

# **COLLEGE AND CAREER READINESS: EXPLORING PERCEPTION AND MOTIVATION**

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COLLEGE AND CAREER READINESS: EXPLORING PERCEPTION AND MOTIVATION

A Field Study Report

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The College of Graduate Studies

Austin Peay State University

In Partial Fulfillment

Of

The Requirements for the Degree

Education Specialist

Sarah Coyne

December, 2016



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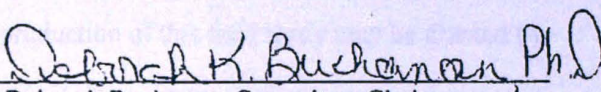
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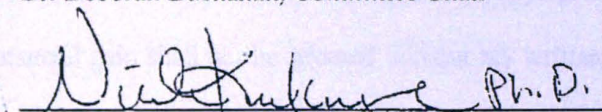
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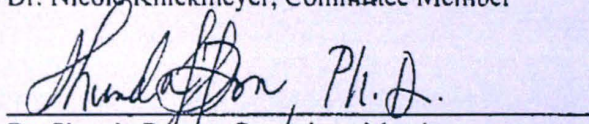
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Dr. Deborah Buchanan, Committee Chair

  
Dr. Nicole Knickmeyer, Committee Member

  
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Accepted for the Graduate and Research Council

  
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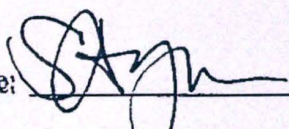
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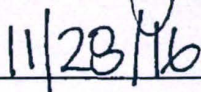
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Data Analysis and Coding.....	27
Summary .....	28
CHAPTER IV .....	30
FINDINGS .....	30
Overview .....	30
College and Career Readiness Challenges .....	30
Procrastination.....	31
Scheduling.....	32
Attitude.....	34
Assessing College and Career Readiness.....	35
Motivation.....	35
Perception.....	36
Supporting College and Career Readiness in High School.....	37
Experiences.....	38
Guidance .....	39
Paying for college.....	42
Summary .....	44
CHAPTER V.....	46
DISCUSSION .....	46
Overview .....	46
Implications and Recommendations .....	49
School counselors' influence on college and career readiness.....	50
Building a college and career readiness community.....	52
Student involvement with college and career readiness.....	54
Limitations and Implications for Further Research.....	55
Summary .....	56
REFERENCES.....	57
APPENDICES .....	63
APPENDIX A.....	64
Austin Peay State University Institutional Review Board Approval Letter.....	65
APPENDIX B .....	66
Interview Questions .....	67
APPENDIX C .....	68
Informed Consent Form .....	69
APPENDIX D .....	72



## DEDICATION

I dedicate this field study to the members in my family that never fail at providing me continuous love and support. My husband for his calmness, insight, support, and sense of adventure. My dad who taught me how to build relationships, recognize ability in myself and others, and exercising is actually enjoyable. My mom for showing me it is necessary and okay to ask for help and for always finding the positive in any situation. My brothers for always being goofy and providing comical relief.



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## ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to gain information from college students about their college and career readiness experiences in high school and whether those activities and/or programs provided them with the college and career readiness skills necessary to be successful in their first year in postsecondary institutions. This field study utilized general inductive data analysis research methodology. Semi-structured interview data was used to conduct this descriptive qualitative study. Participants were first year college students enrolled in a state university located in central Tennessee. Each participant had different responses, but all shared perceptions of their experiences related to college and career readiness. Three themes emerged from their responses; defining college and career readiness, assessing college and career readiness, and supporting college and career readiness. Based on this study, the researcher was able to share the findings of the motivations and perceptions of college and career experiences that may enhance the school counselors understand of creating, modifying, or expanding college and career readiness programs.



## TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER I .....	1
INTRODUCTION .....	1
Statement of the Problem .....	1
Purpose of the Study .....	2
Significance of the Study .....	2
Theoretical Perspective .....	3
Research Method .....	4
Definition of the Key Terms .....	4
CHAPTER II .....	6
REVIEW OF LITERATURE .....	6
Introduction .....	6
What It Means to be College and Career Ready .....	7
Assessing College and Career Readiness .....	9
The Common Core Initiative .....	10
The College Board .....	11
The American College Test .....	12
High School Programs that Support College and Career Readiness .....	14
Dual enrollment programs .....	15
Advancement Via Individual Determination .....	16
Career and Technical Education .....	18
How School Counselors Support College and Career Readiness .....	20
Summary .....	21
CHAPTER III .....	23
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY .....	23
Overview .....	23
Research Questions .....	23
Setting .....	23
Population .....	24
Research Design .....	25
Procedures .....	25
Interview Instrument .....	26
Data Analysis Strategy .....	27



CHAPTER 1  
INTRODUCTION

What is college and career readiness, and why is it important in today's classrooms surrounding education? As a second reminder, it is important to be knowledgeable of college and career readiness programs that can assist students with their plans after high school. For example, the College Board has developed multiple resources that measure what is taught in classrooms, and analyze the skills and knowledge that today's students need to be college and career ready. All students have a career pathway (Singer, 2012). It's just a matter of providing opportunities for students to succeed in achieving personal learning goals through their career pathway.

College and Career Readiness is the framework of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS), placing grade-specific standards in context and rigor and prepare students for college and career readiness (Common Core State Standards Initiative, 2014a). CCSS is not the only initiative to monitor and prepare students for life after graduation. There are many other programs, activities and initiatives that focus on college and career readiness, aiming to increase graduation rates and decrease retention and dropout rates in the post-secondary institutions.

College and career readiness as described by Jackson (2014) include employment and technical skills as well as academic skills. The graduating student's ability and motivation to find work is one of college's requirements. However, providing them the skills and knowledge to be successful in the workplace are. How organizations, policy makers, educators, and the community work together to ensure graduates is essential for a successful career pathway.

Submitted by: [redacted]



## CHAPTER I INTRODUCTION

What is college and career readiness and why is it important in today's discussions surrounding education? As a school counselor, it is important to be knowledgeable of college and career readiness programs that can assist students with their plans after high school. For example, the College Board has developed multiple assessments that measure what is taught in classrooms, and analyzes the skills and knowledge that today's students need to become college and career ready. All students have a career pathway (Stone, 2012), it's just a matter of providing opportunities for students to succeed in achieving personal learning goals through their career pathways.

College and Career Readiness is the framework of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS), placing grade-specific standards to increase academic rigor and prepare students for college and career readiness (Common Core State Standards Initiative, 2014a). CCSS is not the only initiative to monitor and prepare students for life after graduation. There are many other programs, activities and timelines that focus on college and career readiness, aiming to increase graduation rates and decrease retention and dropout rates in the post-secondary institutions.

College and career readiness as described by Jackson (2014) includes employability and technical skills in addition to academic skills. The graduating student's ability and motivation to find work or attend college is important. However, providing them the skills and knowledge to be successful is the defining concern. How organizations, policyholders, educators, and researchers define college and career readiness is explored throughout this field study.

### Statement of the Problem



Though a significant amount of college and career readiness information is available, literature on the effectiveness of these programs in regards to preparing students for college and career in research is not emphasized enough as stated in research by Alford et al. (2014). Students enter higher education institutions without consistent college and career readiness skills to be successful their freshmen year. According to President Obama, "America must ensure that every student graduates from high school well prepared for college and a career" (United States Department of Education, 2010, p. 3)." College and Career Readiness is defined as providing a road map for high school students preparing for postsecondary coursework" (Education Week, 2009, para. 13). Without exposure to college and career readiness activities, students do not have an understanding of what to expect in college or in the workplace. However, upon graduation, students are expected to enter the military, workforce or continue their learning in a higher education setting. Research is still being collected in the area of education and school counseling that indicates the effectiveness of current college and career readiness programs to prepare students for the rigors of higher education.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to understand the college and career readiness programs students experienced in high school that prepared them for success in postsecondary institutions. According to Adams (2015) with 60 percent of incoming college students failing placement exams, a better alignment between standards of high school and college is needed. This study explores what college and career readiness experiences students are encountering in high school and their perceptions of those experiences in preparing them for college.

### **Significance of the Study**



This study can provide school counselors with useful information about the experiences, perceptions, and motivations of a variety of college and career readiness programs. Currently, school counselors have a variety of many different programs, activities and timelines that focus on career and college readiness. It is important for school counselors to not only be knowledgeable of the variety of tools available to them in preparing students for the rigors of higher-education and life after graduation, but to also be informed of the effectiveness of these programs. The study contributes to the paucity of research related to the effectiveness of current college and career readiness programs, thus informing school counselors and educators of best practices in preparing today's youth for college and career.

### **Theoretical Perspective**

The theoretical framework chosen for this study is Albert Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory (Bandura, 2012). Following the social cognitive theory, researchers focus on cognitive, behavioral, personal and environmental factors that might influence a person's motivation and behavior (Bandura, 2012). This theory requires the researcher to explore what motivates an individual to accomplish actions, extracting meaning data from the research gathered from the individual participants. Bandura's self-efficacy theory focuses on motivation and perceptions of individuals based on their experiences (Bandura, 2012). The researcher has interest in extracting meaning from the participants' data based on the participants' ideas and experiences of exposure to college and career readiness. The researcher aims to explore participants' confidence and the motivational factors that influenced their college and career readiness based on their exposure to college and career readiness in high school. Therefore, this research explores how participants' self-efficacy, perceptions and motivation, impacts their experience with post-secondary education.



## Research Method

This field study follows a qualitative research approach, involving the use of semi-structured interviews as the primary method for collecting data. Semi-structured interviews include a mix of flexible, structure and less structured, open-ended questions (Merriam, 2009). The overall purpose of qualitative study is to understand how people make sense of their lives and their experiences (Merriam, 2009). Using open-ended, semi-structured interviewing techniques, this study seeks to gain insight into how participants' views of their experiences with the subject, college and career readiness programs, has affected their motivation and overall success during their first year of college.

Qualitative research is an approach for exploring and understanding the meaning of individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem (Creswell, 2014). In qualitative research, the researcher is allowed to be flexible with the questions used in the interview process, but is looking for patterns and to make sense of the participants' answers. Trustworthiness will be addressed with the researcher transcribing the data from the participants' interviews. To increase trustworthiness and confirm the findings from the data collection, the researcher will compare the participants' responses from the semi-structured interviews to the information collected for the literature review of this study.

## Definition of the Key Terms

American College Test (ACT): standardized college admissions test developed by ACT, Inc., measuring English, mathematics, reading, and science skills.

Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery (ASVAB): multiple-aptitude battery that measures developed abilities and helps predict future academic and occupational successes in the military.



Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID): a program used by trained educators to prepare students for success in high school, college and a career, especially students traditionally underrepresented in higher education.

College and Career Readiness (CCR): preparing students for the knowledge and skills needed to qualify and succeed in entry-level, credit bearing postsecondary coursework without the need for remediation.

College Board: organization that assists and prepares students for successful transition to college by offering assessments such as PSAT, SAT and the Advanced Placement Program.

Core curriculum: set of common courses required of all undergraduates and considered the necessary general education for students, irrespective of their choice in major.

Common Core State Standards (CCSS): a set of clear, college and career ready standards for kindergarten through 12th grade in English language arts/literacy (ELA) and mathematics.

Dual Enrollment: a program that allows high school students to enroll in a college course for credit prior to high school graduation.

Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA): annual form submitted by prospective and current United States college students to determine student aid funds.

Grade Point Average (GPA): calculation of dividing the total amount of grade points earned by the total number of credit hours attempted.

Remediation: program available for students who have identified deficiencies in reading, writing and math courses.



## CHAPTER II

### REVIEW OF LITERATURE

#### Introduction

Throughout an individual's educational career, he/she is expected to develop plans for life after high school graduation. Whether it is continuing their education at a college or university, beginning their career by entering the workforce or joining the armed forces, there are post-secondary decisions high school students face prior to receiving their high school diploma. A student's post-secondary decisions are influenced by their experiences, perceptions, and motivation which are shaped by the exploration of post-secondary options with the guidance of school counselors and other professionals in the school setting. The use of career inventories, results from assessments such as PSAT, SAT, AP exams and exposure of family experiences contribute to the career exploration outcomes and ultimate career decisions.

Bandura (2012) states, "...human functioning is a product of the interplay of intrapersonal influences, the behavior individuals engage in, and the environmental forces that impinge upon them. Because intrapersonal influences, in which self-efficacy is a constituent, are part of the determining conditions in this dynamic interplay, people have a hand in shaping events and the course their lives take" (p. 9). Using Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory with an emphasis on self-efficacy theory, this literature review addressed the following questions, topics, and issues related to individuals' motivations and perceptions of college and career readiness:

1. What does it mean to be college and career ready?
2. Assessing college and career readiness
  - a. The Common Core Initiative
  - b. ACT



- c. The College Board
- 3. High school programs that supports college and career readiness
  - a. Dual Enrollment
  - b. AVID
  - c. Career and Technical Education
- 4. How school counselors support college and career readiness

### **What It Means to be College and Career Ready**

The term college and career readiness has become a very popular term in recent years. Various organizations, policy makers and educators have different opinions and views on what it means to be college and career ready. Previous research defining college and career readiness has focused on the courses taken in high school, grade point average, and scores of college entrance exams. In addition, motivational factors such as achievement motivation, connectedness, a sense of personal belonging in school, interpersonal relationships and skills, and perceptions of safety are strongly linked to critical markers of student postsecondary success (Poynton, et al., 2015).

According to Conley (2014), success is defined as the ability to complete entry-level courses at a level of performance that is sufficient to enable students to continue to the next level of courses in their chosen field of study. Additionally, understanding the relationship between student skills and interests and the program students hope to enter is helpful when judging college readiness. It is important for students to have an understanding of time-management, study skills, organization and motivation when they enter college and/or the workplace.

Today's students must change with the growing trends of development, advanced technology and high demands of the economy. Focus on how students will transition from



adolescent to adult, teaching them the importance of asking for help, and providing them the confidence to increase their motivation to accomplish their individual goals are factors that educators provide in preparing students for college and career readiness. Dance (2015) encouraged Congress, to establish a vision for the 21st century that ensures an educational system that is engineered for excellence where all students will graduate from high school with the knowledge and skills essential for success in college and/or a career.

Building the skills and knowledge for college and career readiness needs to begin before students enter high school. Research by Radcliffe and Bos (2013) show trends among adolescents continue to be discouraging in terms of college and career readiness based on National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) achievement reports and high school graduation rates. Radcliffe and Bos (2013) developed goals and strategies for building college and career readiness. The five goals are; (1) understanding the nature of college, (2) recognizing college is important, (3) acquiring positive perceptions about college, (4) preparing for college admission, and (5) setting short and long term goals that support college readiness. These goals are the foundation of the following seven strategies: (1) creating digital stories, (2) visit college and universities, (3) write about college visit, (4) participate in academic tutoring, (5) attend college related presentations, (6) plan school-related goals that prepare for college readiness, (7) and collaborate with college students. Radcliff and Bos implemented these strategies in the middle school setting, with 6<sup>th</sup> grade students, exposing them to college and career readiness activities aimed at improving their chances for success after graduation. The implementation of these strategies reduced dropout rates, increased attendance rates, and raised the percentage rate of students declaring college as their plan for after graduation (Radcliffe & Bos, 2013).



Newell (2013) describes an advisement program set in an Oklahoma high school that ensured all students are counseled for college and career readiness. Newell (2013) describes the goal of creating a seamless education from junior high school to postsecondary education while the students are enrolled in high school. On a weekly basis, teachers advised students on career, academic, and social development; and focused on test-taking skills, essential vocabulary and critical-thinking skills. In addition, parents were encouraged to attend school meetings and workshops. The workshops provided informative sessions to students and their parents about graduation requirements, post-secondary courses available to their students while in high school, financial resources including scholarships and aid information, and transitional information.

### **Assessing College and Career Readiness**

School counselors support students' academic, career, and social/emotional development by providing programs and activities that focus on college and career readiness related to life after graduation. In order to measure a student's knowledge of college and career readiness, assessments and standards have been developed. College and Career Readiness (CCR) anchor standards, described as the backbone of the CCSS, gauge what grade-specific skills students need to learn when they graduate (Baker et al., 2015). The Common Core is focused on student success and encourages schools to serve as the provider for education and growth towards college and career readiness through the state standards. Students college and career readiness can be measured through college entrance assessments such as the SAT and the ACT. The College Board measures college and career readiness with benchmarks that are found on SAT Suite data and compared to first-year college performance data (College Board, 2015). The ACT assessment measures college readiness skills but also and provides students with tools to improve their readiness skills and preparation for life after graduation.



**The Common Core initiative.** The Common Core State Standards (CCSS) are a set of clear college and career ready standards for kindergarten through 12th grade in English Language Arts (ELA)/literature and mathematics. Implementation of the Common Core Standards, how they are taught, the curriculum developed, and the materials used to support teachers as they help students reach the standards, is led entirely by the state and local levels (Common Core State Standards Initiative, 2014a). There are Forty-three states, the District of Columbia, four territories, and the Department of Defense Education Activity have adopted the CCSS (Common Core State Standards Initiative, 2014b).

The Common Core developed the Partnership for the Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC). It is an assessment that focuses on student's ability to be successful in the next grade and their level of college and career readiness after high school. The PARCC assessment only focuses on two disciplines: mathematics and English language arts. The assessment was developed by researchers, educators, and policymakers, over a span of several years. Since the assessment is fairly new, not all states have begun using the PARCC to obtain feedback. Collecting data is not mandatory with CCSS. Teachers still create their own lesson plans and use the CCSS as a guide for what students are expected to learn at each grade level (Common Core State Standards Initiative, 2014a).

“A student who is determined to be college and career ready through performance on the PARCC high school assessments is one who has demonstrated the academic knowledge, skills, and practices in ELArts/literacy or mathematics necessary to enter directly into and succeed in entry-level, credit-bearing courses in those content areas” (Common Core State Standards Initiative, 2014b, para. 6). With time, the PARCC will become part of school's data collection for determining whether students are considered college and career ready (PARCC,



2015). Parents and teachers can adjust what their students are exposed to and provide what their student may be lacking based on their PARCC results. The PARCC website provides resources that include; practice tests, instructional tools, understanding results, and news and videos related to college and career (PARCC, 2015).

**The College Board.** The goal of the College Entrance Examination Board (CEEB), was to create standards that would be used for college admission decisions. College Boards originated in 1900, eventually transitioning into the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) in 1926 (Madison et al., 2015). The SAT Suite of Assessments provide college and career readiness benchmarks and consistent feedback for measuring student progress (College Board, 2015). The College Board offers the PSAT assessment for middle and high school students to prepare for the college entrance exam, the SAT. PSAT scores are used to determine the student's college and career readiness score, their Advanced Placement (AP) potential, and determines whether they will receive scholarships from such programs as the National Merit Scholarship Program and the National Hispanic Recognition Program, to name a few. College and career readiness benchmarks determine whether or not a student is likely to earn a C or better in a first-year, credit-bearing college course in the same subject area as the AP course (College Board, 2015).

In 2015 College Board had many changes to their assessments. The PSAT 8/9 assessment was introduced to eighth and ninth grade students creating a baseline for the students' college and career readiness. The College Board's pre-SAT / National Merit Scholar Qualifying Test (PSAT/NMSQT) rolled out their redesign, the PSAT 10 which was first administered to sophomores only, serving as a prequel to the PSAT/NMSQT. PSAT/NMSQT is an assessment, showing college readiness benchmarks but also opportunity for scholarships. The PSAT/NMSQT is administered to juniors in high school. In the spring of 2016, the redesigned



SAT will be administered. The SAT redesign has an optional essay, no penalty for guessing and according to The College Board (2015), vocabulary students will use long after the test day.

The College Board's AP program enables high school students to earn college credits while working towards their high school diploma. The College Board owns the AP program, providing quality control for the individuals teaching the courses and the students enrolled in them. The College Board does not determine whether a student earns college credit based on their AP exam score. College credit is determined by the college or university that the student is applying the AP exam score to. Students that apply their AP exam score to their college or university could save money by replacing introductory college courses with the AP course taken in high school.

Big Future is an interactive guide provided by the College Board that allows students to start planning their future by answering a couple of questions. The program is free to all students, and only requires internet access to the College Board's website. Students can save their plan and make updates as they progress through high school. Big Future provides step-by-step instructions on how to start planning for college or a career. The program offers videos, tutorials, tools and calculators, handouts, and much more. It is geared for students but information is also available for parents, veterans, nontraditional students and educators.

**The American College Test.** The American College Test (ACT) was introduced in 1959 as a placement test for college admission. ACT offers a variety of assessments that focus on college and career readiness starting at the third grade level and extending through the twelfth grade. According to ACT (2015a, p. 5), "educators have the ability to establish a longitudinal plan using ACT assessments, which provide high schools, districts, and states with unique



student-level data that can be used for effective student intervention plans.” Benchmarks developed by ACT predict how college and career ready the student is. “The ACT College Readiness Benchmarks reflect the standard that all high school graduates need to reach to be prepared for success in postsecondary education, work, and life” (ACT, 2015a, p. 5). Additional research by ACT (2015a, p. 5) states “a student who meets the ACT College Readiness Benchmark on any of the four ACT subject-area tests has a 50 percent chance of obtaining a B or higher, or about a 75 percent chance of obtaining a C or higher in each subject at the college level” (p.5).

ACT goes to great lengths to raise awareness and improve college and career readiness. The Condition of College and Career Readiness is an annual report provided by ACT for educators to understand and view the data collected on the progress of high school students in the United States (ACT, 2015b). The holistic approach that the ACT uses when reporting their findings aims to provide reliable information for students, parents, schools, districts, and states to achieve education and workplace success (ACT, 2015c).

According to ACT research (2015c, p.9), “academically prepared students, as measured by the ACT College Readiness Benchmarks, are more likely than their less-prepared peers to succeed in their future educational endeavors.” Core academic skills, behavioral skills, education and career navigation skills are the four factors that impact student success. To support the readiness culture, ACT research (2015c) supports students taking a core curriculum in high school that consists of four years of English and three years of science, math and social studies. To assist with student’s interest in planning for their future, ACT developed a new computer-based program for students called the ACT Profile. The ACT Profile is a free college



and career planning tool that allows individuals to navigate through life's key decision points (ACT, 2015d). This program offers free college and career planning self-assessments that can be taken on the computer, tablet, or smartphone.

### **High School Programs that Support College and Career Readiness**

For many students, high school is the time to explore career interests and plan for life after graduation. The role of the school counselor is vital to the career exploration process and includes providing early exposure to college preparedness, support of career and technical programs, and encouragement toward rigorous educational programs such as AP, honors, and dual enrollment courses. Dual enrollment programs, AVID, and career and technical education programs are just a few learning models that can provide the skills, knowledge, and preparation for students' postsecondary plans.

Not every student will have the same educational background therefore school counselors must be able to provide a variety of opportunities to increase students' college and career readiness based on the individual's plans and goals for life after graduation. School counselors must also be sensitive to student's cultural backgrounds when providing college and career guidance. Research by Whiston & Keller (2004) claims the influence of family or parents on college students' career decision making has often been emphasized in Western literature, because students typically would seek parents' assistance with career decisions. It is important for counselors to understand how the family could facilitate career development (Fan, Cheung, Leong and Cheung, 2014), especially the likeliness of the adolescents seeking career decisions from their family members. School counselors should recognize the sensitivity and cultural differences of their population when working with students from different backgrounds and provide programs and options for all students and families.



**Dual enrollment programs.** In dual enrollment programs, high school students are permitted to take college courses and, if they pass them, earn college credit (Hughes, 2010). Opportunity to take courses for college credit during high school, can be applied to students' general education or first year college courses providing students with the experience of college before officially enrolling. An's (2015) study of dual enrollment found a central issue among educators and researchers as to whether college entrants are academically prepared to handle the rigor of college coursework. According to An's research (2015) "students who participate in dual enrollment is positively related to college GPA, persistence, and degree attainment" (p. 101). Depending on the program, high school students may not have to take a college entrance assessment such as ACT or SAT to enroll in a dual enrollment course.

According to Dzubak (n.d.), "college curriculum is typically based on the premise that students have completed college preparatory courses while in high school, yet many students arrive on campus not having completed those courses and are underprepared to succeed" (para. 2). Taking dual enrollment courses while in high school allows students the opportunity to challenge themselves academically. An and Taylor (2015) consider dual enrollment as a means to reduce the need for remediation, and to improve college readiness. Research by Hughes (2010) found "students who participated in dual enrollment programs and went on to attend college were more likely to enroll in a four-year institution, perhaps indicating that their early taste of college gave them the skills and confidence to raise their educational aspirations" (p.12). Hughes (2010) suggested there are a few challenges for which dual enrollment programs need to be cognizant. "Dual enrollment courses should deliver the same rigorous college content using the same syllabus, texts, and assessments as other college courses however, it is allowable for the college instructor to consider using pedagogical strategies better suited for high school



students enrolled in the course” (Hughes, 2010, p. 13). Students enrolled in dual enrollment courses have access to college resources however, they may not know of all these resources, particularly if they are taking distance learning courses. College instructors may not even be aware that they have high school students enrolled in their course. Ideally, high school counselors or dual enrollment coordinators provide students with some kind of orientation to prevent poor performance but this is not always the practice of dual enrollment programs (Hughes, 2012).

Dual enrollment programs are available to students through a variety of formats including: on-ground at the student’s high school, on a college campus, or through asynchronous learning. The format in which dual enrollment programs are delivered is dependent on the high school and its proximity to higher education institutions. According to Ruth and Connors (2012) students in distance education courses allows for asynchronous learning and frees them from the need to be in a specific location when learning. Concerns of distance learning dual enrollment courses are present when participating students do not have access to computers, know how to operate the programs needed for the course, and do not receive any support or guidance. Distance learning courses also lack face-to-face interaction between teacher and student. Some high school students may not be self-motivated or mature enough for distance learning courses. Dual enrollment courses that focus on vocational offering or certification tracks would benefit students who are looking for challenging nontraditional courses that could be applied to their post-graduation plans (Conley & McGaughy, 2012).

**Advancement Via Individual Determination.** The Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID) program is a college-readiness system, targeting populations traditionally underrepresented in postsecondary education. AVID, provides students with consistent



academic support while enrolled in a rigorous course of study (Bernhardt, 2013). Peer support is also incorporated in the program that if available, begins in the fourth grade and extends through the student's senior year. The AVID program encourages students to take rigorous courses including honors, Advanced Placement (AP) and dual enrollment college courses while in the secondary setting. Students in the AVID program receive support from the AVID teacher, AVID tutors, AVID counselor and the supporting staff and community members who are also part of the program (AVID, 2016a). Huerta and Watt's (2015) research shows that AVID graduates at community colleges and four-year universities continued to use a variety of strategies they learned in the AVID high school program such as tutoring, Cornell note taking, and binder organization. Community college students used Cornell notes, an AVID binder, and learning logs whereas students at the university utilized collaborative study groups and on-campus tutoring services.

Within the AVID classroom, students learn a variety of skills that prepare them for college and career. These include: (a) how to fill out college applications, (b) take Cornell notes, (c) binder organization, (d) how to write college essays, and (e) complete and submit scholarships (AVID, 2016a). In addition, students learn collaboration, time management, and organization skills; attend community workshops, tour college campuses, and have guest speakers that provide real world experiences and helpful tips. The organizational skills and social skills that AVID students learn are transferable skills that can be easily used in the college setting (AVID, 2016b). Students that were successful in the AVID program, by attending college after graduation, could be asked to work as AVID tutors in the secondary setting. AVID tutors are college students who experienced the AVID program in high school and/or adults that are trained in the AVID program (AVID, 2016c).



AVID counselors take on an important role in assisting AVID students in the college admissions process. AVID counselors are trained to work with students each year, starting out with developing a four-year plan that is utilized in high school, incorporating visits to college campuses, participating in mock interviews, offering individual counseling and during the senior year, filling out applications and scholarships, assisting with college essays and providing guidance with college acceptance, waitlist and denials (AVID, 2016a). The program focuses on developing long-term goals, and teaches students how to achieve their individual plans. AVID encourages students from all backgrounds to participate, and seeks to break the assumption that all students can be college bound, regardless of whether or not their parents attended college.

**Career and Technical Education.** Career and technical education (CTE) programs, are national programs available to students in the secondary setting as well as postsecondary setting. Career and technical education (CTE) provides students with the option of working towards an industry certificate, certification in a specific job field and/or training in courses that focus on technical skills. The National Research Center for Career and Technical Education (NRCCTE) is part of the Office of Vocational and Adult Education's (OVAE) strategy to assist states and local education agencies in identifying and implementing effective career and technical education programs (NRCCTE, 2004). The NRCCTE is responsible for improving curriculum and programs for students by providing professional development for secondary and postsecondary technical educators. Maintaining and improving career and technical education is important because students who are seeking an education in these fields need to be taught the most up-to-date concepts and practices.

Grundmann (2013), states community colleges have strong collaborations with local industry and employers to provide students with hands-on skills that are directly applicable to



their respective profession. Math and English courses are also part of the community college program since most jobs require advanced knowledge of these subjects. Many institutions started to implement the career readiness certificate (CRC) as far back as 2006 to prepare students with the skills they need when entering the workforce after graduation (Grundmann 2013).

Research by Darche and Stam (2012) provides insight to one student's, Maria, expectations of college, wanting to be a doctor without knowledge of how to become one, and her actual path. Participating in the health academy while in high school, allowed Maria to earn college credit and experience before graduating high school. Maria's story like many others, aims to synthesize research and perspectives based on a holistic view of students needs and considering long-range educational, economic and societal trends (Darche & Stam, 2012). For students that may not have the opportunity to explore career pathways or become knowledgeable of the career field they want to enter, having the option of vocational programs allows them to focus on content courses and a variety of electives with the assistance of career counselors.

Vocational education or job training has been replaced by the current concept of career readiness. Conley and McGaughy (2012), suggest the shift of the economy from agricultural and industrial jobs to service jobs has also changed the concepts and program offerings of secondary education. In the past, high schools were divided between career preparation and college preparation. Today schools focus on college and career readiness for all students regardless of what their plans are after high school. Career readiness measures such as the Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery (ASVAB), ACT's WorkKeys and various assessments and certificate programs are offered by National Occupational Competency Testing Institute (NOCTI).



### **How School Counselors Support College and Career Readiness**

The American School Counselor Association (ASCA) provides a systematic, National Model for school counselors to use to guide their school counseling programs (ASCA, 2016a). It is a comprehensive school counseling model that aims to improve academic achievement, decrease discipline referrals, improve school climate, increase student attendance and increase graduation rates (ASCA, 2016b). School counselors work with students by providing guidance, setting and achieving goals, offering support groups, individual counseling, and parent workshops. School counselors also work with parents, teachers, staff, administrators, community members and other stakeholders toward improving student outcomes in the academic, personal/social, and career domains.

Academic skill level, as described by Dzubak (n.d.), generally refers to reading, writing, and math but it also includes critical thinking and application of knowledge. School counselors assist with building students' skill level by providing support and guidance through all stages of career planning and decision making. According to Chambers (2012) success can be measured by the quality of education but also by the confidence and level of preparedness that students feel after participating in college preparatory programs. Poynton and his colleagues (2015) found that the readiness to succeed in college relates strongly to demographic, academic, motivational, and career planning factors. Part of the school counselor's role is to support students and encourage post-graduation goal attainment. School counselors can support post-graduation goal attainment by incorporating programs and services that foster college and career readiness within their comprehensive school counseling program. This program can be shared with teachers and staff throughout the building for additional support and implementation. Each year, the school counselor can collect data from student needs assessments, analyzing the feedback, and ensuring



the needs of the students are being met with the services and programs provided through the school counseling program.

Stone-Johnson (2015) discussed the role of school counselors within the school setting. Stone-Johnson (2015) describes 25-35% of the high school counselor's time should focus on individual student planning which involves; goal-setting and decision making, academic planning, education on self-understanding, and transition plans. Her research claims schools want students to be prepared but are not committed to using existing college and career readiness resources to make it happen. Stone-Johnson (2015) is specifically concerned that schools are unsure of how to use teachers and/or counselors as support for students in non-academic ways and/or how to support systemic involvement in college and career readiness efforts. Her recommendation is to create a school environment that supports school counselors' development with both pre-professional and in-service training that counselors, teachers, and school leaders can participate in.

### **Summary**

The Common Core Initiative, ACT, and the College Board provide assessment tools to gauge college and career readiness among the secondary student population. College and career readiness programs such as AVID, dual enrollment, and career and technical education provide students with opportunities to develop the skills necessary to be successful in a post-secondary education setting. School counselors can support the use of these assessment tools by, implement them within their school counseling program, thus offering students the opportunity to explore and understand their college and career goals. Though a significant amount of college and career readiness information is available, literature on the effectiveness of these programs in preparing students for college and career is lacking. Understanding students' perceptions of their







### CHAPTER III RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

#### Overview

The purpose of this chapter was to explain the methodology that was used in conducting this descriptive study using semi-structured interview data. This study aimed to gain information from college students about their college and career readiness experiences in high school and whether those activities and/or programs provided them with the college and career readiness skills necessary to be successful in their first year of college. Based on the participant's responses, the researcher looked for patterns from the availability of college and career readiness programs offered to the participant and compared them to other participants looking for common themes.

#### Research Questions

The following research questions were used to guide this study:

1. What motivating factors in high school contributed to the participants' readiness in a post-secondary educational setting?
2. What perceptions do first-year college students have about their college and career readiness based on their current exposure and past experiences?

#### Setting

The participants selected for this study were first-year college students enrolled in a state university located in central Tennessee. Participants were recruited from an Introductory Psychology course offered at the university. Data was collected through interviewing the participants in a private, designated area on the campus of the institution. The in-person interviews were conducted and recorded on campus in a quiet, neutral location where the participants were not in danger and there was no intimidation or coercion.



## Population

The researcher purposefully selected participants that best helped the researcher understand the problem and the research question (Creswell, 2014). The researcher used a voluntary sample of students who were unknown to the researcher, over 18 years of age and were currently enrolled in the second semester of their first year of college. The researcher contacted an instructor of a general psychology course for permission to recruit students for this research study. There were approximately 40-50 potential participants who were given the opportunity to participate in this study. From the pool of potential participants, the researcher interviewed nine participants, when saturation, or the point at which “fresh data no longer spark[ed] new insight or reveal[ed] new properties” was reached (Creswell, 2014, p. 189).

Twelve students who agreed to participate were contacted by the researcher via email and/or phone to set up a time to conduct the interview. Of the twelve, nine students actually participated in the study. Meg is one of the seven out of the nine participants that graduated from public high schools throughout Tennessee. Nadia, graduated from a Department of Defense high school in Kentucky and Anna was the only participant that graduated in another country from a preparatory school in Canada. Out of the nine participants, three identified as black or African American, three identified as white and two identified as Other Pacific Islander. Adam was the only male participant in the study. All participants were between the ages of 17-19 years old. Kara was the only participant that had a full-time job off campus related to her college major. Petra, Hadley and Kylie all lived at home with their parents / guardians. Five of the nine participants lived on campus in the dorms including Ceja who moved on campus her second semester of her freshmen year.



The interviews conducted by the researcher took place in-person, on campus, and were comprised of approximately 15 semi-structured questions. Each interview took approximately 20-30 minutes. Throughout each interview, each participant offered personal involvement with their college experience related to college and career readiness. The participants described their experiences with the admission process, paying for college tuition and scholarships. They also shared their perceptions of college and career readiness and explained motivations of attending a post-secondary institution following high school graduation. Based on the information the participants shared; themes, categories and patterns were formed from the collected data. Three themes emerged from their responses.

### **Research Design**

This field study research used general inductive data analysis qualitative research methodology. Qualitative research is an approach for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem (Creswell, 2014). The researcher was the primary instrument for collecting the data using in-person semi-structured interviewing methodology (Merriam, 2009). This study used person-to-person encounters in which one person elicits information from another (Merriam, 2009). The researcher gathered information through semi-structured interviews, asking open-ended questions, recording the answers with notes and audio recording, looking for themes and patterns in the participants' responses.

### **Procedures**

The Institutional Review Board (IRB) application was submitted to the university's IRB board before research began. The researcher's request was approved by the IRB and the interviews were conducted based on the following procedures. The researcher received the participation list of students from a General Psychology instructor. Next, the researcher



contacted the participants via email and/or telephone to set up a meeting. When the meeting was established, the researcher reviewed the purpose of the study, reviewed the consent and permission to tape form and asked the participant to sign it if they were willing to continue with the interview.

The interviews were recorded with a digital recorder provided by the researcher. After the participant agreed, the researcher asked the participant semi-structured interview questions about their experience with college and career readiness, their high school experience, and their current college experience. Semi-structured interviews include a mix of flexible, structure and less structured, open-ended questions (Merriam, 2009). This allowed the researcher to ask participants to clarify or explain any unclear or contradictory responses. When the interview was finished, the researcher thanked the participant. The audio recordings will be kept in a password protected computer file in the researcher's office for a minimum of five years. Each participant was provided with contact information for the researcher and committee chair should they want to receive the results of this study. There were no known risks associated with this research. However, sometimes when people are asked about their experiences, they feel anxious or uncomfortable. Therefore, participants were provided with a brochure for student counseling services should they need assistance after the interview was concluded.

### **Interview Instrument**

Individuals that participated in the interview answered approximately 15-20 questions that requested information about their high school experience, college experience, exposure to college and career readiness and decisions they have made based on the guidance they have received. The semi-structured interview questions were developed by the researcher based on her personal experiences, professional experience as a school counselor, and current research on



the subject. The participant responses to the open-ended questions enabled the researcher to better understand the participant's motivation and perception of their experiences with college and career readiness. Based on those responses, the researcher was able to share the findings of the motivations and perceptions of college and career readiness experiences that may enhance the school counselors' understanding of creating, modifying, or expanding college and career readiness programs.

### **Data Analysis Strategy**

Research by Thomas (2006) describes the inductive approach as a systematic procedure for analyzing qualitative data where the analysis is guided by specific objectives. Upon completion of the interviews, the in-person interviews were transcribed into an electronic format. Then, using the general inductive approach for qualitative data analysis, the interviews were read in detail to gain familiarity with the data from the interviews. Segments were identified of specific information found in the data from the interviews.

The next step was to develop themes and create a label for each new category. The labels were summarized and coded in order to look for clear links between the research objectives and the summary findings. Information in the segments were labeled to create categories. Then the categories were reviewed again and reduced for any redundancy and to limit the total number of categories.

### **Data Analysis and Coding**

The researcher used general inductive data analysis procedures. The researcher transcribed all collected interview data looking for segments in the data sets that were responsive to the research topic. The interview data was then inventoried using the transcript and field note method (Merriam, 2009). The transcribed interviews were then assigned pseudonyms to ensure



the anonymity of the participants. After working through the entire transcript, the researcher went over the marginal notes, comments, and responses, looking for major themes and grouping the responses, comments and notes that seemed to go together (Merriam, 2009). The researcher then made generalizations based on the thematized responses and compared them to previous research and findings on the topic." Once the data [was] inventoried, organized, and coded for easy retrieval and manipulation, the researcher [began] intensive analysis" (Merriam, 2009, p. 207).

A total of 30 themes were found in the data collected. The transcripts were reviewed a second time and the labeled themes were divided and placed into subcategories. Fifteen subcategories were developed. The data was reviewed for a third time, linking information and looking for any redundancies. The data categories were reduced to three main categories, creating a model that will assess the key aspects of the themes found in the raw data collected. The final three categories were most important and relate to the original proposed research questions.

Once the codes were categorized, they were compared to one another. Looking for recurring regularities in the data, assigning it to categories and breaking those categories into subcategories. Ultimately, being able to use the data collected to answer the research questions proposed in this research study. Identifying segments in the data that are responsive to the research questions (Merriam, 2009). Three categories were defined from the data collected and relate to the proposed research questions of this study.

### **Summary**

This chapter provides an overview of the methodology that was used in collecting and analyzing data for this research, including information about the research questions, the setting,



the population, the research design, the interview instrument, and the data analysis process.

General inductive approach was used in this qualitative research study to categorize the motivations and perceptions of second semester, first year college students based on their college and career readiness experiences in high school. The following chapter discusses the findings from this study as it relates to the research questions and supporting literature.



## CHAPTER IV FINDINGS

### Overview

The purpose of this chapter is to describe the findings from the interviews with nine participants who provided specific high school experiences that have guided their first year of college. The theme titles were selected based on the participants' responses in effort to keep the reporting of the findings grounded in the participants' experience. The first theme *college and career readiness challenges* illustrates participants' experiences in their first year of college. The second theme, *assessing college and career readiness* explores the type of assessments used for college admission and different types of preparation used for the college setting. Third theme, *supporting college and career readiness in high school* describes the exposure to college and career readiness programs that helped prepare the participants for the college environment.

### College and Career Readiness Challenges

The participants in this study were all asked what it means to be college and career ready. "College and Career Readiness is defined as providing a road map for high school students preparing for postsecondary coursework" (Education Week, 2009, para. 13). Participants' responses were based on previous experiences in high school, knowledge from completing the first semester of college and exposure to programs and opportunities offered as a student. The participants had similar answers to this broad question and their responses were characterized into *procrastination*, *scheduling*, and *attitude* categories that are discussed below.



**Procrastination.** Petra and Ceja both mentioned procrastination when describing what guidance they would give to current high school students based on the knowledge and experiences they learned in college. Both students admitted to procrastinating in college on homework, and in preparing for exams. Petra said, “never procrastinate. Learn to prioritize, learn how to balance out your schedule, take advantage of the helpful services, don’t be afraid to ask questions but don’t wait to get it done.” Looking back, Petra mentioned she should have managed her time better but is using the experiences from her first semester to do better during the second semester.

Ceja projected she would fail two courses her second semester and stated procrastination was part of the problem. “I can’t stay up until two in the morning and chill with my friends. [Instead] I need to do this essay.” She described procrastination and how it related to college and career readiness as “meeting deadlines, investing in yourself, study and get to know the material.” When asked how she could improve and not be in this situation in the future, she said “don’t procrastinate...jump in on the open labs and the tutoring...take initiative.”

Nadia warned others to “stay on top of things and for them to not underestimate what college will be. You really are responsible for what you do and if you don’t go to class then that is on you.” Kara had a similar response to Nadia’s outlook on finding motivational factors in college. She recommended,

“Find a focus. If you like it in high school [then] stick with it [in college]. You wouldn’t want to do something that you wouldn’t like because you aren’t going to pay attention and you’re not going to want it. I feel like if you stick with something that you actually like and you enjoy to learn about then you have like a higher chance of actually staying in the classes and in the field.”



Looking back, Hadley wished she studied more and taken high school more seriously. Her guidance towards college and career readiness is, “study more! Make sure that you take school seriously.” She talked about how she mentored freshmen for two years in high school, “I would always tell them you need to take it seriously because your GPA really can get you more scholarships. It really does affect you and I know you’re just like it doesn’t matter, it’s not college, it’s not really that important but it really is if you want to get in a good school.” Her final words of advice for future college students, “manage your time...don’t procrastinate things. Procrastination is never a good thing.”

Adam admitted to forgetting about the tutoring services because he “hasn’t had any major issues” but then confesses that he “should [attend tutoring] but most of the time [he] just blanks when it comes to tests and does bad[ly] even though [he] knows all the information.” He said, “I never do homework in my room because I’ll never do it. I’ve been going outside and basically anywhere where it’s not quiet but not loud.” Adam didn’t mention the word procrastination but he did say, “do the work. Don’t put it off until the last minute.” He also discussed the struggle of choices in college; “do I want to go out and party with my friends or do I want to stay in and study?”

**Scheduling.** Kara and Kylie both mentioned scheduling when providing guidance to future high school graduates. When referring to picking classes, Kylie said, “try to make sure the classes are one after another that way you don’t have big gaps and end up doing something else that you shouldn’t be doing” She also said, “try to get classes with your friends because that can be slightly easier, they can catch you up on what you’ve missed.”

Hadley discussed how important it is to know how to build a class schedule each semester. Hadley took 15 hours her second semester but ended up with all courses that involved



lots of writing. She talked about “how many essays each of her courses require” and how consuming that can be all in one semester. She stated, “It’s a lot of essays in one semester.” Hadley discussed her experience with the advisor that was assigned to her at college. “[The] first semester I did not have an advisor until the week of advising. I didn’t really like her at first because she was just throwing me into classes and I had basically already taken them. Now I’m a class short and I either have to do summer or winter term. They never told me that at first.”

Kara had a more flexible school schedule the first semester and had ample opportunities to study and go to the library. She did not have the same luxury with her second semester schedule. She said, “there’s more classes that I tried to fit in.” In order to keep her position at work, which includes full-time hours, she had to adjust her school schedule each semester in order to stay on track for graduation. Kara worked three 12 hour shifts and managed to “[cram] all of her classes into two days.” As Kara discussed her school and work schedule she said she “only ha[d] 10 minutes’ in-between classes and [was] on campus from eight in the morning until seven at night.” She said, “I probably wouldn’t recommend it.” Kara expected to “do alright” and receive B and C letter grades for the courses she was enrolled in second semester.

Kylie was accepted into the Honors program and remained part of the Dean’s scholar program which required her to maintain a 3.5 GPA and work 75 hours on campus, per semester. Prior to college, she worked to save money for college. Kylie quit her job so she “could focus, because last semester [she] took 17 hours” of course credits. Kylie worked second semester at the campus library to fulfill her scholarship requirements. She talked about how the Dean’s scholar program helped with tuition. She hoped that if she continues full time student status, maintains the GPA requirement, and works the required hours, she will continue to receive the scholarship.



Adam explained he took 18 credit hours his second semester of college in order to be considered a sophomore the following year. Although he increased his course load to stay on track for graduation, he was quick to say, "I'm never doing it again". He also increased the number of classes second semester to be considered for a resident advisor (RA) position. He was proud to say he was accepted for the position and will be a RA in the fall.

**Attitude.** Nadia described college and career readiness as "be[ing] comfortable and sure about where you are going and know[ing] all the facts about college. Just be[ing] prepared for classes, ...being on your own and independent." She went on to say, "getting your ACT scores and then being confident in them and applying early. Being aware of the classes you want to take and knowing your major" are some ideas that she found were really important to share when preparing other students for college.

Kara had a similar outlook on college and career readiness. She believed "everybody that is at college has a purpose...they want to be here." She felt, "everybody [is] going towards the same [goal]...everybody wants to have a good career," and she felt that "college is a way to get there...it will better yourself in the future."

Meg described college and career readiness as preparing for the next step to be in college. She said "it's realizing that you have to make your own study hours and your classes are longer, and you have to wake up early some days and prepare for the unexpected." She encouraged others to "ask a lot of questions about anything and everything. Do a lot of scholarships, read up on the schools that you want to go to and do college visits. It helps a lot."

Ceja's attitude towards college is about being disciplined. She felt she could not focus living at home first semester and made the decision to live on campus her spring semester. Ceja did okay first semester but described second semester as a struggle. First semester she lived at



home but found chores to be distracting. Second semester, she lived on campus but said, “I can’t focus here either.” At the time of her interview, she was projected to fail two of her five courses during the second semester. Petra advised students to “learn how to balance out your schedule, take advantage of every helpful service and don’t be afraid to ask questions and email your professors.” Petra felt comfortable emailing her professors and often communicated with them in that fashion.

### Assessing College and Career Readiness

Bandura’s self-efficacy theory focuses on cognitive, behavioral and environmental factors that might influence an individual’s motivations and perceptions based on their experiences (Bandura, 2012). The environment where participants attended high school influenced what cognitive and behavioral preparation they received. The participant’s motivation and perception surrounding preparation with the college entrance exam, ACT, is explored based on their experiences. Some were required to take ACT preparation courses in high school, while others were not given the option and had to pay out of pocket for the ACT and any preparation for the assessment.

**Motivation.** Anna, a graduate from a high school in Canada, did not receive any preparation for the ACT or SAT because it was not required or part of their high school curriculum. She mentioned finding information for the ACT was “one of the hardest things” she had to do to prepare for admission into a college in the United States. Since Anna was a little girl, her goal was to play soccer somewhere in America. After touring Austin Peay State University, she said “the campus is so beautiful and it was like the right fit”. In order to get accepted, she had to take the ACT and found a preparation course in Toronto. Her family paid



for this course out of pocket and Anna used her school break in March to complete the prep course.

According to Chambers (2012), success can be measured by the quality of education but also by the confidence and level of preparedness that students feel after participating in college preparatory programs. Like many other participants in the study, Anna took an ACT preparation course. However, she was the only one that had to pay and complete the course outside of her high school setting. Adam, a high school graduate from a small rural town in Tennessee received ACT practice for about 10-20 minutes daily in study hall. He said it was mandatory for juniors and seniors. Adam took the ACT twice and although he scored the same both times, he said, “[practice] did help because I did improve in science and math”.

**Perception.** Anna and Adam both mentioned that their ACT scores did not reflect their grades in high school. Taking the ACT was not Anna’s finest moment. Although she got a 21, she said “it was not my finest moment since I had only ever just focused on grades.” Though Adam took ACT preparation courses in high school, he only scored 18 on two attempts. He said, “overall I just don’t do well on tests but my high school GPA was a 3.6.” He went on to say, “I don’t really count the ACT, if you look at my grades.”

Nadia was the only high school graduate that mentioned the PSAT as part of her preparation for college. She was not offered an ACT prep course nor did her school offer the ACT. She used the College Board Big Future program for college searches, college majors and course planning. She also used the College Board website and the PSAT exam as preparation for entrance exams needed for college admissions.

Kara understood that all the writing in high school was going to prepare her for college. She says, “my school basically surround[ed] all of our papers around [the] MLA [writing style]



and when you go to college, that's not the only style they give." She wished she would have asked more questions about the different writing styles for academic papers because she stated she "had to write different style paper in every single class."

Kylie's perception of high school preparation for college was negative. She said, "everything they taught in high school had nothing to do with what I'm learning now. Yes, there are some things that overlap such as history, it's going to be pretty much the same information...as far as English, the same material just reorganized and made a little harder and they get a little more specific on what they ask for." When asked, what would have been helpful, she suggested "preparing [students] for the amount of homework and instead of having the schedules that they do for high school, perhaps having classes that you...get to choose would help you further. Instead of just core classes that everyone has to take." She suggested a more individualized schedule for students to stimulate their academic interest. She went on to say,

"I got a little bit of say [in selecting high school classes] but not that much because you could only choose one elective freshman year and I wanted to take more than one thing...You can't really take that many electives because of the way they have the courses set up. I couldn't really have the classes that I wanted to take until my senior year and at that point they wouldn't let me double up the classes because one course was high[er] than the other and you can't take the other or chronological classes at [the same] time."

### **Supporting College and Career Readiness in High School**

All participants had graduated high school in the spring of 2015. Each participant was asked to describe the college preparatory courses offered at their high school and which of these they enrolled in during high school. Many discussed their experiences with the opportunity of



dual enrollment, Advanced Placement (AP) courses and the process of applying those credits to college. Their involvement with those programs and the guidance they received are described below.

**Experiences.** Poynton and his colleagues (2015) found that the readiness to succeed in college relates strongly to demographic, academic, motivational, and career planning factors. Petra did not take any dual enrollment or AP courses in high school to prepare her for college but said she “wished [she] had.” The only experience she described towards college readiness was the mandatory ACT preparation course offered during her school day. She did not feel as if the ACT preparation course helped her. Instead, she described her experience with relating high school course content with the exposure to her college courses. She stated, “I remember some of the information that we went over in English, history, sociology and psychology in high school and college classes.”

Although dual enrollment was offered at Adam’s high school he felt, “I wasn’t able to do the dual enrollment that was offered.” He said, “If you take it, you’re stuck in it and even if you are failing it, you can’t get out of it and I was worried about that.” Instead of dual enrollment, Adam participated in the FAFSA meeting, Tennessee Promise, ACT practice, attended the local college fair and did some job shadowing in high school. Adam received about \$400 per semester for the Tennessee Promise scholarship. When describing the Tennessee Promise scholarship, he said, “this was the first-year Tennessee did this...there wasn’t a lot of knowledge about it but it did give me the [scholarship] money.”

Ceja described the extensive amount of dual enrollment and AP courses offered at her high school. She talked about her experience with AP Statistics. “It wasn’t what I expected. I expected it to be hard like studying every night but it was really drawn out. We would go extra



slow and the teacher gave homework but then gave the answers to us.” She did not use the credit from the AP Statistics course towards a college statistics course because she did not pass the AP exam.

Kylie took AP Calculus her senior year of high school. She was able to use the credit towards her college math requirement. However, Kylie felt the course did not prepare her for college. “I haven’t taken a math class since [high school] ...there is only one required math course you have to take and you only need one credit for the program I’m doing.” Her reason for taking AP Calculus, “I took it because they only gave me two choices and both of them were AP classes for my senior year. They said I couldn’t take one of the easy classes because I scored too high on the ACT.”

An and Taylor (2015) consider dual enrollment as a means to reduce the need for remediation, and to improve college readiness. Meg was the only participant that took both dual enrollment and AP courses while in high school. “I was encouraged to take AP U.S. History and English because my cross-country coach really wanted me in his class and AP U.S. History because I heard it would be a good experience.” She said, “I took dual enrollment because I wanted to get ahead and have college credits.

**Guidance.** According to Conley (2014), success is defined as the ability to complete entry-level courses at a level of performance that is sufficient to enable students to continue to the next level of courses in their chosen field of study. Out of all the participants, Kara had the most exposure to her college major and chosen career path while in high school. Health science was one of the pathways that was offered at Kara’s high school. As a result, Kara took a lot of health science courses. She stated, “I took every one that was available except the clinical...I took anatomy and terminology...it helped me a lot, and then I had a bunch of teachers that ended



up moving me up in courses, like honors classes, that they thought would help me better for college.”

In addition to the exposure to relevant course work in the health sciences, Kara also received several certifications upon completion. She is “first aid certified, CPR (cardio-pulmonary resuscitation), and BLS (basic life support) certified” because of the EMS (emergency medical services) course that was offered through her health science pathway. The experiences and exposure Kara had to the medical profession through her high school coursework, and her job at a nursing home motivated her “to stay in the medical field” and enroll in the nursing program at Austin Peay State University.

Like Kara, Meg’s major is in a health science; human health performance. Meg said, “I don’t remember picking a major. I kind of knew I wanted to be in physical therapy so I did my own research, but I don’t think I received any [guidance] from my school.” She goes on to explain that her high school did not assist with picking a major or planning a schedule, “when I got to Austin Peay they taught me how to pick my schedule.” Petra described the same lack of guidance as Meg. Petra had a school counselor but reported that she did not receive any guidance on what to expect from college. She felt disappointment and as if she did not have anyone to refer to.

Adam mentioned feeling that he “wasn’t really prepared [for college]. The only teacher that [he] had that really prepared [him] was [his] criminal justice teacher...who was in law enforcement. He told us how it was...you know you’re going to college, you’re going to have fun, you’re going to do all of this but at the same time if you don’t do all of your work you’re going to pay for it.” After Adam graduated high school, he met with that teacher. “I went and



visited him and I thanked him because he was the only one that prepared us. He basically ripped off the band-aid and told us how it was.”

Kylie felt like her high school did not give many preparation course options. Although she took an AP course her senior year, she said “they didn’t really give us many prep courses as much as they told us this is what is going on, you need to go to college and you need to send out applications for college.” She did not find out until later that AP courses could count for college credit. She explains that lack of communication about AP courses:

“To get into AP classes...you had to score a certain amount or have high enough grades to get into the smart classes to be able to get credits for them. More or less. It wasn’t oh, hey you can [earn] credits by doing this or that. I didn’t find out that until later. They told us, you take this and you pass the test you actually get credit for college. I didn’t find out until they basically told us to take the test. Good thing I passed.”

Hadley took three AP courses in high school and claimed she did not receive any college or career guidance until she started working with an advisor her senior year. “I did not want to take AP and honors classes. They told me considering I had all A’s that the other classes were too easy for me.” She described how she tried to get out of the AP classes but her high school counselor said did not support that decision and Hadley remained in the AP courses. She mentioned the senior advisor “memorized everyone’s names, would call and text them when an application or scholarship was coming up.” Hadley felt like the advisor cared about the students. Hadley was not able to apply her AP scores for college credit because she did not receive an acceptable score. Hadley compared her AP statistic course to the college statistics course, “[AP] was over the top. Like more excessive than they needed to be. Because the one’s here at Austin Peay are really not even hard.”



Meg took dual enrollment courses based on her teacher's recommendations and support from her school counselor. When asked if she applied all those credits to college she said, "No, just the dual enrollment courses. I don't remember ever looking at my scores actually." Meg stated she did not receive any guidance on how to look up her scores or how to apply them to college.

Petra had limited guidance and exposure to college preparedness while in high school. She mentioned not taking advantage of the free services her school offered. She shared her knowledge of college and career readiness based on her first semester of college and using those experiences to make changes to her second semester and beyond. She said, "I know how it was last semester and I'm more prepared and I can actually focus and prioritize myself more than I [did] last semester." She mentioned she adjusted her work schedule and the number of hours worked based on her second semester course load and homework.

**Paying for college.** Most of the participants mentioned attending a FAFSA workshop that was held at their high school. Most participants had FAFSA nights where either their school counselor, or an outside representative provided information on financing a college education. All except one of the interviewees graduated from a high school in Tennessee and mentioned the Tennessee Promise and/or HOPE scholarship. None of the participants filled out the general application that the university provides for their school specific scholarships.

Three of the participants received sport related scholarships, one participant was enrolled in the honors program, and only one mentioned applying to an outside scholarship that was offered from her local community. Kylie said, "I was going to use the Tennessee Promise, however with the other scholarships I got, such as the Dean's scholarship and Pell grant, I didn't



need it. The cost of my classes [was] covered and...I had been working somewhere else before I attended college [to cover the remaining cost]."

Like many of the participants in this study, Kylie did not apply for any university specific scholarships. She replied, "not really," when asked if she knew how to do that. Although Kylie said her GPA from high school could qualify her for the HOPE scholarship, Kylie did not know why she was not receiving it. She said, "I've considered looking into it but I've never really found very much information on it for some reason." None of the participants could provide any information about the general application for the school specific scholarships offered at the University.

Petra's school offered FAFSA assistance, yet Petra did not receive any information about school specific scholarships or state assistance funding. However, by filling out the FAFSA she qualified for a Tennessee student assistance grant. Though Petra is a military dependent, she was unaware of the benefits that the University offered, such as the military student center. She said, "I see it on the 'Gov Says' but I don't know where or what it is about." She said she did not qualify for Tennessee Promise, HOPE or any other opportunities nor was she aware of how to apply for need-based assistance outside of the FAFSA.

Based on Kylie's experience in high school and involvement in the honors program at the University, she recommended everyone "completes the FAFSA. You don't know what scholarships that you can get through that. Apply for as many scholarships as you can because you don't want to have to pay for books. They add up fast and are extremely expensive."

Other than attending a FAFSA workshop, Nadia mentioned a newsletter that her high school offered all students. She stated, "the newsletter helped a lot. I still look at it for



scholarships and stuff.” Nadia is attending the University on a track scholarship. She is also using the HOPE and “three to four scholarships” that she applied for in high school.

Adam is using the Tennessee Promise and HOPE scholarship to pay for school. He said “I thought I’d get more for it but I took a [campus] tour and really fell in love with it...I really liked the people and the place.” To help with college finances, Adam worked part-time at the book store on campus. He said, “Once I got college paid for I was like ok, it’s just a breeze now. I [can] focus on school.” Adam relied on the Tennessee Promise and HOPE scholarship to pay for his college tuition.

Based on Hadley’s experience with college, she encourages future students to “know your financial situations...know your living situation...know your free time and how to manage it...are you going to work or not work.” Hadley mentioned she lives about ten minutes away from campus and had a retail job to assist paying for college. She described living at home is “ten times cheaper” because she does not have to worry about a meal plan, housing or the other fees associated to living on campus. Hadley stated her goal was to save money and apply for scholarships to help ease the cost of tuition.

## Summary

This chapter provided the discussions that the participants shared based on their experiences with college and career readiness in high school, and how it applied to their first year of college. Three major themes, *college and career readiness challenges*, *assessing college and career readiness*, and *supporting college and career readiness* described participants’ (1) exposure to college and career readiness programs in high school, (2) the types of assessment tools used to determine college and career readiness, (3) their attitudes about these programs and assessment tools, and (4) the guidance they received in high school in preparation for their first



year of college. The next and final chapter will discuss proposed suggestions to increase student's experiences, motivations and perceptions towards college and career readiness.



## CHAPTER V DISCUSSION

### Overview

The three major themes that emerged from this study are *college and career readiness challenges*, *assessing college and career readiness*, and *supporting college and career readiness in high school*. These themes illustrate the factors that influenced the motivations, perceptions and experiences of the first-year college students who participated in this study. A discussion of the results, the limitations of the study, and the implications for school counselors and future research will be discussed in this chapter.

*College and career readiness challenges* shares the knowledge that participating first year college students experienced during their first year of college. It is important for students to have an understanding of time-management, study skills, organization and motivation when they enter college and/or the workplace. One of the major challenges that was mentioned by the participants was finding a balance with their time and learning the skills on how to build a schedule that would provide time for studying, class attendance, leisure, and for some, a job. In order to keep their scholarship or continue attending college, the participants had to manage a job in the community or on campus. Although some participants had jobs in high school, they felt the pressure more in college. Although support is provided on campus, many did not use the services offered that could help them through the transition from high school to college.

Research by Dance (2015) suggests a system that can show how students will transition from adolescent to adult, teaching them the importance of asking for help, and providing them the confidence to increase their motivation to accomplish their individual goals. Procrastination was a significant topic that emerged from the participants' responses to describing college and career readiness. Many of the participants described feeling overwhelmed with the lack of skills



to overcome this challenge on their own. Procrastination was described as part of the problem for participants that failed courses because they decided to not attend class, do the work, or ask for help when needed. The participants offered advice to future students to never procrastinate and take advantage of the helpful services, however many of them did not use those services themselves.

Scheduling and time-management were important challenges that arose throughout the interviews because many of the participants felt independent and responsible for all their decisions. A couple participants mentioned a college advisor that assisted with selecting courses however, building their schedule was ultimately determined by each individual participant. One participant mentioned he used to play football in high school and how he opted to play intermural sports at college because he wanted to maintain his scholarship, grades and remain on track for graduation. Another participant who received a soccer scholarship recognized that her schedule does not allow time for a job because she spent a majority of her time focused on the sport and on her grades. The participants expressed the importance of learning good time management skills in order to develop a daily schedule that led to success in their courses. They also described their attitudes which included having a purpose, being prepared and being comfortable with their decisions surrounding college and career readiness.

*Assessing college and career readiness* explains participants' exposure to preparation of college entrance exams and how their motivation and perception of their experiences contributed to the admissions process and follow-through to attend college following high school graduation. Students' college and career readiness can be measured through college entrance assessments such as the SAT and ACT. Research by Jackson (2014) states that college and career readiness includes employability and technical skills in addition to the academic skills found in entrance



exams such as the SAT and ACT. Participants discussed how assessment scores determined their admission to the college, their eligibility for scholarships, invitations to participate in the Honor Program, and course placement.

All of the participants had knowledge of the ACT, college entrance exam, needed for college admission. Many of them reported receiving some form of preparation but not all of the participants had the same exposure or structured preparation before taking the ACT. Most of the participants described their experiences with mandatory ACT preparation courses in high school that determined AP placement senior year and scholarship and college admission opportunities following graduation.

Some of the participants were motivated enough to complete their own research, attend preparation courses and use study resources prior to taking the ACT. One participant knew she wanted to attend a college in the United States and completed her research on admissions in order to fulfill the requirements. She describes her experience as having the motivation to complete the task even though it was a daunting task since she lived in a country that did not administer the exam. A similar response was shared from another participant who completed her own practice, registration and attendance of exam because her high school also did not offer it.

*Supporting college and career readiness* voices participants' experiences regarding the guidance and information they received toward college and career preparation while in high school including exposure of college and career information, and options for financing college tuition. Participants' responses supported the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) that aim to increase academic rigor and prepare students for college and career readiness (Common Core State Standards Initiative, 2014a). The participants shared their experiences with dual



enrollment, Advanced Placement courses, job shadowing, and job experience that prepared them for their first year of college.

All participants received some type of guidance but their attitudes towards the effectiveness of the information, attention, and support varied. All of the participants mentioned a school counselor when describing who provided most of the information regarding college and career readiness. A few of the participants felt that their school counselor did not provide them enough information and they did not feel supported. A similar response was found in research involving young people who characterized their meetings with their counselors as dispiriting and unhelpful, especially if the student happened to be one who didn't stand out as "college material" (Johnson & Rochkind, 2010). The participants that had taken AP courses and/or dual enrollment had more confidence with the admission process and felt knowledgeable of the expectations of college.

### **Implications and Recommendations**

There are factors that educators can provide in an educational framework to prepare students for college and career readiness. College and career readiness is an ever-changing concept that aims to successfully prepare students for life after graduation. It is important for school counselors to be knowledgeable and comfortable with college and career readiness programming so they can better serve not only students, but school staff, parents, the community, and other stakeholders that are involved in the process. This section addresses the implications this study has for school counselors. Recommendations for school counselors providing college and career readiness opportunities to their students will be addressed. Additionally, this section will discuss ways to engage communities in the college and career readiness progress, and make suggestions on how students can enhance their own knowledge of college and career readiness.



**School counselors' influence on college and career readiness.** School counselors can determine college readiness by college entrance exam scores, graduating student's GPA, admission to college, scholarships and/or commitment to the military or workforce following high school graduation. As a school counselor, it is important to be knowledgeable of college and career readiness programs that can assist students with their plans after high school.

Part of the school counselor role is to design and implement a curriculum program that provides activities, information and guidance for students that is geared towards making plans after high school. This curriculum would provide resources for each grade level focused on college and career readiness skills. Stone-Johnson (2015) describes 25-35% of the high school counselor's time should focus on individual student planning which involves; goal-setting and decision making, academic planning, education on self-understanding, and transition plans.

The role of the school counselor is vital to the career exploration process and includes providing early exposure to college preparedness, support of career and technical programs, and encouragement toward rigorous educational programs such as AP, honors, and dual enrollment courses. The use of career inventories, results from assessments such as PSAT, SAT, AP exams and exposure of family experiences contribute to career exploration outcomes and ultimate career decisions. Recent work within school counseling related to career development has found that students will try harder and learn more when they are doing work that matters to them personally and has real-world value and consequences (Bottoms, Presson, & Han, 2006).

Multiple assessments are available to assist students in developing career pathways by matching students' interest and abilities with specific careers. The College Board offers an interactive guide called the Big Future that provides step-by-step instructions for 9<sup>th</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup> grade



high school students, on how to start planning for college or a career. The ACT Profile is a free college and career planning tool that allows individuals to navigate through life's key decision points (ACT, 2015d). Career exploration can also be assessed with the Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery (ASVAB). These assessments can inform students' career decisions, and ultimate post-secondary education choices. When students make career choices that align with their interests and aptitudes, they are more likely to experience success in their post-secondary decisions, thus developing the necessary skills and knowledge needed for success in their chosen career field.

Consistent with Poynton, et al's (2015) findings: motivational factors such as achievement motivation, connectedness, a sense of personal belonging in school, interpersonal relationship and skills, and perceptions of safety are strongly linked to critical markers of student postsecondary success. These are all skills that counselors can help build in students by providing them specific plans, assisting with defining goals, offering career assessments, and providing support and encouragement to follow their interest and plan for the future. Research by Schlossberg, Morris, & Lieberman (2001) states school counseling classroom curriculum designed to educate high school students about goal-setting, problem-solving, career exploration, and school resources has been found to significantly improve student behavior, attitude and knowledge in these areas.

School counselors need to prioritize the incorporation of time in their schedules to attend workshops, and professional development activities that expand their understanding and knowledge of college and career programming, and the assessment tools available. They need to stay abreast of current research and literature on the topic, and stay informed of the changes in post-secondary educational options, including admission requirements and deadlines. A crucial



step in providing college and career programming to students is for school counselors to have an understanding of, and familiarity with, available programs and corresponding implementation guidelines. School counselors can obtain this knowledge through in-service and professional development training provided by the local community; subscribing to professional journals and newsletters; membership in relevant professional organizations that focus on college and career readiness; and collaborating with other school counselors. The College Board website provides a variety of free resources for school counselors such as; workshops, webinars, electronic newsletters and a variety of lesson plans and classroom presentations.

**Building a college and career readiness community.** A student's post-secondary decisions are influenced by their experiences, perceptions, and motivation which shape the exploration of post-secondary options with the guidance of school counselors, other professionals in the school setting and in the student's community. Involving parents, coaches, and business and community leaders is just as important as the involvement of individuals in the school setting in assisting students with post-secondary decision-making. School counselors can support post-graduation goal attainment by incorporating programs and services that foster college and career readiness within their comprehensive school counseling program. This program can be shared with teachers and staff throughout the building for additional support and implementation.

School counselors can offer informative sessions to students, parents, and staff on a multitude of college and career readiness topics including; (1) graduation requirements (2) post-secondary dual enrollment course offerings available while in high school, (3) financial resources including scholarships and aid information, (4) and transitional information such as taking a gap year, internships and/or trade school information. Coaches can provide supportive



structure in the students' academic, career, and personal-social performance by collaborating with the school counselor about the students' achievements, successes, preparation, and practice. Community members can provide guidance with scholarships, job shadowing, internships, and employment. Students can use these experiences to gain knowledge, build relationships and improve communication skills by working with community and business leaders.

Not all students will have the option to build a customized program of study while in high school. When students do not have the guidance or college and career readiness program availability in their high schools it is important for the community to step in and provide the information. The AVID program is an example of how community members can assist with teaching the students how to build confidence by providing real-life experiences and guidance to assist the students with establishing goals for post-secondary education. The AVID program uses resources beyond the teacher in the classroom, training current college students to be AVID tutors. AVID tutors assist high school students with scholarships, career exploration, scholarships, internships, and job shadowing opportunities in the community.

Community stakeholders have the opportunity to bring together key education and members to identify linkage to existing college and career readiness programs and supporting new ideas and initiatives for the community. For example, community career centers could provide workshops that could focus on resume writing, interviewing skills, employment testing programs, skill assessments, and employment opportunities. Communities could provide FAFSA events offering information on why and how to file for financial aid, and upcoming application deadlines. The community could be involved in job fairs, military recruitment fairs, and college fairs for the public, showcasing opportunities for recent graduates and those interested in continuing education and/or job improvement.



**Student involvement with college and career readiness.** Students need resources, guidance, and programs to assist with college and career readiness. Research by Jackson (2014) states, students also need a vision and know the relevance of what they are learning to be motivated to learn everything they need to move forward in their lives. Students need to be self-driven and motivated to learn the basic soft skills of effective communication, problem-solving, decision-making, and resourcefulness in order to make choices about their future and how to take the next steps. Recognizing the importance of being on time, demonstrating positive attitudes and dressing professionally are skills that are needed for life after graduation regardless of the path students take.

Without exposure to college and career readiness activities, students do not have an understanding of what to expect in college or in the workplace. However, upon graduation, students are expected to enter the military, workforce or continue their learning in a higher education setting. Students need to be active in self-exploration towards their plans for life after graduation. The school and community can provide opportunities, assessments, and suggestions but ultimately it is up to the individual to decide what path they will take and what resources they may need to be successful. Recognizing the available support systems that are available after high school is extremely important for high school graduates.

For example, if a student with a high GPA plans to attend college but scores low on the college entrance exam, he/she may need testing accommodations in college. Additionally, knowledge of remedial courses that may be needed, and how to develop a four-year plan toward college graduation is vital information students will need to be aware of prior to entering college. It is the student's responsibility to seek out the accommodations and services a college provides, then take advantage of those that will support their academic endeavors.



Students who are joining the military following graduation should gain information from a local military recruiter about career options, benefits, and the ASVAB, and fitness test requirements. Information about career opportunities, job placement, enlistment bonuses, promotions, and option to continue education should all be additional items that interested individuals should discuss with a recruiter prior to joining the military.

For students who decide that university or college is not an option, trade school can provide these individuals with opportunities to learn a skill, trade or craft. Trade schools offer hands on learning, become an apprentice in a specific trade, take a test and get a job in that field. For those interested in a career should make sure that it has opportunity for growth and advancement, provides personal pride and satisfaction and allows long-term financial security.

### **Limitations and Implications for Further Research**

The limitations of this study are the small sample size, lack of diversity among participants, and the limited geographic area from which participants were selected. Additionally, the use of semi-structured interview questions as the means of collecting data further limits the generalizability of this study due to the subjective nature of self-reported information. Caution should be used in making generalizations from this study.

Due to the paucity of current research on college and career readiness, further research on the topic is warranted. Quantitative research methodology would allow for the sampling of a larger, more diverse population over a more expansive geographic area, thus providing for greater generalizability. A mixed-methods research study could lend veracity to participants' interviews by including an examination of participants' academic records. Lastly, extending college and career readiness research to middle and high school students' experiences could explicate the effectiveness of current programming.



## Summary

Students selected for this research study were asked about their experience with college and career readiness programs in high school and how it affected their motivations, success and overall preparedness for the first year of post-secondary education. Based on their responses, suggestions were made for school counselors to improve future students' awareness and understanding towards college and career readiness. Implications, limitations and recommendations to improve college and career readiness were presented.



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APPENDIX A

State University Institutional Review Board Approval Letter

Researcher Permission to Conduct the Study

APPENDICES



AUSTIN PEAY STATE UNIVERSITY  
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

**APPENDIX A**

**Austin Peay State University Institutional Review Board Approval Letter  
Granting Permission to Conduct the Study**





AUSTIN PEAY STATE UNIVERSITY  
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

Date: 4/05/2016

RE: 16-010 College and Career Readiness: Exploring Perception and Motivation

Dear Dr. Buchanan and Ms. Coyne,

We appreciate your cooperation with the human research review process. This letter is to inform you that study 16-010 has been reviewed and approved on an expedited level. It is my pleasure to inform that you are free to conduct your study.

This approval is subject to APSU Policies and Procedures governing human subject research. The IRB reserves the right to withdraw approval if unresolved issues are raised during the review period. Any changes or deviations from the approved protocol must be submitted in writing to the IRB for further review and approval before continuing.

This approval is for one calendar year and will expire 4/05/2017, unless closed before that date.

Please submit the appropriate form (Closed Study or Request for Continuing Review) prior to 4/05/2017. If you have any questions or require further information, you can contact me by phone (931-221-7506) or email ([butterfieldj@apsu.edu](mailto:butterfieldj@apsu.edu)).

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'J. Butterfield', written over a horizontal line.

Jonniann Butterfield, Ph. D. Chair, APIRB



## APPENDIX B

### Interview Questions



**Interview Questions:**

Where did you attend high school?

What year did you graduate?

Tell me about any prep courses you took in high school (AVID, college prep, Advanced Placement, dual enrollment, etc.)

Tell me about the college/career readiness assistance you received from your high school counselor / teachers.

What type of college / career events did your high school offer? (college application week, FAFSA, TN Promise meetings, ACT, PSAT, SAT, career fair, military information fair, college visits, job fairs, vocations programs, career assessments (KUDER), work-study, summer programs, etc.)

Which events did you participate in?

What does it mean to you to be college and career ready?

Are you receiving any scholarships (HOPE, TN Promise, APSU specific, etc.)?

How well did you do first semester?

What classes did you take first semester?

Did you earn credit for all your first semester courses?

How many credits are you taking this semester?

What courses are you enrolled in second semester?

Do you use the tutoring services on campus?

Do you have a job?

Based on your experience, what college and career advice and/or guidance would you give to current high school students to prepare them for life after graduation?



## APPENDIX C

### Informed Consent Form

## APPENDIX C

### Informed Consent Form



## INFORMED CONSENT STATEMENT

College and Career Readiness: Exploring Perception and Motivation

### INTRODUCTION

The Department of Psychological Science and Counseling at Austin Peay State University supports the practice of protection for human subjects participating in research. The following information is provided to help you decide whether you wish to participate in the present study. You retain the right to refuse to sign this form and not participate in this study. You should be aware that even if you consent to participate in this study, you may withdraw from this study at any time without consequence. If you choose to withdraw from this study, it will not affect your relationship with this department, the services it may provide to you, or Austin Peay State University.

### PURPOSE

You have been invited to take part in a research study to learn more about student's experiences with college and career readiness. This study is being conducted by one counseling student from Austin Peay State University as partial fulfillment of their Education Specialist degree.

### PROCEDURES

If you agree, you will be asked to participate in a semi-structured interview that ask you about your experiences with college and career readiness. The approximate time required for completion is 20 minutes. The interview session will be recorded by the researcher. You can refuse to answer any of the questions during the interview session. You have the right to review your audiotapes or transcripts of the interviews, and ask that portions of your tape be removed if you are uncomfortable with the information.

### RISKS

There are no known risks associated with your participation with this research. However, sometimes when people are asked to think about their experiences, they feel anxious or uncomfortable. If you would like to talk to someone about your feelings, you can contact the Austin Peay State University Student Counseling Services at 931-221-6162.

### BENEFITS

Participants will receive 5 bonus points towards their PSY 1010 course for participating in the study. Participating in this research, you will also provide information to the researcher on your experience with college and career readiness. With this information, school counselors can better provide college and career readiness programs and skills to future students.

### COMPENSATION

No compensation will be provided to participations for this study.



**PARTICIPANT CONFIDENTIALITY**

Any information provided and/or identifying records will remain confidential and kept in a locked file and/or password protected computer file in the researcher's office for a minimum of five years. All data collected from you will be coded with a number or pseudonym (fake name). Your real name will not be used.

**REFUSAL TO SIGN CONSENT**

You are not required to sign this Consent form and you may refuse to do so without affecting your right to participate in any programs or events of Austin Peay State University or any services you are receiving or may receive from Austin Peay State University. However, if you refuse to sign, you cannot participate in this study.

**CANCELLING THIS CONSENT**

You may withdraw your consent to participate in this study at any time. If you choose to withdraw from the study before data collection is completed, any collected data will be destroyed and not used.

**QUESTIONS ABOUT PARTICIPATION**

If you have any questions about the procedures, you may direct them to the principal investigator, Dr. Buchanan.



**CONSENT**

I have read the above information and received a copy of this form. I have had the opportunity to ask questions regarding my participation in this study. I agree to take part in this study as a research participant.

By my signature I affirm that I am at least 18 years old and a student at Austin Peay State University.

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Print Participant's Name Date

---

Participant's Signature Date

**RESEARCHER CONTACT INFORMATION**

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**IRB Contact Information**

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**APPENDIX D**  
Debriefing Statement



**DEBRIEFING STATEMENT****College and Career Readiness: Exploring Perception and Motivation**

The purpose of this study is to understand the college and career readiness programs students experienced, in high school that prepared them for success in postsecondary institutions. This study explores what college and career readiness experiences students are encountering in high school and their perceptions of those experiences in preparing them for college. By participating in this study, your results can provide school counselors with useful information about the effectiveness of a variety of college and career readiness programs that you experienced in high school. Thank you for participating in this study. Should you have any questions or concerns, please contact Sarah Coyne, Student Researcher at [scoyne@apsu.edu](mailto:scoyne@apsu.edu), 808-222-8915 or Dr. Deborah Buchanan, Chair, [buchanand@apsu.edu](mailto:buchanand@apsu.edu), (931) 221-1247.