FACULTY AND STUDENT PERCEPTIONS OF COLLEGE-READINESS

IN THE COMMUNITY COLLEGE: A FRAMEWORK

FOR POLICY REALIGNMENT

Except where reference is made to the work of others, the work described in this Dissertation is my own or was done in the collaboration with my advisory committee. This dissertation does not include proprietary or classified information.

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FACULTY AND STUDENT PERCEPTIONS OF COLLEGE-READINESS IN THE COMMUNITY COLLEGE: A FRAMEWORK FOR POLICY REALIGNMENT

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FACULTY AND STUDENT PERCEPTIONS OF COLLEGE-READINESS

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VITA

Kenneth Edward Scott, son of Willie Edward Scott and Mary Faye Brannen Scott, was born May 28, 1953, in Jesup, Georgia, United States of America. He graduated from Greenville High School, Greenville, Alabama, in 1971, and was called to Naval Intelligence service during the Vietnam Conflict. During and subsequent to military service, he earned the following degrees, awards, or certifications: (1) AA Degree, University of Maryland (1978); (2) BET Degree, Georgia Southern University (1983); (3) MED Degree, Auburn University Montgomery (1991); (4) Thirty postgraduate hours in CIS from Auburn University Montgomery and Troy University (1993); (5) National Teaching Excellence Award (1989); (6) nominee for Chancellor's Faculty of the Year award (2000); and, (6) Cisco Certified Networking Associate (CCNA) (2001, 2006). He has been in the Community College system for 21 years and has served in the capacity of Division Director, Department Chair, Program Coordinator, or Instructor for Computer Information Systems for 19 of those years. Two years in the system were devoted as a Programmer/Systems Analyst. In private business, he served as a Project Engineer for 2 years; in the Navy, service was rendered in the covert/overt operations of Naval Intelligence for a combined 7.5 years in the Far East, United States, and in Europe.

Married for 28 wonderful years to Rita M. Scott has happily resulted in a beautiful daughter, Tera Rebekah Scott Folmar.

DISSERTATION ABSTRACT

FACULTY AND STUDENT PERCEPTIONS OF COLLEGE-READINESS

IN THE COMMUNITY COLLEGE: A FRAMEWORK

FOR POLICY REALIGNMENT

Kenneth Edward Scott

Doctor of Education, May 28, 2007
(Post-Graduate, Computer Information Systems, 1993)
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College-readiness has been classified as a national education priority. Moreover, students have perceptions about their own college preparation which differs from the perceptions of faculty members, administrators, or policymakers. Academic or policy decisions which ignore these variances could have detrimental effects on student planning, access, success, or institutional outcomes. While studies on college-readiness exist, there is little research in correlating how students and faculty separately and collectively perceive college-readiness as variables in policy decisions or practice.

This study examined the perceptions of community college students and faculty as determinants to shape educational policy in terms of college-readiness. Specific datasets and policies were used to establish a delimited baseline from which to develop and compare survey data from community college faculty and students. Faculty-student perceptions were then used to formulate a framework for policy realignment of college-readiness between various levels of institutional structures, particularly between the community college and P-12, with implications for 4-year institutions.

This research surveyed 1,250 community college students and 625 faculty members. Using ANOVA and Regression, the results from the analysis indicated that there is a statistically significant difference in the perceptions of college-readiness between students and faculty, while the correlation of perceptions within student and faculty groups have a much higher positive correlation of homogeneity, $p < .05$. Analysis of survey data, correlated to national reported data and policies, indicated a strong positive correlation, .9102, between this study and similar studies.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

No man, or person, is an island. This has never been more apropos than when a doctoral student undertakes the challenge of completing a dissertation. Granted, it may involve fulfilling a requirement in a doctoral program; however, it always involves the support from others, as we are beings who need others; we are not islands.

I would like to thank my dearest wife, Rita, who encouraged me to undertake this trek across the universe of learning. To my most precious daughter, Tera, "dad says" thanks for making me laugh just for the "fun" of it. I give my love always to each of you.

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Dr. Jim Manring, Ph.D., P.E.: your example in the classroom has not been lost in the transition from student-to-teacher in my own life. It is because of what you have demonstrated in my own learning that I have embarked upon this journey of teaching-learning. It is my solemn prayer that your retirement has been a time of greatest fulfillment and personal happiness. You may never know how much you challenged and changed the lives of your students – but I know the Records of Heaven surely do!

To my mom and dad, how can a simple "thanks" ever say what needs to be said? My dad was never able to realize his own education, yet he is one of the most intelligent people I know, and this dissertation is dedicated especially to him (and mom). They have earned a Heavenly Reward for all of their years of sacrifice, love, and patience. God bless you both and you are two very special people!

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Page

LIST OF TABLES

Table Page

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure Page

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

"Let us think of education as the means of developing our greatest abilities, because in each of us there is a private hope and dream which, fulfilled, can be translated into benefit for everyone and greater strength for our nation." --- *John F. Kennedy*

Introduction

High school students intend to pursue a college degree at levels proportionate with the present millennial generation, e.g., students born between 1982 – 2002. The millennial generation is 33% larger than one of the foremost student populations in U. S. History, e.g., the Baby Boomers (Coomes & DeBard, 2004). While the number of students declaring their intent to pursue postsecondary education is increasing significantly, inconsistencies in the defining trends and realities of college-readiness seem to exist. Moreover, the difference between perceptions and the actual outcomes of college-readiness indicates the need for investigation. As suggested by Conley (2005):

> An ever-increasing proportion of high school students in the United States today aspire to college. Yet statistics indicate that the percentage of college students receiving bachelor's degrees has remained relatively constant over the past twenty-five years, that it now takes on average five years to get a four-year college degree, and that somewhere between 30 percent and 60 percent of students now require remedial education upon entry to college, depending on the type of institution they attend. Also over the past twenty-five years, SAT and ACT scores have risen only slightly in math and been relatively constant in reading, high school grade point average has gradually risen, and the proportion of students taking college preparatory courses has grown as well. How do we explain the seeming inconsistencies between these trends? The answer can be found in part in the distinction between being *college-eligible* and *college-ready.* (p. xi)

Background

College-readiness is a dynamic process which is impacted by the decisions of students, parents, community, administrators, legislators, and policy-makers. Of paramount interest in this study is how policy has impacted perceptions, which in turn, suggests the need to research the perceptions which have been formed over time from current educational policy and practice. College-readiness is one of the most important, yet complex, educational and global issues in the United States today (Byrd & MacDonald, 2005; U.S. Department of Education, 2000; Kirst & Venezia, 2006; Phillips & Skelly, 2006). The preparation of high school graduates to enter the workforce or college is a critically important issue. A lack of education significantly matters and college-readiness – not college-eligibility (Conley, 2005) -- is the linchpin to educational success and employment opportunities in the post-industrial age (ACT: 2005a, 2005b; Boswell, 2004; Boswell & Wilson, 2004; College Board, 2004; Forster, 2006; NCES: 1995, 1997, 2000, 2005; Swanson, 2004).

Moreover, the complexity of college-readiness is multidimensional across every conceivable line of demarcation: policies, parental and community support, politics, recruitment and retention, racial and educational disparities, high school dropouts, peer pressure and graduation rates (Achieve, Inc., 2005). Specific examples of the nature of college-readiness include: student swirl as it impacts multi-educational decisions about individual goals and suggests a need for policy review and realignment (Borden, 2004; Komives & Woodard, 2003); faulty decisions made by educational leaders as a misrepresentation of Generation X (Franke, 2001; Haworth, 1997); how the characteristics of millennials impact college-readiness decisions before and during

college (DeBard, 2004); and, the diversity of students in the pipeline waiting to enter college (Callan et al, 2006; Chang et al, 2006; Kazis, 2006; Kraman, 2006).

The U.S. Department of Education projects that by 2009, 75% of high school seniors will likely attend college (Boggs, 2004), which includes an estimated 42% enrolled in public two-year technical, community and junior college institutions (Horn & Nevill, 2006; NCES, 2003). Moreover, as noted by the Reference Service Press (2003) in citing data from the College Board, colleges and universities over the last eight years have increased student enrollment from 14.3 million to 15.3 million to reach an all-time record high number of students. College enrollment is expected to increase another 15% to an estimated 17.7 million students by the year 2012. Assuming the validity and reliability of the College Board's projection, college-readiness initiatives have the baseline potential to positively or negatively affect the nation's future workforce, leadership in a global economy, and students' personal and professional lives.

The American College Testing Service (ACT) (2005a) conducted a study of college entrance examinations and concluded that the percentage of ACT-tested high school graduates who were able to meet or surpass all three College-readiness Benchmarks was of considerable concern – a mere 22% of the 1.2 million students tested in 2004. Benchmarks referenced in the study were college-level courses in English, Mathematics, and Science. ACT officials classified college-readiness as earning at least a "C" in a "for-credit" course without a prerequisite for remediation. The reference to college-level courses included both two-and-four-year institutions. Although the study suggested a significant potential increase in college-readiness deficiencies as the number of college-bound students also increase, policies which address deficiencies in student

preparation for college-level work have the significant potential to offset this negative trend (Dougherty & Hong, 2005; Dougherty, Reid, & Nienhusser, 2006; Hughes & Karp, 2006).

Table 1 suggests the potential impact of a lack of college-readiness based on the composite projections by the College Board, U.S. Department of Education and the American College Testing Service. The data presented in Table 1 does not directly address the variables of workforce readiness, economics, or policy issues.

Table 1

College-Readiness Impact Projections

Reporting Agency	Actual or Projected Year	% Attendance	# of Students Attending	# of Students Not Attending	Impact of College-readiness (Remedial or Developmental or Completion Rates)
College Board	2012 ±	75%	17.7 million	Baseline	3.9 million College-ready (.22 x 17.7 million)
U.S. Department of Education	2009 ±	100%	22.2 million	4.5 million	4.9 million potentially College-ready (.22 x 22.2 million)
ACT, Inc. (2005a)	2004	n/a	n/a	n/a	22% met or exceeded College-readiness Benchmarks
ACT, Inc. (2005b)	1983 – 2005	n/a	n/a	n/a	All Two-Year College Completion Rates: 30% National Completion Rates for Four-Year Colleges: 51.8%

As put forth in Table 1, a lack of college-readiness has the potential to impact the performance and often times the completion rates of students enrolled in college or those potential college-eligible students seeking to enroll in college (Dournay, 2006; Maloney, 2003). Furthermore, if the data as projected are within a few percentage points of being correct, this would suggest the depth of the problem of students not prepared for the

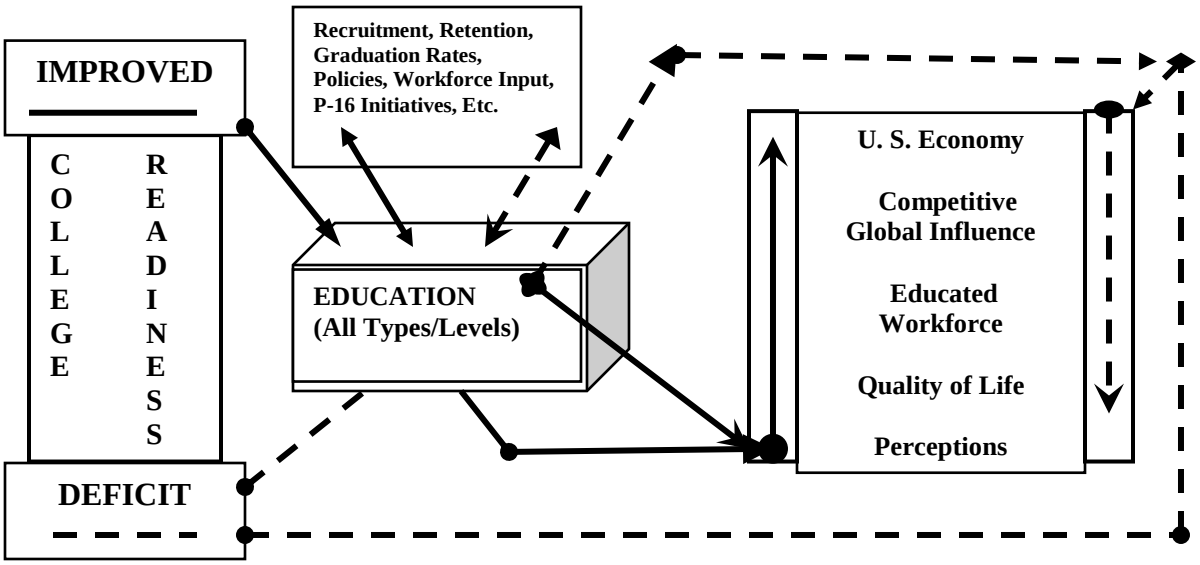
rigors of college-level work. The result of deficits in college-readiness suggests a negative impact on the economy, society, and higher education (Boswell & Wilson, 2004; NCES, 2005).

Additional data from the American College Testing Service (ACT, 2006) indicated that student preparation for college-level reading is at its lowest point in more than a decade, spanning 1994 to 2005. Additionally, the study noted that "it is also recognized today that the knowledge and skills needed for college are equivalent to those needed in the workplace" (p. 3), including reading skills. Figure 1 suggests a model of the economic, societal, or educational impact resulting from a deficit (or improvement) in college-readiness in the United States. As suggested in Figure 1, education is the catalyst for improving the lives of individuals. The education begins in the formative years of grade school, transitions to and through high school, and concludes when the individual has successfully obtained a college degree or vocational training.

As further noted in the Model of Figure 1, there are many variables which positively or negatively impact the learning process. These variables possess the potential to hinder the applicability of the college-readiness process resulting in negative outcomes in the sphere of national competitiveness, global leadership, quality of life, and unfavorable perceptions of the educational system beginning with P-12 (Conley, 2005; Daugherty, 2005; Lord, Marks & Creech; 2005).

The overarching theme of the College-readiness Impact Model is to suggest that "as a state policy-maker and education leader, you will see considerable variety in state policies. You will be able to assess your individual state policies by how well they support your state's overall college-readiness effort" (Daugherty, 2005, p. 2).

Figure 1. *College-Readiness Impact Model.*



Lovett and Mundhenk (2004) have suggested that a college degree has replaced the high-school diploma as the gateway to the American middle class and workforce readiness. The relationship between postsecondary education, employment, global competition, and college-readiness, is that in the competitively global society in which individuals co-exist, it is imperative that the students who will meet the needs of the future workforce are empowered with knowledge, skills and the ability to perpetually learn throughout their lives (Krueger, 2006). The report by Krueger also indicated that data from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics estimates that the "fastest growing and highest paying occupations between now and 2014 require some form of postsecondary education" (p.1).

Additionally, Conklin and Smith (2004) have suggested that the future economic survival of the nation is of critical historical importance and directly related to educational achievement:

> Never before in U.S. history has the quality of human resources—the skills and education of its people—been so important to the economic prospects of states and their residents. Within the next 20 years, the nation will lack 14 million people with postsecondary education unless states realize significant improvements in high school and postsecondary performance. High school and postsecondary completion rates and college-readiness need to improve, particularly among disadvantaged populations. (p. 1)

Phillips and Skelly (2006), in citing Gaston Caperton, president of The College Board, notes that "The future of this country is going to be won in the public schools. We are in an education race, not an arms race. To successfully compete in a global economy, our students need to be prepared" to earn a living wage (p. 26). In relationship to a living wage, the U. S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics (2000), noted that college graduates over the age of 25 earn nearly twice as much as those in the workforce who only have high school diplomas. In subsequent and related studies, the College Board (2004, 2005) conducted research in the area of educational benefits. Generally, these findings suggested that education not only supports individuals financially, but society through increased tax revenues, improved health benefits, politically informed citizenry, and life-long learners. The recommendations of the research, therefore, suggests that students prepared for and acquiring postsecondary education will be in a position to support themselves to a higher standard and, consequently, contribute to society in a positive and progressive manner.

Although college-readiness may be viewed as a broad set of paradigms of preparation to enter college, successful outcomes, and contributions to society, readiness is influenced by perceptions, attitudes and reality (Reason, Terenzini & Domingo, 2005). The reality of college-readiness is noted in the ability of individuals to utilize

postsecondary education or training to acquire gainful employment, and once employed, to remain competitive in the market as an asset for employers, nationally and internationally (Baum & Payea, 2005; Lord, 2002). Attitudes and perceptions are more intrinsic but just as powerful. When attitudes and perceptions do not mesh with established policies and practices, problems arise. As a result, it is imperative that institutional research is undertaken to correlate perceptions-to-policy-effectiveness as a means to assess and react to how perceptions impact college-readiness policy-decisions and outcomes (Dougherty & Hong, 2005; Education Commission of the States, 2006; Knight, Moore & Coperthwaite, 1997).

If the perceptions of students and faculty are not properly aligned and supported by relevant policies, the framework for establishing successful programs of college-readiness may be misaligned, ineffective or detrimental to student success. Currently, there is a widening gap between educators' expectations of their students and students' own expectations for success (Achieve, Inc., 2005; Brancato, 2003; Jenkins, 2005; Levine & Cureton, 1998; McGuire & Williams, 2002). And in terms of policy issues, Venezia, Kirst, and Antonio (2003a) summarize the need to establish the validity of effective college-readiness programs--driven and guided by applicable and evolving policies:

> The disconnect between K-12 and postsecondary education has inhibited the ability of schools and colleges to address the issues of inadequate preparation for college, high levels of remediation, and low rates of college completion. A major problem is that students' and teachers' poor knowledge of college policies makes good college preparation difficult. (p. 34)

Stanford University's Bridge Project, a six-year longitudinal study conducted by Venezia, Kirst, and Antonio (2003b), indicated that policies and human relationships impact the decisions made by students and parents as they plan for college. The human relationships were categorized as stakeholders such as parents, educators, policymakers, business leaders, community members, researchers, etc., who influenced the college planning process.

Moreover, the Stanford University Bridge Project study also connected barriers between high school and college which included misaligned policies and perceptions which hampered or altogether prevented students from being prepared for college or being equipped to make proper and informed decisions. Collins and Chandler (1997) investigated perceptions that parents and students had with respect to learning environments at school. The students were generally less positive about their school environments than were the parents. The study suggests that policies which address these negative perceptions are more likely to initiate positive change if the perceptions are identified and given consideration during policy formulation. Notwithstanding, policy formulation and alignment is a systematic process which requires perpetual assessment to measure the effectiveness of policy on the educational process known as college-readiness (Callan et al, 2006). The Stanford and Collins and Chandler studies indicated that policies and perceptions, when out-of-sync, tend to have a detrimental impact on college preparation decisions or college choice, as portrayed in Table 2.

Table 2

Students' Misconceptions About Preparing For And Attending College

Many students believe that:	**In reality:**
I can't afford college	Students and parents regularly overestimate the cost of college
I have to be a stellar athlete or student to get financial aid	Most students receive some form of financial aid
Meeting high school graduation requirement will prepare me for college	Adequate preparation for college usually requires a more demanding curriculum than is reflected in minimum requirements for high school graduation, sometimes even if that curriculum is termed "college prep"
Getting into college is the hardest part	For the majority of students, the hardest part is completing college
Community colleges don't have academic standards	Students usually must take placement tests at community colleges in order to quality for college-level work
It's better to take easier classes in high school and get better grades	One of the best predictors of college success is taking rigorous high school classes. Getting good grades in lower-level classes will not prepare students for college-level work
My senior year in high school doesn't matter	The classes students take in their senior year will often determine the classes they are able to take in college and how well-prepared they are for those classes
I don't have to worry about my grades, or the kind of classes I take, until my sophomore year	Many colleges look at sophomore year grades, and, in order to enroll in college-level courses, students need to prepare well for college. This means taking a well-thought out series of courses starting no later than 8th or 10th grade
I can't start thinking about financial aid until I know where I'm going to college	Students need to file a federal aid form prior to when most colleges send out their acceptance letters. This applies to students who attend community colleges, too, even though they can apply and enroll in the fall of the year they wish to attend
I can take whatever classes I want when I get to college	Most colleges and universities require entering students to take placement exams in core subject areas. Those tests will determine the classes students can take

Note. An excerpt from Betraying the College Dream, Andrea Venezia, Michael W. Kirst and Anthony L. Antonio, March, 2003, Stanford University Bridge Project.

Statement of the Problem

There is a lack of research investigating the relationship between student and faculty perceptions of college-readiness. To address the problem of misaligned college-readiness policies, survey data can be used as a basis to formulate the framework for a college-readiness policy realignment model. A directly related problem to be examined is how the perceptions of faculty and students may be categorized as predictor variables to proactively influence the policy realignment model (ACTE, 2006; Dobelle, 2006). The major hypothesis was to investigate whether there is a statistically significant perceptual difference of college-readiness within and between student and faculty groups. Current P–16 policy alignment was reviewed to form a baseline from which to statistically compare perceptions from students and faculty, with the primary source of policy and perceptions data collected from the community college system (Jenkins et al, 2006; Kazis, 2006).

This research is directed at community college students and faculty as a method to suggest the power of perceptions in influencing policy decisions and vice versa. The questions to be answered in this study are operationalized by grouping students and faculty as primary sources of perceptual data. Additionally, the research questions will investigate relationships between and within groups to suggest the strengths or weaknesses of correlation between perceptions and how college-readiness policy may be impacted (Adelman, 2006; Maypole & Davies, 2001; NCES, 2003; Overby, 2004; Sanoff, 2006).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to investigate underlying perceptions of students and faculty and how these perceptions relate to college-readiness initiatives and policies. Students entering the doors of the community college have self-expectations, differences in high school preparation, and personal experiences which may significantly differ from what faculty members perceive or expect of students (Perin, 2006). Variances in skills, experiences, and perceptions become evident when students are required to take a placement test or complete an attitudes/opinions survey, e.g., Comprehensive Computer-Adaptive Testing System (COMPASS) (ACT COMPASS System, 2006), College Student Inventory (CSI-B) (Noel-Levitz, 2006). Outcomes of these types of entrance exams or surveys in the community college give rise to a concern for student preparation to enter college, and to also compete at an acceptable level through the maze of coursework, study skills, and persistence. The number of students requiring remediation to formally begin community college level courses range from 30% to 94%, with the 94% being a valid outlier for very specific high school systems (Conley, 2005; Hammons, 2004; Phipps, 1998; Spann, 2000).

The community college, as an entity of education, has had an open-door policy which the community college system has afforded to potential students for more than 100 years (Boggs, 2004; NCES, 2003; Vaughn, 2004). This study explored the perceptions of college-readiness by students and faculty in the community college and correlates these findings with selected datasets, e.g., National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES), Education Commission of the States (ECS), Educational Policy Institute, and The National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education. Outcomes of this study are to

inform not only educational administrators of the serious issues surrounding these perceptions of college-readiness, but to also inform policy designers that perceptions can be used as input variables to properly redress misaligned or ineffective policies.

In terms of how students and faculty separately and collectively perceive college-readiness, the Higher Education Research Institute (2005) noted that 36% of postsecondary faculty (from four-and-two-year institutions, both public and private) considered that most students are well prepared academically for college. Forty-one percent of all survey respondents – and 65% of faculty at public two-year colleges – revealed that most of the students they taught lacked the basic skills needed for college-level coursework, whereas 70% of entering college students perceived themselves as above average or in the highest 10% academically. These perceptions by faculty and students can have detrimental outcomes for students if they are translated into policy action, reflected in faculty practice, or remain unchallenged by policy-makers.

Moreover, college-readiness is a matter of perception on the part of *both* the student and faculty member (Dalgeth & Coll, 2005; Lynch, 2005; Sanoff, 2006). Levine and Cureton (1998) suggested an increasing gap between how students learn most effectively as compared to faculty teaching methods. Students have a perception of learning that is practical, real-world, linearly-structured, and primarily focused on the concrete, physical environment. Conversely, faculty view learning as a process of stimulating students by using concepts, ideas, and abstractions. Furthermore, the perception of faculty is that students should be independent learners and need a significant level of autonomy in their assigned work. The major disconnect between these two group perceptions is best summarized by the results of Levine and Cureton:

"Small wonder, then, that frustration results and that every year faculty believe students are less well prepared, while students increasingly think their classes are incomprehensible" (p. 16).

Such misaligned perceptions even extend to developmental or remedial studies in which selected faculty view successful completers of developmental or remedial courses as "academic underachievers" (Overby, 2004, p. 1). The dichotomy in current research indicates that comparative perceptions of students and faculty do not necessarily align themselves in terms of teaching, learning, policy directives, practice, and college-readiness. Brozik (2004) reflected on student preparation:

> No kidding, I mean it. Whom do I blame? I teach upper-division and graduate courses, and I am constantly confronted with students who cannot spell, who do not or will not read, and whose math skills are simply appalling. I spend a whole lot of time trying to get these kids up to a reasonable level of literacy. I should be teaching content, but, oh no, I just try to get past sentence fragments. (p. 25)

College-readiness has been studied and identified as a problematic source of educational dysfunction. The outcomes of a lack of college-readiness are specifically and minimally indicated in test scores, GPA, writing, reading, and computational prowess. However, this study investigated the perceptions of students and faculty to focus on respective viewpoints which are used as a basis to make decisions. The outcomes of these measured perceptions will then become the framework to determine how policies may be impacted by "what" students and faculty members "think" of college-readiness and "how" they respectively make educational decisions based on individual and group perceptions.

Research Questions

The following research questions were used in this study:

1. What are the college-readiness perceptions of community college students and faculty members?
2. Is there a significant difference in the perceptions of college-readiness between students and faculty members in the community college?
3. Is there a significant difference (homogeneity or heterogeneity) in the perceptions of college-readiness within student and faculty groups in the community college?
4. What are the relationships of college-readiness perceptions by faculty and students as related to selected datasets and policies?
5. What college-readiness variables are identified as the best predictors to inform policy designers that policy reform is statistically significant, educationally sound, and perceptually relevant?
6. Do faculty members perceive college-readiness as an indicator of variance in attitudes towards and support of students, specifically or generally?
7. Do students perceive college-readiness as an indicator that their own success is relational to their self-perceptions?
8. What variables do *both* students and faculty perceive to be the *most* significant indicators for improving college-readiness as a means to inform policy designers that perceptions have statistical significance, policy influence, and educational merit?

Significance of the Study

The significance of this study is embedded in the daily routines of education. Students and faculty regularly meet to exchange ideas, participate in teaching-learning, interact as human beings, and react as they respectively perceive their environments. Perceptions are force-multipliers in the eyes of the individual and, therefore, must be understood and researched to a significant level in order to become a catalyst for change. This study will assist in identifying perceptions which impact college-readiness policy, with inverse implications. College-readiness policy which is ineffective or insignificant interferes with educational outcomes at the earliest stages of the P-16 process and in many cases proceeds through middle school, high school and college (Van de Water & Rainwater, 2001).

This study will have a potential impact on policy designers as college-readiness issues are studied and promulgated to the educational community. As underlying perceptions suggest the actual interpretation and application of policies applied to college-readiness, this study will have considerable significance to policy designers who affect the lives of the future student population in the United States. This study will contribute to the literature on how students and faculty – two major educational players in the teaching-learning process – relate to each other perceptually and what these differences might suggest to college-readiness stakeholders and policy-makers.

Limitations of the Study

The limitations of this study are summarized below:

1. Perceptions data were collected only from community college students and faculty and may limit the *specific* transferability of the research to four-year institutions.

2. Stakeholders in this study are recognized as all individuals for whom college-readiness is a part of their respective consideration. The limitation in this regard is that this study delimits the stakeholders to students, faculty and policymakers, with full disclosure that all stakeholder input and perceptions would necessitate a much broader scale of research.
3. Sampling sub-scales of student respondents in this study did not specifically distinguish between full-time, part-time, first-year, first-generation, returning, or adult students in the population.
4. Independent variables which define, categorize, quantify, or qualify college-readiness are delimited in scope to focus this study on perceptions of central tendencies.
5. Sampling sub-scales of faculty respondents in this study did not specifically distinguish between full-time or part-time (adjunct).

Assumptions of the Study

The assumptions of this study are summarized below:

1. This study assumes that faculty in the community college are readily cognizant of issues and research regarding college-readiness, have well-established perceptions of student preparation, and recognize student outcomes which indicate a deficit (or surplus) of college preparation.
2. Sample policies and data used in this study to correlate survey data from students and faculty are assumed to have considered perceptions as a control group function and, consequently, are not influenced by previous perceptions research to any statistically significant level.

3. Data cited or noted in this study will cross-reference reports, studies, research, and same-institutional data which may present conflicting assumptions. For example, the National Center for Education Statistics may report on remedial education in the Year 2000 and again in the Year 2005; the percentages may differ slightly or significantly, and where possible, this study will note these differences as pertaining to positive or negative trends. It is assumed, nevertheless, that the data reported by the research or reports of these same-institutions or various institutions, will provide significant relationships for the variables related to college-readiness.

Definitions of Key Terms

The following terms are used in this study and indicate general and specific applicability to this study with a specific inference to the community college system of education.

Baby Boomers. Individuals born between 1946 – 1964 and comprise the largest student population in the history of education until the rise of the millennial generation (see definition for Millennials).

College-eligible. The process established by policy in the educational community in which a student has met all requirements for entry into college.

College Preparation, College Preparedness, Student Preparedness, Student Readiness, or Student Preparation. These items are synonyms for College-readiness.

College-Readiness. The conceptual ideal that a student is academically prepared to engage and persist in the rigors of college-level work (courses) as a means to complete a college degree (Kazis, 2006). College-readiness also includes any postsecondary

education or training in which a student is prepared to engage for the purpose of improving his or her life-long learning and self-sustaining workforce attributes.

College-Readiness Policy Realignment Model. A model to indicate the need to realign college-readiness policies to improve the system of P-16. This definition has a significant relationship to perceptions as policy and perceptions are correlates of one another.

COMPASS. A copyright testing and placement service of the ACT, COMPASS is "much more than a series of tests." The COMPASS™ system is a comprehensive computer-adaptive testing system that helps place students into appropriate courses and maximizes the information postsecondary schools need to ensure student success. (http://www.act.org/compass/index.html).

Community College(s) or Community College System of Education. The national educational system of two-year institutions includes technical, community and junior colleges offering postsecondary education ranging from specialized certificates in technical training to two-year transfer college degrees of general studies or highly professional fields. Included in this definition is the interchange of the terms "community college", "community/junior college", "junior college", "technical college", "community/junior/technical", or the generic term of "community college" to represent the community college system of education. "Technical College" will be used specifically when defining or describing the technical college as a vocational institution, when appropriate, or its attributes.

Dual-Enrollment. The process of high school students dually enrolled in high school and college as a means to increase their potential for college-readiness success.

Faculty. Specific to this study, faculty will be classified as those individuals with primary, secondary, or tertiary responsibility in the classroom as "instructor of record" within the community college system of education.

Gen X. The generation of students born between 1961 and 1981 and have been identified as a group with the attributes which differ from other generations and require an understanding of their perceptions of college-readiness.

Middle Schoolism. An approach to educating children in the middle grades (usually grades 5-8), popularized in the latter half of the 20th century, that contributed to a precipitous decline in academic achievement among American early adolescents (Yecke, 2005).

Millennials. The generation of students born between 1982 and 2002 and have been identified as the largest potential pool of students since the Baby Boomer generation and will statistically and significantly impact college-readiness research.

Open-Door Policies. Within the community college system of education, open-door policies are those policies and practices which afford "open-access" to all students who apply to enroll in a community college regardless of the declared objective of the individual student, e.g., one course, a certificate, retraining, vocational training, degree, transfer courses, etc. (Milliron & E. de los Santos, 2004; Phillippe & Sullivan, 2005).

P-12. The system of K-12 to include Pre-K as noted in the research literature and as referenced in P-16.

P-16. An acronym for a seamless educational system in which college-readiness policies linearly support the longitudinal process of P-16 education from Pre-K to a four-college degree. The P-16 system has three delimiters: 1) guiding a child from early care

through high school to prepare for college; 2) the successful completion of a two-year college degree or technical training; 3) the successful completion of a four-year college degree (Paredes, 2006; Pipho, 2001).

P-16 CRAI. An acronym for the P-16 System and includes a research-based framework to realign policies which impact college-readiness. The CRAI is specific to College-readiness Alignment Initiatives, which is also termed College-readiness ReAlignment Initiatives. Current policies do not accurately reflect the non-linear relationship between P-12 and Higher Education.

Perceptions. Perceptions are defined as the processes which form ideas and understandings about the world in which an individual lives. Society, peers, upbringing, experiences, high school, rules, laws, policies, and so forth, are the "shapers" of individual perceptions. Emphasis in this study is given to how policy has influenced perceptions and how perceptions might realign college-readiness policies.

Perceptions Research. The system of statistical analysis to measure and report the perceptions of individuals impacted by college-readiness policy. Perceptions research is used in this study to suggest how these perceptions might statistically impact the present and future actions of policy designers.

Policy or Policies. A written document or set of documents in which the document(s) is/are presented to an organization as a matter of guide to achieve specific or general goals. Policies may be interpreted differently in terms of how the policies are perceived, carried out, and reflected in the culture of the organization. For this study, policy is further defined as "the catalyst which creates educational perceptions and outcomes" (Venezia, 2005).

Policy Alignment. Policies which are aligned are effective guidelines which reflect the perceptions and actual practices in the educational institutions. Alignment is the process of contiguous positive correlation between what is perceived and practiced in the halls of the institution and policy application (Venezia, 2005).

Policy Designers. Any individual or group who has influence on shaping policy to impact college-readiness.

Policy Realignment. The intentional process of reviewing current educational policy and practice in full view of feedback, input, opinions, and perceptions by all stake holders for the sole purpose to realign policy and practice to improve educational outcomes.

Remediation or Remedial Education. The requirement of a student to participate in a developmental course prior to the student being permitted to participate in a college-level course of the same or related subject matter as required by the institution (NCES, 2004-010; NCES, 97-584). Remediation is noted in this study as a variable of deficiency in college-readiness and is determined by community college testing services for high school students who have not taken the ACT, SAT or who do not have transfer courses in General Education core courses. Remedial education courses provide the solution.

Reverse Transfers. The process of students attending a community college to upgrade a skill, acquire new skills, or acquire non-credit learning. Of the students in the reverse transfer process, 28% have at least a Bachelor's Degree (Boggs, 2004).

Students. Specific to this study, community college students are those individuals enrolled in the college in any course, program of study, or activity in which the stated

goal is a degree, certificate, or specialized training. Students within this definition are not qualified as first-time students, adult learners, millennials, or other classification.

Stakeholders. Any individual or group which has direct or indirect influence on college-readiness policy or practice at any level in the P-16 system.

Student Swirl. The non-linear matriculation of students as they enter and leave college in pursuit of their educational goals.

Organization of the Study

The organization of this study is segmented in into five Chapters. Chapter I includes an introduction to the scope of college-readiness and stipulates the objectives of the research in terms of the research questions. Moreover, the relationship between college-readiness, policies, and outcomes has been suggested and includes the problem to be researched, limitations, specific terms, significance and purpose of the study.

Chapter II presents a review of the directly and indirectly related literature of college-readiness, perceptions of students and faculty, the community college, policies, reported data on college-readiness, and summary. In Chapter III, the methodology of the study is organized into the research design, population, sampling, instrumentations, procedure, data analysis, confidentiality and anonymity, reliability and validity, and a summary. The results or findings of the study will be statistically presented in Chapter IV, whereas Chapter V will discuss the conclusions and recommendations of the study. An Appendix includes Survey Instruments, specific letters, pilot test information, and other supporting or related research material pertinent to this study.

Summary

College-readiness is a well researched, but highly controversial educational phenomenon which suggests the need for additional and continued research to uncover and suggest evolving solutions. Furthermore, this chapter has identified studies which have investigated college-readiness from the perspective of policies and how these policies have generally not been properly aligned-realigned to direct-redirect efforts to improve the college-readiness process. College-readiness is a national priority, inclusive of the future well-being of the nation. And, in the absence of prepared students for the workforce or college, the outlook for enrollment, persistence, graduation, and a strong economy is comparatively and statistically less impressive than a strong national policy of college-readiness for all individuals (Phillips & Skelly, 2006)

Figure 2 provides a graphical summation of this chapter and will be discussed in detail in Chapter 2. The overarching goal of this study is to derive a framework or model to suggest that perceptions in the community college positively (or negatively) correlate perceptions-to-policy practice. Applicability of the findings of this study would suggest to policy-makers that how policies are perceived is the crux of how policies are actually executed in daily educational practice. To omit perceptions as variables in setting policy is to omit a major source of valuable information in making life-changing decisions for students, faculty, and other stakeholders directly or indirectly related to college-readiness.

Figure 2. *Community College-Readiness Realignment Model*