. Selection depends in part on what information is already stored in long-term memory from prior learning and experience. For long-term memory, prior experience is retained and stored.

The theme that emerged from the ALMA groups' responses was that their approach to problem-solving had changed. Some ALMA students viewed this change as maturity while others attributed their change in problem-solving to the university experience itself. The common theme was that knowledge, as it pertained to problem-solving, was content
bound and that ALMA students made personal meanings of their learning experiences as they progressed through their undergraduate experience. Thus, learning how to solve problems was not separated from the context or environment in which the problem-solving approach was done in; the students' problem-solving experience was tied into the process of maneuvering through the undergraduate university experience. ALMA students stressed the cumulative nature of learning to deal with problem-solving (see Table 4.7).

The findings for the ALMA group for question #3, regarding changes to the student's problem-solving approach since attending the university, indicate a considerable change. Nine ALMA students mentioned they had become more self-directed in their problem-solving approach. Nine ALMA students cited maturity as being a factor and six cited that their problem-solving approach was directly influenced by the university environment.

The Non-ALMA group responses to question #3 were as follows:

Non-ALMA student K wrote, "Yes, my approach to problem solving has changed due to the new knowledge I have gained from taking classes at the U of A."

Non-ALMA student L wrote, "My approach to problem-solving has changed since attending the university, I try not to be quick in making my decisions, I look more at the
big picture of things and how I problem-solve and do it in a priority like manner."

Non-ALMA student M wrote, "Yes, my approach to problem solving has changed I am more of a procrastinator now because I realize that when I was a freshman I didn’t need to spend as much time studying as I did. I can do just as well by studying a little-less."

Non-ALMA student N wrote, "Yes, my approach to problem-solving has changed I have become more analytical and have been able to attack problem issues based on the larger issues at hand."

Non-ALMA student O wrote, "Yes, my problem-solving approach has changed, I have learned different techniques to problem-solving. I learned from various classes taught that differing groups presenting differing perspectives, this teaches you to be open minded. I am a psych-soc major so my majors complement one another. My basic problem-solving approach has not changed but my view points have."

Non-ALMA student P wrote, "Yes my approach to problem-solving has changed. I now look at problems from several angles before I tackle them. In the past, I used to just take one approach to problem-solving. Now I approach problems from several routes before I decide."
Non-ALMA student Q wrote, "Yes my problem approach has changed, but the changes in my problem-solving have been built on my old problem-solving techniques."

Non-ALMA student R wrote, "Yes, my problem-solving approaches have changed. I learned that a more step by step approach is best."

Non-ALMA student S wrote, "Yes, my problem solving approaches have changed depending upon the issues the problem involves."

Non-ALMA student T wrote, "Yes, I learned to use your support network, but the final one to make the decision is me."

The theme that emerged from the Non-ALMA group was that this group indicated a multi-leveled approach to problem-solving. Students spoke of approaching problem-solving from various angles. Within the Non-ALMA group ideas, such as prioritizing problem-solving approaches in decision making and analyzing the problems in depth before deciding, were common. The Non-ALMA group wrote with some confidence about their decision making skills in academic areas.

The findings for the Non-ALMA group for question #3, regarding changes in their problem-solving approach since attending the university, indicate the Non-ALMA students continued to refine and build upon their previously learned
problem-solving skills. Nine Non-ALMA students described moving to a more sophisticated multi-level decision making approach. Nine Non-ALMA students stated greater confidence in their problem-solving skills. In addition, eight Non-ALMA students said they have continued to use skills and strategies acquired before they began attending the university.

Both groups interpreted that changes to their problem-solving process have occurred since high school and defined their problem-solving process in somewhat similar ways such as: (a) The acquisition and mastery of what is already known about something in making decisions; (b) The extension and clarification of meaning based on one's experience and using these experiences; (c) The organized, intentional process of testing ideas relevant to solving the problem. Both groups, ALMA and Non-ALMA, described a change in the process of problem-solving since high school (see Table 4.7).

ALMA students wrote more of the struggle in developing problem-solving strategies while experiencing university life. ALMA students referred to academic probation as being a learning experience. ALMA students appeared less confident in the problem-solving skills that they were developing. One stated "I learned to be careful to read the small print," whereas a Non-ALMA student spoke
of becoming more of a procrastinator in school work because
he felt more confident in the higher level of development of
his problem-solving skills (see Table 4.6).

Question #4 continued this line of inquiry into the
students' problem-solving approaches by asking if the
students' problem-solving approaches had changed since
attending the university, Question #4 "If so, how has this
problem solving process changed?" The ALMA group responses
to question #4 were as follows:

ALMA student A wrote, "My problem solving process has
changed, I am not so critical of the person (advisors or
instructors) giving me suggestions. Also to continue to
touch base with the (advisors and instructors) through e-
mail on problem areas that occur in my learning process,
everything from writing skills to what is available for me
in my areas of interests."

ALMA student B wrote, "My problem solving process has
changed, I no longer panic and see things as huge and
insurmountable or being black or white decisions. I seek out
my options from the start and weigh the consequences and
pro's and con's of my choices. As well as ask for help and
suggestions from advisors/instructors. I seek the help, but
I keep control of the direction. I seek guidance from people
(advisors and instructors) that have also been through the
undergrad experience."
TABLE 4.7

Question #3: "Has your approach to problem solving changed since attending the university?"

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Maturity changes student’s approaches to problem-solving</td>
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<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
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<tr>
<td>Student’s change in problem solving influenced by the university’s social, academic environment</td>
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<tr>
<td>Student’s approach to problem-solving becomes more self-directed</td>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Students demonstrate multi-levels of problem-solving</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
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<td>X</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students use problem-solving skills acquired prior to attending college</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
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<tr>
<td>Students express high level of confidence in their level of problem-solving skills</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
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ALMA student C wrote, "My problem solving processes changed. My options and accompanied problems became so varied and responses unlimited. I didn’t have the pressure of a nun or high school teacher saying, I think you should do this, or this would be best for you. In college I felt more independent. Each decision was my own. I had to collect the data necessary and I had to take responsibility for making the decision."

ALMA student D wrote, "My problem solving process has changed. The attitude portion of problem solving or the actual courage to take responsibility for wanting to solve the problem has been the hardest obstacle for me to get over. After years of being in school for the sake of just passing time and the accompanied bad grades, I found myself on academic probation, and I had to make a serious decision to academically just sink or swim. Once I decided to go after my education and fight for it, my decision making process improved and even making decisions came easier. With the first taste of academic success filtered into me, I became a better listener and communicator, and this success was all important to myself esteem as a person."

ALMA student E wrote, "My problem solving processes changed, I think about what is being asked of me. I then weigh out my options. I then try to problem solve keeping in
mind the long-range effects and results of my decisions and I find I do more on-line research before deciding."

ALMA student F wrote, "My problem solving process has changed. Instead of slamming my book bag on the floor and whining about being overloaded with school work, then watching T.V. for 5 hours. I now slam my book bag on the ground, whine a little, pick it (book bag) back up and go to the library."

ALMA student G wrote, "My problem solving processes changed. My first year, I could not go to an instructor or advisor if I was having a problem. I was embarrassed. Now I feel I can talk to anyone. I know to access data through the library and send my assignments by e-mail. This has also helped me not be intimated by people in authority at the university."

ALMA student H wrote, "My problem solving process has changed. In terms of problem solving. I think I have always been fairly competent. However, in the later part of my college experience I have learned to utilize the tools at my disposal. I have learned that everyone needs a helping hand from time to time in order to clarify issues."

ALMA student I wrote, "Yes my problem solving skills have been influenced by my access to more information being available when I need to gather information regarding a decision."
ALMA student J wrote, "My problem solving processes changed. I have more confidence in my decisions now. I am far more aware of helpful resources available and this has allowed me to get more creative in my problem solving approach."

The theme that emerged from the ALMA groups' responses was the references to the improved use of technology in the student's decision making process. Students also noted that improvement in their access to technology assisted in enhancing their skills in communication and listening. The ALMA group referred to improving their use of the University's technological resources and developing a better use of the on-line and the net learning services available on campus (see Table 4.8). The ALMA Academic Strategy (see Appendix C) stresses that the ALMA student begins by getting a mastery of their computer generated graduation degree audit. The computer generated graduation degree audit was the process of monitoring the progress and completion of the student's graduation plan by using the university's computerized degree audit system. From this point forward the ALMA students accessed a web of technological outlets either through University Library Services, Computer Center Information and Technology Services or The University Learning Center. ALMA Advising used technology that met the
TABLE 4.8

Question #4: "If so, how was this problem-solving process changed?"

ALMA GROUP RESPONSES

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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Technological influences assist with flexibility in problem-solving process</td>
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<td>X</td>
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<tr>
<td>Problem-solving process influenced by ALMA/OAS technology connection</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
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<tr>
<td>Development of technology network improves communication, listening and writing skills in problem-solving</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
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NON-ALMA GROUP RESPONSES

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<tr>
<td>Students demonstrate learning based problem-solving skills</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
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<tr>
<td>Students demonstrate flexibility in problem-solving process</td>
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following student learning objectives: promoted self-awareness and self-assessment for the student, provided a strong integration of assistance with all future academic and career planning, supported the process of planning for decision making, offered exposure to a variety of campus resources and individuals and tracking all academic progress toward the student's graduation.

In the findings for the ALMA group for question #4 regarding how students problem-solving approach had changed since attending the university, nine ALMA students mentioned that developing a technology network improved their communication skills. Nine ALMA students stated that technology had improved their flexibility in problem-solving. Five ALMA students mentioned the specific connection between improved technological skills and ALMA/OAS advising.

In the Non-ALMA group responses to Question #4, about whether their problem-solving approach had changed and if so how, the responses were as follows:

Non-ALMA K wrote, "My problem solving process changed, I now take more time to research whatever it is I am doing before I begin to answer a problem situation."

Non-ALMA student L wrote, "My problem solving process changed, In high school problems were not just yours but that of your parents or guardians. Now since your on your
own you may still ask for advice but the problem is solved on your own terms."

Non-ALMA M wrote, "My problem solving process has not changed much. I still problem solve and study best when I am alone. I still go over notes and study for exams in my same old manner that I did in high school."

Non-ALMA student N wrote, "My problem solving process has changed little its just evolved a little through maturity. I think things through a little more."

Non-ALMA student O wrote, "My problem solving process has changed. It has gotten deeper and more independent. I look more at the possible consequences and effects of your solutions instead of doing the first thing that comes to mind. I think my problem solving process is more mature than before I attended college, but the process itself has not changed."

Non-ALMA student P wrote, "My problem solving process has not changed much. I have just learned new ways to handle problem solving."

Non-ALMA student Q wrote, "My problem solving process has changed some, but I still have huge input and support from my parents."

Non-ALMA student R wrote, "My problem solving process is much the same as in high school. Only now I think more about how it will effect my career as a doctor."
Non-ALMA student S wrote, "My problem solving process did not change much I do now have to think of law school before I make decisions."

Non-ALMA student T wrote, "My problem solving process has change a bit but that is because of your maturing thought process."

The theme that emerged from the Non-ALMA group response to Question #4 is they saw little change in the problem-solving process from high school to college (see Table 4.8). In the problem-solving situations, the Non-ALMA group’s responses referred to professional or graduate programs more frequently than did their ALMA counterparts. Both groups expressed some level of growth in their problem-solving process with the Non-ALMA student responses appearing to demonstrate what Neufeld and Barrows (1983) referred to as learning-based problem skills. These are mature skills acquired and used in learning how to deal with base problems as opposed to dealing with studying blocks of classified knowledge and applying them. In learning-based problem skills learners bring and uses all their experiences, expertise and abilities involved in making decisions. After assembling the appropriate information, they synthesize a problem solution. There are many advantages to the development of learning-based problem skills when applied to problem solving process. These
learning-based skills contribute to the student's motivation; they encourage active intellectual process at higher cognitive levels and enhance the retention of information and the transfer of information. These learning-based problem solving skills are modified and applied to the students' problem solving process. They meet the individual's needs and encourage curiosity and systematic thinking.

In the findings for the Non-ALMA group for question #4 regarding how the students changed their problem-solving approach since attending the university, all ten Non-ALMA students stated that change in problem-solving since having attended the university assisted in their problem-solving learning approach. Six Non-ALMA students stated that change in their problem-solving approach improved their flexibility in dealing with academic obstacles.

In question #5 the students were asked, "As a college student, do you feel more of a performance-centered pressure than you felt in high school?" The ALMA group responses were as follows:

ALMA student A wrote, "As a college student, yes, I absolutely feel more of a performance-centered pressure. High school was in fact easy as an institution. The learning process was non-performance-centered it was simple to glide through with poor work and study habits and still do great
academically. As a college student if you can not perform to the set of standards of your professor, you will suffer poor grades. Once you realize that grades and extra curricular activities in college determine your future profession or continuing in graduate school, you have to become performance-centered."

ALMA student B wrote, "As a college student, yes, I feel more performance-centered pressure. In high school you really don't have to try. It's very easy to achieve success. However, in college you need to bust your tail or else you are kicked out (academically disqualified). There is a lot of money and hard work on the line in college if you fail. Finding friends who understand what you are going through helps"

ALMA student C wrote, "As a college student, I feel more performance-centered pressure. In college you are involved in a competition with all the other students on campus for the professors attention and assistance."

ALMA student D wrote, "As a college student, I feel more performance-centered pressure but not to as much a degree as I thought I would. I avoid performance centered pressure by keeping to myself. I still try not to connect or tightly bond to other students, and this helps to keep the competitive pressure off me. I am allowed to focus on my own self-centered performance and personal goals. I already feel
that it's made it harder for me to operate like this. But I feel it's better for me to be tougher on myself than the school can be on me."

ALMA student E wrote, "As a college student I feel more performance-centered pressure, most defiantly. In high school it was easy and in high school I was at the top 5% of my class. In college I feel I am in the lower 50% of my class. My study group helps me out a little by showing me at times that I am not the only one lost in understanding the material for certain classes. The grades of A and B are harder to earn and there is incredible pressure to achieve these grades."

ALMA student F wrote, "As a college student I feel more performance-centered pressure, although in high school, grades were everything and all that mattered was getting into a good college. Now graduating with a marketable degree is very important. My views and perspectives and priorities have changed. At times I miss high school when all I had to worry about was being accepted in my social group and getting into a good college. Just as one day after I graduate, I'll wish I was back in college rather than working for a living and experiencing even more performance-centered pressure to support a family."

ALMA student G wrote, "As a college student I feel more performance-centered pressure, but to a degree its good
when attending a large school. In high school teachers were able to keep an eye on you but here at the U of A there are so many different people and the classes are so big that you just blend in with everyone else. Because of the U of A's size you are just another individual if you pass or fail, you are on your own. This takes some of the pressure off. Although despite not being viewed so closely, you are expected to do academically much better, and this creates new type of performance-centered pressure where you feel alone at times even if you are successful in your school work."

ALMA student H wrote, "As a college student, I feel more of a performance-centered pressure I did feel this type of pressure in high school also. However, the sense of pressure is far more serious in college as it was in high school because it is the college experience that prepares you more directly for life, friendships and your future. You don't want to screw things up for yourself when you get out."

ALMA student I wrote, "As a college student I feel more performance-centered pressure, I can't say that the pressure increased a lot more. I will say that in high school, I never felt the need to study, but rather felt as long as I went to class everyday, I would do fine. In
college I have learned that I need to actually keep up with the material in the course."

ALMA student J wrote, "As a college student I feel more of a performance-centered pressure because now I have to attend class each day to know what is going on in the course. At college no one will check on you if you do not attend, then you are on your own."

The theme that emerged from the ALMA groups response to question #5 is how important the sense of being part of the university community was to the ALMA student’s success. The ALMA group generally spoke of study groups and friendships they established at the university as a means of dealing with the performance-centered pressure of college and assisting them to acclimate to the university environment (see Table 4.9). ALMA students D and G wrote that they experienced less pressure by trying to avoid making these type of university connections, but both were quick to point out that by doing so, it made it harder to deal with the university performance-centered pressure.

Discussion. Tinto, (1987, 1993) spoke of reflections of going through the student stages of the students integration into college life. Applying Van Gennep’s, (1960) concepts of student attrition, Tinto suggests that the process of student departure can be conceptualized into three distinct stages: separation, transition, and
incorporation. Tinto argues that for students to succeed in college, they first must experience the separation from their previous lives and enter the collegiate environment. They then progress to the transition stage in which they have not yet acquired the norms or established the personal bonds needed for full integration into the collegiate environment. They are often torn between their old environment and the new one. To negotiate the incorporation stage successfully, students must establish full membership in both the social and academic communities of college life. (See ALMA Advising Strategy Appendix C.) Social interactions are the primary vehicles through which such integrative associations occur. Entering students need to establish connections with other members of the institution such as students, faculty, and advisors. Failing to do so may lead to dropping out. Experiences important to all student’s success include participation in ALMA individualized orientation seminars, good peer support services, knowledge of student and academic services and at least one supportive relationship with a faculty or advising member.

In the findings for the ALMA group for question #5, if as college students they felt more performance-centered pressure than they did as high school students, all ten of the ALMA group students reported that performance-centered pressure had increased since high school. Seven ALMA
TABLE 4.9

Question #5: "As a college students do you feel more of a performance-centered pressure than you felt in high school?"

ALMA GROUP RESPONSES

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<tbody>
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<td>Students feel that performance-centered pressure increases in college</td>
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<td>X</td>
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<tr>
<td>Feeling part of the larger university community assists students with coping performance-centered</td>
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<td>Students feel coping with increased univ. performance-center pressure during transition to college is important</td>
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NON-ALMA GROUP RESPONSES

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<tr>
<td>Students express increase in performance-centered pressure translates to sense of individual competition</td>
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<tr>
<td>Students develop coping techniques to deal with increased individual academic competition</td>
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<tr>
<td>Students cite increase in competition for graduate school consideration</td>
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students mentioned that feeling a part of the greater university community assisted them in dealing with this increased performance-centered pressure. Seven of the ALMA students mentioned that the increased performance-centered pressure during the transition from high school to college was difficult and feeling part of the greater university community assisted them during this period.

The Non-ALMA group responses to question #5 were as follows:

Non-ALMA student K wrote, "As a college student, I feel more performance-centered pressure because I know that expectations are now a lot higher and competition a lot stiffer."

Non-ALMA student L wrote, "As a college student, I feel more performance-centered pressure not so much to live up to anyone else's standards as I did in high school. Back then I was worried about getting into a good college attended classes regularly I did not enjoy high school because of this. Now I mostly feel pressure from myself to preform up to standards that I myself set, for myself."

Non-ALMA student M wrote, "As a college student, I feel more performance-centered pressure, but I do notice that since high school my attitude has changed. I use to be a perfectionist and had to get "A's" in everything. Now, I
simply try my best and accept the results. If someone gets better grades than me I try not to be too hard on myself."

Non-ALMA student N wrote, "As a college student, I feel more performance-centered pressure. High school was easy. I generally do very well academically but the increased pressure comes from applying to graduate schools. I try to lessen the pressure by telling myself that I’ll get into medical school when it is my time."

Non-ALMA student O wrote, "As a college student, I feel more performance-centered pressure, but it’s less than most of my peers because ever since high school, I have been conditioned to perform. It has always been a key to my success in my mind, and I anticipated the added pressure. But at times it’s hard."

Non-ALMA student P wrote, "As a college student, I feel more performance-centered pressure. In high school grades were important. Now to get into a good law school grades are not everything, and I have to compete with my peers at a different level."

Non-ALMA Q wrote, "As a college student I definitely feel more performance-centered pressure. In high school it was pretty easy to skate by through sticking in a group of your peers. However, good grades and success are less a matter of being in a hard working group and more pressure is
placed on you as an individual even when you are in a group."

Non-ALMA student R wrote, "As a college student I feel more performance-centered pressure because I am just realizing that this is just the beginning of my long academic career."

Non-ALMA student S wrote, "As a college student I feel more performance-centered pressure because you do well or fail. You’re an individual and there is no place to hide if you do not succeed."

Non-ALMA student T wrote, "As a college student, I feel more performance-centered pressure. Everyone you work with in your study groups is a potential person you have to beat out for a place in graduate school."

The theme that emerged from the Non-ALMA group was the groups’ heightened sense of the individual student competition that accompanies consideration for graduate school. It is important to stress that this sense of competition does not imply that the Non-ALMA group lost their collaborative abilities, but the stress of graduate school admission was expressed frequently. Non-ALMA students made several more references to having to compete against each other for entry into graduate or professional schools than the ALMA group did. In addition, the Non-ALMA group
spoke of having to compete against each other at many different levels other than grades (see Table 4.9).

In the findings for the Non-ALMA group for question #5 regarding if the students as college students felt more performance-centered pressure than they did as high school students, nine of the Non-ALMA students reported that peer competition is related to their performance-centered pressure. Nine of the Non-ALMA students reported they have had to develop coping skills to deal with academic competition. Seven Non-ALMA students mentioned that there is increased competition to get into graduate schools.

Discussion. In the ALMA Advising Strategy (see Appendix C) an emphasis is made by the ALMA advisor and student to establish early Advising Alliances that extend into all university services including The University Testing Center for graduate school entrance testing. Advising Alliances also include various undergraduate as well as graduate level academic advisors and The University's Graduate College itself.

ALMA advising emphasizes that the ALMA student do practical fact finding research well in advance of applying for graduate programs or establishing undergraduate off-campus internships. The ALMA student who considers either an undergraduate specific career directed internships or independent study programs or graduate school, post-
baccalaureate, or professional school is required to go online and research undergraduate and graduate programs, and also use as a guide to researching graduate studies programs or careers. The Petersen's Guide to Career Programs or The Petersen's Directory for Graduate Studies. ALMA Students who establish ALMA advising alliances take this commitment to graduate school application and undergraduate internships and independent studies seriously and understand that such alliances are not easy and require constant work. The first steps in developing such an alliance is to have the student define the mission of this alliance early and reflect on its direction on an on-going basis. It is essential to involve all constituencies in the advising alliance in on the planning of the student's objectives. Each constituent in these ALMA advising alliances is an important stakeholder and the shared experience can nurture bridges that become a strength of the ALMA advising program. Strong working relationships between academic affairs and student affairs, faculty and professional advisors, and faculty and peer advisors lead to strong alliances and these gains can have an influence on other ALMA student orientated efforts. The relationships that stem from these ALMA advising alliances becomes arenas in which the ALMA students practice their decision-making skills and gradually assume responsibility for planning their own career, major, and curriculum.
In question #6 of the ALMA Student Narrative Survey the direction of the survey shifted the ALMA and Non-ALMA students' attention to the university and its influences on the students' decision making. Question #6 asked the students, "What university departments have influenced your decisions during your education?" The ALMA group responses were as follows:

ALMA student A wrote, "The university departments that have influenced my decisions during my education were the history department as well as The ALMA advisor in The Office of Academic Services. Both advising services have encouraged me to success and guided me in the right direction. Without their knowledge and abilities in the advising area the obstacles of climbing out of academic probation would have been substantially harder."

ALMA student B wrote, "The university departments that have influenced my decisions during my education was The ALMA advisor in The Office of Academic Services through guidance beginning with general education requirements. He saw me as an individual and being seen for advising one-on-one as opposed to in a group was very important."

ALMA student C wrote, "The university departments that have influenced my decisions during my education was probably only my ALMA general education advisor through The Office of Academic Services."
ALMA student D wrote, "The university departments that have influenced my decisions while at college was the Office of Academic Services and also the University Learning Center."

ALMA student E wrote, "The university departments that have influenced my decisions during my education are many. During my college education the ALMA advisor in The Office of Academic Services was very helpful with guidance and advising and working with me in setting probationary contract terms and standards that would keep me in school and allow me to advance toward my degree requirements. The Native American Resources Center was helpful in providing resources. Also The college major department in Speech and Hearing played a big role in preparing me for what was expected of me for graduate school."

ALMA student F wrote, "The university departments that have influenced my decisions during my education were the College of Education and Department of Italian. One in a positive way another in a very negative manner. No offence, but the College of education needs to get its act together. I had five different people giving me five different pieces of information. I was not welcomed by the college. I feel that this college made it very clear that a chosen few people were wanted from day one, and I was not one of these
selected people. I walked in the building and felt unwanted, trapped in an unfriendly atmosphere.

On the other hand, I could write a short novel on how helpful, interesting and wonderful the Italian Department has been. I have never had a boring course or unintellectual class. My professors have been willing to help and have demonstrated that they care about their students. Even talking to friends about their experiences in their Italian classes they have taken has convinced me that the Italian Department is the best program here at the University of Arizona."

ALMA student G wrote, "The university departments that have influenced my decisions during my education have been my ALMA advisor through The Office of Academic Services by advising me on my general education courses. The Communication Department and my major advisor Dr. David Williams have also influenced me by guidance. By both advisors working with me I have been able to get the very best out of the educational opportunities available to me."

ALMA student H wrote, "The university departments that have influenced my decisions during my education have been my ALMA advisor through The Office of Academic Services and the Art Department."

ALMA student I wrote, "The university departments that have influenced my decisions during my education have
been my ALMA advisor through The Office of Academic Services and the Economics Department. They are really the only U of A departments that have had any influence on me. I feel that if either advisor in either department had not worked with me, my education would have been much more difficult and taken much longer that it actually did."

ALMA student J wrote, "The university departments that have influenced my decisions during my education have been the German and Italian Departments. The university departments that have influenced my decisions during my education has also been History. The most influential department by far was my ALMA advisor through The Office of Academic Services. My ALMA advisor showed me how to play the University Game. This is the unofficial game the university puts its students through. Knowledge is power here at the university you have to plan way in advance to accomplish your academic goals and objectives. The most important thing I was taught by my ALMA advisor was that my college education is a marathon not a sprint to my college degree. If I use sound judgement, and I am tenacious, and persevere that these are critical attributes at the university."

The theme that emerged from the ALMA students' responses is ALMA advising played an important role in the students' successful transition into the university environment. Many other departments played a role in
influencing the students' decisions but ALMA advising appeared to have served as a foundation for building relationships with major advisors and departments in allowing students to nurture connections with others in the university (see Table 4.10).

In findings for the ALMA group for question #6 regarding what university departments had influenced the student's decisions during their education, nine of the ALMA students mentioned ALMA advising. Seven ALMA students mentioned department or major faculty advising. Six ALMA students mentioned ALMA advising as a means of mediating university resources.

Discussion. All students entered the university environment with expectations. When the students expectations did not meet the universities realities, students felt alienated from their school. ALMA advising established the advisor's role as a mediator. In this role the advisor served as an individual who assisted the student in mediating the differences between student expectations and the student's university experiences. Quality advising rested on the ability of the advisor to assist the student in identifying these differences, constructing a plan of action in conjunction with the student for dealing with the differences, and monitoring this plan of action. In the role as the mediator, the advisor was also an orchestrator, a
TABLE 4.10

Question #6: "What university departments have influenced your decisions during your education?"

ALMA GROUP RESPONSES

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Students cite depts. or major advisors as influence on academic decision making</td>
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<td>X</td>
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<tr>
<td>Students cite ALMA advising an influence in academic decision making</td>
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<tr>
<td>Students cite ALMA advising as mediator or blender or UofA resources that facilitate decision making</td>
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NON-ALMA GROUP RESPONSES

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Students cite peers as influence in decision making</td>
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<tr>
<td>Students cite decision making influenced by departments, faculty, outside OAS</td>
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<td>X</td>
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<tr>
<td>Students cite family and outside support systems influencing decision making</td>
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blender of student and institutional resources. The ALMA advisor understood that students bring with them a wealth of increasingly diverse resources and background experiences. It was knowledge of both student and institutional resources which placed the advisor in the orchestrator role, focusing on the full utilization of institutional resources to help achieve student success.

The ALMA advisor was also intervener. Interveners are individuals who actively insert themselves into the student transition process itself. This role included not only monitoring student progress but also actively interceding when a student's academic progress was not what it should have been. The ALMA advisor practiced intrusive advising if necessary to assist the students in developing these important connections to the university community.

The ALMA advisor advocated for constructive change in the university system. Because academic advising is the only structured activity on campus through which all students have the opportunity for ongoing one-to-one interaction with a concerned representative of the institution (Habley, 1981) advisors know how policies, programs, procedures, and personnel affected students directly. However, in many cases advisors did not and were not encouraged to share with university policy makers the information which would lead to program personnel or policy modifications. This role as
advocate for change was particularly important in the case of the increasing diversity of our entering students population. The ALMA advisor was the first to recognize how this diversity in student population was negatively influenced by programs, personnel, and policies.

A growing segment of our student population in higher education is the non-traditional student, defined by Greenfeig and Goldberg (1984) as 25 years old or older who are either entering college for the first time or returning to college after an absence. An example of issues that may affect university policy for this student group is being aware that a previous study by Kasworm (1980) confirmed that non-traditional students are much less likely than younger traditional students to report needing, using, or being satisfied with the university's general student orientation services. This dissatisfaction may be due to the focus in many orientation programs on areas, such as residence life, which are of little relevance to the non-traditional student. However, it is critical for the ALMA advisor to work with the non-traditional student in developing an understanding that orientation activities and advising are important sources of information for all students.

Because non-traditional students bring such a variety of life experiences with them and because they are often negotiating personal life transitions that involve
clarification of life career goals, non-traditional students are likely to look to their advisor for advice about a broader array of real life oriented transitional issues than younger traditional students, such as student day care services (Kasworm, 1980). It is important for the ALMA advisor to be an advocate to the university concerning the characteristics of the non-traditional student population including the variety of issues faced by these students. It is frequently the ALMA advisor who is the first to recognize how different segments of the student population are being influenced by programs, personnel and policies.

It is important to stress that the ALMA advisor in assuming the roles as student mediator, orchestrator, intervener and advocate for constructive change, left himself vulnerable to potentially serious professional criticism from university administrators who did not welcome the idea of institutional change. The further away policy makers were from actual student contact on an on-going basis, the more resistant they tended to be when the advisor questioned existing methods of doing things. Sadly to say that even with all the research demonstrating the improved retention and graduation rates that developmental advising has shown, some university policy makers still look upon the 50% retention rate of undergraduate students as a necessary evil. This form of social and academic Darwinism in higher
education is still viewed as the natural separation of the successful college student from those non-successful students.

The non-ALMA student responses to question #6 regarding the university departments that had influenced their decisions during the education on the ALMA Student Narrative Survey were as follows:

Non-ALMA student K wrote, "The university departments that have influenced my decisions during my education were the Communication and Business and Public Administration programs."

Non-ALMA student L wrote, "The university departments that have influenced my decisions during my education were not really departments but faculty that have taken an interest in me due to the high quality of my school work. I have been assisted in getting faculty attention by peers that have gone before me in their programs and have introduced me them. More often than not though faculty at this big university are too busy to pay attention to you. They have too many students to deal with, so it really helps if you got an in with them otherwise you just another student."

Non-ALMA student M wrote, "The university departments that have influenced my decisions during my education have
been my Pre-med Advisor through the Office of Academic Services and my Molecular Cellar Biology (M CB) advisor."

Non-ALMA student N wrote, "The university departments that have influenced my decisions during my education have been my Pol Sci and Pre-Law advisors through The Office of Academic Services."

Non-ALMA O wrote, "The university departments that have influenced my decisions during my education have not been departments. They have been individual instructors that have worked in the past with my family members that have preceded me through my program. Advising has not helped much.

Non-ALMA student P wrote, "The university departments that have influenced my decisions during my education has been History."

Non-ALMA Q wrote, "The departments that have influenced my decisions during my education have been Bio-Chem, MCB, Near Eastern Studies, and History."

Non-ALMA student R wrote, "The departments that have influenced my decisions during my education, I would have to say none. I have made my own choices."

Non-ALMA student S wrote, "The departments that have influenced my decisions during my education have been none, I been influenced more by my peers. People that have gone through the program before me."
Non-ALMA student T wrote, "The departments that have influenced my decisions during my education have been none. My family and friends have been more of an influence on me that advising or departments."

The theme that emerged from the Non-ALMA students' response is that with the exception of two references to the Pre-Med and Pre-Law advisors, this group tended to be influenced less by advising and more by peers or instructors (see Table 4.10). Several Non-ALMA students wrote that their decisions were influenced by "more" the university departments. The Non-ALMA response also indicated that this group had a support system in placed either family, friends, or peers that afforded them their vital connection with university faculty.

In the findings for the Non-ALMA group for question #6 regarding what university departments had influenced their decisions during their education, seven of the Non-ALMA students mentioned department or faculty advising as having been influential in their decisions as undergraduates. Four Non-ALMA students mentioned the influence of peers in their educational decisions. Four Non-ALMA students mentioned that family, friends and other outside support systems influenced their decisions. The Non-ALMA students appeared to understand the value associated
with having peer, faculty and outside support systems in place during their transition to the university.

According to the National Student Opinion Survey from the American College Testing Normative Report (1992), all students will experience a transition from what their expectations are versus what their college experiences are. Those students with support services in place either formalized or informalized by family, friends, or peers will transition easier to college life than those who do not have a support system in place and have to establish these systems through happenstance measures after arriving at the university.

Question #7 the students were asked if they felt any university limitations during their undergraduate education, "Have you encountered institutional limitations?" The ALMA group responses were as follows:

ALMA student A wrote, "Yes, I felt institutional limitations. Institutional limitations were and continue to be one of the greatest challenges to the U of A undergraduate’s education. It became so hard to find the right direction and focus to be successful in classes and it was even more difficult in getting advising. I went through at least four advisors in the Office of Academic Services before I found the ALMA advisor who just seemed to have the knowledge, wisdom, and was able to provide the guidance
through the mountain of useless administrative paper work and processes that I lacked and needed. In fact I became so discouraged and disgusted with my Political Science Departmental Advisor than I never went back to her for advising. The lack of non-traditional student services was also extremely difficult to overcome."

ALMA student B wrote, "Yes there are institutional limitations because of my low grade point average I was not allowed into the College of Education."

ALMA student C wrote, "Yes I encountered institutional limitations. The English Department writing improvement program refused to work with me beyond a certain point and rejected my request for additional help but I found through my ALMA advisor alternative resources to help me improve my writing."

ALMA student D wrote, "The limitations I encounter is all the red tape that goes into graduating. It is getting more and more complicated."

ALMA student E wrote, "Yes, within just the last year I have encountered a tremendous amount of limited institutional resources from the Native American Resource Center. I know that this is due in part to the new director. I also felt limited that there are so few Native American Students and administrative people on campus. My cousin who
attends Northern Arizona University has many more of these people they can relate to."

ALMA student F wrote, "Yes, I encountered institutional limitations. However, they were small issues excessive amounts of red tape and paper work that all seems so meaningless. Thanks to my ALMA advisor I saw my way through this and was able to reach my academic goals."

ALMA student G wrote, "Yes I feel there were institutional limitations that I encountered some had to do with my grade point average not being high enough to take upper division economics classes. I don't feel as if I am walking away with a designed program of study. I am not sure how to pull my econ major all together. Having to petition academic issues to the Dean or some high level Faculty Committee within the Office of The Registrar makes no sense at all to me. I never met these people they have no knowledge of me yet they make decisions on my petitions that influence my academic career."

ALMA student H wrote, "Yes I encountered institutional limitations mostly with the scheduling of my classes. Also in the transfers of my classes from the other non-American international colleges I have attended. I had to go through a long and complicated process of filing papers and waiting for high level administrators who know nothing about academics to decide how my courses would
transfer. They kept losing my paperwork then blaming me for not being cooperative."

ALMA student I wrote, "Yes I have encountered limitations. Without someone knowledgeable about the academic process, it’s difficult to make sure everything is in order to graduate."

ALMA student J wrote, "Yes I encountered institutional limitations. Every time I had a problem it seems like I had to get approval in solving the problem from someone high up the administrative level who could care less, yet was on this power trip."

Three themes emerged from the ALMA group. First was the wide range of student diversity ranging from a Native American to an International transfer student, second to the non-traditional to the traditional student who were bringing with them an equally wide range of expectations regarding college. Third, the general agreement that administrative paperwork, red tape, and decision making at multiple levels, especially at the upper administrative level at the university had proven to be organizationally-oriented barriers to success (see Table 4.11).

In the findings for the ALMA group for question #7, regarding encountering institutional limitations, all ten ALMA students reported a conflict between their expectations and the university’s requirements. Eight ALMA students
mentioned that they felt they had encountered bureaucracy limitations. Five of the ALMA students mentioned their student diversity (ethnicity as well as non-traditional student status) as a factor that limited their participation in the university community.

Discussion. ALMA advising focuses on the idea that all students entering college the first time, whether they be traditional or nontraditional, bring different expectations to the academic experience. For the students who return to college after an absence (non-traditional), to the students who just begin their higher educational experience as a high school transfer (traditional) student, their views and expectations of the university will vary. The students' backgrounds frequently determines how students will deal with what they perceive as institutional limitations. Traditional students enter the collegiate setting with limited or no prior knowledge about what it takes to succeed academically and no or little familiarity with basic college institutional procedures or services that are available. The non-traditional student, on the other hand, may bring expectations formed as a result of previous college experiences that may not have been positive. It is because of this wide range of differing expectations and backgrounds and how they influence the student's response to
the institutional limitations that ALMA advising focuses on student-centered advising.

**Discussion.** ALMA advising (see Appendix C) stresses that student-centered advising must take its lead from the student's own self-directed learning interests and needs. Despite the vast differences in the student's academic expectations, one can often find similarities across traditional and non-traditional students. Both groups might be anxious about their ability to succeed (Kasworm, 1994) and might have unrealistic expectations about the college experience (Kuh & Sturgis, 1990), particularly the time commitment required to succeed (Steltenpohl & Shipton, 1986). Traditional and non-traditional students are likely to enter college with a wealth of life experiences and a variety of family, community and work responsibilities. It is important to use these experiences as a basis of developing college interests that will assist in the growth of student's transition skills and enable them to become active members in the university community (see Appendix C, ALMA Advising Strategy).

The Non-ALMA students responses to question #7, were as follows:

Non-ALMA student K wrote, "Yes I have encountered institutional limitations. Classes are always full. It's practically impossible to get an appointment with an
**TABLE 4.11**

Question #7: "Have you encountered institutional limitations?"

**ALMA GROUP RESPONSES**

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**NON-ALMA GROUP RESPONSES**

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advisor, and I have had to drag paperwork from building to building looking for the person who can actually sign the documents I need to have signed. Everyone sends you off to someone else."

Non-ALMA student L wrote, "The only institutional limitations I have faced are having to jump through the administrative hoops."

Non-ALMA student M wrote, "The institutional limitations I encountered is that it is extremely hard to make an advising appointment. I have learned more through my roommate and my own experiences it is sometimes hard to get into the correct class also."

Non-ALMA student N wrote, "Not really, its up to me to become involved in the university activities and functions."

Non-ALMA student O wrote, "I have only been limited in time."

Non-ALMA P wrote, "The only institutional limitation I can think of is all the red tape you have to go through."

Non-ALMA student Q wrote, "The limitations I have encountered have to do with the size of the U of A. A school this size makes it hard to get the help you need at times."

Non-ALMA student R wrote, "This question does not apply to me."
Non-ALMA student S wrote, "The institutional limitations I encountered are in getting the services I need advising and support services. Sometimes advisors give different advise on the same issue."

Non-ALMA student T wrote, "The institutional limitations I have encountered have to do when you really need help. Everybody is real nice when your doing well, but if your grades fall then people act like they don’t know you."

The theme that emerged from the Non-ALMA group was concerns about institutional limitations that were materialized in unavailability of required classes, unavailability of advising appointments and support services as well as too much administrative red tape. How the student responded when encountering what they perceived as an institutional limitation was critical to the academic success and retention of the student.

In the findings for the Non-ALMA group for question #7 regarding encountering institutional limitations, six Non-ALMA students reported a conflict between their expectations and the university requirements. Five Non-ALMA students mentioned experiencing bureaucratic limitations with the university. Two Non-ALMA students said that required courses were not available.
Discussion. During ALMA advising, beginning with ALMA Orientation, and consistently throughout the ALMA advising sessions, the advisor stresses to the student that college consists of anticipated transitions and unanticipated transitions. Anticipated transitions are events that the student plans for and directs. The unanticipated transitions are those events that cannot be planned for but must be responded to. The ALMA advisor and student adjust advising appointments and strategies depending upon the nature of the unanticipated transitions. During these times ALMA students may require more attention and more assurance that they can succeed. The academic success of the at-risk ALMA students has affirmed that the potential gains accrued by this additional time investment can result in developing an independent self-directed student with improved decision-making skills. This is justification for the ALMA advisor devoting extra time and energy in the short term, to facilitate the student through these unanticipated transitions.

Question # 8 of the ALMA Student Narrative asked, "Have these (institutional) limitations influenced your sense of participation within the university community?" The ALMA student responses were as follows:

ALMA student A wrote, "Yes the institutional limitations influenced my participation in the extent that
the university offered so little in terms of classes or services to fit the so called nontraditional students, I was forced to take classes that offered little, in support of my major or minor. At this point the university offered me so little the self-confidence to succeed in the classroom diminished and so did the desire to participate in the university community."

ALMA student B wrote, "Yes, the institutional limitations I feel are related to GPA obstacles."

ALMA student C wrote, "Yes, the institutional limitations influenced my participation. I was never offered the opportunity to participate. I had to seek out my own way of participation."

ALMA student D wrote, "Yes, institutional limitations caused me to miss out. Because once you get on academic probation you do not have the time to be as involved as you would like to."

ALMA student E wrote, "Yes, the institutional limitations influenced my participation in the extent that some support services offices, namely the Native American Resource Center have over extended their resources. Mostly I just sought out any minority staff members or advisors to help me with any questions or concerns."

ALMA student F wrote, "Yes, the institutional limitations influenced my participation, but my
participation was limited to my available time anyway. I only got involved with what interested me anyway."

ALMA student G wrote, "Yes, institutional limitations influenced my participation. There seems to be two aspects to this limitations. The first is fitting in with your peers. The second is how the red tape of the university administration makes everything difficult with its paper work."

ALMA student H wrote, "Yes, absolutely I felt very unwelcome at times in various colleges and departments." ALMA student I wrote, "Yes, institutional limitations caused me to feel that I was on the out-side looking in."

ALMA student J wrote, "Yes the institutional limitations did influence my participation but only in a very small way."

The theme that emerged from the ALMA group from question #8 is that the ALMA group felt that institutional limitations did influence their participation in the university community (see Table 4.12). This theme was significant because their ALMA advising was designed to act to facilitate their connection with their academic departments as well as the undergraduate academic services available to them.
Table 4.12

Question #8: "Have these (institutional) limitations influenced your sense of participation with the university community?"

**ALMA GROUP RESPONSES**

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<td>X</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Students cite excessive organizational complexities as limitations on UofA participation</td>
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**NON-ALMA GROUP RESPONSES**

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<td>Students cite excessive organizational complexities as limitations on UofA participation</td>
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In the findings for the ALMA group for question #8, the students were asked if institutional limitations influenced their participation within the university community? All ten ALMA students report a definite limiting influence as their community participation. Six ALMA students stated that excessive organizational complexity within the university diminished their community participation. Two ALMA students mentioned grade point average as a limiting factor in community activity.

It is very important that the university take steps to simplify its procedures and enhance its efforts at outreach to all students. The assumption that entering students voluntarily seek out academic advising and related services when they need them is inaccurate and a harmful belief, but nevertheless, it is one that is shared by many in academic and student services (Hart, 1993).

The reasons why students succeed or fail in college are fairly well understood. We know that caring attitudes on the part of faculty, advising and administrative staff contribute to student retention; that students are more likely to drop out if they are bored, lack academic focus, are unprepared for specific courses, and experience difficulty in the transition from high school to college or are uncertain about their major course of study (Levitz & Noel, 1990). One of the biggest challenges for the ALMA
advisor at the University of Arizona is follow up on student referrals. The ALMA advisor as well as the ALMA students, at times, encounter excessive segmentation of services resulting from complex organizational structures, overspecialization of professional units, unnecessary limits on methods of service delivery and frequently inadequate knowledge about the attitudes and characteristics of the undergraduate students. This is a university-wide problem that needs the attention of all faculty, administrative, and advising staff.

The Non-ALMA group responses to question #8 were as follows:

Non-ALMA student K wrote, "No, these institutional limitations have not really influenced my participation much. You can always find ways you can participate within the university community. You just have to work at it a little."

Non-ALMA student L wrote, "The institutional limitations did not hinder me, but others I know have said they felt their participation has been limited."

Non-ALMA student M wrote, "Yes, the institutional limitations did influence my participation in the university. I have not always felt like I was on the correct academic track. I sort of got carried along with the momentum of"
college and didn't know what was going on until about mid-sophomore year."

Non-ALMA student N wrote, "The institutional limitation have had some influence on my university participation I also have a full time job outside the university. I don’t have a lot of time to participate in university activity. The university does limit you by the huge amounts of red tape you have to go through to participate in some university activities."

Non-ALMA student O wrote, "Yes institutional limitations have influenced my participation at the university but only a little."

Non-Alma student P wrote, "Yes, institutional limitations have influenced my participation at the university mostly because of scheduling conflicts with classes and work."

Non-ALMA student Q wrote, "Yes, some institutional limitations have influenced my participation at the university, but overall, I have been involved with the actives I have wanted to participate in."

Non-ALMA student R wrote, "Somewhat, but I set the level of my university participation myself."

Non-ALMA S student wrote, "This question does not apply to me."
Non-ALMA student T wrote, "Yes institutional limitations have influenced my participation at the university by making some classes and field trips and extra class fees so expensive I could not afford to participate."

The theme that emerged from the Non-ALMA group response to question #8 is that the Non-ALMA group, as with the ALMA group, experienced some level of participatory limitation but the Non-ALMA group seemed to report experiencing less of a barrier to their university participation. The Non-ALMA group used wording such as "I experienced some limitations, university participation was influenced a little by institutional limitations, and limitations did not apply to me but I know of others who felt that institutional limitations influenced their university participation."

In the findings for the Non-ALMA group for question #8, the students were asked if institutional limitations influenced their participation within the university community? Six of the Non-ALMA students reported a definite limiting influence on their community participation. Five Non-ALMA students stated that excessive organizational complexity in the university diminished their community participation.

Discussion. The ALMA advising Strategy (see Appendix C) stresses that the ALMA advisor should not allow himself
to think about advising and university referrals as simply part of a formal advising session or during presentations. It is important to be pro-active in giving students the option of the advisors' referrals services. It is naive to expect new students or students with limited experience with the university's system of referral services to take the primary initiative to seek the needed information when they are most in need of assistance or when the services will be most helpful. The complexity and depth of the university student services has grown in part due to the introduction of more technology. This has resulted in the expanding of undergraduate programs on many campuses. Despite increased use of technology and extended undergraduate programs, it is important for the ALMA advisor to understand that during the student's transitions to the university, most students are notorious for not realizing they are in need of assistance until well after the fact. Therefore, ALMA advising emphasis is on pro-active or preemptive advising.

In question #9 students were asked if institutional limitations had influenced the extent and quality of their participation at the university. Students were asked, "Describe these limitations and how they influenced your participation at the university?" The ALMA group responses are as follows:
ALMA student A wrote, "In the beginning of my educational experience (first two years) the university's limitations were a huge factor in losing oneself within the university system. I was overwhelmed with trying to adjust and fit into the system through my major department and frat activities. I faltered in the studying and time management department. Because of this, my grades suffered. After dropping in and out of college, night school became my final option since by then I was working full time to support a wife and new family. Part of the reason it took me so long to graduate was that Extended university offered so little in the way of classes and those that they did offer were just electives and not required courses."

ALMA student B wrote, "I have participated but I wish I had gotten more involved. I feel I missed the complete university experience."

ALMA student C wrote, "I tried volunteering for university activities but they never returned my calls."

ALMA student D wrote, "ALMA assisted me in finding academic and support resources to use when I needed them, but the more social activities I felt left out of."

ALMA student E wrote, "It is difficult to participate in the university community. The size of the school seems to isolate you."
ALMA student F wrote, "Except for a few people who have really helped me in this area of belonging, I often felt that I was alone in the educational process. I often get the feeling that I was working against the administration of the university rather than having it work with me or for me."

ALMA student G wrote, "How I felt the institutional limitations to university participation was that a departmental advisor kept ditching me and not showing up during their office hours. This was during a time when I was in the process of making an very important career choice. I would skip class to in the hopes of meeting with this advisor, then they wouldn't show and this limited my full participation at the university."

ALMA student H wrote, "Was limited in my university participation by the rude and unhelpful behavior of the College of Education. I found them very discouraging. I would ask myself why are my parents paying the U of A so much money for me to walk into the College of Education to find a depressing worker describe my chances of being a teacher as bleak?"

ALMA student I wrote, "The limitations on my university participation was based on the academic demands of my schedule."
ALMA student J wrote, "How I would describe the most important institutional limitations at the U of A is in finding available required classes through on-line, correspondence, or evening classes. No one seems to care that what is being offered is just a bunch of random elective courses that will not assist you in graduating and are only available to make the university a buck or two."

The themes that emerged from the ALMA responses were that the university needed to examine the availability of on-line and correspondence courses, departmental and faculty advisors were seen as needing training by the ALMA students. This, in turn, limited their departmental and university participation, and the ALMA students stated the large size of the university itself acted as a limitation on their participation.

In the findings for the ALMA group for question #9, the students were asked to describe any institutional limitations and how they influenced their participation at the university. Four ALMA students viewed the limited number of required courses available on-line and through correspondence as an institutional limitation. Four ALMA students viewed the lack of advising training of faculty and departmental advisors as being a limitation to their participation. Nine ALMA students reported that the large
size of the university was a limitation to their participation.

**Discussion.** It is important that the university consider a campus-wide assessment to determine the type of non-residence course availability that best meets the student's academic needs and requirements. Currently, it appears that the approach to non-residence course availability is based more upon the availability of the instructor to teach the class. The current growth of distance learning and the increase in the demographic representation of non-traditional students makes this issue a significant topic for immediate review (Upcraft & Stephens, 2000).

**Discussion.** The second theme regarding advising emerged from the ALMA student's responses to question #9 deals with the dual academic advising system employed by the University of Arizona which uses both professional advisors and faculty advisors. Professional advisors working out of the Office of Academic Services are individually assessed by their students during the course of each year with a student satisfaction survey. These results are included in each advisors performance appraisal. However, most faculty advisors are not formally evaluated by their students for their effectiveness in advising. Considering that these faculty have been produced by American research graduate
schools where there is essentially little or no attention paid to teaching, let alone to academic advising, the implications of these findings are significant for the quality of academic advising (Habley, 1981). The Office of Academic Services does offer faculty training in advising, but these training sessions are usually poorly attended and little follow up is offered during the course of the year. If OAS is charged with training faculty in advising, it is critical to devote the resources and personnel to make this dual advising system work. Considering how vital faculty advising is to student retention and graduation, more attention needs to be directed to the improvement of faculty advising training (see Table 4.13).

The size of the university can also be a factor in student participation. Whereas there is no specific formula for blending the need for institutional growth and assuring that this growth does not negatively impact student participation, advising plays an important role in the inclusive-facilitation of the university resources to the student. Various studies have demonstrated the need for student university participation, such as regular advisor, student and faculty interaction. This interaction increases student academic success, satisfaction, and retention (Tinto, 1989; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991; Astin, 1993, Nutt, 2000).
The Non-ALMA student response to question #9 were as follows:

Non-ALMA student K wrote, "How the institution limited my limitations had more to do with just being carried away by the volume of university activity. It was hard to focus on major selections and careers at times because the U of A academic kept re-directing me."

Non-ALMA student L wrote, "How the university limited my participation was more a factor of me not having the time I would have liked to participate in all the events I wanted to."

Non-ALMA student M wrote, "How the university limitations effected me were that there seemed to be no organized way of working through all the college distractions in determining my major and career choices."

Non-ALMA student N wrote, "I was limited by being overwhelmed by the university's size at times."

Non-ALMA student O wrote, "I cannot recall how I was being limited in my participation at the university other than always feeling that there was always so much going on and this sometimes lead me to feel I did not have a real direction I was going with the flow."

Non-ALMA P wrote, "How the U of A limited my involvement was by overwhelming me with choices and not providing that much direction."
TABLE 4.13

Question #9: "Describe these limitations and how they influenced your participation at the university."

ALMA GROUP RESPONSES

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NON-ALMA GROUP RESPONSES

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Non-ALMA student Q wrote, "I was somewhat limited in my participation but I got involved with the clubs and organizations I choose to get involved with."

Non-ALMA student R wrote, "In the beginning during orientation I was overloaded with information. It was way too much to remember."

Non-ALMA student S wrote, "I was limited by other demands on my time such as family obligations."

Non-ALMA student T wrote, "The U of A at times seems to process you through their system. At times I felt limited by the feeling that my choices had already been done for me, and I was just suppose to pass the classes and keep going forward."

The theme that emerged from the Non-ALMA student responses is that the undergraduate experience was overwhelming for some students. This overwhelming experience caused the student delays in graduation. Faculty and advisors can play an important role in assisting with the students' transition into the university and, thus, making the undergraduate education less of an overwhelming experience.

In the findings for the Non-ALMA group for question #9, the students were asked to describe any institutional limitations and how they influenced their participation in the university. Six Non-ALMA students suggested that the
structure of the major programs were limiting. Two Non-ALMA students reported that factors outside the university influenced their community participation. Seven Non-ALMA students reported that the university's size influenced their participation.

Both the ALMA and Non-ALMA students reported feeling that the size of the university made them feel isolated at times and was an influence in limiting community participation. At large institutions of higher education, making a direct connection with an advisor or faculty can be critical to the students' success.

ALMA advising stresses self-directed learning in an organized manner. ALMA advising (see Appendix C) is connected to the early intrusive career planning process to heighten the probability of a more appropriate major selection earlier in the baccalaureate experience. This may reduce time and costs to degree completion. Once this is done the ALMA student has a career/major foundation to work from. ALMA student can explore their academic or personal interest at the university, but they still have the ALMA program to be used as a sounding board for new ideas consistently and throughout their undergraduate experience. This consistent ALMA advising acts to make changes in majors and careers less stressful and time consuming for the student. This is important because without a common base to
explore ideas the choices at the university can be overwhelming. There are also increasing political pressures to reduce these time and cost factors as more state legislators follow the North Carolina Model of imposing student fee surcharges and reductions in state appropriations for students who remain longer than the standard number of hours/units needed to complete an undergraduate degree.

**ALMA Case Studies**

The four students selected for the ALMA case studies were all undergraduates at The University of Arizona. These students were: Pseudonyms were used rather than real names of the students. The random sampling procedures that were used resulted in the selection of one Hispanic male, one Anglo Hispanic female, one Anglo male, and a Anglo female.

Toward the end of the Spring semester 1999, after the completion of the students' senior check, final degree audit or ALMA major project (see Appendix C) these students were requested to write a journal chronicling their undergraduate experiences at The University of Arizona. They were asked to tell about their perceptions of themselves as students, how they viewed their own academic experience at the University of Arizona, what elements of the undergraduate experience contributed to their success in making good academic as well as personal decisions, and to name those factors that they
felt played a good or bad role in the completion of their degree programs.

ALMA advising techniques and materials were used to advise and facilitate the academic progress of all the case study students.

The ALMA advising program is based upon the interpersonal relationship developed between the advisor administering the ALMA program and the ALMA case study students. References in their journals to Larry constitute their depiction of the program, their description of its services and evaluation of its effectiveness.

Sue

Describes herself as just an average student and in many ways Sue represents the typical in-state student at the University of Arizona. Because the University of Arizona is a state land grant public institution one of the mandates is that it provide a higher education to the in-state graduating high school students as cost free as possible. Sue needed assistance from her high school guidance counselor in the completion of her application for admission into the University of Arizona. Sue also took advantage of a University of Arizona program that assists students in the transition from high school to the university called "New Start". She acknowledged that this program was a benefit to her. She also felt that it earmarked her as a student who
needed to be watched because the program required her to take a preliminary courses to measure her academic skills.

Sue lived at home with her parents while attending the university. When Sue was a Freshman she was dating her high school boyfriend who also attended The University of Arizona. She also established a close friendship with Jenn another female student at the university. It appeared that Sue’s transition to the university was going smoothly. Sue states she was happy but admits her concentration was not on school but socializing and attending "Date Dashes" with her boyfriend. During the end of her Freshman year, her social life began to fall apart. Her boyfriend joined a fraternity, began to smoke a lot of pot, and began experimenting with other drugs as well as seeing other women. She states that she was emotionally devastated.

During her Sophomore year, her grandfather became very ill and moved in with her family. As her grandfather continued to decline in health. She took on more of the responsibility for his care and as her grades began to fall, she went on academic probation. During her Junior year, she continued her academic decline despite attending academic improvement workshops.

Late into her senior year during finals, Sue suffered a bad asthma attack, brought on by stress and missed three finals. At this time, her grandfather had a cardiac arrest
while Sue was caring for him. She tried to revive him with CPR till the paramedics arrived. After they arrived, they told Sue they could revive him, but he would be brain dead. She declined treatment and signed her grandfather’s death certificate. At this time she was also informed that the university had academically disqualified her and she was not welcome to return to complete her education until she completed 24 units with a 3.000 average at a community college. As a senior, she had already completed all her lower level course work needed to graduate. She only needed upper division classes, which she could only take at the university. Despite pointing this out to the Dean and Readmission Committee, their answer was still "No."

The ALMA advisor and Sue had only one appeal to request the rescinding of her academic disqualification. The ALMA advisor and Sue proposed an extended academic recovery program that focused on study and academic organizational strategies as well as time management and self-management strategies. With a great deal of lobbying by the ALMA advisor and work by Sue, the Dean and Readmission Committee reluctantly agree to allow her back under a very strict readmission contract. Sue went on to elevate her grade point average and graduate.

**Discussion.** Sue’s depiction of herself as an average student was not far from the mark. Moore and Carpenter
(1985) and Tinto (1997) report that of all entering college students, approximately 30% to 40% struggle with the academic demands of university. ALMA advising has also found that frequently even those advisors and professionals who work with this group of students have little firsthand knowledge of these students and therefore do not understand their characteristics, backgrounds, and motivations. Even when advisors come from backgrounds that tend to foster working with these type of students, the dominant culture at the university's "sink or swim" approach tends to reinforce stereotypes of these students as being unwilling to put in the effort to do well. Advisors who propose working with these at-risk students are frequently viewed by their supervisors as not upholding the academic standards of the university. This managerial opinion frequently appears in the advisor's performance evaluations. For this reason, it is in the best interest of the students and the ALMA program to be seen as perhaps outside the regular academic advising system with more of the status of an advising student advocate as opposed to policy reinforcement.

Ramon

Ramon responded to the student case studies journal by elaborating upon some of the ALMA Student Narrative Survey questions as well as commenting freely upon what he felt his experiences were at the university. Ramon was
admitted to the University of Arizona as a transfer student from Pima Community College. His native language is Spanish and despite doing well academically at the community college, his writing skills were very poor when he was admitted to the University of Arizona. He spoke English with a heavy Spanish accent. Because of his accent and his age (43), he found acceptance by faculty, staff and advising personnel slow in coming.

Much of ALMA advising's initial efforts were in obtaining writing and math support services for Ramon just to keep him from being academically disqualified from the university. Ramon continued to work on his writing skills. He felt that the University of Arizona did discriminate against minority students, older students, and students whose political beliefs were not in the mainstream. Perhaps because of his age, Ramon found the incoming student orientation intimidating. He referred to individuals involved in this process as, "Living in the 1800's during the period of white supremacy." Ramon said that he found he had to learn to ignore the practice of racism on campus. He recalled a member of the psychology department as stating, "We have to be aware of you, you are a communist" and member of the Family Studies department saying that he could make-up the work in his class but the instructor would not pass Ramon because with his Spanish accent, no one would
understand him anyway. Ramon found it difficult to fit into the university community even when ALMA attempted to involve him with the center and programs for Latino students and older students. He admitted that his behavior had been less than perfect. Ramon said that he realized that as a student at the university he had also been educating himself on how to cope with and deal with "the institution", and this was a very important thing to learn. Ramon went on academic probation during his first year at the university. This was largely due to his poor choice of majors. The major he initially declared required a great deal of writing and above average math skills. Ramon went through several ALMA major exploration assignments before he connected with his chosen major.

Discussion. It was important for the ALMA advisor to resist suggesting any particular major such as Spanish, Latin American Studies or Mexican American Studies major because Ramon felt that the purpose of the university was to segregate students by race anyway. Once he self-directed himself in his field of interest, his academic performance improved and he got off academic probation.

Despite the drawbacks of language, academic struggles, and what Ramon perceived as overt racism by many at the university he still felt that the his experiences at the university had been positive and rewarding. Through a
great deal of major exploration set up by ALMA advising, Ramon decided upon the major of Mexican American Studies with a minor in Gerontology.

The high level of attrition of students of color and those who are older is a personal tragedy for them as well as their communities, which so desperately need their skills. It is also a significant loss of human capital that we as a nation cannot afford. It requires a double adjustment for the older student of color especially those attempting to transition to a predominantly white campus (Stage & Manning, 1992). In addition to learning to cope, often independently, with a new environment, they must also learn to adapt to new aspects of the dominant culture in areas of their lives. Ramon graduated and currently works as a social advocate and case manager for a non-profit community service agency focusing on the needs of minority and elderly adults.

James

James is a Tucson native. James came to the university confident that his high school education and background prepared him for college. As he stated in his journal, "The papers he received 'A' in high school became nothing more that red ink and criticism at the university." James defined this as a defining blow to his self-confidence. Soon he found that his undergraduate experience
all but overwhelmed him. Finding new friends and figuring out what he wanted from the university with regard to his education and future added to this sense of being in over his head. James credited The Summer Bridge Program with helping him somewhat in his transition to the university. But he also stated that no bridge program prepared him for walking into a classroom with 100 to 200 students and attending school on a campus with 35,000 students. James soon found himself on academic probation. He failed in his classes in college, even in areas that he did well in high school. After he received his second semester academic probation, James felt that he was slowly being forced out of college life by both his insecurities and academic problems. He soon felt he was labeled as part of the group of students who were on the verge of "academic wipe-out".

About this time, James found a girlfriend and decided to get married and start a family. He said now that he made this choice, from an educational perspective, it was not a good idea, but from an emotional experience, it met his need to feel part of something.

After James' marriage, he was referred to ALMA as a last ditch measure to save his failing educational objectives. A time management and academic renewal plan was drawn out with James setting the guidelines for school and work. Each short and long term goal was set and evaluated at
the end of each semester. Part of this plan was the gradual re-introduction of James into the university on a part-time basis. After each examination, James and the ALMA advisor would review his academic performance with a focus in three categories: mastery of information and concepts; this was related to the information on the exam and involved information he did not know, could not remember, or his overall problem-solving approach in addressing the exam's question. The next category covered was test taking; did he use the wrong formula for solving the problem, was he not clear on the question being asked, or had he not choose the best answer offered. And, finally, his method of test taking was reviewed; had he not have time to complete the exam, had he read the directions wrong, had he reasoned his way to wrong answer, or had he made a mistake in transferring the answer to the answer sheet. Gradually James began to improve his approach to exam preparation and taking. As this occurred, his confidence in his academic skills improved. James began to attend the university on a full-time basis and graduated with a double major in political science and history. In James' case, his initial failure was due to a combination of the academic demands, loss of self-confidence, and the organizational system that caused him to struggle with completing his education. Currently, James is
working in a professional position with an electronics corporation as a Team Leader in a major personal project.

**Liz**

Liz is an out of state transfer student. She came to the University of Arizona from an upper middle class family (both parents holding college degrees) from New Jersey after what she describes as a very dangerous life style of drug abuse. She had worked in New Jersey after high school for two years before escaping from "her very dangerous life style" to attend The University of Arizona described by her as "one of the biggest party schools in the country." Liz arrived at the University of Arizona as perhaps the best academically prepared of my case study ALMA students.

Liz did well her first semester at the university. Her grade point average was 3.000 plus, but, in her own words, it did not take long to figure out where the drugs were, and she began to party again. She wrote,

My grades took a nose dive and no one really acknowledged it among the university faculty or staff. My experience at the U up to this point was very bureaucratic, and I was not much more than a number to many people at the university. Up to this point I declared myself an Anthro major because I felt pressure at orientation to declare a major even
through I had absolutely no clue as to what I wanted to be when I grew up.

ALMA's advising encounters with Liz were erratic. When she arrived for advising for one meeting, she'd be extraverted and happy. However, the next advising session she might be withdrawn and very depressed. Rather then confront Liz and risk alienating her from seeking advising services from The Office of Academic Services, the ALMA advisor decided on another approach. The ALMA advisor inquired of Liz why she felt that her grades continued on their downward spiral. Liz began to discuss carefully and slowly why she felt her grades were dropping rapidly and then just opened-up about her drug and alcohol abuse. The ALMA advisor suggested contacting Student Health Services regarding the substance abuse issue. However, Liz was already attending a program and preferred to remain with her own group. The ALMA advisor then offered Liz the chance to design her own academic program using those academic fields she found most interesting. Working within the ALMA Strategy of Advising (Appendix C), Liz developed her own cohesive Interdisciplinary Studies Program IDS program. She later confessed to how important it was to her personal well being to begin to establish control over all areas of her life, including designing her own academic program. Liz also found a strong voice of support from a professor in the Humanities
department who assisted her in getting into courses important for the completion of her major.

Liz graduated with her bachelor of arts degree in Interdisciplinary Studies with the focus on Anthropology, Creative Writing, Sociology and the Humanities. She currently works in a substance abuse program for women and has been drug-free for two years. In addition, Liz also overcame an eating disorder in the process of completing her undergraduate education.

I have included a complete unedited copy of the ALMA Study Case Study Student Journals in Appendix F. The purpose for including verbatim student journals was to assure that the ALMA students were allowed to voice their perceptions and views within the context of this study. ALMA as an advising tool was administered by me in the student-directed manner as outlined in the ALMA Advising Strategy (see Appendix C). Because of this direct advisor-student relationship it was important to see from the students' eyes how ALMA's application was seen, what the students saw of value, or what they perceived as flaws.

The findings for the ALMA case studies revealed that life experiences related to jobs, family, outside university activities and commitments which affected the students' academic performances. All four case study students mentioned that life factors, such as failing relationships,
drug abuse, lack of maturity, cultural and age differences and poor preparation for college began their academic difficulties at the university. The ALMA students in the case studies reported that as their grade point average declined at the university, they became discouraged and felt disconnected from their academic programs and less self-directed in their involvement in meeting their academic goals. All four case study students mentioned that fine-tuning their academic skills, assuming their self-directedness and rebuilding confidence in their decision making skills was important to their academic recovery.

**Discussion.** The significance of the ALMA advising approach to student self-learning readiness is that (see Appendix C ALMA Advising Strategy) it moves away from the perception of learning and advising as a process of controlling, changing, or shaping behavior and puts student self-directed learning readiness into more of a context of student competency-development. The basis for this approach is Carl Rogers, (1963) work in humanistic psychology. Self-directed learning readiness involves personal involvement of the whole person, including his or her feelings and cognitive aspects, all of which are involved in the learning event. Self-initiation is very important. Even when the impetus or stimulus comes from the outside the sense of discovery, of reaching out, of grasping, and comprehending
comes from within. The student's pervasiveness is critical to advising, because learning makes a difference in behavior and attitudes, perhaps even in the personality of the learner. The student's own evaluation as a learner is important. Students as learners know whether the learning meets their personal need or whether it leads toward what the student wants to know. Students know if advising is illuminating the dark areas of their undergraduate experience or not. The locus of evaluation resides definitely within the student learner. When advising is effective, the element of meaning to the student is built into the whole undergraduate experience. The essence of learning and advising becomes as a whole more meaningful.

The foundation for ALMA advising strategy is building on insights from Carl Rogers work in behavioral sciences that have expanded the perception of the student's potential for learning through the advising process. ALMA advising requires the advisor to re-cast the image of the undergraduate student from a passive, reactive recipient to that of an active, seeking, autonomous and reflective learner.

Self-direction is important to the students, because it represents the basic law of human nature: people tend to feel committed to any decision in proportion to the extent to which they have participated in making it; the reverse is
even more true. People tend to feel uncommitted to any
decision to the extent that they feel others are making it
for them and imposing it on them (Knowles, 1984). ALMA
advising stresses learner involvement in mutual planning,
and diagnosing of their own needs for learning.

One of the pervasive problems in this self-direction
process is meshing the needs the learners are aware of (felt
needs) with the needs their organizations has for them
(ascribed needs). ALMA uses a variety of strategies to
address this, ranging from simple interest-finding
checklists to a more involved performance assessment system,
with a balance between felt needs and ascribed needs being
negotiated between the facilitator and the student learner.
ALMA frequently uses a model of competencies which reflects
both the personal and organizational (academic) needs, so
that students can identify the gaps between where they are
now and where the model specifies they need to be see (ALMA
General Advising Strategy Outline).

In ALMA advising, the advisor assists the student by
beginning the student’s learning strategy by asking three
important questions: (1) "What procedures can be used to
help students translate their diagnosed needs into learning
objectives?" Involve the student learner in formulating
their learning objectives. (2) "What procedures can be used
to help students identify resources and devise strategies
for using these resources to accomplish their objectives?" Involve the student learner in designing learning plans. (3) "How does the student learner translate a diagnosed learning need into a learning objective?" Involve the student learners in the evaluation process of their learning.

In ALMA advising, the student learner translates a diagnosed learning need into a learning objective, describes the terminal behavior to be achieved, and with the ALMA advisor's help, specifies what evidence will indicate the extent to which each objective is accomplished. In andragogy, adults become ready to learn when they experience a need to know or do something to perform more effectively in some aspects of their lives (Knowles, 1984).

The chief source of this shift in self-directed learning readiness is the developmental tasks associated with moving from one stage of development to another. Several developmental tasks occur as students transition through these developmental stages at the university. Students frequently change residence, leave family behind, and are confronted with a new environment and a new set of learning challenges. In ALMA advising, the advisor does not wait for the student's learning readiness shift to develop but attempts to induce it by providing effective role models, engaging students in career planning, and providing them with diagnostic experiences (see ALMA Learning Strategy
Appendix C) in which they can assess the gaps between where they are now and where they want and need to be.

The alternative to not using this relationship between adult self-directed learning and institutional expectations is to ignore this issue and simply leave students to deal with self-directed learning by themselves as is the case in many institutions of higher education. In doing this, from the outset, students are thrown into a trial by immersion experience with only marginal support (Freshman Orientations) at the on-set of their undergraduate experience. Providing advising and guidance, without recognizing the student’s developmental process toward achieving self-direction in learning is a full term need that all students will experience throughout their undergraduate experience. Thankfully, many of those in higher education; advising, teaching, and administration have been made aware of this problem and some have been supportive in devising and using these strategies for helping adults make the transition from being dependent learners to being self-directed learners. In the Office of Academic Services at The University of Arizona, the ALMA advising program has attempted to establish itself as a foundation for the increasingly widespread practice in higher education of including students in both an advising orientation to self-directed learning, and providing an on-
going support for this educational activity throughout the student's university experience.

Chapter Four of the Findings segment focused on presenting the individualized student-centered views and perspectives on ALMA and advising in general. In Chapter 5, I have taken the collective view from the students' responses and recommendations as well as outlining the implications from my research and suggest future research topics for consideration.
CHAPTER 5
RESPONSES, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

According to Howe and Strauss (cited by Gordon, 2000), college students who are matriculating in this new millennium are the thirteenth generation of Americans to attend college since students first entered colonial colleges when the nation was born. During this time advising has experienced many cycles of reemphasis and renewal and the advising process itself has been defined and redefined in many forms, and its acceptance as an integral part of higher education has never been stronger than it is today (Gordon, 2000). It is important in any study on advising in higher education not to lose sight of these historical cycles of change and redefinition that this field has experienced. Equally important is the role of advising and its overall relationship to the operation and success of the university or college. As the size of institutions have increased over the years to accommodate growing numbers of students and as curricula have expanded and become more complex, advising has taken on new and, in most cases, expanded responsibilities (Gordon, 2000).

In this section the findings that have emerged from this study are summarized and discussed, and suggestions and possible implications are offered. The findings are
organized into four segments: the student response segment, the student recommendation segment, author's recommendations and the conclusion. The student response segment entails a view of the overall significant commonalities and differences that emerged from the students' group responses on the ALMA Likert survey, ALMA student narrative survey, and the ALMA case studies. The student recommendation segment focuses on two general topics and summarizes the students' recommendations for advising and what advising can do to facilitate the relationship between the university and the student. Next, the author's recommendations on the findings are presented and in the conclusion, the ALMA role in academic advising is summarized.

**Student Responses**

Student responses illustrate that the ALMA and the Non-ALMA group responses differed; however, they also shared some important similarities in their views on developing decision-making skills and in how they saw their relationships with the university evolve and take shape as they progressed through their undergraduate education.

**Student Grade Point Average Findings**

The ALMA and Non-ALMA group grade point averages in Tables 4.1 and 4.2 illustrate that both groups initial mean grade point averages were different. The ALMA group's mean grade point average after their first year at the university
was 2.28 versus the Non-ALMA group's grade point average of 3.04. This disparity could be the result of the ALMA group consisting of six academically at-risk students while the Non-ALMA group consisted largely of Pre-Law and Pre-Medicine students who generally score higher on an academic performance continuum. While both groups improved their mean grade point average, the ALMA students' mean gain of 0.94 exceeded that of the Non-ALMA students' mean improvement of 0.23. As a result, after five years, the ALMA students improved to the point where the two groups were similar with the ALMA group's mean grade point average equaling 3.22 and the Non-ALMA group's mean grade point average equaling 3.27. Although there are many variables outside and within the university that can influence the academic performance of undergraduate students, it appears that the ALMA advising was a factor in improving the students' academic performance.

Summary of Student Responses

ALMA Likert Scale Student Survey Questions 1-4. These questions examined if andragogical characteristics were evident in both the ALMA and Non-ALMA groups. Both groups expressed positive agreement with all four andragogically related questions.

ALMA and Non-ALMA groups mean scores were positive and identical (7.40 on a ten point scale) on their use of
past learning experiences as an andragogical foundation for making academic decisions during their undergraduate experiences.

The Non-ALMA group mean scores were slightly higher (0.29) than the ALMA group on the importance of self-direction in making academic choices. This could be attributed to the earlier use of self-directed learning strategies to problem-solve by the Non-ALMA group. The ALMA group's reported use of self-directed learning strategies to problem-solve grew more rapidly (by 0.8 of a point) than the Non-ALMA group after their enrollment at the university and involvement in ALMA.

In addition, the ALMA group seems to place somewhat greater value than the Non-ALMA group in course content as opposed to scheduling needs when registering for classes. This could be a by-product of ALMA course selection advising process and the ALMA student evolving self-directed interest in majors and career planning.

**ALMA Likert Scale Student Survey Questions 5-7.** These items examined how both student groups perceived their relationship with the university. All mean scores across both the ALMA and Non-ALMA groups fell into the positive agreement range of 6.8 to 9.1 on a 10 point scale.

Both the ALMA and Non-ALMA groups responded positively to the university providing access to information
necessary for students to make decisions and choices with the Non-ALMA group’s mean score of 7.32 being greater than that of the ALMA group’s of 6.80. One distinctive factor to consider in examining the students’ relationship to the university was that the expectations of members in the academically better performing Non-ALMA group were expected to reflect a higher positive score than the academically at-risk oriented ALMA group.

The ALMA group indicated higher mean agreement than the Non-ALMA group by (0.7) on a 10 point scale regarding being able to specifically identify someone within the university community to help them with problem-solving decisions. This indicated that the ALMA group participated in the important process of making mentoring connections with advisors, faculty and administrators, which, in turn, led them to participate more freely within the university community.

ALMA Student Narrative Question #1. This question asked the students what, if any, experiences had assisted them in making academic decisions. All the ALMA group stated that ALMA advising and advising received from The Office of Academic Services influenced their decision making. In contrast, even though all of the Non-ALMA students received OAS advising, none of them mentioned it as aiding the decision making.
The ALMA students reported that they were also helped in decision making by other university-related factors, such as their general education courses and the process of trial and error. On the other hand, the Non-ALMA students reported being helped by factors external to the university, such as past (pre-university) mentoring and support from family and friends who had already graduated.

**ALMA Student Narrative Question #2.** This question asked the students how experiences have guided their academic choices over the period of their undergraduate education. The Analysis of the ALMA and Non-ALMA responses revealed that these groups differed in several ways.

The Non-ALMA students reported greater independence in the self-directness of their learning strategies, their development of academic survival and time management skills, as well as having support services in place during the early stages of their undergraduate experience. While the ALMA students also mentioned self-direction, they felt that trial and error and negative academic factors, such as academic probation guided their academic choices.

This difference in the utilization and timely application of self-directed strategies influenced the level and frequency of participation in both groups in the greater university community. Participation and a sense of belonging
in the university by the student is an important factor in academic retention.

**ALMA Student Narrative Question #3.** This question asked the students if their approach to problem-solving changed since attending the university.

An analysis of the groups' comments revealed that the ALMA and Non-ALMA groups were different in how they responded to this item. The Non-ALMA students reported higher levels of confidence in the continued use and refinement of problem-solving strategies acquired before going to the university. In contrast, the ALMA students reported that their strategies had changed due to the university environment, increased maturity, and greater use of self-direction.

**ALMA Student Narrative Question #4.** This question asked the students if or how their problem-solving process changed since high school.

An analysis of comments revealed that the ALMA and Non-ALMA groups responded differently to this item. The ALMA students consistently reported the role of technology in improving their problem-solving flexibility and communication skills. The Non-ALMA students did not mention technology. They did write that their intact problem-solving skills aided their learning and that they became more
flexible in their problem-solving approach at the university.

**ALMA Student Narrative Question #5.** This question asked the students if they felt more of a performance-centered pressure in college than they had in high school.

Analysis of the comments revealed that the ALMA and Non-ALMA groups responded differently to this survey item. The Non-ALMA students repeatedly mentioned that competition with peers related to their experience of increased academic pressure and that dealing with competition was central to their coping techniques and their graduate school admission chances. All of the ALMA students reported feeling that the community links in the university helped them deal with performance-centered pressure.

**ALMA Student Narrative Question 6**

**ALMA Student Narrative Question #6.** This question asked the students what university departments had influenced their decision during their education?

An analysis of comments from question #6 revealed that the ALMA students consistently mentioned the importance of their ALMA/OAS advisor. In contrast, none of the Non-ALMA students mentioned OAS advising as being important even though they all had OAS advisors. The same number of ALMA and Non-ALMA students (7) mentioned importance of department or major faculty advising. Only the ALMA students mentioned
ALMA/OAS advising as being a starting point for developing departmental or faculty advising connections. The Non-ALMA students were unique in mentioning the importance to their decision making of peers, family, and other outside support services.

**ALMA Student Narrative Question #7.** This question asked the students if they had encountered institutional limitations or barriers.

More ALMA students reported encountering the negative effects of institutional limitations than Non-ALMA students. Both groups mentioned a conflict between their expectations and the university’s requirements, and both groups stated that bureaucracy was a barrier to success. The ALMA students were unique in mentioning student’s diversity as a factor and two of the Non-ALMA students cited difficulty getting into required courses.

**ALMA Student Narrative Question #8.** This question asked the students if institutional limitations influenced their participation within the university community.

Both ALMA and Non-ALMA students answered that institutional limitations did adversely affect their sense of participation in the university community. Both groups blamed excessive organizational complexity in the university as a factor in impeding their sense of community.
participation. Two of the ALMA students were unique in also mentioning grade point average as a limitation factor.

**ALMA Student Narrative Question #9.** This question asked the students to describe the institutional limitations, if any, and how they influenced their participation at the university.

Both ALMA and Non—ALMA students described the large size of the university as a limiting factor on their community participation. The ALMA and Non—ALMA groups mentioned the need for additional support for departmental and faculty advising. They differed in that some of the ALMA students cited department advising problems, a lack of proper teaching training, and/or a limited number of required courses available on-line or through correspondence as limitations. Some of the Non—AMA students mentioned the structure of their major program and off-campus factors as being influential.

**ALMA Case Studies**

The ALMA case study students reported that advising is most useful when it supplies a practical structured approach that allows them to work toward their self-directed academic goals and objectives. This approach to advising was also cited as assisting in their academic recovery. ALMA, the self-directed student-centered method of advising, was used with these four students.
Because it is important for the ALMA advisor to support the student's use of self-directed learning strategies, ALMA advising emphasizes the following approach to assist the student in the deployment of self-directed planning and learning strategies (see Appendix C):

(1) Anchor all learning activities to a larger task or problem (in the case of ALMA advising). This is the student's final graduation degree audit.
(2) Support the learner in developing ownership for the overall problem or task.
(3) Design an authentic task (see ALMA advising strategy planning outline, Appendix C).
(4) Design the task and the advising approach to reflect the complexity of the environment in which the students should be able to function at the end of learning (see ALMA Advising on specific course selection, Appendix C).
(5) Give learners ownership of the process used to develop their program of study.
(6) Design the learning environment to support and challenge learners' thinking (see ALMA advising out of classroom, non-traditional, experiential learning activity requirement, Appendix C).
(7) Encourage testing ideas against alternative views and alternative contexts.
(8) Provide opportunity for support reflection on both the content learned and the problem-solving approach process itself. The emphasis is on ALMA student ownership of the learning process, developmental learning and problem-solving approaches to learning.

**Student Recommendations**

In the data collected for this study, both the ALMA and the Non-ALMA groups summarized their recommendations regarding advising and their relationships to the university. The students felt:

1. the university's seemingly excessive organizational complexities can have dehumanizing effects on the student.
2. professional advising must play a more complete and consistent role in facilitating the student's transition into the university.

To meet these demands the university needs to consider finding solutions to the problems that have developed as it has attempted to fulfill its societal obligations.

In the past century the major forces influencing university stability have been science and democracy (Gordon, 2000). In a global survey of universities, *The Economist* determined that the university is "not just a creator of knowledge, a trainer of young minds, and a transmitter of culture, but also a major agent of economic
growth" (p.4). The survey indicated that the university is not so much a moral or cultural force, but more of an incubator of new industries in a technologically dominated economy (Gordon, 200). Hence, the role of the university in society is expanding. This comes at a time when the university is already struggling to reconcile its ancient mission of "creator of knowledge" with the demands of mass education, economics and politics. How the university reconciles this issue will continue to influence its future role in society.

University Organizational Complexities

The expansion of the university role in society has been particularly difficult for the large public institution of higher education with its limited public and private resources and its public mandate for meeting the needs of the community. Here the institution finds its emphasis has grown very efficient at the cost of being effective.

In advising, this phenomenon of efficiency can materialize at the cost of being effective and providing students with a meaningful learning experience (Nutt, 2000). There is a tendency to become prescriptive in advising by handing out lists of educational material and moving on to the next student without establishing meaningful dialogue or making an advising connection with the students. This occurs
because of the scarceness of time and resources and over-
extension of advising personnel (Nutt).

Whereas there are no easy remedies to address this
issue of organizational complexity brought about by rapid
institutional growth and the university’s shifting identity,
advising can play an important role in minimizing its
effects on the students. ALMA advising implemented a system
of humanizing the process of teaching the student the use of
information technology (see Appendix G). This has enabled
the ALMA advisor and student the collection, analysis,
storage, distribution, and management of academic and
planning information. This also allows the ALMA advisor the
opportunity to pass information to the student using a
timely, accurate, and individualized advising format. ALMA
advising includes the student in the use of information
technology to problem-solve. ALMA students began to use the
Student Information System to plan for their short-term
objectives, access their academic records and begin planning
for their upcoming class registration. They also acquired
copies of their graduation degree audits and confirmed
academic requirements that were still pending with their
ALMA advisor during advising sessions. Another positive
result of self-directed learning and planning strategies was
that although the ALMA group felt a high degree of
performance-centered pressure while attending college (see
Table 4.8), as they began using university sponsored information technology to access tutoring, major exploration, and additional advising and support services, they felt more confident and they participated more as part of the larger university community (see Table 4.8). As participation in the university community increased, retention rates increased (McCalla-Wiggins, 2000). Using the ALMA student technological profile, the ALMA advisors place themselves in a position to anticipate the learners’ needs, offer information and planning assistance and coordinate institutional resources to promote student-centered development (see Appendix C).

In addition this approach puts a human face on the institution not only offering a counterbalancing to technology (organizational technology that may intimidate students) with a human response (see Appendix C). This process also reduces the student’s rejection of computer technology in advising as being cold and impersonal and replaces it with a process of humanizing the technology used by the student to be successful.

Taking this approach to the humanization of technology can even free the advisor to provide individualized services and give students assistance beyond that which is routine. The integration of information technology into the advising process helps advisors do
advising differently and can be used to varying degrees of effectiveness (Kramer, Higley, & Olsen, 1993).

The ALMA integration of information technology adds value for the student and the advising process because it places the student at the starting point for all academic advising (see ALMA Appendix C). Moreover, it requires that advisors begin and continue advising from the student-centered position, which is based upon their technological information profile (see Appendix G).

**Professional Advising**

Professional advising must play a more complete and consistent role in facilitating the student’s transition into the university. As students enter the university, they are motivated to learn after they experience needs in their life situations. During this beginning transition period, for the most part, students do not learn for the sake of learning; they learn to perform a task or solve a problem. The chief implication is the importance of organizing learning experiences (the curriculum choices, career planning, alternative learning options) around the needs in their life situation. From the outset, it is important to make clear the relevance of this connection to the student. In adult education the first task of a facilitator of learning is to develop the need to know what will be learned by the student (Knowles, 1984). It is important for ALMA
advising to approach the student's learning needs around their real life situation; however, ALMA recognizes that real life situations can involve entirely different topics depending upon the student.

Central to both the traditional and non-traditional students' transition to the university is the support they have as they move in and through the university. Support includes internal resources (such as the student's coping response) and external resources (financial stability, support from family, close friends and the university community) (Creamer, et al., 1995).

It is important for the ALMA advisor to look beyond the commonalities of student support when working with non-traditional students. Training opportunities for all advisors, faculty, and staff who will be working with older non-traditional students must be planned and incorporated into the institutional professional development Offerings, if advisors are to meet the developmental and informational needs of entering non-traditional student.

Although it is acknowledged that students will respond to some external motivators—grades, the Andragogical Model of ALMA predicates that the more potent motivators are internal self-esteem, recognition, greater self-confidence, and self-actualization. Because these internal motivators
are so important to the adult learner, the university experience of learning should be a positive one.

It is important in ALMA advising that the advising environment be collaborative, comfortable, and judgmentally free. Knowles (1984) stresses the need for both a physically comfortable environment and a positive psychological climate. If students find that in any area of decision making they are made to feel like they are being talked down to, ignored, or regarded as dumb, they feel that their opinions are not valued. In these circumstances, the student's energy then is spent dealing with this negative feeling more than with the actual learning and successful institutional transitioning.

Several major studies (Tinto, Goodsell Love, & Russo, 1993; Goodsell Love 1994; Matthews 1993; and Smith, 1991) have illustrated that collaborative advising involving the student, advisor, and faculty contribute to the integration of students both socially and intellectually into the university. This integration process serves to develop student self-directed learning skills while incorporating students into a network of university sponsored resources. Bringing together student potential for personal and academic development and the institution's vast resources and educational opportunities is the challenge of the ALMA advisor (see Appendix C).
For many students, the major source of on-going personal contact with the university comes through their interacting with their academic advisor. At large institutions such as The University of Arizona with automated processes for registration and course selection, entering students may see an advisor on a superficial manner at the point of admission. This can set a precedence for the lack of student advisor contact. Consequently, many students arrive at institutions with little knowledge of the language or practices of higher education (White, Goetz, Hunter, and Barefoot, 1995). Students need to learn the institution’s new vocabulary, such as the difference between colleges and universities. They need to understand the curricular structure, such as majors, minors, options, academic tracks and emphases as well as distinctions between baccalaureate degrees in bachelor of science and bachelor of arts degrees. It is critical for students to know the difference between officially withdrawing from school or simply not attending classes. They need to know who makes the rules, what these rules are, and who enforces them. And, most importantly, they need to be reminded of their value as well and what it takes to succeed while working within this environment.

At many universities, the student’s academic orientation into higher education is a one time event. In ALMA advising, this academic orientation is an on-going
process. ALMA advising is constructed to focus on academic advising but also integrate other components of university life into a seamless structure so that students are given the opportunity to use information, to relate this information to themselves, and to begin the critical task of assessing themselves in relation to their academic interest and abilities.

Unlike the one time student orientations, ALMA advising recognizes that a number of converging circumstances, both internal and external to the institution, arise as students change over time. ALMA advising provides the student an on-going forum to express these concerns as they occur. The increasing complexities of contemporary life which affect the student's situation in the greater university society emerge, such as diversity, health issues, drug use, conflict and violence.

It is important to stress that ALMA advising does not directly counsel students in these areas but makes it much easier to identify the university resources available to address these issues through a system of specific personal referrals that allow the student a more expedient access to these services.

The objectives of ALMA can be summarized by the following student advising expectations:

Advising must enable students to:
1) acquire a long-range overview with an awareness of short-range realities
2) identify, develop, and demonstrate skills and unique student strengths
3) make realistic choices based on information about themselves as individuals and their environment
4) investigate the basis of their choices and possible conflicts resulting from their choices
5) realize that choices affect future outcomes
6) accept the fact that the responsibility for gathering information and making choices is ultimately theirs alone.

Recommendations from Findings for Resource Allocation for Advising

According to the latest Office of Academic Services performance statistics (Garrecht, 2000), the advisors working out of OAS had a total of 8,998 individual one-on-one advising appointments during the 1998-1999 academic year. This does not include 10,031 students who OAS advisors advised at the Quick Advising Counter, nor does it include the 29,101 Non-Appointment advising contacts via phone or e-mail. In conjunction with these advising duties, each OAS advisor is assigned the responsibility for the operation of specialized programs, such as retention, pre-law, pre-medical, and readmission.
More resources must be directed to advising in general, but in particular, to finding ways to reward and train faculty serving in advising positions. Faculty advisors are a valuable and often unrecognized resource in student retention efforts. In 1993, Habley reported that 75% of the advising done in American higher education is done by faculty. Yet, Habley also found in the same study that comparatively few institutions rewarded or trained their faculty advisors. In the National Academic Advising Association (NACADA) monograph series #1 (1995) *Reaffirming the Role of Faculty in Academic Advising*, this study-survey found,

There are no appreciable gains in the use of various methods to reward or recognize faculty advisors between 1987 and 1995. Slightly more than one in ten institutions report that advising is a major consideration in promotion and tenure in all departments on their campus. Just under one in four institutions report that advising is a minor consideration in promotion and tenure in all departments on campus. (p. 15)

A subsequent follow-up on a study done by NACADA (1998), *Current Practices in Academic Advising: Final Report on ACT’s Fifth National Survey of Academic Advising*, showed minor to no change in the this trend.
The University of Arizona employs a method of advising based upon the dual advising model. This dual model of advising relies upon faculty to provide all advising in the student's major and minor programs of study. Yet the critical role of training faculty is given marginal support. These aforementioned surveys also showed that most faculty members are not trained not because of a lack of interest in advising but because of limited allocation of time and incentives.

Therefore, more time and resources are needed to provide pre-service and regular in-service programs to assist faculty in developing their advising skills. In these advising training sessions, faculty advisors can be trained in information on procedures, strategies for advising sessions, common problems, and campus rules and regulations. Advising sessions can also expose faculty advisors to individual and group advising techniques, questioning and listening skills, referral skills and student development theory.

Limitations

It is important for the reader to keep in mind that the ALMA method of advising investigated in this study was employed by only one advisor of The Office of Academic Services. There are two possible problems connected to this limitation: First, the personality and competency of that
one ALMA advisor was intimately intertwined with this method. It may be that the ALMA method may have produced better or worse results with other advisors. Second, the one university advisor who employed the ALMA method was also the investigator of this study. Therefore, the reader should be aware that while I, as the author, have consistently attempted to be objective and detached in my collection and analysis of data, there is a possibility that despite my efforts at objectivity, some bias may have unknowingly crept into my findings and conclusions.

In addition this study is limited by the relatively small number of student participants (twenty). A larger study group may have yielded additional themes and insights.

Application of Research Findings

Application of research findings in developmental advising would entail the following four points:

1. In the immediate future an ALMA Student Advisee Workbook based upon self-directed learning principles will be integrated into the author’s correspondence course, which is currently being offered through the University of Arizona Community Outreach Correspondence Program. This workbook will be a student’s how-to manual for becoming a self-directed learner in a college environment. Feedback from student surveys accompanying the correspondence course will
continue to supply current information on the undergraduate's advising needs.

2. The University of Arizona's new Integrated Learning Center scheduled to be opened in Spring 2002 could provide a research forum for using ALMA advising as a teaching tool for training faculty in student advising. The ALMA training and subsequent research on advising could examine both the practical applications of university policies and student developmental theory.

3. It would also be beneficial for the university to use the data generated from ALMA advising as a starting point for the goal of developing a truly student-centered campus-wide advising system. By using ALMA advising as a broad framework for university advising with the flexibility of adjustment for the student's self-directed needs and the advisor's degree of application, perhaps a more consistent system of delivery of advising services could be established. In turn, this would reduce the time and administrative effort put forth to address the existing extensive number of student petitions regarding inconsistent and inaccurate advising.

4. The Integrated Learning Center would also provide the technological resources to expand the ALMA advising support network as well as the technology needed to follow up on referrals made by the advisor.
General Recommendations for Future Research

Recommendations for future research of andragogy-based advising systems on a broader spectrum in higher education should include the following:

Further research and assessment of andragogy-based advising would assist in emphasizing the need for more direct student-based assessment of university/college advising services.

Further research with andragogy-based advising programs and their applications using larger numbers of student participants in higher education over an extended period of time should be considered.

Continued research between andragogy-based advising and undergraduate student learning and problem-solving approaches should be supported at a larger scale by the university's advising centers.

Research with a random selection of students advised in both the university's conventional advising manner and the andragogy-based advising and monitored for grade point average performance and student satisfaction would yield further relevant data.

Additional research evaluating the most effective manner of training faculty and advising staff in the use of andragogy-based advising would provide insight into the
possibility of developing and implementing a uniform student-centered advising program campus-wide.

Conclusion

The ALMA program is not a panacea or a silver bullet that will solve all the advising related problems and address all the advising related issues of the university. The advising problems confronted by the University of Arizona and all of higher education are vast and defy any quick fix. It will require the continued efforts of advisors, faculty, and administrators to address these issues to meet the needs of college students in the twenty first century.

What makes the ALMA advising process a significant contribution in academic advising is that it is an advising method that has evolved over the years, using problem-solving techniques employed by self-directed students in conjunction with the ALMA advisor acting as their institutional facilitator. Students' problems addressed in this study are real. They are not theoretical hypotheses. ALMA has revealed that if students are allowed to make their own self-directed choices within an advising program that empowers them to make sound academic decisions, based upon their own interests and self-recognized limitations, even the most at-risk students can be successful. The goal of ALMA is to provide a student-centered advising process that
allows students to find solutions in addressing their own problems.

A strength of ALMA advising to the advisor or faculty advisor lies in the flexibility of its application by the advisor. Depending upon the individual student-centered needs, an advisor can apply ALMA advising as an encompassing set of educational criteria or milder set of advisor recommendations and facilitating suggestions. The frequency and depth of advising is tied to the self-directed interests and needs of the student (see Appendix C).

ALMA advising has demonstrated that students can be responsible for their own behaviors. Students can be successful as a result of their individual goals and efforts. Students have a desire to learn with needs varying according to individual skills, goals, and experiences. Most importantly, students hold their own beliefs and opinions that can be used by the advisor to assist them through their self-directed undergraduate program.

Although ALMA advising is based in part on the andragogy adult learning theory, the mechanics and functional operations of this program are based on tried and historically successful advising expertise. The ALMA advising techniques utilized in this program are a by-product of twelve years of observing and learning what is effective in advising from professional peers and colleagues.
who work in student services and advise at the University of Arizona. ALMA is not the product of a controlled academic experiment in a small liberal arts college, but rather ALMA is the tough blue collar practitioner's approach to personalized developmental advising that functions within a large public institution with scarce resources. ALMA's success was earned the old fashion way and tested under the adverse circumstances that accompany an advising program that employed six full time advisors who are responsible for advising up to fifteen thousand students housed in the Colleges of Science, Social Behavioral Sciences, Humanities and University.

Even amidst the advising demands of this environment, ALMA caught the imagination of students who were seeking a more personalized method of learning at a large and somewhat impersonal educational institution.

ALMA is Spanish for the word soul. Webster defines soul, as the divine principle of life that unites us and is common to all humankind. The common denominator among us is the desire for the freedom to be self-directed in our learning. To be allowed to set our own goals and objectives and learn from our own mistakes. It is the role of higher education to provide this opportunity. It is our reward as educators to appreciate the value of the diversity that emerges when we accomplish this feat.
APPENDIX A

ALMA ADVISING OUTLINE

I. Student Orientation on ALMA
   a. General Advising Segment
   b. Self-Directed Study Skills
   c. Communication Skills:

III. Variety of Learning Activities Segment

III. Course Selection and Advising Segment
   a. Social Studies Academic Achievement
   b. Scientific Inquiry
   c. Artistic Expression

IV. Major Project
   a. Degree Certification Audit
APPENDIX B

Preface

The following is the Student-Advisor Strategy Outline for the Advising Learning Method of Andragogy (ALMA). This approach to advising uses the routine advising sessions scheduled between the student and the advisor. The approach integrates self-directed learning in decision making and collaborates dialogue aimed at promoting a climate of mutual respect, trust, and inclusiveness into the student’s academic experience.

The advisor and student collaborate on the development of the ALMA learner’s packet, which functions as the individualized student’s workbook throughout the undergraduate education experience. The ALMA learner’s packet includes developmental learning material, decision making exercises, and self-directed learning tools that will enhance the student’s curriculum and course selection choices. The process for ALMA students is one of learning to think in new ways and that college learning experiences can be evaluated and discussed with their advisor. This allows the student (particularly at larger institutions) to make important connections between their education and their personal development. This process is aimed at allowing the student to become an autonomous, responsible, self-directed learner.

The ALMA advisor has a dual role: first and primarily, the role of designer and manager of processes or learning procedures that facilitate the acquisition of content by the learner; and only secondarily, the role of content resource. ALMA advising strategy assumes that there are many resources other than the advisor, including peers, and individuals with specialized knowledge and skill in the academic community. The principle responsibilities of the ALMA advisor are to be highly knowledgeable about all these resources and to link the student with them. Students are expected to be actively involved in all aspects of their learning from mutual planning to the evaluation of their learning experience with their advisor.

My dissertation researches the use of ALMA advising through a four year longitudinal case study of four graduating seniors at a large public institution of higher education. The participants have taken an active role in this advising process, and their comments, skills in decision making, academic performance, and development as self-directed learners document and evaluate ALMA’s performance.
APPENDIX C

ALMA GENERAL ADVISING STRATEGY OUTLINE

I. Student Orientation on ALMA

a. General Advising Segment

1. To become comfortable and involved in the ALMA advising program.
2. To understand the ongoing process of career choice.
3. To set career and educational goals, and to make career and educational plans to meet those goals.
4. To learn how to be a self-directed learner.
5. To learn other college survival skills (such as study skills, time management, reading, note taking, and research skills).
6. To become acquainted with the University college’s services, procedures and personnel.
7. To understand the process of self-growth and development.
8. To meet individual significant learning objectives.

b. Self-Directed Study Skills

1. The student and the advisor will collaborate on the development of an advising program that will demonstrate the student’s ability to design and carry out study projects of their own choosing. In order to meet this objective, the student will need to evidence that the following conceptional and practical skills are being met: a. question-asking ability; b. willingness and ability to engage in self-evaluation in studies pursued; c. ability to develop suitable rationales for studies undertaken; and d. an ability to pursue such studies in a self-directed manner where in the student is the primary initiator of the learning activity. The advisor-student dialogue, self-directed learning material and decision making exercises will assist the collaborating parties in meeting these program objectives.

c. Communication Skills

1. The student and the advisor will develop materials which will evidence an ability to write effectively and intelligibly in the English
language. Students will test these skills in the university writing proficiency examination that is required of students during their sophomore year of college. This involves minimally meeting commonly accepted criteria of organization, grammar, and punctuation used in the evaluation of senior level writing material. In addition, the student will provide evidence of an active pattern of seeking to share their questions and insights with others faculty and professionals, while at the same time seeking out the communication from peers. The more general communication skills may be evident through the use of other than written media such as oral communication.

II. Variety of Learning Activities Segment:

a. The advisor and the student will develop a program that will demonstrate evidence that the student's pursued all levels of learning in the university. This will be done in a variety of ways and contexts. The formal classroom, an internship, the library, electronic research systems, the experimental laboratories or some alternative context. Reading, field surveys, and experimental research are some alternative ways of learning.

III. Course Selection and Advising Strategy Segment:

a. Social Studies Academic Achievement:

1. The advisor and the student will collaboratively develop a program of course selection that will evidence learning in the student's social studies field, such as the following: a. knowledge of commonly recognized historical and contemporary core (basic) literature and a. consequent understanding of the basic vocabulary field; b. understanding of the main theoretical concepts or perspectives in the field; c. demonstration of ability to use basic methods of investigation required for study in the social studies field and exploration of the ways of the main fields of studies relate to broader concerns (problems/issues) of contemporary or future society.

This course selection program (as well as those of science and artistic expression) will actively pursue the student's
academic and developmental interests as an objective as well as meet the university’s general education requirements.

b. Scientific Inquiry
1. The advisor and the student will collaboratively develop a program on course selection aimed to pursue the student’s understanding of the scientific method of inquiry such as the following: a. understanding the difference between objective and subjective knowledge; b. understanding of the philosophical foundations of science. This understanding involves knowing about the beliefs and assumptions scientists have regarding the order of the universe and the relationship between phenomena. c. The course selection program will enable the student to understand the basic ingredients of an experimental paradigm. This understanding involves knowing what a basic experiment looks like and the factors which must be taken into account in the construction of an experiment; d. The advisor and the student will develop a course selection strategy that will allow the student an understanding of how science relates to their world. What science means to them as a person.

c. Artistic Expression:

1. The student and the advisor will collaboratively develop a course selection strategy that will assist the student to understand more the artistic process as it is expressed in the fine arts (for example, painted, sculpture, theater, architecture, dance, literature, and music). The student will seek to develop the skills to understand art in one of two ways: a. Understand the artistic process that can be gained through experience with a medium. b. Develop an understanding of the artistic process that can be gained through the investigation of some aspect of the fine arts from the perspective of the critic. (by the examination of the works of others).

IV. Major Project

a. The student and the advisor will set as a major project the student’s degree certification audit processed in the student’s last year at the University. This process will confirm completion of
quality work that the student has demonstrated toward meeting their self-directed academic goals. This project will demonstrate that the student has met the goal that higher education be participatory in nature. The student is more than a consumer of what earlier scholars and artists have offered. The student is interactive with the advising program and their academic curriculum, as well as setting and meeting their own personal goals for self-development.
APPENDIX D
ALMA LIKERT STUDENT SURVEY

On the scale below each question, place an X in front of the number, which best matches your response to the question.

1) Do you find that past learning experiences have guided your adjustment to university life?

   Strongly Disagree       Strongly Agree

   1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

2) To what degree do you find self-direction of your academic choices important?

   Strongly Disagree       Strongly Agree

   1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

3) Would you say your approach to problem solving has changed since high school?

   Strongly Disagree       Strongly Agree

   1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

4) When registering for classes do you think more about the routine of your schedule than about actual course content?

   Strongly Disagree       Strongly Agree

   1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
5) Have university sponsored resources assisted you in making decisions?

**Strongly Disagree**  **Strongly Agree**

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

6) Do you feel that the university allowed you access to information necessary to make decisions and choices?

**Strongly Disagree**  **Strongly Agree**

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

7) As a student, have you found someone you can speak regarding problem-solving and making decisions?

**Strongly Disagree**  **Strongly Agree**

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
APPENDIX E

ALMA STUDENT NARRATIVE RESPONSE

Please respond in a brief narrative to the following questions:

1) What experiences have assisted you in making decisions concerning your education?
   Answer

2) How have these experiences guided your academic choices at the university?
   Answer

3) Has your approach to problem solving changed since attending the university?
   Answer

4) If so, how has this problem solving process changed?
   Answer
5) As a college student do you feel more of a performance-centered pressure than you felt when in high school? 
Answer

6) What university departments have influenced your decisions during your education? 
Answer

7) Have you encountered institutional limitations? 
Answer

8) Have these limitations influenced your sense of participation with the university community? 
Answer

9) If so, describe them and how? 
Answer
Case Study / Journal – How I was Successful Throughout College

As I look back on college, I know that I was different from a lot of the other students. Not because of my background, or my ethnicity, it was because of my academic history. I didn’t get a scholarship from high school, nor was I top of my class. I was just an average student.

It is a fact in my family that everyone goes to college. There are no questions, or conversations weighing out the options of what to do after high school. I never thought twice about not going to school. Both of my parents went to the U of A, and so did my sister; With this in mind I never thought to go to another University besides the University of Arizona.

How I was accepted into college was with the help from a wonderful advisor, Ms. Duttz. She went through my application backwards and forwards many times, and was able to help me get into “New Start” at the U of A. This way, I was able to get into College knowing that I was already being “watched”, because I had to take preliminary courses.

When I was a Freshman, I was dating my boyfriend from high school. He joined a fraternity along with his other friends. My best friends didn’t attend U of A, they went to NAU. I didn’t join a Sorority, I was never interested in that sort of thing. So basically I was alone at the university, except for my friend that I met at New Start (Jenn – who we hit it off and became best friends automatically).

Freshman year I concentrated on school, but it really wasn’t my focus. My focus was going to “Date Dashes” with my boyfriend, and basically trying to figure out my level of importance with him. Before the year ended we had broken up. He made it clear to me that I was not at all what he wanted. He started smoking Pot and tried other drugs.
with his new found friends, not to mention all the girls that he had a chance to be with. He broke my heart... I was devastated! I lost 14 lbs. In one week. I couldn’t do anything except cry. But from that heartache, I learned so much... No guy is ever worth that many tears! Plus someone always better will come around next.

During freshman year my grandfather became very ill (96 years old at the time, suffering from a stroke, and Prostrate Cancer). Every day someone from our immediate family had to go to his house to take care of him – feeding, bathing, etc... He was too stubborn at the time to move in with us, and him living on 6th and Michigan (by the Rodeo Grounds) and us living at Skyline and Ina. It was quite a commute.

While everything was happening in our family with my grandfather, it was very difficult to keep up the stamina needed in school. So during all of this chaos with relationships and family, I went to see an advisor. I signed up for anyone who cold see me, Larry Espinoza. At the time I thought it was going to be a rush in/rush out appointment, but it wasn’t. I took extra time to get me on a program to follow and to guide me through my destination – graduation. He took time to get to know me, and made me feel I could get through college. After this meeting, I felt as if someone actually cared at the U of A as to what I was going through. It was such a relief to speak with someone in a real caring conversation instead of dealing with the “typical U of A employee attitude” – you just need to wait in line to get quick answers and be thought of just as your student ID number. Most people don’t care who you are or what your story is, but Larry did. I felt not only as though he was my advisor, but my friend as well.

During my Sophomore year I worked very hard at my classes and school work with our new routine at home. I was being successful with my classes, and being diligent by seeing Larry every semester. Every thing seemed to be going smoothly with out any crucial distractions.

The summer after Sophomore year the was a terrible distraction in my life. It was my turn to visit my grandfather and take care of him. when I found him he was face down on the couch clutching his heart. He made me promise him that I wouldn’t take him to the hospital, he wanted me to take him to my parents house. “I want to die at home with my family”, after saying this he made me promise I wouldn’t take him to the hospital. Of course I respected his wishes...... This is when my life turned upside down.
When we moved my grandfather in with us, he basically took over my room. Which was fine by me because he was happy and comfortable. However it did make me homeless. I moved into the laundry room, which was very cramped and uncomfortable. This didn’t bother me or my parents because my grandfather’s well-being was at stake. Since my priority was my grandfather, my school work became my last. I tried to concentrate at school, but it really didn’t matter what I tried to do. My grades were falling and my interest in school was hardly there. By the end of fall Junior year I was on academic probation. I kept up with my appointments with Larry, listened to all of the great advice and tried to get on track.

My family rearranged their schedule on more time — My father worked at 6:30am, my mother worked at 10:30am, so that left me changing my classes at school to be between the hours of 7:00 – 11:00 am. Between the early morning classes, and then being the afternoon sitter of my grandfather, it was overwhelming not only to me but my whole family. This was the routine for about a year.

Needless to say my studies stayed the same, and again I was on academic probation the following semester. I was being kicked out of school! Once again I went to Larry, but this time in tears not knowing what I was supposed to do. He said to me with a smile and a hug, “You’re not out yet, don’t worry we’ll work together to keep you in school.” At that moment I felt as if an ton of bricks were lifted from my shoulders. For a couple of hours, Larry helped me with my essay to the committee that reviews all of the probationary students. He even wrote them a letter in my behalf. After a week of nightmares of not knowing what was going to happen, they called with the good news that I would be admitted back in school with stricken conditions. I was ecstatic! From then on I kept my grades up as best I could (with passing grades) while dealing with my family problems.

Late September of my Senior year during finals I had a bad Asthma attack. My doctor told me I had to miss school for the rest of the week. I was panicked that I was going to miss three finals, but it was meant to be that I stay home. The day after I was studying all morning while everyone went to work. It was just me and my grandfather who were at home that day. After helping him go to the restroom, I put him back to bed. he seemed to have fallen asleep right away. Two hours later I went to check on him, and
I didn’t see the sheets move up and down to see if he was breathing or not. I immediately called my dad at work and told him what was happening. He told me to check his pulse — nothing! I pleaded with him not to call 911 because I was so scared... But he did. 911 called me there were very nice but had me do CPR. I was hysterical! No one discusses what happens when someone dies — what they look like. What rigor mortis is etc... It was obvious that he had passed away a couple hours previous to when I found him because he was so cold. But I know I had to do CPR and everything else. After about ten minutes the paramedics came and asked me if I wanted them to revive him — but he would be brain dead. I said no, signed the death certificate, and about that time my sister and my dad arrived at the same time. I felt as if I did something wrong, or maybe the feeling was that I was having a breakdown right then. I don’t really know.

That’s basically a long story but shortened of what happened that day. It was all over with in just a week, with the funeral and everything. My sister and I were two of the Pall Bearers, which was a very nice experience. But all in all was the most tragic experience I have ever been through. There isn’t a day that goes by still that I don’t think of my grandfather, or what happened that day.

After the whole ordeal was over I concentrated on school and finally graduated. I still feel that the main reason I succeeded through school during this time with my grandfather being ill was Larry. It was a breath of fresh air every time going to see him, because he never judged me, never put me down, or never made me feel ashamed of my grades. He was always my supporter, and always made me feel proud of what I have achieved.

Moving my tassel over during graduation was the best feeling I think I have ever felt. Knowing all the heartache, headaches, and hard work I had to put in towards graduating. I know with out an advisor like Larry I would have fallen through the cracks of the “system”. But Larry as an advisor knows everyone has their own story and a life outside of school. You’re not just another number to him, he actually does care. And you know that he care just by meeting him you can tell within seconds that he’s really listening to you, instead of getting through the appointment to the next.

I feel so strong about Larry and him believing in his students, that I have referred my current boyfriend (who I’m head over heals with, and know he’s the one) to him. He
has decided to go back to school and was very nervous, until he met Larry. I feel he will be getting the same superb advising that I received.

So in all that is how I got through college for my BA. now since I finally have a permanent position I will be taking advantage of their school reimbursement to maybe get my masters. I have definitely learned that you can achieve anything with determination, diligence, and a person who believes in you.
Did you find that your past experiences in life prepared you for the university? I like to say that my life experiences are not related to my formal education. But one thing for sure it is that the time that I had been a student in the University of Arizona it has been and always will be a challenge with rewarding and positive results. Why do I think that it is a challenge it is for fact that the system it is not simple to grasp and before the system can be understand probably takes approximately the same time that takes to graduate. The fact that I had to be familiar and try to understand the insides and outsides of the university system then this institution definitely it is a difficult place to receive an education.

Have your past experiences in life helped you cope with the university or hindered you? The experiences that I had are okay and those experiences had been in many different forms. When a problem arise I always try not to focus on the problem. Instead I become more open mind and try to find a way that may make the situation less stressful; also I try not to confront the problems by my self, which definitively will be impossible for me to cope with the struggles. One problem that I find very difficult it is the fact that I as a student I had to please the professors which are the ones that have control over my learning with the subject of studying. The worst problems that had not find out a solution for it is the rejection from the classroom, this is a individual behavior that are been practiced by some of the instructors, and some professors.
My experiences in the university are many and probably I will never forget those specially the times that I was put down by some professors. One of my first experiences in the university it is when I transferred from Pima college to the summer transferring institute program. In 1995 I was required to register to a class, and the orientation was very intimidating. These individuals probably are living in the 1848, on the times of white supremacy. Their philosophy it is that a new student will be a failure, then I struggle to understand their point of view so I was persuaded not to continued in the class. The problem then was that the professor don't like to have the obligation of guiding its student in stead they like to put the burden of the class to the "TA." This is hard for me since they are students too. Also they have open door for mistakes and there is no rules or regulations to prevent that the "TA's" to practice racism. More to these are some of the situations that I had to learn new ways to ignore the mistreatment which it is most verbally. But in the long run can and may become a psychological mistreatment I have experience the rejection from class room by professors, base on my looks. So verbally they tray to put me down by saying to me "you wont do well in this class, I suggest to you to droop from this class" from the Sociology department. Because of your form of writing I don't want you in my class" English. "We need to be aware of you" "you are a communist" from the department of Psychology.
" I will give to you and "I", but even if you do the remaining work, I am not giving you a passing grade" from the department of FS. " You have an accent no one will understand what you say" from the department of FS.

In relation to my education with in the university, my experiences can be considered as a form of obstruction; or may be interpreted in a form of restraining in trying to have or to keep control to the person rights to obtain the same opportunity when dealing with education.

Has your approach to problem solving changed since you been to the U of A? This is a good question and if I had to respond then the answer is a yes. One and most important it is not my approach to problem solving, because this is not sample, in stead I like to say that no one that my have my characteristics will be able to solve a problem in the grounds of the university. But I honestly think that those who deserve the credit for their guiding are those individuals that are tray to provide personal support and are waling to guided me as a student since I may not understand why the behavior of some individual may be interfering with may education. Their work it is the most important if we the student dot have any one to help us the student may be, I may not graduate from this institution. But more important it is the fact that these individuals like to help the students, with guiding suggesting, and by implementing new strategic.
Their support is what propelled me in the struggling for learning the subject material related to my education. I think that without a help from them, I won't be able to be typing this report which I am happily doing.

Have you changed in how you approach the academic, personal problem in your life since being at the U of A? To the question is yes the challenge was then to try to find ways to understand that I am a student and that I must learn to use the negative attitudes also their behavior from those incidents. I try to use them in a positive way. For example, if I encounter an instructor that disagree with my thinking, then I go to his office all the time. This approach has helped me to get to know the teacher and to be able to communicate with the person in his office hours. This has help some how. More to are my experiences that I will never forget about and that is the fact that my problem solving has to be in a form of analyzing those individuals that surrounded me in the institution. I became more aware that if a person talk to me in a tone of voice that was not appropriate I stop trying to obtain services from those individuals.

What factor influenced your decision making at the U of A? One of the factors that influenced me is that I learn the necessity and how important is of having a relationship with one counselor. There is no question, that success will be obtained only by following his suggestions to the latter, and to due as I agreed to follow all recommendation's.
How have they done so, why? I think that definitely it is my counselor the one that deserves credit, I only need to have a positive attitude and to trust my counselor. I realize that my behaviors is not perfect, but I have the ability to adapt, and to make changes to obtain positive results, but all goals that I may have planed I may not be able to achieve by my self. Most important has been the support from Larry Espinoza he is the expert in counseling and advising when my education it is exposed to a loss or to a threat from the system of education. I due consider Mr. Espinoza to be a part of my goal planing. I think that by learning the teacher attitude and their behavior and by implementing some of the behavior modification models with my positive attitude, the results all ways will be a positive out come. More to I think that I as a humans need the guiding from this individuals with in the university and to be able to present the situation that may be creating a problem with my education. Some of my problems that I had to present to my counselor were more related to situations that take place with in the class, like difficulty to grasp the information from a class, or some times when I been rejected from a class. Then I had to present the situation to my counselor Larry D. Espinoza. Most important is that he all ways have encouraged me with new ideas and ways to find a solution to the problem, specifically with problem related to my education.
Provide examples and descriptions on how you deal with academic and personal at the U of A? So as an old adult I had learn that it is not good to request service from a person that may appear or demonstrates racial attitudes, or may dislike minority individuals in my situation would be Mexican American. One example is that I need financial assistance to further my education, so I need to communicate to the persons that work in this are, so what I have discovered is that there are few persons that they may think that they own the place. Once I request help and the person that was talking to me this person say to me "you don know" "I due because I work here" to that I responded to the person please donut treat me like ignorant! Then the person say "well I can not help you then" so I request to speak with the director of the finance department, which the person provided solution to my situation the problem was that I was refusing the award that they give to me, in stead I requested a State incentive wish it is more money to assist the students with their education. To the fact I have implemented a new approach when comes to problem solving, I had learn to develop a relationship only with one individual with in the departments that I have to deal with, so by this I mean only one person, because I had discovered that if I communicate with different individual, they all ways give different answers.
Have you found people at the U of A you could speak to about this? To the question I may say no, I think that the people that work in the University are not working to solve my problems, that may be affecting or may be connected to my education. The institution have rules and regulations, but are more design to segregate students, so in my opinion my problems can not be solve. From the time that I have been student in the University I realize that I am educating my self and my problems may be part of the my educational learning, like attitudes and behaviors, I have encounter many problems, but there has been no solution too them. In contrast too I communicate with some persons, not about my problems but more tour a new approach for the future, in my opinion time is a factor that I need to consider. Finely I think that the most important part in education it is the guiding that I may obtain from my academic advisor, this person is the one that I need to trust, in my opinion when this person suggest I consider his suggestion and his advising like it is one of my own decision's. What this person recommends is what I all ways due. In doing as he recommends brings satisfaction and prevents conflicts, more to provide solutions to any educational situations that my be part of the University as an educational institution. This I have learn from my advisor Larry D. Espinoza to focus on my strong points, to have positive attitude, and to find out more from the professor, his recommendation have provide solution to my problems in dealing with my education.
The act of learning at the University level has been by itself an adventure. In the more than ten years of studying, pushing, and dredging my brain to learn exactly as the professors wanted, I became knowledgeable of the learning process with eventual success. How I was able to accomplish this should be explained in a historical timetable of my beginnings through end at the University.

I remember the first words my professor told his English 101 summer bridge class during the summer of 1987, "Forget everything you learned in high school." And here I was thinking I knew it all. What became the reality of being in college was a relearning of everything I thought I knew in high school, which became evidently clear, "Nothing." Papers that were once grade A in high school became nothing more than red ink and criticism from professors. A defining blow to the old confidence level. From that point on it became a struggle not only to find the good grades but where exactly I fit into the so called "college life."

I received a "C" in my first college course: it seemed to be an O.K. start. Yet, I had noticed that the amount of study time I should have been spending on class became time spent wandering around campus trying to find a niche to settle into. I can honestly say I really don't know if more study time would have helped or not. It was bad enough looking for parking, finding new friends (acquaintances) and figuring out what I wanted from the University, with an education, lifestyle and future.
well in getting consistent D’s or F’s. I tried studying, group studies with a friend and finally even a peek on someone else’s test. I wound up getting a D. I know now there was tutoring available (free) but I didn’t pursue how or didn’t want to know how I could get tutoring (self-confidence). My MIS111 class was worse. My self-confidence was so low I didn’t show up to my final because they had moved the class. I knew what it was like walking in late to a class full of 500 students and my morale/character (shyness) wouldn’t let me do it. I ended up failing that class; the GPA continued to take hit after hit, until I wound up on probation.

Probation, now what a kick in the ass that was. Not only does it put you in a unique group of students, it was a labeler as well. An identifier for not only fellow students to label you as, but faculty as well. I felt like a complete idiot. I needed to perform now and get up to speed with the rest of the institution. Easier said than done. The second semester went a little better. I took a flag football course and started to meet people. Grades on the other hand still continued to decline. I began to study a bit more but was not comprehending the big picture. Slowly I was being forced out of the college life by my insecurities and being able to fit in. The maturity was not there to grasp at what was needed to succeed.

It was after this semester I received my second probation. I went to academic advising in the College of Arts and Sciences in hopes of getting some answers to obtain help and guidance to no
It seemed that no one had answers or did not care to help me find any answers. I went away feeling that no one could help with my academic problems. The second probationary period was even worse than the first. This was the point where the first group of people I was labeled with filtered out into a whole new group of students on the verge of virtual educational wipeout. It was in this group where I had the not so pleasant arranged meeting with the dean. After this meeting I became "advised" that if I didn't get the act together than it was going to be a slap on the ass by the door on the way out. A perpetual hell of ridicule by friends, family, and society. I became my own worst friend. The so called performance level was now at an all time high. The second probation means I had to take time management courses, meet once a week with a group of other students on the way out, and listen to their tales of woe all the while keeping my grades up. Unfortunately my level of maturity was not up to par as were most of the other students and it seemed as if not one of us cared at all.

It was around this time that a friend of mine lined me up a job working retail at the local Factory 2-U and I met my girlfriend now wife. What a predicament this turned out to be. My close friend was getting good grades, and I was skimming my way at the top of the sludge pile. I now had a girlfriend that educationally was not a good idea. It could have been a good idea if it was managed properly but as in most relationships I found that it was a hell of a lot better spending time with her and work (not necessarily work)
getting what all college student's wanted(laid) rather than studying. I knew my performance had to improve or I was gone but I just couldn't accomplish that feat.

To remain in school the probation stipulation was for me to attend half time classes at Pima Community College. Another shot at the diminishing self-worth and respect I had as a University student. I could not comprehend that community college students were just like myself, they wanted an education to better themselves. Ignorance had the best of me, how could someone like myself be in a community college I thought. How blind could one individual be to the process of obtaining an education? I know now that it is the baby steps that lead you to the top and eventual success.

The next semester was filled with work, relationship and school. Classes were becoming enjoyable, something was being understood; a meaning of some rather social life embedded within the institution of learning. School had become fun. What was more of a shock was while learning and a relationship was fun, the outcome of the relationship was about to produce a new life. This effect put an enormous amount of stress upon school. A pregnancy took the last ounce of energy from me. I couldn't eat, sleep let alone study or concentrate. What was I to do? What I did, was pass most classes with C's and D's but I also failed one course (public speaking). I knew what was in store for me--a disqualification from school for six months. During that time I did not complete a speech
(the final) and failed. I sought out the professor explaining my
dilemma but what I received back was a callous remark and a flat
out "no" for any remakes. In a nutshell I was gone, kicked out of
the university, an institution I respected but could not grasp. It
was time for some reflection with the thoughts of raising a child,
my responsibility was as a father now. It was of no importance how
badly I truly felt for being a dropout and a failure to learning,
than being able to grow up, see my mistakes and go on.

Eight months had passed, a promising job (warehouseman) was
landed in July for preparations of the upcoming changes and in
December of 1989 my life changed forever with the birth of my
daughter. It was then that school became out of sight but
definitely not out of mind. While working I constantly had my
thoughts on finishing school; it was a dream and later an
obsession.

I worked through a couple of spring and fall semesters and in
approximately the following year I decided to make the leap back
into school. The first step was the desire to go back and learn.
After two years of working, I wanted more. My job as a warehouseman
taught me that I did not want to continue at that level for a long
time. The object became to move up in the business world; that
could only be accomplished with an education and experience.

My wife and I both decided to go back to school her full time
and myself part-time while working. The first task was seek out a
new advisor after previous and numerous other individuals had been
respectively discarded due to lack of knowledge, and/or advice. Finally, I had met an outstanding advisor with the compassion and willingness to help me through my academic problems. I began the upward climb by taking a half-time load and usually dropping down to one class after a month or so. At this rate it was going to take time and patience.

Working full time and attending night class was a first but it kept me focused on class. After talking to my advisor (John Doe) or (Larry) whichever you prefer, the course of action was primarily getting off probation and then fulfilling the department/college requirements. The only possible way to do this was getting good grades, at least B’s, to slowly climb out of the deep crevices of academic probationary hell.

The first class back I believe was Art History 118. It began around 7:00 P.M. and ended at 9:50 P.M. one night a week. Right after work I would jaunt home, change, eat, say hello and good-bye then off to class. Some nights I remember falling asleep (for mere momentary lapses) but dozing off nonetheless. Yet, I continued to study and work. I even did extra credit and wound up with a "B." Yes it became possible to earn a good grade, work and raise a family. Dedication to the dream was the key ingredient to a new beginning of learning.

I continued on this trend of one or two classes for a year or so meeting with my advisor three to four times a year. Juggling three schedules was extremely tough and painful but the more I did
it, the more I matured, seeing the light at the end of the tunnel. After another "B" I received some C's but I still progressed. Also during this period another child came along and I began climbing the chain of command at work from warehouseman to warehouse manager. More responsibilities meant more dedication to work, family and school. At this juncture, I decided to try a full time load, half at the community college and half at the university, on the advice of my advisor (again, the so called John Doe).

At this point I must reiterate that after three to four and sometimes five meetings with my advisor throughout the year, a certain bond was created and maintained. After each meeting I was so encouraged to accomplish my goals I reeked of self confidence. It was those meetings that strengthen my resolve for an education. I cannot stress enough of the importance of my advisor, not only in my academic life but also in essence a type of spiritual life as well. I believe there was a deep respect for the time and understanding that came forth from every meeting, conversation that a mutual friendship occurred.

Full time school while working close to fifty hours a week and maintaining a household with my wife who was at school also was a blessing. Every night was school and studying no time for breaks. I think this helped a lot as I was to busy for anything else but. The semester grades were my best to that point one C two B's and an A. Good grades and again progression did have its rewards but there were some drawbacks. My wife became pregnant with our third child,
we never saw each other and work became ever more constant with increased hours and workload. What a burnout it all became, I dropped out for one semester to catch my breath.

I continued to mature at work with added responsibilities and a new promotion to sales. It was at this point the understanding of communication and shyness with people slowly dissipated. Learning was coming not only from school but the business and outside world as well. The adult world became all too clear and it was so much more different from just being a student and working. A professional I had become, maturing in ways of understanding the business world more and dealing with it.

It was during this time that it was decided my wife would go all out full time and complete her education while I worked, exclusively. Once completed it would be my turn to go back full time and do the same. I agreed, worked and handled the kids (3) for a semester but just couldn’t find myself being out of school. I had to pursue it, the quest. I found myself bringing my backpack with me everywhere I went, a reminder that school was not completed. I went back to school again on a half-time class load a semester deal, infuriating the wife, as scheduling classes between both of us became a nightmare. I received "C’s" on those classes I took, I look back and see I could have done so much better if I concentrated more on the school and not on everything else around me at the time. There was a gap of about a year or two of this continuous vacuum of scheduling classes, work and family time.
A struggle it was, work was tedious and becoming more and more something I did not want to do. Do not get me wrong; I was very good at what I did, made good money and was very loyal. It just wasn’t making me happy nor was it in the field I wanted to be in (all the more reason for the pursuit of the degree). On top of this family problems had cropped up, two near divorces (very close) and financial burdens kept school and learning stalled. I attended night school now for five or so years slowly working my way off probation, completing my required courses and working off some of my political science courses.

It was time for a change. My wife graduated in May of 1996 with the marriage on rough cycle and I made the decision I was going to quit that fall of 1996 and pursue my schooling. Again by keeping in touch with my advisor, after each meeting it was like a new lease on life, an "anything could be accomplished", attitude came forth. During these rough times his words were inspirational and I wanted to keep going with school.

Well, it didn’t quite work out as planned but this was to my benefit. I took one class in the fall (a political science class) worked out my marriage problems (maturity helped in this endeavor) and put in my notice in November that I would be attending school full time in the spring. This was the beginning of the last phase in the learning process and maturity into, I believe, that of adulthood or some higher state of understanding.

The spring of 1997, I began a full time status as nothing but
a pure student. I wanted to learn, I was not afraid, not of the surroundings, intimidations, nothing. I wanted to learn, to achieve, to finally accomplish the "Feat." I began to catch on to the little tricks of becoming a good student. I attended every class, listened intently, took notes, reread them, read my material and talked freely to my professors openly, knowing I was and could be just as professional as they were. The professor became more of a tool for the actual understanding of the material. I had noticed that if a study session was arranged by the professor or teaching assistant it was invaluable right before a test. Most if not all of what was to be covered by the session was exactly what was on the test or what the professor wanted to be explained in the test.

I did so well the first semester back I was off probation. I did notice that my writing skills were not up to par though as years of work diminished some writing essentials. In time, improvement was of some proportion. I had finished my Political Science requirements that first semester back and went on to my real enjoyment of History. This made learning more fun and challenging. I was able to see things more clearly with more objectivity; not everything was black and white. My study habits continued to improve with each passing class and more so the self-confidence was brimming.

A new height in maturity was taking place, an enjoyment with life and a sense of direction was being affirmed. Successful grades that were few and far between became frequent and easier to obtain.
My relationships with others became more real and defined and my wife and I became the best of friends. School and my understanding and relationship with the institution were defining my outside life as well; clear, concise and obtainable. The grades continued to improve with each semester back and by the summer of 1998 I was receiving straight A's. Reading the material, acquainting myself to the processes of learning it and what the professor wanted to teach was, for the first time, revolving as one process and not a multitude of tasks. And so it came to pass that I finally accomplished my dream of graduating. With that understanding and direction I also want to further my education and receive a master's degree in the future.

The process of learning was by far broken into segments of maturity, understanding and self confidence. I went through periods of maturation that culminated with the experience obtained at the University. With the experience of outside influences surrounding the educational experience be it work, family, acquaintances or one hell of an advisor, all shaped my growth of understanding the learning process and taking something out of it that fit my life. There were so many obstacles that the institution of higher learning forced at me be it directly or indirectly that it took years of maturity and outside experience to knock those barriers down. I now know that I will be able to accomplish anything I set out to do by using all that I have learned from my life and educational experiences. Finally, by allowing people to help
especially professors, advisors and outside influences in a positive manner with your will and desire to accomplish a particular task, you have just found the keys to becoming successful.
My adventure with the University of Arizona began in 1993 when I was a senior in high school, and I was first accepted into the University. However, after being accepted to the UofA and various other schools, I chose to go to Cosmetology School and move out on my own. I spent the next three years waiting tables and cutting hair and living on my own in a small apartment in Ocean Grove New Jersey.

In the summer of 1995, I had become heavily involved in a very dangerous lifestyle of drugs and alcohol, and I woke up one morning weighing a hundred pounds, and I knew that I had to change my life or I was going to die. So, being that I came from an affluent upper middle class white family where both my parents and sister have college degrees, I decided I would turn my life around go to college and live off of my parents for four years. However, I had to do so far away from the friends I had made in Jersey, because I would never be able to stop using drugs if I stayed there. I applied to the U, and bugged the dean of Arts and Sciences every week, until he finally said okay, pack your stuff and come out to orientation on August 22nd, or there about. So off I went across country with my father in my little car to start a new life in Arizona at the UofA (one of the biggest party schools in the country).

I did not do much research on the school, my main purpose for attending it was because it was in a place in the country two thousand miles away from home, and it was sunny all year round. I did very well my first semester, 3.3 GAP, however, it did not take me long to figure out where the drugs were, and I began to party again. My grades took a nose dive, and no one really acknowledged it among the University faculty or staff. But I did, and after a year of GRO ing and reaching one point above academic probation, I went to Larry Espinoza, an advisor that a friend of mine had recommended. Up until this point, I had declared myself an Anthro major, because I felt pressured at orientation to declare a major, even though I had absolutely no clue as to what I wanted to be when I grew up.

My experience at the U up to this point was very bureaucratic, and I was not much more than a number to many of the people at the University. I had not been contacted by any individual nor had I really sat down with anyone and tried to find a path for myself and my studies. I knew about academic probation and what GPA was the cut off for that because several of my friends were on it. I thank God, I woke up when I did, one point above and decided to try and figure this crap out.

I met with Larry, and off the bat he treated me like a person. He wanted to know what was happening with me, and if I knew why my grades had slipped. He also was very reassuring to me that all was not lost, there was hope for my academic career, and that I had the ability to pull myself up. He reassured me by sharing his own academic experiences with me, and by sharing his stories of his life. This is the kind of people the University system needs more of, people who haven’t forgotten how to be human and how to treat other human beings.

Larry also told me of a degree plan in which he would work along side of me, we would devise it together, and I didn’t have to narrow or limit myself to just one major and one minor. I was relieved, because I felt like I was incapable of narrowing down my focus of studied, I had
many diverse interests, and I believed in my heart that each one was valid, and that they could be joined to create a cohesive whole; and in the end they did.

I worked closely with Larry for the next three years of my journey through the UofA. I was accepted as an IDS major with my study areas being in Anthropology, Creative Writing, Sociology and the humanities. I firmly believe that I got a valuable education at the University of Arizona, but only because I was allowed to design my own program of study, and I was allowed to be a human being. The next three years were difficult for me. Not only did I get a textbook education, I got many life affirming lessons. I confronted an eating disorder, and I got myself into recovery for my drug and alcohol addiction. None of this was with the help of the University, nor was my assistance associated with the University. Only one time did I have a teacher, Donna Swaim, who confronted me in her office and asked for an explanation as to why my grades went from A’s to D’s within the short time period of a few weeks.

I graduated on May 17th of this year, and my entire family, including my grandmother, were here to see me in my cap and gown. When I got that degree in the mail a month later, I cried. I never in a million years had the faith in myself that I could accomplish anything remotely close to a college degree. Four years ago I was so lost, spiritually, emotionally, and intellectually, that I was hopeless. I am grateful that I chose to come to Arizona and the UofA, because I believe that every journey I take has a purpose and is meaningful to my own personal purpose here on earth. I had to go through everything I did in my life in order to be the strong, self-assured, and beautiful person I am today. However, I would not recommend the UofA to anyone who is thinking of sending their child here. It is full of upper-class privileged children who are continuously partying and trying to skate through life. The faculty and staff, I can speak more highly of. In my last year, I was blessed with some pretty wonderful individuals who showed an interest in me as a person, and who encouraged me to be who I am on a daily basis, and to go for my dreams. In a big University such as the UofA, I think that it is too easy to get lost in all the numbers and forget that we are dealing with impressionable human beings. However, I have hope for the U because of people like Larry, and Donna, who do reach out to the students who walk into their office, and who do help them to achieve their potential, because they have compassion for the students and each other as well as a passion for their work. I talk with people a lot who have graduated from the U, and they have a much more narrow, impersonal memory of their years here, but I have a different, more personal, and more significant memory of the past four years of my life at the University of Arizona, and for that, I am grateful. The past four years were full of growth and today, as I start a professional job in the field of behavioral sciences, I sit and wonder how the hell I ever made it this far, because I never imagined I would be here. I wasn’t good enough to be here, but today, I know in my heart I am in the exact place where I am supposed to be and I will do a damn good job for the organization who now employs me.
APPENDIX G

ALMA HUMANIZATION OF INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

THE STUDENT ACADEMIC PROFILE

Step 1. Establishing the ALMA student’s Academic Profile.

Consider the student’s academic strengths, and needs the ALMA advisor can utilize the student’s SAT, ACT scores, grades from transfer course work done at other schools, and any information the student or SALT or CEDDR (centers for learning disability diagnosis) can provide. Much of this information is online.

Step 2. Student Profile should be a collaborative effort involving the student and ALMA advisor.

Communicate with the student. Recommend courses based upon the student’s academic preparation this is the beginning of establishing a student-institutional fit. Walk through the computer pre-registration procedures with student.

Step 3. Making the Academic Connection between the student and institution.

Identify campus resources, services, and other opportunities for campus involvement based on the student’s expressed interests and needs. Walk through with the student the computer access procedure to identify these resources.

Step 4. Making the important faculty connection.

Provide the student with the name, campus address, phone #, and email address of the assigned faculty advisor. If necessary include a student note of introduction from the advisor to the faculty member. Walk through the email access and campus map locating the assigned faculty member’s location.

Step 5. Completing the student’s Academic Profile.

By completing a Student Academic Profile in advance the ALMA advisor is freed from the labor intensive data retrieval process. More importantly the ALMA advisor is freed to listen, reason, personalize, speak, smile and individualize and humanize the student’s advising process.
REFERENCES


Garrecht Gasen, S. (September 18, 2000), Overtaxed system needs fix. Arizona Daily Star. Section B.


