

Turning Points:
Improving Honors Student Preparation for Thesis Completion
by
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A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment
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ABSTRACT

This dissertation is an action research study that had as its primary goal to increase retention of honors college students at Arizona State University by implementing an additional advising session during the fifth semester of their academic career. Introducing additional, strategically-timed support for the honors thesis and demystifying the thesis project was intended to help honors college students make more successful transitions to the final stage of their undergraduate honors careers. This advising session is not only used to demystify the thesis/creative project, but to introduce the student to the logistical elements of the thesis process. Most importantly, this session was designed to encourage students to find a focal interest for the project and to engage them in the process of identifying an appropriate director for this project.

To assess the success of the early upper division thesis group advising session, students were asked to identify steps taken to begin the process early. Pre and post-intervention surveys and follow-up interviews were used to determine if the participants had taken steps necessary to complete the thesis. Questions regarding the identification of potential thesis foci, committee member selection, and research question formation were used to measure forward momentum. The early group advising session was successful in assisting 7 of the 9 participants to move one step closer to the completion of their honors thesis completion. However, the degree of movement was less than I expected or predicted. The early group advising session gave voice to our students by soliciting suggestions that might improve the session. Suggested changes included:

- Maintain an optimal size group of six to eight students selected by discipline and projected date of graduation
- Breakouts for students to discuss thesis topic and committee member selection strategies facilitated by faculty and honors advisors
- Upper division students currently completing or who have successfully completed their thesis/creative projects made available to answer questions and provide success strategies
- Specialty research librarians invited to demonstrate web based resources
- Faculty approved discipline specific thesis/creative projects (models of best practice) available for review during the group intervention

DEDICATION

To my parents, Manuel and Corrine Patiño who taught me the value of an

education,

with all my gratitude and love.

Para mi Abuelita Josepha con todo mi amor.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

To all of my supporters who encouraged me to travel the road less traveled.

Thank You!

Robert Frost (1874–1963)

*The Road Not Taken*¹

Two roads diverged in a yellow wood,
And sorry I could not travel both
And be one traveler, long I stood
And looked down one as far as I could
To where it bent in the undergrowth;

Then took the other, as just as fair,
And having perhaps the better claim,
Because it was grassy and wanted wear;
Though as for that the passing there
Had worn them really about the same,

And both that morning equally lay
In leaves no step had trodden black.
Oh, I kept the first for another day!
Yet knowing how way leads on to way,
I doubted if I should ever come back.

I shall be telling this with a sigh
Somewhere ages and ages hence:
Two roads diverged in a wood, and I —
I took the one less traveled by,
And that has made all the difference

Without the continual support and prodding from Dr. Kris Ewing I would never have begun my eventual quest to complete the doctoral program. As a lifelong learner, casually involved in gathering knowledge to inform my practice in higher education, I lacked the confidence and courage to enter a degree

¹ Note. From "*Mountain Interval*," by Robert Frost, 1920, New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1920; Bartleby.com, 1999. <http://www.bartleby.com/119/1.html>. [February 4, 2012]. Copyright 1999 by Bartleby.com, Inc. Reprinted with permission.

program. It was not until she insisted that I apply to the Master of Education program that I embarked on this long journey.

Thank you to my committee members, Dr. Chris Clark, Dr. Christine Wilkinson and Dr. Elsie Szecsy for their time and expert guidance through the often painstakingly slow process of completing this doctoral dissertation. To Dr. Caroline Sotello Viernes Turner, without whom the *Leadership for Changing Times* doctoral program would not have been possible, thank you. Thank you to all the faculty who supported our Master and Doctoral programs, Dr. Alfredo de los Santos, Dr. Rufus Glasper, Dr. Maria Hesse, Dr. Rund, Dr. Lisa Rodrigue McIntyre, Dr. Mehmet Ozturk, Dr. Michele Mosco, and Dr. Richard Freishtat.

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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

The Honors College, at many public universities, is prominently featured in publicity that highlights the success in attracting high-achieving students, engaging faculty and cutting edge researchers. Yet, it is hidden in regard to its position among the academic colleges with regard to statistics about enrollment management. Although much research has been undertaken concerning attrition and persistence within universities, very little information exists on attrition trends and patterns within honors colleges (Tinto, 1987; Tinto, 1975; Spady, 1970; Tinto & Goodsell, 1993; Bean & Eaton, 2000; Terenzini & Pascarella, 1977, 1978, 1980). This may be due to the fact that researchers are concerned with overall student success as measured by graduation rates from the university as a whole. Colleges and universities are rated by these measures in popular media sources such as *US News and World Report*, *The Readers Digest Top 100*, and *The College Board Report*, all of which influence the decision-making of prospective students. Retention and attrition rates, as ultimately expressed by graduation rates, are often used as yardsticks to measure the efficacy of faculty instruction and student services operations, generally expressed as student success (Cowbane, 2008).

Much is known and reported about the number of students admitted to honors colleges, including the demographic composition of each entering class. However, little is known about the details of persistence and attrition of the students within the honors college. Cosgrove (2004) and Campbell (2005)

reported graduation from honors programs at rates of less than 30%. A paradox exists within honors colleges in which the rate of honor students graduating from the university is considerably higher than the average rate of graduation when compared to the total student body, yet the graduation rate from honors colleges is lower than one might expect.

Local Setting

Barrett, The Honors College at Arizona State University is described as a *Public College of Scholars*, a selective, residential academically outstanding undergraduate college whose administrators, faculty and staff strive to support its high-achieving students academically and socially. In the Fall 2010 semester, the honors community consisted of approximately 3500 students, distributed over four campuses (225 Downtown, 68 Polytechnic, 3129 Tempe, 101 West) (Barrett, Facts Book, 2010-2011). These students are members of the honors community and in addition are members of one or more disciplinary colleges within Arizona State University (ASU). Each successive year the academic achievement of the incoming class, as measured by Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT)/ American College Testing (ACT) scores, High School Grade Point Average (GPA), and merit scholarship attainment has been on the rise. Most recently, Barrett has attracted more National Merit Scholars than Duke, Brown, Columbia or the University of California at Berkeley (National Merit Scholarship Corporation Annual Report, 2011).

Although honors students present with great promise, there remains an apparent discrepancy between expected retention rates, as measured by the

percentage of students who graduate from the honors college within 4, 5 or 6 years and actual graduation rates as compiled over the past ten years for Barrett, The Honors College (Figure 1).

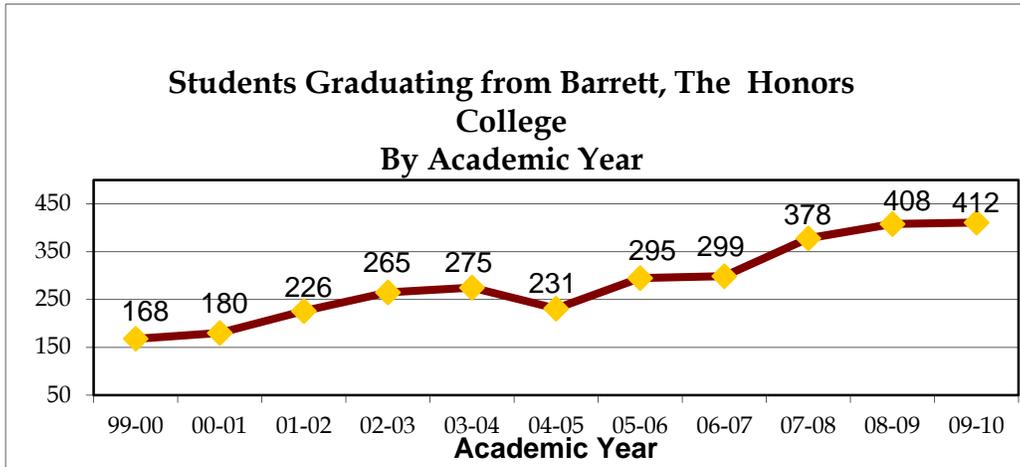


Figure 1. The Number of Students Graduating from Barrett

As predicted by the literature, enumerating the benefits to the university of retaining honors programs, first-time freshman entering as honors students graduate from the university at much higher rates when compared to all undergraduates. Currently, 58.7% of ASU undergraduates graduate within 6 years (<http://uoia.asu.edu/common-data-set>). First-time freshman honors students graduate from ASU at a rate of 82.4 %. However, using the 2004 cohort of first-time freshmen, only 43.2% of students who matriculated as honors college students completed the requirements necessary to graduate from Barrett. There has been a steady increase in the number of honors students retained by the honors college over the past five years as the college has become what the National Council of Honors Colleges refers to as a *Fully Developed Honors*

College indicating that all aspects of the honors college from the curriculum, faculty, advising and student services staff, housing, student engagement activities, organizational structure to the architectural details provide enrichment (Table 1). Honors advisors are positioned to enhance the gains already achieved by Barrett in the retention of these high-achieving students (Klein, French, & Degotardi, 2007; Kem & Navan, 2006). Advisors currently meet with students for mandatory advising appointments during the first, third and sixth, semesters of their academic careers.

Table 1

Barrett, The Honors College Retention Trends

Graduation Rate Trend				
Incoming Freshman Class Year 2006	2002	2003	2004	2005
Graduating Class of 2010	2006	2007	2008	2009
Number of incoming BHC freshmen 595	679	812	759	767
Graduated from ASU # and % of incoming BHC freshmen				
Within 4 years 395 (66.4%)	354 (52.1%)	445 (54.8%)	473 (62.3%)	464 (60.5%)
Within 5 years NA	484 (71.3%)	617 (76.0%)	603 (79.4%)	611 (82.9%)
Within 6 years NA	530 (78.1%)	648 (79.8%)	626 (82.4%)	NA
Graduated from BHC # and % of incoming BHC freshmen				
Within 4 years 303 (50.9%)	168 (24.7%)	185 (22.7%)	278 (36.6%)	279 (36.4%)
Within 5 years NA	210 (30.9%)	238 (29.3%)	323 (42.56%)	383 (49.9%)
Within 6 years NA	214 (31.5%)	241 (29.7%)	328 (43.2%)	NA

Notes: The six-year graduation rate for ASU for the 2004 cohort of full-time, first time bachelor's (or equivalent) degree seeking undergraduate students was 56%.

Source: Barrett Facts Book 2010-2011

A review of the advising student record system data and interviews conducted as part of a pilot study during the Spring 2010 semester, revealed potential stressors that contribute to honors student attrition from the honors college. Currently, students who request to be withdrawn from the honors college are required to meet with an honors advisor for an exit interview. This interview has two purposes: first, to find appropriate resources to retain the student. If this is not possible, the second objective of the interview is to identify factors that led the student to request to be withdrawn from the honors college. One such stressor for upper division students is the impending completion of an honors thesis project.

Barrett Advising Protocol. Within the advising office of Barrett, The Honors College, advisors meet with students in their first, third, and sixth semester of their undergraduate studies. These appointments vary in content and purpose depending on the progress the student has made toward degree completion. Upon admission students have their first opportunity to meet with their advisors during orientation. At that time each student is acquainted with the requirements of the honors college. To graduate with honors from Barrett, students admitted as First Time Freshman must achieve a Cumulative GPA of 3.25 or higher, complete a total of 36 honors credits, including the satisfactory completion and defense of an honors thesis and a two semester course entitled *The Human Event*. Students admitted as Upper Division ASU or Transfer Students must achieve a 3.25 Cumulative GPA, complete a total of 21 upper

division honors credits and at least one three credit upper division honors seminar, and successfully defend and submit an approved honors thesis/creative project.

The Human Event is a signature course that has been described by students as both the most rigorous and most rewarding course of their undergraduate degree program. Based on the *Great Books*, this course was created to nurture foundational skills, strong analytic skills and clear, graceful self-expression. Completion of The Human Event course often presents the student with their first academic challenge.

In each subsequent advising appointment, progress toward meeting the honors credit requirement is emphasized and the student's transcript is reviewed to calculate the total number of honors credits completed. Students, in concert with their advisors, develop strategies for completing the requirements.

During the mandatory first year advising appointment students are encouraged to discuss their adjustment to college, the rigor of the curriculum and social integration. It is the primary responsibility of the advisor to identify resources across campus that promote student success. These resources include course selection, honors only sections, enrichment contracts, tutoring, psychological counseling, financial aid, and scholarship and engagement opportunities within Barrett and across the University.

Sophomore appointments are structured to allow the student to lead the appointment in the direction they deem most profitable. Discussions of honors credits, honor faculty advisor roles and relationships, preliminary conversations of thesis projects, scholarship renewal, advanced honors opportunities including

internships, research, Project Excellence, study abroad and honors omnibus seminar courses are discussed. Career exploration, graduate school, and professional school preparation are often part of the sophomore appointment. This appointment can be critical for those students who are not making significant progress toward the completion of the 36 honors credit requirement. Students are encouraged to complete a total of 12 honors credits per academic year to allow sufficient time during the junior and senior years to complete the thesis project.

Sixth semester or upper division advisement typically is devoted entirely to the thesis project. The process from beginning to end is discussed including the identification of a thesis topic, the thesis committee selection process including the director, second and third reader selection, funding options, format, and defense of the thesis. Workshops are led by the faculty thesis liaison and students are invited to attend a semester ending thesis colloquium, at which time students who have successfully defended their thesis participate in a poster presentation event. Every attempt is made to demystify the thesis project so that students can successfully complete and defend their thesis to move closer to graduation. But for some honors college students, this sixth-semester help may come too late.

Purpose of the Study

This action research dissertation had as its primary goal to increase retention leading to graduation of upper division honors students by implementing an additional advising session during the fifth semester of their academic career.

Introducing additional, strategically-timed support for the honors thesis and demystifying the thesis project should help honors college students make more successful transitions to the final stage of their undergraduate careers.

Significance of the Study

The retention of honors students is significant to the students from a personal perspective and to the honors college as an integral part of the university educational system. High-achieving students have always been defined in part by their ability to succeed in academic settings (Achterberg, 2005; Gerrity, Lawrence & Sedlack, 1993; Kaczvinsky, 2007; Gohn & Albin, 2006; Klein, French, & Degotardi, 2007; Mathiasen, 1985). One potential cost to students who withdraw from the honors college may be the necessity to begin finding an identity that no longer is defined solely by their academic prowess. A pilot study that informed this action research dissertation indicated that one reason students gave for withdrawing from the Honors College was to find out who they were without the “honors” label. They described themselves as always included in the high-achieving subgroup of students and so it was automatically assumed by teachers, counselors, parents and the students themselves that they would become members of the honors college.

Students who withdraw from the honors college lose the benefits associated with membership. As members of the honors college they qualify for priority registration, specialized residential facilities, smaller classes, and access to renowned faculty. In addition, opportunities for pre-med, pre-health advising,

specialized internship, research and leadership opportunities are provided by the honors college. These enrichment opportunities are provided to assist the students in maximizing their academic potential. Research indicates that for high-achieving students participating in honors has a positive effect on academic achievement and success (Pflaum, Pascarella, & Dubym, 1985). Other studies have indicated that high-achieving students participating in honors had significantly more experiences with faculty and greater gains in general education, liberal arts, science and technology, persistence to second year, and college GPA than non-honors high-achieving students (Astin, 1993; Shushok 2002). Clearly, it is in the best interest of the students to continue their participation in the honors college and reap the benefits of all the college has to offer.

For the university, this very special high-achieving sub-population of students brings with them positive attributes that become part of the university culture (Bulakowski & Townsend, 1995; Byrne, 1998; Long, 2002; Reinman, Varhus, & Whipple, 1990; Shushok, 2003). The overall quality of the student body can be enriched by attracting a higher number of honor students. A strong honors college, with a record of high levels of retention and persistence, perpetuates the culture by drawing like-minded students. In reviewing over 500 honors programs, Long (2002) suggests that high achieving students offer a positive peer effect to the campus culture and may positively influence recruiting of outstanding faculty members. External stakeholders are impressed by the successes of these students as positive indicators of their return on investment in

public education. States suffering from brain drain are particularly likely to respond positively to increases in high-achieving students brought to their state as a result of a successful honors college (Long, 2002). Humphrey (2008), the founding Dean of Barrett, reported that Arizona was permanently exporting its most precious natural resources, human talent. According to Humphrey, “the vast majority of undergraduates settle permanently within a radius of one hundred twenty-five miles from the institution where they pursue their undergraduate education therefore the state could gain significant talent by supporting an honors college” (Humphrey, 2008 p. 12). Clearly, it is imperative for the honors college to retain its students to meet the goals identified above.

Key Terms and Definitions

Honors Credits

Credits associated with the successful completion of specially designed courses, honors enrichment contracts, research, study abroad, internships, and thesis/creative projects. The number of honors credits is equivalent to the number of hours of credit awarded.

Honors Only Sections

Special sections of courses especially designed to challenge honors students. These courses may be taught by Honors Fellows or specially chosen faculty from across ASU.

Honors Enrichment Contract

An agreement between the professor and student that allows honors credit to be added to qualifying non-honors courses. Students and faculty

collaborate to design an agreement that is appropriate to the course, generally involving additional contact time and special projects.

Project Excellence

Exclusive partnership between the ASU Sandra Day O'Connor College of Law and Barrett, The Honors College, designed to allow upperclassmen an opportunity to enroll in second year law classes.

Honors Fellows

Full time faculty of the honors college responsible for offering the core honors curriculum.

Faculty Honors Advisors

Members of the faculty specially chosen to support honors students in the disciplines. The faculty honors advisors function as liaisons between the honors college and his or her concentration in the discipline.

Academic or Major Advisor

Assists students to select courses and provides guidance in the completion of degree, college and university requirements.

Honors Academic Advisor

A member of the student services team responsible to assist students in the completion of the honors requirements. In addition, the Honors Academic Advisor provides links to special resources available to honors students.

Celebrating Honors Symposium

A symposium held in April designed to provide honors students the opportunity to showcase their completed honors/creative projects.

Thesis/Creative Project

The thesis/creative project is the culmination of the honors students' entire honors experience and undergraduate education. This project affords the students the opportunity to contribute to, and advance knowledge in their discipline. In addition, it is a rare opportunity for undergraduates to become deeply engaged with professors, nationally recognized in their disciplines. This project requires that students explore a self-selected area of academic interest in greater depth than would normally be achieved in a single course. It is expected that the thesis/creative project will be completed over two semesters and result in the awarding of three to six honors credits. (<http://barretthonors.asu.edu/2011/02/what-is-the-thesis-creative-project/> pp2).

Director

A regularly appointed member of the ASU faculty, generally having the title of Full, Associate, or Assistant Professor, Lecturer or Senior Lecturer. The Director must have expertise in the area of the thesis/creative project. This member of the committee provides the highest level of guidance and his or her opinion carries the highest weight.

Second Reader

A regularly appointed member of the ASU faculty, generally having the title of Full, Associate, or Assistant Professor, Lecturer or Senior Lecturer.

This member of the committee provides expertise directly or indirectly related to the thesis/creative project.

Third Reader

A qualified professional in any field within or outside ASU who can lend expertise to the thesis/creative project.

Honors Credit Verification Check Sheet

An updated summary of honors credits completed by the student provided during advising appoints.

Retention

The rate, usually expressed as a percentage, of students who re-enroll each semester.

Persistence

The continued enrollment of the student in his or her institution leading to graduation.

Advanced Placement Credit (AP)

College level courses, usually offered through honors programs in high school, that are offered for college credit through examination.

Transfer Credit

College level credit completed outside of ASU from an accredited institution of higher education.

Chapter 2

REVIEW OF SUPPORTING SCHOLARSHIP

This action research dissertation is informed by current scholarship which explains the theories of college student retention and persistence, models of academic advising, the characteristics of honors colleges and the identity of the honors student. An understanding of these underlying concepts of the honors student educational experience was essential in the creation of the action research intervention designed to move students closer to thesis completion and thus increasing the likelihood for graduation from the honors college.

Honors Colleges

What are honors programs or colleges? This can best be answered by what honors colleges do, provide an academic enriching learning environment to high-achieving students. This quote from the National Collegiate Honors Council provides insight into the central tenets upon which honors colleges are established.

Honors grows out of a rich, alert, ever changing dedication to deep, creative, active learning-the kind of learning that happens within and outside honors classrooms, the kind of pedagogies that pay attention to how "slant" approaches to teaching and learning result in truly engaged, exemplary, transformative education (<http://www.nchchonors.org/honorsphilosophy.shtml>).

The core values of academic excellence, challenge, rigor, risk, creativity, innovation, interdisciplinary, community, leadership, reflection, motivation, curiosity, integrity, and service are found as central themes woven throughout the mission statements of honors programs and college missions. In all cases, although honor colleges are vastly different they all have a goal of providing academic enrichment. The interpretation of this may be different for different institutions, however in most cases this enrichment includes intense involvement with specialized faculty in small seminars shared with other honors students, internship, mentored individualized research opportunities, study abroad, and service opportunities.

The numbers of honors colleges are on the rise, particularly as public institution of higher education witness the benefits of institutional prestige, increase ease of recruitment and the fundraising cache associated with their creation (Cobane, 2008). In 1994, The National Collegiate Honors Council (NCNC) adopted a series of characteristics considered the *Basic Characteristics of a Fully Developed Honors Programs and Colleges*; these characteristics have undergone numerous revisions, however there is agreement that the curriculum of the honors college constitutes at least 20% of a student's degree program and that an honors thesis or honors capstone project be included in the requirements for graduation.

Honors Students

Who are the students identified as honors students? Much has been written about this topic from an operational viewpoint. Rather little has been done to identify this subcategory of students empirically. The operational definition of an honors student is one which often changes dependent upon the institution answering the question (Achterberg, 2005; Rinn & Plucker, 2004). Within any institution, honors students are the most high-achieving students within the student body who choose to accept admission to an honors program or college. Each institution defines the honors student by the criteria used for admission purposes; the criteria used for admission may be similar between institutions, although thresholds differ between institutions depending on level of selectivity (Robinson, 1997; Dougherty, 2007).

Most often high school GPA, class ranking, SAT and ACT scores, a written essay and letters of recommendation are reviewed to determine the composition of the entering class. Institutions vary in the weight assigned to the criteria reviewed based on their philosophy of *what* constitutes honors. Although this information is useful in determining the composition of the entering class it does not necessarily provide all the information necessary for honors advisors, in collaboration with their students, to craft a pathway for the undergraduates to negotiate through their undergraduate career. If one believes that such a thing exists, from the perspective of the advisor it is helpful to understand the *group psyche* of honors students.

Honors students are often described as advanced, high achieving or academically gifted, experienced, accelerated, conscientious with a will to achieve, open to new experiences, autonomous, value intrinsic learning, inquisitive, open to faculty-student interactions, and more involved with co-curricular or volunteer activities (Aydelotte, 1925; Austin, 1986; Cohen, 1966; Long & Lange, 2002; Stephen & Eisen 1996,1997; Lease, 2002; Mathiasen, 1985). These attributes are reflected in their SAT/ACT scores, high school GPA, class rank, the litany of leadership positions held and the numerous co-curricular activities reflected in their admission records. To this should be added that honor students often come to the university with a high number of Advanced Placement (AP) or dual enrollment credits, on a fast track to higher education, many completing general education requirements before their first day in the honors college.

Yet we are reminded by Robertson (1966) that “bright young men and women experience the same self-questioning, the same anxieties, the same social triumphs and failures, the same problems of choice, the same difficulty meeting deadlines as do all other young men and women...” (p. 52). Models of attrition typically address students considered at risk and often make predictions based on input variables; however the input variables among honors students are more homogenous than those of the general student population in regard to GPA, school rank, SAT/ACT scores (Tinto, 1987; Tinto, 1975; Spady,1970; Tinto & Goodsell, 1993; Bean & Eaton, 2000; Terenzini & Pascarella, 1977, 1978, 1980). These variables have been noted as most closely related to student success.

Recognizing that other personal attributes may be varied, these academic input variables were found to be most related to retention (Astin, 1993; Tinto, 1975; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005).

Risks for high achieving honors students may be more related to time management and study skills, the inability of honors students to cope with the first grade which falls below their expectations, and asking for assistance (Kaczvinsky, 2007; Robinson, 1997). Additionally honors students may experience difficulty with adjusting to being *one among many high achieving students*, evolving issues of self-esteem, and maintaining the degree of commitment or level of aspiration required to sustain performance in the honors college (Robinson, 1997). Finally, high-achieving students may not have fully developed an understanding of their intrinsic/extrinsic motivational drivers, multipotentiality, or negative attributes of perfectionism such as a fear of failure (Robinson, 1997; Neumeister, 2004; Rice & Darke, 2000). These are important consideration for the honors advisor, as all too often advisors are only provided with evidence of the academic prowess of these students.

It is only through time and personal interaction with these high-ability students that one begins to see the complexity and individuality of these students. When advising any one subpopulation of college students it is imperative to remember that students do not represent one and only one subset of characteristics. Honors students also present with characteristics of other *subpopulations* identified by the National Association of Student Personnel Administrators (NASPA) as Millennial, First-generation, Minority, LBGT,

Athletes, Students with Disabilities, Native American, Non-traditional, Working, Residential Living, Commuter, Greek, International, and Transfer students (Gohn & Albin, 2006).

Advising Models

Developmental advising describes an advising protocol where the student and advisor share responsibility for uncovering growth experiences for the student. The goal is for the advisor to direct students to resources that will facilitate independence, decision-making and problem-solving skill sets (Crookston, 1972). King (2005) suggests that “Developmental academic advising recognizes the importance of interactions between the student and the campus environment, it focuses on the whole person, and it works with the student at that person's own life stage of development” (para. 2). Honors students prefer this type of collaborative advising model, concurrently learning and receiving support for their desire for an enriched and challenging educational experience (Kem & Navan, 2006; Ender & Wilke, 2000; Ender, 1997).

Intrusive advising focuses on a consistent interaction between advisor and student. In this approach to advising, advisors are proactive in building a relationship with students and contacting them rather than reacting to issues and solely problem-solving (Abelman & Molina, 2001; Abelman & Molina, 2002; Austin, Cherney, Crowner, & Hill, 1997; Backhus, 1989; Jeschke, Johnson, & Williams, 2001). The model of advising practiced in Barrett; The Honors College conforms to both the developmental and intrusive advising model. Students are required to participate in mandatory advising appointments. Email reminders are

sent on a routine basis until students comply with the advising requirements. In the event that students do not attend the mandatory appointment a hold is placed on the students' record precluding them from registering for classes until they have scheduled their appointment. These appointments are required for the first, third and sixth semesters of the undergraduate career.

Retention and Persistence

Much has been written about persistence and retention from the university, however little has been written about persistence within the honor college. The predominant information concerning honors concerns the history of honors programs or colleges in the United States or the study of curriculum design within the honors college. What little has been written about honors college student persistence measures the predictability of persistence based on input variables such as high school grade point average (GPA), rank, Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) and American College Testing (ACT) scores (McDonald & Gawkoski, 1979; Roufagalus, 1993; Feldman, 1992). Advisors begin their work with students who have been admitted based on these and other input variables.

Honors academic advisors at Barrett, The Honors College are committed to meeting the needs of the students from the point of admission to the day of graduation. Honors advisors strive to create stronger bonds between their students and the college, proactively reminding students of important academic deadlines and upcoming opportunities, monitoring performances to ensure continued eligibility for merit scholarships, encourage students to come in for mandatory advising at the right times, complete a thesis prospectus and thesis, and

ultimately graduate from Barrett (J. Roberts, personal communication, March 11, 2011). Honor advisors tailor the honors experience to each student's interests, strengths, and goals in keeping with the Developmental Model of Advising. Described by Crookston (1972) as collaborating with students navigating "the investigation of not only personal and vocational decision making but also facilitating the student's rational processes, environmental and interpersonal interactions, behavior awareness and problem-solving, decision making, and evaluation skills" (p. 5).

Advising should evolve from the working definition of the honor student offered by Acterberg (2005):

...an honor student should be: a highly motivated, academically talented, intrinsically-inspired, advanced and a curious student who has broad interests a passion for learning, and excitement about ideas. The student should also be sufficiently different or unique from the institutional norm as to need, indeed require, a different, more challenging curriculum and other learning opportunities to satisfy his or her drive to learn, know, and do (p 81).

Honors academic advisors are challenged to assist high-ability students to uncover the vast resources the university has available in terms of special programs, research, internships, study abroad, national scholarships, and thesis opportunities. Tapping into the student's sources of motivation and aligning these interests with the universities resources are central to the Barrett advising model.

Self-Determination Theory (SDT)

Ryan and Deci (2000) suggested that human motivation could be categorized by amount or degree of motivation and also by motivational orientation, where motivational orientation refers to a type of motivation. Motivation that arises from personal interests and values is described as intrinsic and is the most self-determined. In contrast, motivational orientation described as extrinsic, originates out of a desire to undertake or obtain outcomes separable from the self. Ryan and Deci (2000) also describe a-motivation as an absence of motivation. SDT theorists suggest that intrinsic and extrinsic motivational factors need not be mutually exclusive and that some range of factors are at play in moving individuals to act. Students are motivated to attend institutions of higher education for multiple reasons (Cokley, Bernard, Cunningham, & Motoike, 2001; Fan-child, Horst, Finney, & Ban-on, 2005). The same may be true in regard to completion of degree requirements or in the case of the intervention, the undertaking and completion of the thesis project.

Four types of extrinsic motivation are identified by Ryan and Deci (2000); *external, introjected, identified and integrated regulation* which represents varying degrees of self-determination. External regulation represents a type of extrinsic motivation where activity is performed to satisfy an external demand or to obtain an externally imposed reward. This type of motivation was cited in the early literature as diametrically opposed to intrinsic motivation and the least effective type of motivation (deCharms, 1968 as cited in Ryan & Deci, 2000).

Introjected regulation is considered to be the second least effective method of motivation, whereby the individual performs actions in response to an internalized feeling of pressure, to avoid guilt or anxiety or to attain ego-enhancements or pride (Ryan & Deci, 2000). A more autonomous and effective type of external motivation, identification regulation involves the acceptance of the personal importance of a behavior. In this instance the motivation has become internalized and the person accepts the control as his or her own.

The most autonomous and powerful form of extrinsic motivation is referred to as integrated regulation, whereby the motivating forces become most self-directed and are those that are most closely aligned with the individual's values and interests. Accordingly, "if the extrinsic goal is self-endorsed and thus adopted with a sense of volition" an individual will be highly motivated to act (Ryan & Deci, 2000, p.5).

Self-Determination Theory addresses educational challenges concerning the motivation of students to accomplish prescribed behaviors. To maintain intrinsic motivation, students must experience perceived competence or self-confidence and they must experience their behavior as self-determined or within their own control. For extrinsic motivation to be sustained it must become internalized and integrated with students' goals and values (Ryan & Deci, 1985; 2000). A graphic representation of the Self-Determination Theory appears in Figure 2.

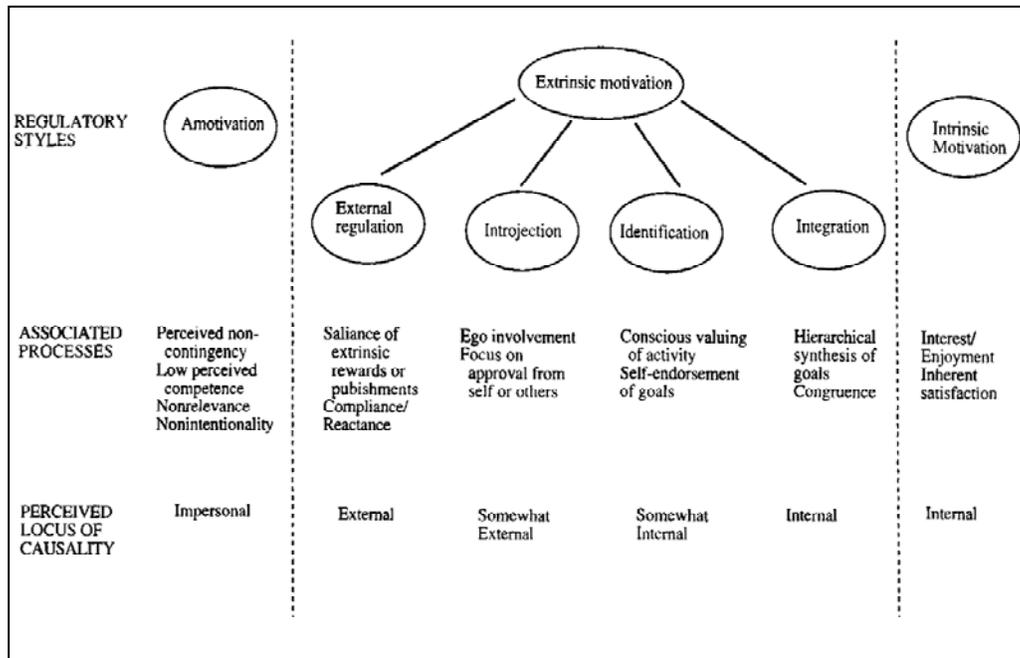


Figure 2. A Taxonomy of Human Motivation (Ryan & Deci, 2000)

Making the best use of university opportunities is a weighing and balancing of opportunities, risks and benefits. Students express their evaluation of benefits by choosing the programs they participate in during their undergraduate educational experience, selecting those that most closely align with their personal values. Initially, students choosing to enroll in the honors college do so for either intrinsic or extrinsic motivational reasons, or possibly a combination of both. Self-Determination Theory provides us with a theoretical model that helps to explain why some students, when faced with obstacles to complete their honors requirements, continue in their endeavor while others do not.

Completing the honors requirements to graduate from Barrett, The Honors College is optional. Students who choose not to complete the honors

requirements can still complete their degree requirements and graduate from ASU. To facilitate the completion of the thesis project and required honors credits, an additional early fifth semester advising appointment is structured at a time that is most beneficial to the student. One of the goals of the advising session is to inspire students to complete their thesis and to uncover the motivational underpinning that will sustain the students' autonomous effort to complete all honors requirements. Utilizing a self-determination theoretical perspective, the advising appointment becomes a learning and motivational experience. Assisting students to examine their motivation for completing the thesis and graduating from the honors college may be an important retention tool.

This chapter provided an overview of the literature that informed the action research study undertaken to improve the rate of thesis completion thereby increasing the numbers of honors students graduating from the honors college. Chapter three describes the research design employed for the intervention of this action research study, fifth semester group advising session.

RESEARCH DESIGN

Position of the Researcher

The journey for the researcher begins in defining his or her worldview (Creswell, 2009). In Action Research the researcher is an integral part of the research design, therefore it is incumbent upon the researcher to establish internal knowledge of his or her operating paradigm. In this way, the research design and results can be understood through the lens of the researcher. At the very least, the theoretical framework within which the researcher operates needs to be disclosed to the readers (Merriam, 2009). Investigating my own worldview has convinced me that I am of a Constructivist mind with leanings toward critical theory.

The key phrases used to describe *Constructivism* suggest a worldview where meaning is created by multiple participants, in a naturalistic environment (Merriam, 2009). Crotty (1998) defined constructivism as "the view that all knowledge, and therefore all meaningful reality as such, is contingent upon human practices, being constructed in and out of interaction between human beings and their world, and developed and transmitted within an essentially social context" (p. 42). The *Critical Theorist* is described in terms of his or her worldview as emancipator, one of advocacy and change-oriented (Merriam, 2009). It is imperative for the reader to consider the above paradigm preference as the focal lens through which the overarching research question or statement of purpose has been constructed.

As a participant observer in this research there is an expectation that the researcher may have some influence on the actions of the participants and operates as a part of the action research intervention. My role as an advisor in the honors college was somewhat attenuated by the fact that I was relatively new to this position. The participants in this study had met with me on only one occasion prior to the start of this intervention for their third semester mandatory advising appointment. Of particular interest is the measurable change, if any, in our advisee/advisor relationship.

Action Research

Action research is meant to be utilized within a particular community of practice; it works from the assumption that all people affected by or having an effect on an issue should be involved in the processes of inquiry (Stringer, 2007). Barrett honors students, through the interview process, will inform practice by sharing their experiences and expertise. Having lived the honors program they have a basis in direct experience for making recommendations about improvements in the advising protocol.

Herr & Anderson (2005) insist that action research demands some form of intervention, in which the intervention constitutes a spiral of action cycles in which the research undertakes

1. To develop a plan of action to improve what is already happening;
2. To act to implement the plan;
3. To observe the effects of action in the context in which it occurs;

4. To reflect on these effects as a basis for further planning, subsequent action and on through a succession of cycles (Kemmis, 1982, p.7).

Honors academic advisors meet with honors students during the first, third and sixth semester at ASU for mandatory advising appointments. In addition advisors meet with students who wish to withdraw from the honors college. As a new member of the advising staff in fall 2010 I felt compelled to learn why students with great potential were interested in withdrawing from the Honors College. Initially, I assumed that the students who would be requesting to be withdrawn were those who were unable to maintain the required 3.25 cumulative grade point average to graduate from the honors college. Familiarity with the research on persistence and retention led me to expect that I would find patterns of attrition consistent with these theories, such that the highest rates of attrition would occur during the freshman year (Astin, 1993; Tinto, 1975; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005).

To determine if my assumption was correct I examined our student records to determine whether the records contained data that showed patterns of attrition. At the Honors College a higher rate of attrition was found among upperclassmen. Twenty-eight percent of the students withdrawing from the Honors College withdrew within their first two years of study, whereas 72% of those students who withdrew did so as upperclassmen. This finding was unexpected and contradicted the literature on persistence.

A review of the records of the students who withdrew revealed the following:

- The percentage of students who withdraw from any particular college was proportionate to the percentage of students from that college as related to the total number of honors students in the Honors College.
- Only 30.47% of students withdrawing had Cumulative GPAs below the 3.25 needed to graduate from Barrett.
- There was a wide range of honors credit completion within the group of upper division students who requested to be withdrawn.

Number of completed honors credits ranged from 0 to 38

Average number of honors credits completed: 14

Median number of honors credits completed: 12

Mode: 9 honors credits

Paper records containing notes on withdrawal appointments were examined, as were withdrawal notes contained in the electronic student records. At that time no formal series of questions were discussed with students during withdrawal appointments, however central themes could be identified in the data available. To identify better the reasons students gave for withdrawing from the Honors College, I devised an interview script which I used with my advisees (Appendix C). Included in the withdrawal notes were indications that the stress of completing a thesis presented a specific stressor experienced by students who requested to be withdrawn. Honors academic advisors meeting with students during the sixth semester are charged with the task of introducing the thesis/creative project process. Therefore, I began to question how advisors could take action to influence thesis completion and graduation rate positively by

moving the advising session forward to the fifth semester of the student's undergraduate career.

Research Questions

The goal of this action research was to provide an additional advising session at a time which was most beneficial for students about to begin their honors thesis project, moving them one step closer to graduation. To assess the value of this group advising session to the participants the following questions were addressed:

1. How does participation in a fifth semester advising appointment impact honors student success leading to increased retention levels?
2. How does the addition of a thesis group advising session change the perception of the thesis project and upper division honors requirements?

Research Design

This research design utilized the evaluation of student records to inform the decision process to move forward with a fifth semester group advising session referred to as the action research intervention. Field observations, audio recordings, pre and post surveys containing open and closed ended questions were employed during the intervention and post-intervention interviews.

The design of the intervention for this action research dissertation was to implement a fifth semester group advising session on a small scale to evaluate purposefully its short-term benefits. Historically, many students do not attend the sixth semester mandatory advising appointment until after the midterm break,

which leaves little time to begin the steps necessary to start working on the thesis early, assuring completion (Figure 3).

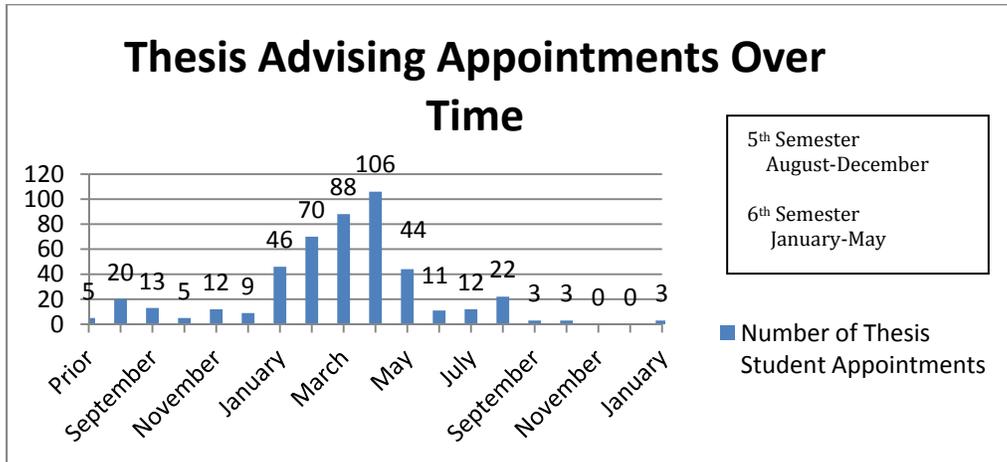


Figure 3. Thesis Advising Appointments Over Time

The first steps in getting the thesis process underway is for students to begin identifying a thesis topic and selecting a thesis director. In many ways, this is the most challenging and time-consuming aspect of the thesis process. Unlike work done for a course in the student’s major curriculum, this is an autonomous process undertaken by the student without a pre-established rubric. In the fifth semester, as distinguished from the second half of the sixth semester, an advising appointment could be more helpful to guide the student to utilize resources such as the thesis database, the in-house thesis library, thesis workshops, faculty honors advisors, the Celebrating Honors Symposium and the opportunity to observe scheduled thesis defenses. During this fifth semester advising session a summary of honors credits will be reviewed. This proposed change in the advising protocol should prove beneficial, allowing for additional time for students to complete the required number of honors credits. Often by the time our students complete their

sixth semester mandatory advising appointment they have only two semesters remaining in which to complete the necessary number of honors credits. Working to complete the thesis and honors credits simultaneously during the senior year can provide an insurmountable challenge to some students, leading them to drop from the honors college.

This intervention was designed in keeping with the model of the honors student presented by Robertson (1966; 1967) and Kaczvinsky (2007) which admonishes those of us working with this student population to consider the shared experience of all students not just honors students, those of meeting deadlines, perfectionism, motivational drive, multipotentiality, self-questioning and fear of failure. Support provided during the fifth semester advising intervention addressed these issues in addition to others related directly to thesis completion.

Recruitment

Participants for this action research study were recruited by querying the electronic student record database, *The Education Edge*, for active Barrett students who have completed their fourth semester of undergraduate studies and mandatory third semester advising appointment. Students who have already participated in upper division advising were excluded. Requests for voluntary participation in a group thesis advising session was extended to the group of students meeting the above criteria. The first ten students who were able to attend the advising session were accepted for the study. Inclusion in the study was not random; majors or concentrations that have an honors thesis track program were

excluded. Gender, age, GPA and other student attributes were not pre-selected for the study; however these student attributes were collected to provide a better description of the participants.

The selection of the participants is in keeping with the goal of action research, to make a difference with a small group of those who are most likely to benefit from the study within your own community of practice (Stringer, 2007). The participants recruited for this sample represents a non-probability sampling, specifically judgmental sampling, an approach taken to include subjects which are most fit for the research (Kerr & Anderson, 2005; Stringer 2007). In this case, a group of subjects who can most benefit from the intended intervention were encouraged to participate. As the results are not meant to be generalized to all honors students this type of selection process is consistent with action research design standards (Greenwood & Levin, 2007). Although this research was not designed to be generalized to other settings, it is possible that lessons learned from this research project may be helpful in similar situations at other institutions.

The Intervention

All too often individual upper division thesis advising appointments are rather one-sided in that advisors are disseminating a great deal of information concerning the thesis project in a very limited amount of time. At best, these advising appointments are scheduled at half-hour intervals throughout the day. Advisors are required to cover procedural information to insure adherence to deadlines and also to provide information concerning university wide resources

available to students completing their thesis projects. More importantly, this should be an opportunity for students to discuss their ideas concerning potential topics and to begin the selection process for their thesis committees. By bringing students together for this advising event, more time can be spent helping students brainstorm ideas for the thesis project and sharing in feedback from their peers.

Timeline

Group Advising Session May 2011. In the original design of this intervention it was my intention to lead the group advising session. Upon further reflection, I decided to have one of my colleagues, another honors academic advisor, conduct the group advising session so that I could observe the group's response to the information being disseminated and take field notes. I did play a role in adding informational suggestions during the session; therefore I was both a participant and an observer in the study.

Students were given instructions to check in with the receptionist in the Honors Advising Office as they normally do during all mandatory advising sessions. During all mandatory advising sessions a questionnaire is given to the student which is intended to provide the honors advisor with updated information on the student's progress toward completion of the honors requirements as well as updated information on academic and career interests. In this study this provides a baseline from which to measure actions taken toward thesis completion after the completion of the intervention.

I greeted each student individually, provided a personalized thesis packet, lead them to the conference room and introduced them to the facilitator of the group advising session. The room selected for the intervention was a secure and comfortable conference room located conveniently within the Barrett complex adjacent to the Honors Advising Office. This room choice allowed the facilitator to demonstrate resources available on the Barrett and ASU web sites. Bagels, juice, tea and coffee were provided to provide an atmosphere conducive to the study. Tent cards were provided with the first names of all of the student participants and facilitators.

Prior to the start of the session, I completed an honors credit verification check sheet for each participant. This check sheet allows students to review the total number of honors credits they have accumulated toward the honors credit requirement for graduation. The credit verification check sheet was included in a thesis/creative project packet provided to each of the participants. The start of the advising session provided a brief overview of the 36 honors credit requirement. This requirement is reviewed during each of the three mandatory advising appointments so that students can re-evaluate strategies for completing the honors requirements as related to the number of completed honors credits relative to the number of semesters remaining to graduation.

Student participants were instructed that the session was voluntary and that they were under no obligation to participate. Participants were advised that they could leave at any time or decline to answer any questions posed as part of the group session. The group was reminded that sessions were being audio

recorded. Informational materials were provided to inform all participants of their right to have their information excluded from the dissertation. They were advised that if they chose to participate their information and identity would be protected. Participants were informed that their identities would not be included in the materials used for the dissertation and that participants would not be able to be identified based upon any documentation, nor would any subjects be at any sort of risk based on the information shared. Each participant signed a consent form, these forms were secured in a locked advising office filing cabinet after the session concluded (Appendix D).

I began the group advising session by welcoming all of the participants and explaining the purpose of this particular thesis/creative project group advising session. The goal of this particular advising session was to provide students with a thorough understanding of the thesis/creative project process. I introduced the facilitator, an honors advisor and alumna of Barrett, The Honors College. In addition, I explained my role as participant and observer as related to the group advising session and dissertation study.

To begin the session the facilitator introduced herself and explained her role in the college and provided personal information reflecting back to her own experience as a Barrett student who successfully completed her thesis/creative project. Students were asked to introduce themselves including their major and potential thesis focus. To insure that group members were comfortable sharing information she reassured the group that it was perfectly understandable if they had not yet selected a thesis topic. After the introductions were concluded she

asked the students to describe what they knew or had heard about the honors thesis/creative project. Each student was asked to identify, on a scale of one to ten, how comfortable they felt in regard to the completion of a thesis. Students were also asked to rate their level of confidence on a 1 to 10 scale, where 1 is least confident and 10 is completely confident. In addition, this initial conversation provided us with the opportunity to encourage a discussion centering on the motivational factors involved in completing the thesis, this discussion was framed by the tenets of the Self-Determination Theory of Motivation (Ryan & Deci, 2000). A question such as “How do you see this thesis project in relationship to your current and future goals?” was used as a prompt to encourage discussion. The discussion provided us details on the position of each student in regard to their motivation in completing a thesis project.

Further discussion was encouraged to provide an opportunity for students who had already selected a thesis focus to speak about the process they used to formulate their ideas for the project. Students who had not yet conceived of a focus for the thesis were encouraged to consider, reflect and discuss courses, enrichment contracts, internships, research opportunities and study abroad trips that might lead to topics of interest. In addition the facilitator suggested that students think about faculty who were inspiring or functioned as mentors that might serve as sounding boards to define topics of interest further or to be considered as potential committee members.

Next, the Barrett home page was accessed via the internet to invite students to review a comprehensive database of thesis/creative projects that have

been archived from 1970 to the present. Students were encouraged to reserve time in the thesis library to familiarize themselves with the format and content of thesis/creative projects of interest. Students were advised that the database could be sorted by discipline and director and asked to shout out disciplines for the facilitator to use as examples to identify potential samples for review.

Beyond selection of the thesis topic, the selection of a thesis director and committee members is necessary for the student to begin work in earnest. The facilitator reviewed the selection criteria for committee members and discussed methods of identifying faculty interests by searching for faculty vita and research interests on the ASU web site. In addition, students were pointed to documents contained on the Barrett site identifying thesis guidelines by discipline which includes the research interests of the faculty and contact information for the Faculty Honors Advisors in the discipline.

The remaining portion of the advising session provided a complete overview of the procedural guidelines and timeline for the thesis prospectus submission, the registration process, the defense, and the completion and submission of the thesis in partial fulfillment of the honors requirements for graduation. Students were encouraged to discuss what they had heard or been told about the defense process. This discussion had as its goal the demystification of the defense process. Providing an accurate description of the defense should equate to increased confidence in the completion of the thesis/creative project for participants.

At the end of the advising session students were asked how they felt about their thesis/creative projects. They were asked to rate their level of confidence in completing the thesis project using a 1-10 scale, where 1 is least confident and 10 is completely confident. In closing, I asked the participants if they would like to meet again as a group to “check in” with each other, sharing challenges and triumphs in selecting a thesis topic and establishing their thesis committee. I encouraged participants to follow up with me individually if they had any additional issues or concerns.

Initially this study was designed as a rolling developmental design, taking the lead from the students themselves as they gauged the level of support they needed to begin the thesis project, the need for additional group sessions was to be determined based on a consensus within the group. Participants in the group declined to schedule additional group meetings. They indicated a preference to meet with me individually.

Survey Distribution Fall 2011. During Fall 2011, participants were sent a survey via ASU email to elicit information concerning progress toward the completion of the thesis/creative project (Appendix G). The post-intervention survey was designed to allow the researcher to identify actions taken by the participants to begin the thesis process. The actions listed on the survey were those identified by interviewing Barrett Honors Academic Advisors and by reviewing the *Honors Thesis/Creative Guidebook*, an operational guide detailing the thesis process. The survey contained both closed and open-ended questions

containing the actions that were identified by advisors as necessary for students to move one step closer to thesis completion.

Individual Interviews Spring 2011. Individual follow-up interviews were conducted at the start of the Spring 2012 semester. These interviews allowed the researcher to provide context for interpreting the survey responses and also to obtain feedback on the strengths and weaknesses of the group advising session. In addition, the researcher obtained suggestions for improvements to the group session advising protocol directly from the participants. (Appendix H).

Chapter 4

ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

Data Collection

In keeping with the action research design a variety of methods of data collection were employed to construct and analyze the results of the intervention (Greenwood & Levin, 2007; Woolley, 2009). Various labels are used to describe research studies using both qualitative and quantitative data analysis; mixed methods, multi-method, integrated, hybrid, combined, and mixed methodology research (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007 p. 6). It has been suggested that mixed methodology be used as a transformative process whereby one form of data can be changed from one form to another, generally qualitative to quantitative (Caracelli & Green 1993; Onwuegbuzie & Teddlie 2003; Driscoll, Appiah-Yeboah, Salib, & Rupert, 2007). Creswell & Plano Clark (2007) further suggest that a mixed methods design is appropriate to validate one form of data with the other form, to transform the data for comparison, or to address different kinds of questions. For this study document analysis in the form of student academic records, advisors notes, observations in the form of field notes, audio recordings, surveys and individual interviews were selected as appropriate methods to gather data.

Baseline Analysis

To begin the analysis of the data, descriptive statistics were used to describe basic features of the data and to provide simple summaries and allow for

easy management of data. The data collected in the pre and post-intervention survey is easily summarized in univariate frequency distribution tables and graphs. These tables and graphs provide a summary and visual representation of actions ordered by quantity of actions, showing the number of times a particular action was taken by the participants. Data collected during the fifth semester of the participants' undergraduate careers served as a baseline used for points of comparison against post-intervention and interview responses conducted later in the year.

Participant Characteristics. The group of participants consisted of 5 males and 4 females, their ages ranged from 19 to 21. Relying on their self-reported ethnicity as reported on the university student information system, the following ethnicities/races were reported, 7 or (77.7%) of the students were categorized as White, 1 or (11.1%) Hispanic/Latino and 1 or (11.1%) Asian. These students represented with a multitude of academic interests in the areas of Accountancy, Anthropology, Biology, Computer Science, Finance, Global Health, Political Science and Sustainability. Four of the participants were completing dual majors and three student were in the process of completing minors in Biological Sciences, Biochemistry and Italian. The Average GPA of the participants was 3.78 with a range from 4.04 to 3.6. The Average Number of Credit Hours Completed at the time of the intervention was 108, with a range from 80 to 141; this number includes Advanced Placement (AP) and Transfer Credit. Finally, the Number of Honors Credits completed by the students at the time of the intervention ranged from 6 to 27 (Table 2).

Table 2

Characteristics of Participants

Characteristics	Michael	Emily	Alice	Jacob	Ethan	Sarah	John	Ashley	Peter
Gender	M	F	F	M	M	F	M	F	M
Ethnicity	Hispanic/ Latino	White	White	White	Asian	White	White	White	White
Age	21	21	20	21	20	20	20	19	20
Major (1)	Finance	Biology	Global Health	Sustainability	Finance	Anthropology	Finance	Political Science	Computer Science
Major (2)					Supply Chain Management		Accountancy	Justice Studies	Accountancy
Minor (3)		Pre-Health	Biological Sciences		Biochemistry	Italian			
GPA (start of spring 2012 semester)	3.86	3.63	3.6	3.66	3.82	3.84	3.79	4.04	3.85
Total Credit Hours Completed (start of spring semester)	127	104	90	100	135	80	112	81	141
Number of Honors Credits Completed	6	18	14	9	27	21	25	18	24

Pseudonyms were used to reference the participants throughout this document in keeping with the information provided in the Consent for Group Advising documents (Appendix D).

Participant Completion Timeline. To graduate from Barrett, students must submit an approved thesis/creative project. As part of the pre-intervention survey participants were asked for their projected date of graduation. This provided a baseline to determine a potential factor influencing thesis completion. Students admitted to Barrett, The Honors College are encouraged to utilize all the resources of the university and to complete their undergraduate degree in no less or more than 4 years. Most of our students have been awarded merit scholarships which provide tuition for a maximum of 8 semesters. Including a question concerning projected graduation date allowed me to determine if the participants were on a 4 year timeline to graduation. The participants reported projected graduation dates which ranged from a minimum of 2 semesters to a maximum of

6 semesters beyond the group thesis advising session. The wide range of these predictions exemplifies the difficulty in predicting an appropriate semester to meet with students to discuss the thesis/creative project as it relates to their date of entry to the university.

Table 3

Self-Reported Projected Graduation Date

<i>Projected Graduation Date</i>	<i>Number of Responses</i>
Spring 2012	3
Fall 2013	1
Spring 2013	3
Spring 2014	2

Quantitative Analysis

Participant survey responses to open ended questions were evaluated using a quantitative method; data were entered into a spread sheet to help organize responses as related to actions taken and motivational responses. Results were entered into a table to allow for ease of comparing pre and post-intervention responses to survey questions. Qualitative data analysis was also conducted to evaluate the observations and dialogue of the fifth semester group advising session and post-intervention interviews.

Actions Taken To Identify Thesis Topic. The pre and post-intervention surveys included questions concerning thesis progress. When asked to check action items taken toward thesis completion the most common action taken by

participants was discussion of their thesis topic with peers, advisors and the Faculty Honors Advisors in their discipline. Table 4 identifies the actions taken by the participants to formulate a thesis focus.

Table 4

Actions Taken by Participants to Identify a Thesis Topic

<i>Actions Taken to Identify Focus of Thesis</i>	<i>Number of Responses</i>
Searched College web site for focus	1
Researched using general internet search engine	1
Researched potential ideas suing ASU Library on internet	1
Reviewed list of thesis projects on the Barrett web site	1
Discussed potential topics with Faculty Honors Advisor	2
Discussed potential topic with faculty member/s	3
Discussed potential topics with academic advisor	4
Discussed potential topics with honors academic advisor	2
Discussed potential topic with peers	3
Attended a thesis defense	1
Attended a thesis workshop	2
Registered for a class in thesis preparation on the downtown campus	1
Total Number of Actions to Identify These Focus by all Participants	22

Notes: N=22. The number of responses exceeds the number of participants due to the open ended nature of the questions, which allowed for participants to give more than one answer.

Actions Taken to Identify Committee Members. Participants were also asked a series of questions to determine if they made attempts to determine which faculty members they might have chosen to approach as potential thesis committee members. The participants who began the process of identifying potential committee members did so by discussing this with their Academic

Advisors, Honors Advisors and Faculty Honors Advisors. Table 5 provides a summary of the actions taken by the participants to identify potential committee members. Clearly, all participants did not move far beyond the initial step of identifying a thesis focus.

Table 5

Actions Taken by Participants to Identify Committee Members

<i>Actions Taken to Identify Committee Members</i>	<i>Number of Responses</i>
Discussed with or referred by Faculty Honors Advisor	2
Discussed with or referred by Academic Advisor	1
Discussed with or referred by Honors Academic Advisor	1

Notes: N=4. This question was not salient for all respondents.

Finally, only one student had moved beyond the thesis topic focus and committee member selection milestones. This particular student had reached multiple turning points and moved closer to thesis completion as indicated in Table 6.

Table 6

Next Steps Taken by Participants toward Thesis Completion

<i>Next Steps Taken</i>	<i>Number of Responses</i>
I have a draft of my prospectus	1
I have discussed my prospectus with my director	1
My director has approved my prospectus	1
I have submitted my approved prospectus to the Advising Office	1
I have begun working on the thesis/creative project	1
I have set a date for my defense	1

Notes: N=6. This question was not salient for all respondents. More than one response per participant was possible.

Motivational Factors. Participants were asked to identify their motivation for completing the thesis project by completing the following sentence: *I am interested in completing my honors thesis because....*

The most common response was related to career aspirations. Participants felt that the thesis/creative project would, in some way prepare them for their eventual career.

Table 7

Motivational Factors Identified by Participants

<i>Motivational Factors</i>	<i>Number of Responses</i>
Interview Gold	1
Preparation Graduate/Professional School	3
Experience for future career	4
Barrett Alumni status	2
Expert in the field	1
Work Published	2
Teach others about the project	1

N=14 The number of responses exceeds the number of participants due to the open ended nature of the questions, which allowed for participants to give more than one answer.

Level of Confidence. As a measure of confidence students were asked to rate their level of confidence in the completion of the thesis project pre and post-intervention. A scale of 1 to 10 was used where 1 indicated the least confident and 10 indicated complete confidence. Eight of the nine participants indicated that they were completely confident that they would complete their thesis/creative project by selecting a 10 on the pre-intervention survey. Of the 8 participants

responding to this post-intervention survey question, 4 participants reported no change in their level of confidence, 4 indicated that they were less confident that they would complete the thesis project. This measure was particularly surprising; however information provided in the follow up interviews helped to clarify these results.

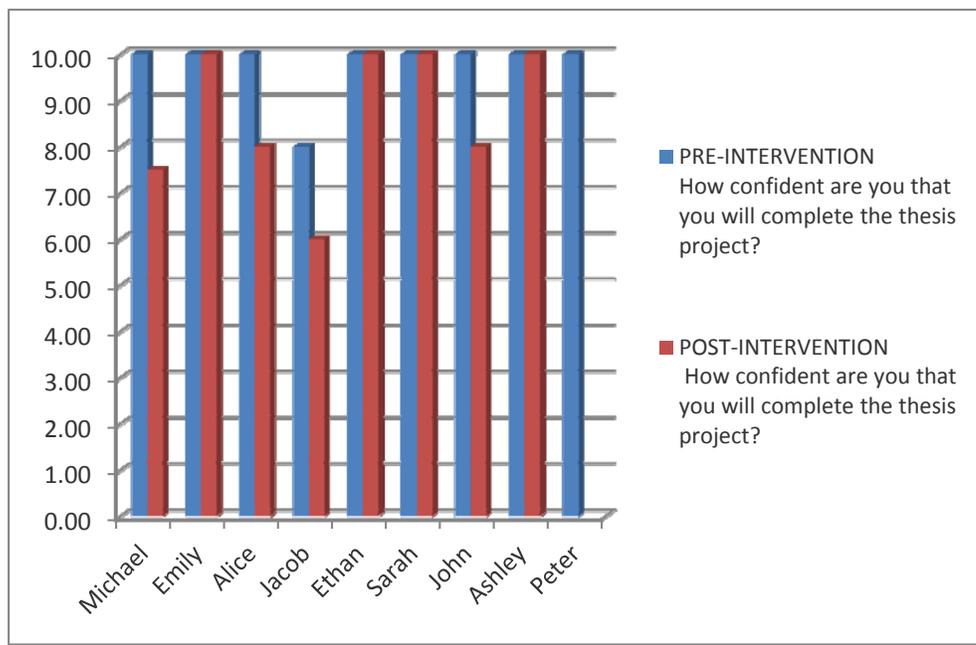


Figure 4. Reported Level of Confidence Pre and Post-Intervention

Level of Comfort. Finally, participants were asked to rate the level of comfort with the idea of completing the thesis project. This question was asked as a complement to the question regarding levels of confidence. Again, it was surprising that 2 participants experienced no change in their level of comfort in regard to completing the thesis project, 3 participants indicated less comfort and 3 participants indicated an increase in comfort level. I expected that the students’

level of comfort would increase as their level of knowledge of the process increased.

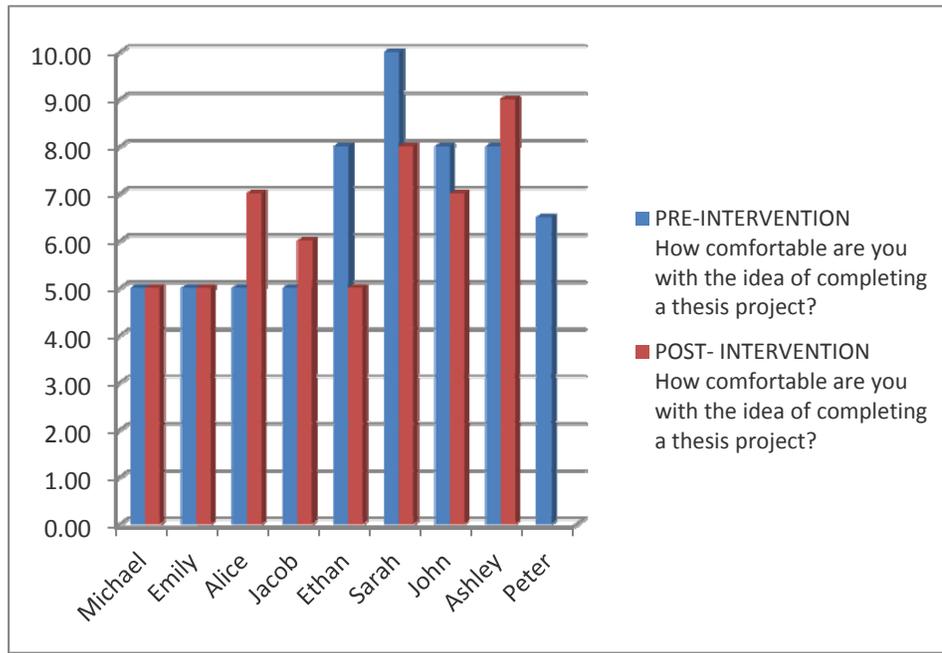


Figure 5. Reported Levels of Comfort Pre and Post- Intervention

Participants were more confident that they would complete the thesis/creative project than they were comfortable with the idea of completing the project. This was true even before they had a full understanding of exactly what the thesis project entailed.

Qualitative Data

Indicators of Action to Move Forward. The post-intervention survey questions provide a one dimensional view of the results from this group advising session. More information was needed to interpret the results as indicated above. Information provided with the open ended questions associated with the data

above and subsequent interviews provided more insight into two subsets of actions taken indicating progress toward thesis completion occurred after attending the group advising session.

Thesis Focal Point Identification. When participants were asked to describe their potential focus for their thesis, a notable change in the description of their focus for the thesis project occurred after the intervention. Prior to the intervention students were limited in their idea formation to the department or discipline they might investigate. Much more detail was provided by the participants when this same question was asked following the intervention (Table 8). For example, Alice originally indicated that she was “behind on ideas” for the thesis/creative project. She identified child psychology or cancer as potential topics of interest. After the intervention and given one semester to investigate potential thesis options she stated that she was interested in “the psychological effects of long-term illness on children in third world countries or possibly the effects of family/spouse on the trajectory of an illness.”

In similar fashion, in response to the pre-intervention survey concerning potential thesis projects, Emily left this question blank. However, after attending the group advising session she was able to articulate her focal topic as “mechanisms of disease as related to genetic mutations.” Prior to the intervention John indicated that he was interested in creating a video educational thesis/project, perhaps something related to finance or his accountancy major. After the intervention and during the follow-up interview he indicated that he was interested in “creating a mobile application which would assist students to learn

basic accounting principles.” Yet another student originally described his areas of interest as sustainable development, desert ecology or environmental justice.

After the intervention and during the follow-up interview he indicated his focus would be “policy related to sustainable technology energy and materials or water conflict management in Israel.” In fact, he has plans to incorporate his observations and research collected during his study abroad experience into his thesis. This type of movement toward the refinement of the thesis focus was not evident when considering only the closed ended question responses on the post-intervention survey.

Table 8

Thesis Focus Formation

<i>First Name only</i>	<i>Pre-Intervention Which subjects or topics have you identified as potential thesis ideas?</i>	<i>Post Intervention Question 4 List potential areas of interest you have identified for your thesis/creative project. How did you reach your decision to work in this particular area of interest?</i>
Michael	Analyzing real estate investment transaction for different kinds of real estate	I will use the Intel Collaborative Thesis project to complete my thesis early.
Emily	None	Medicine Mechanisms of disease as related to genetic mutations.
Alice	Not sure. I'm behind on ideas.	Psychological effects of long-term illness on children in third world countries verses developed countries. Effects of family/spouse on the trajectory of an illness.
Jacob	Sustainable Development, Desert Ecology, Environmental Justice	Policy related to sustainable technology, energy, and materials. Specifically as related to water conflict/management in Israel. Professors and study abroad opportunities provided me inspiration to follow through with these research endeavors.
Ethan	Business Development	Business Plan for my own business, something I saw while traveling in India done by local street merchant. The idea is to make fresh ice cream on site in a vending unit where you see the cream poured over the ice and turning into ice cream. or Analyzing decision framework for student entrepreneurs. Interview student entrepreneurs to determine if the course work provided by the New American University is helping them to reach their goals.
Sarah	Archaeology	Illinois Archaeology-summer excavation in Illinois Italian Archaeology-study abroad in Italy
John	Finance or Accounting, Video Games, Education, Statistical I think our education system is in need of radical change and want to help pioneer that. Video games are addictive and already teach. I am an accounting student and would like something related to my major. I am finance major and if I can't do an accounting related project, finance is the next best thing.	Develop a mobile application for the purpose of teaching accounting principles.
Ashley	Changes in justice in the law over time.	Justice Studies with some insights into Law and Psychology. I plan to go to law school after completing my undergraduate degree and I have really enjoyed my justice studies courses. I have also always been interested in how the mind works and understanding personal motivations. My planned thesis topic combines all of these interests. I also think my work for my thesis will be useful in my planned career.
Peter	Create database program w/ front end/back end software Analyze hospital discharge data w/database Number of other options not sure.	

Comfort and Confidence. Participant answers to questions concerning comfort and confidence levels pre and post-intervention were mixed (Table 9, Table10). I expected that participants would indicate more confidence and comfort with the thesis process after the intervention. Although some students reported increased levels of comfort and confidence, those that indicated a decline in confidence provided the following information in the follow-up interviews: “I became less confident and comfortable after the intervention because the project was now concrete;” “I had a better understanding of the complexity of the project.” Another respondent indicated, “I know I can do it but it is going to be a ton of work.”

Even some of the participants that did not have scores decline on these two measurements indicated that they now had a better understanding of the amount of work required which fit with the descriptions they had heard and repeated during the intervention. During the intervention students mentioned their concerns about the complexity of the thesis project, “the thesis project is a lot of reading and synthesis;” “my friend said that she did not sleep while preparing for the defense;” “it takes your life away.” Another participant mentioned that she had heard “it was 100s of pages of writing. “I know I can complete it if I can just get started; the fact that our project could not pass is unnerving.”

Table 9

Level of Comfort

First Name only	Pre-Intervention How comfortable are you with the idea of completing a thesis project?	Post-Intervention Question 1 How comfortable are you with the idea of completing a thesis project?
Michael	5	5 I know I can do it, but I also know it will be a ton of work.
Emily	5	5 I am really nervous about the completion of the thesis. I need to find a director to get started.
Alice	5	7 I feel like I know the steps I need to take to do the thesis, but I just need an idea that I can get research for.
Jacob	5	6 Now I know what to expect, it will be a lot of work.
Ethan	8	5 Before it was nebulous, now I understand what is expected and much more complex
Sarah	10	8 Will feel more comfortable once I sit down and have more of an idea of what I want to do. However, I feel very comfortable with the amount of work and what is expected from me.
John	8	7 Immediately following the advising appointment I was psyched up and ready to do the work. I get gummed up waiting for e-mail replies over summer and then I've run into problems finding two strong advisors as I am looking to complete an inter-disciplinary project
Ashley	8	9 I am still a bit nervous about completing my own thesis project, but after attending the group advising session, I understand the thesis process well.
Peter	6-7	

Table 10

Level of Confidence

<i>First Name only</i>	<i>Pre-Intervention How confident are you that you will complete the thesis project?</i>	<i>Post-Intervention Question 2 How confident are you that you will complete the thesis project?</i>
Michael	10	7.5 The fact that there is a chance that our project may not pass is nerve racking.
Emily	10	10 I know I can do it. I just need to have the agreement of a professor as my director to get started. I know how to do the work.
Alice	10	8 Originally I felt less confident, but now that I have completed my field work for Global Studies I am feeling better about it.
Jacob	8	6 I was less secure after I realized how much is involved. However, since speaking with faculty who support my ideas, coupled with upcoming research opportunities abroad I feel as if the project is doable.
Ethan	10	10 I know I can and will do it. Not ready to start yet because I am extending my time at ASU to complete an additional major in Math
Sarah	10	10 I have completed research during a six week field school for my major. I have also been involved with PALM (an archaeological project based out of Veracruz)
John	10	8 When I looked at my class schedule I realized how much I still have to do and when I take internships into account, my extra time will be minimal. Exactly when I'll find the time to complete a thesis has become a little bit of a concern.
Ashley	10	10 I know I'll get it done, it's just when and I'm nervous I know that I want to graduate from Barrett and I already have an idea about what I want to do for my thesis project so I am confident that I will complete it.
Peter	10	

Committee Member Identification. I was particularly surprised at the level of discomfort students expressed during the follow-up interviews about approaching faculty to serve on their committees. The literature on high ability

students indicates that this subset of students is more likely to engage with the faculty (Long & Lange, 2002). Yet, in this case, study participants were concerned that they had not formed significant relationships with faculty members and they felt uncomfortable asking a faculty member with whom they have no close relationship to serve as thesis director.

During the intervention participants were particularly interested and animated when discussing strategies for finding committee members. As part of the follow-up interviews students mentioned that they would have appreciated hearing about how current students approached faculty members. In addition, participants felt that in some cases they had not yet taken sufficient course work in a particular disciplinary focus to discuss their ideas in an intellectual manner with faculty, so they wanted to wait until they were better prepared. The preparation could be in the form of an additional course or two or further research on their topic of interest prior to setting up appointments with faculty.

Motivation. Of particular interest is the change in the expression of motivations to complete the thesis pre and post intervention. Survey and interview questions were constructed to uncover the underlying motivational drive of the students participating in the early thesis group advising session. Participants were asked to complete the sentence, “I am interested in completing my thesis because... Table 11 contains pre and post-intervention responses to this question.

Table 11

Statement of Motivations

<i>First Name only</i>	<i>Pre-Intervention I am interested in completing the thesis because...</i>	<i>Post-Intervention I am interested in completing the thesis because...</i>
Michael	"I want to learn something useful."	"I will use the financial analysis techniques learned from the project to assess investments in real estate and business in the future."
Emily	"It will give me a sense of accomplishment and allow me to become very knowledgeable in a certain topic."	"It will help me with graduate/medical school" " I have always been an honors student and I want to graduate from Barrett."
Alice	"It will be interesting once I figure out what to do with it."	"It will help me to treat patients or understand the psychological variables to patients I will one day treat when I am a doctor."
Jacob	"I would like to have research experience prior to graduate school."	"The process of research would provide me experience in doing research in graduate school. If I decide to be professor or anything that requires mental work, then this thesis would help me with the process."
Ethan	"It will give me something I can use after graduation."	"I want to start my own business and I would like this project to be the start of the process to investigate the business. I am still uncertain as to what that business will be."
Sarah	"I will most likely need the research for grad school."	"Aid me in applying for graduate school. Give me experience in coming up with my own research."
John	"It will be something on my resume and in an interview that will set me apart from other candidates."	"It is interview gold and can tell my future employer about my project and defense."
Ashley	"The topic I'm contemplating is interesting and thought provoking."	"I think that this is a great opportunity to become an expert in one area and possibly have my work published as an undergraduate. Completing the thesis will push me to do something I have never done before and will teach me valuable skills in the process. I also hope to use the thesis defense as a way to teach others about my topic, not just to complete graduation requirements." "The examination of unjust laws and the circumstances surrounding their creation (ex. legalized extermination of Jews in Poland) will show law school admissions councils that I can critically analyze laws and statutes." "The psychological aspects of citizen motivations will demonstrate to potential FBI employers that I have learned the investigative skills that can be used in their line of work."
Peter	"I don't want it hanging over my head."	

Limitations

When evaluating the results of this study certain limitation must be considered. Appropriate for this action research design is the purposeful selection of a small number of participants who could most benefit from the research intervention. All of the participants were from a specific group of students who are assigned as my advisees. All students are assigned to advisors on an alpha split, such that the numbers of students assigned to all advisors is about equal. All of the students had at least one advising session with me prior to the group advising session.

Secondly, students who were positioned to take part in disciplinary thesis track programs were excluded from this study. These programs provide direction through the thesis project as part of the disciplinary curriculum. Students participating in these programs are highly successful in completing the honors requirements to graduate from Barrett and therefore unlikely to benefit from the additional group advising session.

Additionally, the timeline for the intervention was determined by the dissertation timeline. The intervention occurred during the first week of summer session. Initially, I expected that this might be an optimal time to capture the interest of the participants as classes had terminated, students were still in the area and they had not yet begun other commitments which might have precluded their involvement. During the interview process at least one student mentioned that he initially was very excited to begin crafting his thesis focus and reached out to faculty via email. His initial excitement was tempered by the disappointment he

experienced from lack of response by the faculty. Many of the faculty do not teach during summer session and therefore have no contractual agreement to participate in university affairs during the summer session.

Finally and perhaps most importantly, the participants were offered the opportunity to meet as a cohort to review their progress through future group sessions. The original design of the intervention was to afford the group an opportunity to work together to discover potential thesis topics, committee members, research question investigation and other turning points in the thesis process. This group would have functioned to support and motivate each other through the thesis process. The fact that the group was uninterested in continuing these sessions limited the scope and therefore the impact of the intervention.

Chapter 5

CONCLUSIONS

Discussion of the Findings

Results from the fifth semester group advising intervention indicate that participants expressed mixed reactions to the extra advising session as expressed in their self-assessment of progress toward thesis completion. During the follow-up interviews students indicated that they did not feel that they had progressed as far as they had hoped they would. Those students who did not meet with faculty to discuss the possibility of serving on their committees expressed disappointment in failing to meet this milestone. Yet as outsiders reviewing the results of the post-intervention survey and interviews, it is apparent that participants were successful, there were concrete measures taken by all of the respondents that indicate that they did reach a turning point and move one step closer to thesis completion and graduation from Barrett, The Honors College.

Advisors must recognize that students may not always acknowledge the progress they have achieved toward thesis completion, as they have no prior experience with which to compare their achievements. It is incumbent upon the honors advisor to help their students identify progress, break down the process into manageable steps and create a realistic timeline to completion. Although our current advising strategies provide the details of the project and timeline to completion, it is more logistical than conceptual. The literature on honors students indicates that this subset of students is more interested in conceptual rather than more mundane logistical concerns; therefore we must speak to them in

more meaningful ways to convey this message (Seay, Gottfried, Cordon & Schafer 1986-87; Stephens & Eison, 1986-7; Warren & Heist, 1960; Capretta, Jones, Siegel & Siegel, 1963).

Contradictions

Familiarity with Faculty. My participation in the intervention provided me with a window into my own practice as an advisor. In this role, my colleagues and I review appointment outcomes to help refine our practice. We look for more effective methods of reaching out to students and speaking in ways that are meaningful to them. My participation in the intervention provided me with insight into the realities that students face when they begin the thesis/creative project process and the difficulties they face in taking the first steps toward completion. Unlike students in thesis track programs that provide easy access to the faculty, students working independently must forge their own path when approaching potential committee members. Finding ways to simplify the process of identifying potential thesis directors would significantly improve the chances that students will move forward toward thesis completion.

The design of the honors curriculum for Barrett, The Honors College has been intentionally created to provide enrichment to our students in their engagement with faculty. In particular, the availability of honors only sections brings with it the expectation of smaller class size, increased interaction between faculty and students, and more rigorous course content than non-honors undergraduate coursework. In addition, options for honors enrichment contracts have an explicit expectation of increased contact time between the faculty and

students. The honors enrichment contract itself includes a specific clause for students to identify the number of hours spent with their professor in addition to standard seat time. This faculty student interaction becomes more critical when students begin to identify potential committee members. The expectation is that students will have developed more meaningful and long-term relationships with professors, particularly in their academic major disciplines, thereby making it possible to elicit faculty participation in the thesis/creative process.

The first and second year mandatory advising appointments are used by advisors to explicate the contract process. The significance of the student/faculty contact time needs to be emphasized more during these mandatory appointments, in a way that is in keeping with the preferred learning process of honors students, articulating not just the “how” but the “why” of underlying policy (Hermann, 2012). Building relationships with faculty members becomes paramount when students undertake the first steps toward thesis completion, topic identification and the selection of their thesis/creative project committee. Without these pre-existing relationships the committee selection process can be daunting. In addition, students who have faculty mentors are able to utilize the faculty member’s expertise to enhance the selection of their thesis focus. This finding is in contrast with the literature on high ability students which indicates that this subset of students is more likely to engage with the faculty (Long & Lange, 2002; Robinson, 1997; Rinn, 2005; Achterberg, 2000)

Consistencies

In reviewing the literature on the characteristics of honors students, researchers remind us that this subset of special students presents with uncommonly high academic abilities and diverse talents, but that they also share many characteristics with other subsets of undergraduate students. Gifted college students may have issues regarding time management, social relationships, health and appearance, career development, perfectionism, and fear of failure (Rinn & Plucker, 2004; Robinson, 1997; Mathiasen, 1985; Stephens & Eison, 1986-87, Long & Lange, 2002). A combined approach of developmental and intrusive advising utilized by the honors advisors allows us to address these issues. All of these traits and more are evident as students work through the thesis/creative project process.

Multipotentiality and Decision Paralysis. There is disagreement in the literature concerning honors students with regard to the multipotentiality of interests experienced by high-ability students and the consequences associated with holding many varied interests (Achter, Lubinski, & Benbow, 1996). Participants in the study did identify multiple interests when asked if they had identified thesis topics. The participant who most exhibited this tendency was John. John is pursuing multiple majors and expressed multiple thesis interests. During his year two mandatory advising session and in the group advising intervention he mentioned four separate potential thesis topics. Originally, he was interested in video gaming, education policy, accounting and supply chain management as broad potential thesis foci. However, over time he conceived of

an interdisciplinary project that encompasses a number of his interests. He investigated each area in a methodical way, enrolled in coursework to determine the efficacy of his ideas and finally conceived of a final project that will allow him to integrate three distinct interests in an innovative manner. This behavior supports what is described in the literature as multipotentiality tempered with the ability to integrate complex and divergent areas of knowledge (Robinson, 1997; Neumeister, 2004; Rice & Darke, 2000).

Perfectionism. Multipotentiality in conjunction with perfectionist tendencies can produce a rather different outcome. Another participant described his inability to settle on one topic as “decision paralysis.” Flooded with ideas, he said he was unable to decide to move forward with “just one topic for fear that it is not the best choice.” Discussions with faculty have led him to believe that his various topics are all feasible. However, unlike John, he has been unable to find a way to satisfy his divergent interests by integrating these topics.

Perfectionism is defined by Burns (1980) as “a combination of thoughts and behaviors generally associated with excessively high standards or expectations for one’s own performance” and often manifests itself in high-ability students” (p. 70). Schuler (2000) suggests that “perfectionism has more than one dimension and exists on a continuum from normal to neurotic, or enabling to disabling, behaviors and attitudes” (para 57). Tolen (2004) asserts that high ability students often exhibit a reluctance to engage in behaviors or situations in which they feel they will not excel. Similarly, high ability individuals are accustomed to being able to do things that others have difficulty with. As a

consequence of holding extremely high expectations of themselves, they may be self-conscious about trying things they have not mastered, which can lead to feeling of inadequacy (Tolen, 2004). During post-intervention interviews participants indicated that they felt less than confident sharing ideas in the open group forum “because they were honors students.” This was stated in a way that suggested that this was obvious. Members of the group concurred that they did not want to appear “dumb” before fellow honors students, elaborating that honors students are “very competitive” and “like to be right.” One participant suggested that an icebreaker asking students “to throw out crazy ideas” might set an expectation of acceptance, which in turn might mitigate the fear factor and encourage discussion.

I have been meeting with a student from the summer intervention group, on a regular basis and at her request, to help her to meet deadlines, as she takes small steps toward meeting with faculty members who might be interested in her thesis project. It has taken her more than a semester to approach potential thesis committee members, and only lately has she agreed to move forward as she begins to understand that she must conquer her fear or not graduate from the honors college.

Although this student is currently involved in research in one of the largest research facilities on campus, she has been reluctant to ask her current mentor to participate as the director of her thesis. Initially, she indicated that the project she was working on was not the project she wanted to continue with for her thesis project. She developed a new focus for her thesis and met with the Faculty

Honors Advisor in the discipline, asking for assistance in identifying members of the faculty who aligned with her current research interests. When she did this she was directed back to her original mentor. Investigating her topic through the ASU discipline web sites pointed us back to her mentor. I was only able to uncover the real reason for her reluctance to approach her mentor after very pointed questioning. In actuality it was a feeling that she did not want her mentor to “uncover” any of her perceived deficiencies. In keeping with the attributes ascribed to high ability honors students, she needed to appear perfect in his eyes to continue the working relationship they had already established. Until she can deal with the perfectionism and self-esteem issues she identified, this student will be unable to move forward with her thesis.

Motivation. It is too soon to measure the long-term effects of the fifth semester thesis group advising session in terms of thesis completion and graduation. The final results will be unknown until students graduate from ASU. However, students who participated in the group advising session did articulate their degree of motivation for completion. During the second year advising session participants provided rather vague reasons for wanting to complete their thesis. During the thesis intervention session the facilitator questioned students about their long term goals after graduation. In keeping with Ryan & Deci (2000) Theory of Self-Determination, the intervention was intended to spotlight the value of thesis completion in meeting participants’ long term goals.

Planting the seeds that participants think of the thesis project as a means to an end, a stepping stone to create networking opportunities, accumulate writing

samples and add to their resume or portfolio did reap benefits. By asking participants to think ahead and to imagine how the thesis might propel them toward their future goals, participants availed themselves of the opportunity to add to their expertise by enrolling in coursework, thus augmenting their skills related to their thesis focus. Students more closely evaluated their careers and/or future educational goals by self-examination of their motivation to complete the thesis/creative project. For example, Jacob had been very interested in studying abroad and by thinking about his thesis and potential areas for graduate study he finalized his decision to extend his time to graduation and to participate in Semester at Sea Spring 2012. His study abroad will culminate with the Fall 2012 semester spent in Israel, which will provide him the opportunity to collect data for his thesis project. He discussed these options with faculty and will be researching sustainability practices of countries he visits. At the start, Jacob rated his level of confidence as relatively low, compared to the other participants. During his post-intervention interview he suggested that the reason for this was that he had not yet found a meaningful focus for his thesis. Finding a focus for his thesis related to his long-term goals, which will allow him to complete the thesis as part of his study abroad experience, provided a motivational force and increased his confidence in his ability to complete his thesis.

The results of the survey indicated that the participants were able to identify the value of the thesis as a pathway toward their long term goals. Participants referred to thesis completion in positive terms when asked to complete the sentence, *I want to complete my thesis because....* Responses, such

as “it is interview gold”, “it will provide me with a competitive edge for graduate school, medical school, or pharmacy school”, “and I will gain experience for my future career ”,“ providing expertise in my field and providing an opportunity to have my work published” were clear indications of the underlying external motivations for thesis completion. The most powerful external motivating forces are those that are most closely aligned with the individual’s values and interests. Accordingly, “if the extrinsic goal is self-endorsed and thus adopted with a sense of volition” an individual will be highly motivated to act (Ryan & Deci, 2000, p.5). The participants articulated a strong degree of external motivation for completing their thesis/creative projects, which had become self-endorsed, thus exhibiting a turning point in the progression toward thesis completion and moving the participants one step closer to graduation.

Confidence. In some ways the group advising appointment made the thesis/creative project more real and added context such that students began to understand the foundational work needed to prepare them to undergo the rigors of the thesis. Some of the participants in the intervention experienced a decrease in confidence immediately after the intervention as they began to identify potential thesis foci and as they contemplated approaching faculty members to support them as members of their thesis committees. In directed programs, such as the Psychology Honors Thesis Tract, Speech and Hearing, Community Action Research Experiences (C.A.R.E.) and Electrical Engineering background coursework such as research methods, statistics, advanced statistical analysis, professional seminars, and design labs must be completed before students are

allowed to begin the thesis process. All of the coursework leading toward the independent work needed to complete the thesis project successfully is provided by the discipline. As the participants in this research study began to understand the skill sets required to select topics, generate research questions, and interview potential committee members they began to understand the necessity for supplemental coursework. Learning the skills needed to successfully complete the thesis/creative project required strategic course planning if these courses were to be completed without extending time to graduation.

Ashley expressed a need to take additional courses before she would be ready to begin her research and to approach professors to request that they support her honors thesis as members of her committee. Although Ashley originally anticipated graduating a year early she has decided to add at least one semester to her projected date of graduation to complete the coursework necessary to prepare for the thesis. Without the early intervention she would not have had this opportunity. Having identified a strategy to complete the thesis in the time and manner she feels appropriate, she remains 100% confident that she will successfully complete her thesis and graduate from the Honors College.

John added a computer game design course to his schedule to augment his skill in programming to determine the feasibility of designing a video/educational game for his thesis/creative project. Without the early intervention he might not have had the opportunity to add this to his schedule. This was an important step which helped him to determine that his skill set would not be sufficient to allow him to pursue his original thesis project iteration. He realized that he would need

to continue to build his expertise in computer programming, select another platform for his project, or possibly change the focus of his thesis. He has had time since the intervention to find another platform for his project and will use a mobile application in place of the video game platform to design a teaching module for accounting. Although he originally reported a decrease in confidence in completing the thesis upon realizing the extent of the task before him, he has now found a thesis project which he is confident that he can complete to his satisfaction.

Michael joined the intervention upon deciding to peruse an early graduation timeline. Upon completion of the interventional group advising session he realized that he needed the structure and opportunity provided by a collaborative track thesis to expedite the thesis process, thereby allowing him to finish his degree early and graduate with honors. He applied for and was accepted into one of the collaborative finance thesis programs in W.P. Carey in which students act in partnership with a major corporation to provide solutions to issues raised by the corporation in collaboration with the faculty. In this instance, the thesis project focus is provided by the corporate partner. Additionally, committee members are assigned to each collaborative thesis group thus eliminating two of the major hurdles required for those working autonomously to complete the thesis project. By attending the early thesis intervention Michael was afforded the time needed to apply for the collaborative thesis and is well on his way to completing his requirements and graduating from Barrett, The Honors College in Spring 2012. He is more confident that he will complete the work

required for the thesis but he still “finds it nerve racking that the project might not pass”.

Implications for Future Research and Practice

Group Dynamics. The inspiration for the group advising session originated out of a need to add advising at a time that was most appropriate for our upper division students during the fifth semester of their undergraduate career at ASU. However, due to limitations in resources, the advising staff was unable to add individual advising session during the fifth semester. Therefore, a group advising session was purposed as a way to achieve this goal. At the same time, I hoped that benefits could be derived from the interaction of the group. Using a standard advising protocol for upper class thesis preparation with the group proved to be valuable to students. However, it is clear that there might be benefits for the honors advisors to develop specific competencies in group facilitation. Reynolds (2009) suggests that student affairs professionals need to develop special awareness, knowledge and skills to intervene effectively within a group. Winston, Bonney, Miller & Dagley (1988) assert that group advising provides fertile ground for enhancing student development and provides the following rationale for utilizing a group intervention.

1. Groups are an efficient use of resources.
2. Groups can be less intimidating because students do not feel alone.
3. Groups can provide for synergistic outcomes whereby students feel that they have more to gain from group interventions and that interacting with peers they benefit from behavioral changes.

4. Groups by design draw attention to important areas that need to be addressed.
5. Outcome data shows that students report having positive group experiences that lead them to want to participate in more groups.
6. Group interventions are easily adaptable and can focus on a variety of issues, goals, developmental tasks, and groups of students.
7. Groups provide safe spaces for students to take risks and try new ways of interacting with others.
8. When groups are well designed and implemented, they use teaching strategies based on developmental and learning style theories.
9. College students are often highly motivated toward group affiliations with their peers.

Students participating in the group thesis advising session indicated that they expected more interaction between group members and thought that the result might be a rich dialogue among students concerning the formation of a thesis focus. Group dynamics dictated the pace of the intervention and the level and type of participation. As the intervention progressed certain individuals led while others contributed minimally to the discussion. Knowing how to draw out participants to maximize diversity in the discussion would have been useful. In addition, having the group coalesce, forming alliances to continue the dialogue outside this intervention was a goal not attained by the intervention. The original intention of the intervention design was to provide multiple group sessions to facilitate on-going group support. A recommendation for staff development

should include competencies to be developed in developmental and group dynamics theory, group facilitation and process skills, diagnostic skills, content knowledge, supervised practice, experience as a participant, and self-awareness (Winston et. al., 1988).

Participant Selection. Results of the fifth semester advising session were mixed in part due to the degree of urgency felt by the participants to begin the thesis/creative project based on their projected date of graduation. Although participants were selected from a pool of students who had completed their second year mandatory advising and had not yet completed their sixth semester upper division advising, the participating student profiles were not identical to one another. High-ability students often enter the university with dual enrollment and AP credit, thereby allowing them a great deal of discretion in regard to time to degree completion. While some students plan on graduating early as a result of entering with multiple credits, others decide to maximize their time at the university to complete multiple degrees and take full advantage of all of the opportunities a large research intensive university has to offer. Time to degree must be considered when evaluating the measure of success of the intervention. Assessment of the short-term results of the intervention points to an unexpected outcome. Some of the participants made the decision to move forward quickly toward thesis and degree completion yet others moved in the opposite direction, stepping back and taking full advantage of the four year college experience. The long- term benefits of the intervention will not be known until the participants graduate.

Exclusionary criteria employed to select participants precluded the participation of students who were poised to take part in disciplinary thesis track programs. These programs provide direction through the thesis project as a part of the disciplinary curriculum. In many cases the students' projects are chosen to align with on-going research in the discipline and committee selection is limited to the faculty integrated into the program structure. Students participating in these programs are highly successful in completing the honors requirements to graduate from Barrett. Using the disciplinary track programs as models may lead to a more successful fifth semester group advising session. An option to cluster disciplines so that students could attend the group advising sessions with a cohort of participants from the same or similar disciplines might lead to more collaboration among students, helping to create a more interactive and supportive peer environment.

Early in the term I was invited by upper division peer mentors to speak to a cohort of business students to demystify the thesis/creative project. The students who participated are from the same living and learning community. In addition, these students were members of a cohort who completed *The Human Event* and other honors only courses together, creating bonds among the participants which carried over to the information session. This event was organized by senior students who facilitated the meeting, while I functioned as a guest speaker and content expert. The seniors added their own voices to the information I presented and led a question and answer period. This particular

group information session was very interactive due to the fact that the students already knew each other and were comfortable collaborating.

Participant Recommendations. Recommendations by students who participated in the fifth semester advising appointment indicated that they would have preferred less information on logistics and more time spent on brainstorming. The most common responses were about the value of peer involvement through a mentoring process. Participants in the advising session recommended that we invite current Barrett students who had already completed their thesis or were in the completion process. Participants from the group advising session wanted to hear current students address the challenge of approaching faculty, especially interdisciplinary faculty who were unknown to the students prior to the start of the thesis/creative project process.

Of particular interest was the difference in perception between the participants and me about the value of choosing a facilitator who is a Barrett alumna. The group advising session facilitator is the youngest honors adviser in our office; in many instances she is mistaken for a student due to her youthful appearance. However, when I mentioned this to the participants from the group intervention they felt that her experience was not current--they said that they would have preferred to work with a student who was currently working on his or her thesis or who had just graduated.

Additional recommendations. As a refinement to the intervention, the introduction of a library specialist to assist with identification of databases by

specialization might prove helpful in assisting students to identify the focus of their thesis/creative project. To provide more engagement among the participants I suggest breaking the intervention group into smaller clusters of students based on their disciplinary thesis focus. In this way smaller groups of students could work directly with the specialty librarians to identify appropriate data sources and craft sample research questions.

Participants also mentioned an interest in viewing models of completed theses by discipline for the purposes of reviewing content, format, length, and source limits. At this time students are directed to a database of theses and given access to our library to review those selected. It would be valuable for our students to have some indication of the quality of the projects available for review. Currently, we rely on Faculty Honors Advisors to evaluate the thesis process practices within their disciplines. By requesting that they nominate the best thesis/creative projects for each graduating cohort we would be assured of exemplary project reports to use as models.

Implication for Future Research

In the true spirit of action research the next iteration of the study should include a group advising session conducted by an advisor trained in group facilitation, to determine the efficacy of group versus individual advising sessions. In addition, the initial invitation to the thesis advising session should include a clear expectation that the students will participate in multiple sessions. The content and timing of this series of sessions would reflect the feedback provided by this study.

Participants

- Maintain an optimal size group of six to eight students
- Participant selection based on projected graduation date rather than time at ASU
- Discipline-specific group advising session option

Intervention Content

- The sessions should include breakouts for students to discuss thesis topic selection strategies.
- Upper division students who are currently completing or have successfully completed their thesis/creative projects should be invited to answer questions and provide success strategies. These student should participate in a mentor training program prior to their involvement in the group advising sessions.
- Faculty should be included in the workshop to provide recommendations for selecting and approaching potential committee members.
- Specialty research librarians should be invited to discuss resources available through the ASU library system.
- Provide faculty selected and approved thesis/creative projects (models of best practice) for review during the group intervention.

A longitudinal study would allow us to track the participants through graduation. This would require at least two years of follow-up to document the long-term benefits of the intervention. The final measure of success for the

group intervention would be an increase in the rate thesis completion and graduation from Barrett, The Honors College.

Summary

Overall the intervention was successful for the participants who responded to my requests to complete a follow-up survey and post-intervention interview. Seven of the nine participants in the group fifth semester advising session reported some degree of action taken, which moved them closer to the completion of their thesis/creative project. However, not all participants acted on suggestions or utilized the resources they were provided during the group advising session. In addition, I was surprised by the difficulty I encountered in obtaining responses to the post-intervention surveys and requests for interviews. As honors advisors we sometimes struggle to understand why our students do not always respond to our emails regarding mandatory advising, scholarship renewal, registration details and other important program communications.

Honors students are very busy undergraduates who strive to complete multiple majors, minors and certificates in some of the most rigorous programs offered at ASU. In addition, they are involved in research, internships, study abroad programs, leadership positions in student organizations, community service and on and off campus employment. They are trying to do it all, maximizing every opportunity put before them. This may explain why the post-intervention involvement in this study was not as complete as I had hoped. This very reason was cited by the participants as the motivation for attending the early

thesis session. They perceived a need to “start early”, to “not be behind” and to not have the project “hang over their heads.”

Although unconfirmed by the participants, I suspect that having had only one meeting with the participants prior to the intervention was not sufficient time to build a trusting relationship therefore the bond needed to entice more complete participation in the study was lacking. However, 6 of the 8 participants who responded to the survey and subsequent interviews have taken advantage of a stronger advisee/advisor relationship, feeling comfortable asking for assistance with other academic issues and checking in with periodic updates.

Action research calls for multiple iterations of actions leading to a more refined intervention. The next iteration of this study would include a design incorporating the suggestions that were generated by the participants from the post-intervention interviews. In the future my advisees will have met with me during orientation, at student staff events and during mandatory first and third semester advising prior to engaging in upper division thesis advising. Potentially, the expectation of an additional group thesis advising session will add to the students’ sense of urgency to begin their thesis/creative project early. In combination with the changes to the session and the additional trusting relationships I will build with the next cohort of advisees, I believe that the group advising session offered at a time that is most valuable to each student, will be a successful strategy to retain upper division honors students.

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APPENDIX A
IRB APPROVAL

To: Christopher Clark
FAB

From: Mark Roosa, Chair
Soc Beh IRB

Date: 02/15/2011

Committee Action: Exemption Granted

IRB Action Date: 02/15/2011

IRB Protocol #: 1102005994

Study Title: Turning Points in Honors Student Advising

The above-referenced protocol is considered exempt after review by the Institutional Review Board pursuant to Federal regulations, 45 CFR Part 46.101(b)(2) .

This part of the federal regulations requires that the information be recorded by investigators in such a manner that subjects cannot be identified, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects. It is necessary that the information obtained not be such that if disclosed outside the research, it could reasonably place the subjects at risk of criminal or civil liability, or be damaging to the subjects' financial standing, employability, or reputation.

You should retain a copy of this letter for your records.

APPENDIX B

RECRUITMENT LETTER FOR PILOT

INFORMATION LETTER
Individual Interviews
Turning Points in Honors Student Advising

February 1, 2010

Dear Student:

I am a graduate student under the direction of Professor Christopher Clark in the Mary Lou Fulton Teacher's College at Arizona State University. I am conducting a research study to assess the advising protocol employed by Honors Student Advisors within Barrett, The Honors College. I am specifically interested in learning more about the perceptions of those students who voluntarily withdrew from the Honors College.

I am inviting your participation, which will involve your participating in a study involving research through the means of an individual interview. The interview will last for up to one hour, in which you will be asked to review your experiences at Barrett, The Honors College. This interview will be video and/or audio taped, you have the right to request that neither a video nor audio recording be made during your interview. You have the right not to answer any question, and to stop participation at any time. Your participation in this study is voluntary. If you choose not to participate or to withdraw from the study at any time, there will be no penalty.

The possible benefits of your participation in the research are to provide some insight into your decision to withdraw from the Honors College. Advisers at Arizona State University and potentially other institutions may benefit from an increased understanding of the needs of undergraduate students leading to a refinement of the advising protocol employed by academic advisors. There are no foreseeable risks or discomforts to your participation.

All responses obtained in this study will be recorded anonymous. The results of this research study may be used in reports, presentations, and publications, but the researchers will not identify you. In order to maintain confidentiality of your records, Dr. Clark and/or Cynthia Patiño will not include any names of particular campus or organization affiliation or specific names. Subject codes will be used and only Dr. Clark or Cynthia Patiño will have access to such information.

If you have any questions concerning the research study, please contact Cynthia Patiño at 480-727-7354 or at Sage North, Suite 110. If you have any questions about your rights as a subject/participant in this research, or if you feel you have been placed at risk, you can contact the Chair of the Human Subjects Institutional

APPENDIX C

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL USED FOR PILOT

Interview Protocol Used for Pilot

Admission to ASU and Barrett, The Honors College

- Please describe your application process to ASU
- Did you apply to other colleges, if yes please list which other institutions were of interest to you?
- How did you feel about your decision to attend ASU?
- Please describe why you applied to Barrett after being accepted to ASU?
- Please identify the factors which influenced your decision to accept admission to and attend Barrett.

Overall Impressions as a Barrett, Honors Student

- Please take me back through your experience with Barrett, The Honors College and provide an overview of your experience?

Curriculum

- Can you describe your experience with *The Human Event*?
- Did you have any contact with your *Honors Faculty Advisor*?
Describe that experience.
- What were your overall impressions of *contracts*?
- How would you describe your experiences with *honors only sections*?
- How would you describe your interaction with instructor and students?

- Did you identify a thesis topic and/or director? Describe that experience.

Residential vs. Commuter Student

- Are you or were you a resident in Barrett housing?

How long did you live in the dorms?

- Please describe your experiences as a resident of Barrett?

If not a Barrett resident

- If no, were you a resident in any other ASU housing facility?

Please describe your experiences as a resident?

If not an ASU resident

- Can you tell me more about your living arrangements as a non-resident student?

If commuting

- Average length of time commuting?
- Please describe your overall experience as a commuter student.

Involvement

- During your time in Barrett were you involved in any Barrett social communities? Organizations or activities?

Please describe your involvement...

- ASU social organizations or activities

Please describe your involvement...

- Are you or were you involved in any undergraduate research/intern activity?

Please describe the type of research/intern activity and the amount of time you were involved with the research.

- While enrolled were you employed?

Please describe your employment situation?

On-campus vs. Off-campus?

Type of work?

Number of hours?

Withdrawal

- At what point did you first begin thinking about withdrawing from Barrett?
- Did you discuss your intention to withdraw with anyone?

Faculty Honors Advisors, Major Academic Advisor, peers, friends, parents or other family members?

Can you tell me a little more about their response?

Honors Advisor Interaction

- How would you describe your overall interaction with your Honors Advisor?
- Is there something more that your advisor might have done that would have lead to your maintaining your honors status?

- Is there something more that the Honors College might have provided that would lead to your maintaining your honors status?

Other Factors

- Are there any other factors you feel lead to your decision to withdraw from The Honors College which we have not discussed?
- If you were to list the reasons for withdrawing from Barrett on a scale from 1-5, where 1 is the most relevant, what would they be?

For students who have already been withdrawn

- Do you feel you made the right decision? Can you share why you believe this?

APPENDIX D

CONCENT FOR GROUP ADVISING

INFORMATION LETTER
Group Advising Appointment
Turning Points in Honors Student Advising

April 1, 2011

Dear Student:

I am a graduate student under the direction of Professor Christopher Clark in the Mary Lou Fulton Teacher's College at Arizona State University. I am conducting a research study to assess the advising protocol employed by Honors Student Advisors within Barrett, The Honors College. I am specifically interested in learning more about the perceptions of those students who voluntarily participate in a group fifth semester advising session.

I am inviting your participation, which will involve your participating in a study involving research through the means of a group advising appointment and subsequent surveys and interviews. The session will last for up to two hours, in which you will be asked to share your knowledge of honors requirements and the thesis project as related to the requirements for graduation from Barrett, The Honors College. This session will be video and/or audio taped, you have the right to request that neither a video nor audio recording be made during your interview. You have the right not to answer any question, and to stop participation at any time. Your participation in this study is voluntary. If you choose not to participate or to withdraw from the study at any time, there will be no penalty.

Of possible benefit to you for your participation in the group advising session will be a better understanding of the requirements for graduation from Barrett, The Honors College. In addition, the possible benefits of your participation in the research are to provide some insight into the efficacy of our current advising protocol in the Honors College. Advisers at Arizona State University and potentially other institutions may benefit from an increased understanding of the needs of undergraduate students leading to a refinement of the advising protocol employed by academic advisors. There are no foreseeable risks or discomforts to your participation.

All responses obtained in this study will be recorded anonymous. The results of this research study may be used in reports, presentations, and publications, but the researchers will not identify you. In order to maintain confidentiality of your records, Dr. Clark and/or Cynthia Patiño will not include any names of particular campus or organization affiliation or specific names. Subject codes will be used and only Dr. Clark or Cynthia Patiño will have access to such information.

If you have any questions concerning the research study, please contact Cynthia Patiño at 480-727-7354 or at Sage North, Suite 110. If you have any questions about your rights as a subject/participant in this research, or if you feel you have been placed at risk, you can contact the Chair of the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board, through the ASU Office of Research Integrity and Assurance, at (480) 965-6788.

Sincerely,
Cynthia Patiño, M. Ed
Student Success Specialist
Sage North, Suite 110
Barrett, The Honors College
Cynthia.Patino@asu.edu

By signing below you are agreeing to participate to in the study.

Signature

Date

By signing below you are agreeing to be videotaped during the interview.

Signature

Date

By signing below you are agreeing to be audio taped during the interview.

Signature

Date

APPENDIX E
SECOND YEAR MANDATORY ADVISING

SECOND YEAR MANDATORY ADVISING

Name and ASU ID number: _____ Date: _____

Email: _____ Cell Phone: _____

Please enter emergency contact information for use of all Barrett Staff (this is required): _____

Current Major(s): _____

(Check all that apply) Pre-Health: _____ Pre-Law: _____

- Changing my major to: _____

- List any minors or certificates you might add: _____

- 1) What has been your favorite course so far and why?

- 2) Which faculty member, honors or non-honors, have you gotten to know best?
How often have you met with your Faculty Honors Advisor?

- 3) What research experience have you had or hope to have?

- 4) What internship experience have you had or hope to have?

- 5) Which subjects/topics would you consider focusing on for your thesis?
 -
 -
 -

- 6) What are your goals for the rest of this year and beyond?
 -

APPENDIX F
GROUP THESIS ADVISING QUESTIONNAIRE

GROUP THESIS ADVISING

Name and ASU ID number:

_____ Date: _____

Email: _____ Cell Phone: _____

Please enter emergency contact information for use of all Barrett Staff (this is required): _____

Current Major(s): _____

(Check all that apply)

Pre-Health: _____ Pre-Law: _____

- Changing my major to:

- List any minors or certificates you might add:

- Anticipated graduation date (For Example: Spring 2012):

Semester: _____ Year: _____

1. How are you doing on your honors credits? (Check)

I have no idea I am behind I *think* I have enough for now

I know exactly how many more I need

2. What research and/or internship experience have you had?

3. What areas/subjects would you like more research and/or internship experience?

4. Which subjects/topics have you identified as potential thesis ideas?
5. How comfortable are you with the idea of completing a thesis project?
Rate on a scale of 1-10, where 1 is least comfortable and 10 is extremely comfortable.

6. How confident are you that you will complete the thesis project?
Rate on a scale of 1-10, where 1 is least confident and 10 is completely confident.

7. Please complete the following sentence: I am interested in completing my honors thesis because.....

8. Which faculty member would you consider asking (or have already asked) to be your Thesis Director and why?

9. What post-graduate plans are you considering?

10. What do you hope to accomplish before you leave ASU?

APPENDIX G

GROUP ADVISING PROGRESS ON THESIS SURVEY

Group Advising- Progress on Thesis/Creative Project

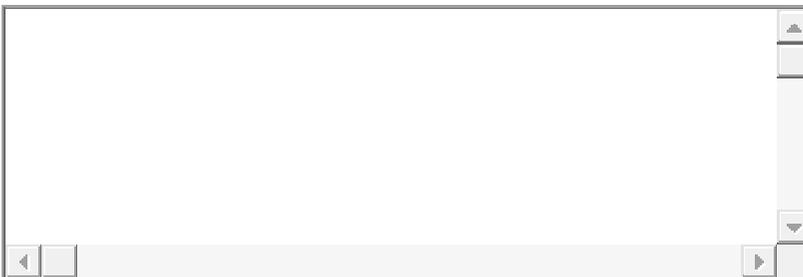
I hope that this email finds you well and that there has been enough time since our group advising meeting so that you have had an opportunity to begin planning your thesis/creative project or perhaps started to work on your project. I am also hoping that you will take some time to help me with my dissertation and agree to answer a few questions concerning your project and the group advising session.

The first three questions were asked as part of the questionnaire you filled out prior to the group advising session. With the group advising session in mind please respond to the following questions:

1. How comfortable are you with the idea of completing a thesis project? Rate on a scale of 1-10, where 1 is least comfortable and 10 is extremely comfortable. Please feel free to add text as needed to explain your answer.



2. How confident are you that you will complete the thesis project? Rate on a scale of 1-10, where 1 is least confident and 10 is completely confident. Please feel free to add text as needed to explain your answer.



3. Please complete the following sentence: I am interested in completing my honors thesis because....

An empty rectangular text box with a light gray border and a vertical scrollbar on the right side. The box is intended for the user to provide an answer to question 4.

Questions 4-12. The following questions are intended to identify steps you have undertaken to begin the thesis/creative project?

4. List potential areas of interest you have identified for your thesis/creative project.

How did you reach your decision to work in this particular area of interest?

An empty rectangular text box with a light gray border and a vertical scrollbar on the right side. The box is intended for the user to provide an answer to question 4.

5. Please check any of the resources used to identify potential thesis/creative project focus areas.

- Searched College web site
- Researched using general internet search engine
- Researched potential ideas using ASU library in person
- Researched potential ideas using ASU library on internet
- Reviewed of list of thesis projects on the Barrett web site
- Discussed potential topics with Faculty Honors Advisor
- Discussed potential topics with faculty member/s
- Discussed potential topics with academic advisor
- Discussed potential topics with honors academic advisor
- Brainstormed ideas with peers
- Reviewed thesis/creative projects in the Barrett thesis library

- Attended a thesis defense
- Attended a thesis workshop
- Registered for a class in thesis preparation on the downtown campus
- Attended a department information session. Example Business, Psychology, C.A.R.E., SOLUR, FURI
- Other:

6 Please list the individuals who might serve as a Director for your thesis/creative project? How did you identify this person as an appropriate fit for your thesis?

7. Have you identified potential committee members other than your director? If so, please explain how the individuals you have identified might play a part in your thesis/creative project? Please describe the process you used to identify these individuals?

8. Please check any of the resources used to identify potential committee members

- Search College web site
- Research using general internet search engine
- Research using ASU library in person
- Research using ASU library on internet
- Review of articles written by potential committee members
- Discussed with or referred by Faculty Honors Advisor

- Discussed with or referred by faculty member
- Discussed with or referred by academic advisor
- Discussed with or referred by honors academic advisor
- Other:

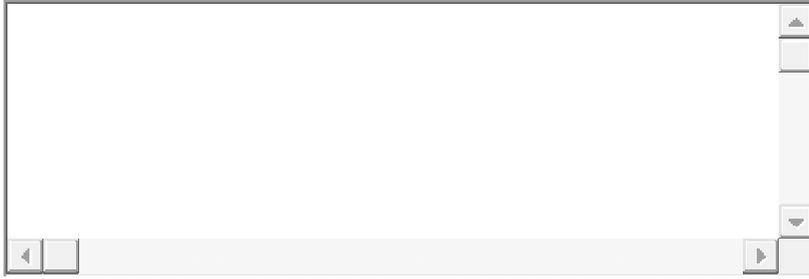
9. Do you have a draft or final research question? Please provide question, even if it is a rough draft.



10. Please check all that apply

- I have not yet started my working on my prospectus
- I have a draft of my prospectus
- I have discussed my prospectus with my director
- My director has approved my prospectus and I am waiting for my second reader to approve my prospectus
- I have submitted my approved prospectus to the Advising Office
- I have begun working on the thesis/creative project
- I have set a date for my defense
- I have completed my defense
- I have submitted my completed thesis
- Other:

11. Please describe how your thesis might move you one step closer to your life/career goals or personal interests?

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12. Have you determined an appropriate timeline to complete your thesis? During which semester will you register XXX-492 Thesis Research? During which semester will your register for XXX-493 and defend your thesis?

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13. General Comments on Group Advising Session Please provide any feedback you have concerning the group advising session.

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Please use this page to provide any additional information concerning the group advising session or your thesis/creative project. If you would like to discuss your progress with me please feel free to contact me directly and I would be happy to meet with you at any time.

Thank you for your assistance.

APPENDIX H
POST-INTERVENTION INTERVIEW

POST-INTERVENTION INTERVIEW

Initiate conversation to clarify responses to post-intervention survey and to determine current status of thesis/creative project.

1. What was your original motivation, reason for attending the early fifth semester group advising session?

2. What were the strengths of the group thesis advising session?

3. What were the challenges of the group thesis advising session?

4. How did the group session impact you personally? How did the group session impact your progress toward thesis completion?

APPENDIX I

COPYRIGHT PERMISSION

COPYRIGHT PERMISSION

From: Bartlebycom [bartlebycom@aol.com]
Sent: Wednesday, March 21, 2012 1:16 PM
To: Cynthia Patino
Subject: Re: copyright permission

Thanks for your note.

Please consider this email permission to use the material listed in the manner described, although for this use it is not necessary to seek permission.

Sincerely,

Steven van Leeuwen
President, Bartleby.com, Inc.

-----Original Message-----

From: Cynthia Patino <Cynthia.Patino@asu.edu>
To: bartlebycom <bartlebycom@aol.com>
Sent: Tue, Mar 20, 2012 11:21 pm
Subject: copyright permission

To whom it may concern,

I am a doctoral student and am in the process of completing my dissertation. Is it possible to gain copyright permission to use a copyright protected poem. I am interested in including Robert Frost's poem *The Road Not Taken* as part of my dedication page in the dissertation.

AUTHOR:Frost, Robert, 1874–1963.

TITLE:Mountain interval, by Robert Frost. PUBLISHED:New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1920. PHYSICAL DETAILS:75 p. front. (port.) 23 cm.
ISBN:1-58734-017-8.

CITATION:Frost, Robert. *Mountain Interval*. New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1920; Bartleby.com, 1999. www.bartleby.com/119/. [Date of Printout].
ON-LINE ED.:First published December 1995; published July 1999 by Bartleby.com; © Copyright Bartleby.com, Inc. (Terms of Use).

I await your response,

Cynthia Patino

*Honors Academic Advisor
Barrett, The Honors College
(480)-727-5324
Cynthia.Patino@asu.edu
<http://barrethonors.asu.edu/home/>*