The relationship between participation in the emerging scholars program and academic performance at Mississippi valley state university

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THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PARTICIPATION IN THE EMERGING SCHOLARS PROGRAM AND ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE AT MISSISSIPPI VALLEY STATE UNIVERSITY

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ABSTRACT

Developmental education is an important component of student success especially in postsecondary education because of the number of underprepared students. This document examines the academic performance of students who participated in the Emerging Scholars Program, a developmental education program of first-time freshmen who began their college career at Mississippi Valley State University during the 2015/2016 and 2016/2017 academic years by analyzing demographic characteristics, including gender, and race and academic characteristics, such as High School Grade Point Average (HSGPA), ACT Composite Scores, and college term grade point averages (GPAs). Through a quantitative study, a comparison of term GPAs of the Emerging Scholars Program participants to students who did not participate in the Emerging Scholars Program during their first year indicated a need for additional research, possibly including other variables, such as curriculum patterns to understand the differences between the two (2) groups.

Keywords: developmental education, remedial education, academic performance, retention
DEDICATION

This work is dedicated in memory of my mother, Augusta Walker Fluker, whose positive spirit and inspirational words of encouragement from years past coupled with the image of her contagious smile beaming with pride for my accomplishment has pushed me through some of my most challenging moments. I am grateful for the love of such a beautiful and Godly woman. I thank God for being able to reflect on uplifting memories and for allowing me to imagine you humbly, yet proudly sharing, “Shon earned her doctorate degree.” Love and miss you mom!
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MANUSCRIPT ONE
CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

The passage of laws created to increase equitable access to education coupled with multiple social and historical events have had important impacts on American society and education, including the passage of the G. I. Bill of 1944, which provided tuition for World War II servicemen and women who wanted to continue their education (Clark, 1998); *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954), which mandated racial desegregation of schools; the Civil Rights Act of 1964 which ended segregation in public places; the Higher Education Act of 1965 which established funding sources to make a college education affordable; and Title IX (1972) which mandated non-discrimination on the basis of gender in any federally funded education program or activity (American, 2013).

As access to colleges and universities became open, many postsecondary and higher education institutions had to develop strategies that would provide opportunities for underprepared students to “catch up” academically (Kreysa, 2006, p. 252). Assistance was provided individually and in group settings, and students were usually required to attend specific session(s) which have become widely known as developmental education or remediation. Remedial programs were established in the 1800s as “college preparatory” programs (Kreysa, 2006), and today almost every college and university in the United States provides some services for students who are not determined to be college ready. Developmental education includes a wide range of interventions, including tutoring, academic advising, counseling, courses, etc., to assist students in being successful in higher education (Boylan, 1999). Most remedial courses focus on improving skills to prepare students for first level courses in English, reading, and math.
(Chen & Simone, 2016). The field of developmental education supports the academic and personal growth of underprepared college students through instruction, counseling, advising, and tutoring. The clients of developmental education programs are traditional and nontraditional students who have been assessed as needing to develop their skills to be successful in college (Higbee, 2001).

This study seeks to examine the growth of developmental education in higher education and how it impacts students matriculating through their first year of college usually taking remedial and non-remedial courses, specifically comparing students who began their college career at Mississippi Valley State University (MVSU). I selected MVSU for several reasons; because I am a current administrator and alumna of MVSU having received my undergraduate and graduate degrees, and to that as a Historically Black College and University (HBCU) in the Mississippi Delta, if the institution is living up to the repetition of HBCUs in the successful preparation of underrepresented and underprepared students with varied ACT composite scores, which have been identified in prior research (Gaertner & McClarty, 2015; McNeish, Radunzel, & Sanchez, 2015; Stewart, Lim, & Kim, 2015) as a predictive variable of college readiness. The focus of this study is to compare and analyze, among students attending a MVSU, the relationship of first semester and second semester college grade point averages of students who began their academic career in the Emerging Scholars Program with an ACT composite score of 16 and below to students who began their academic career without participating in the Emerging Scholars Program and with an ACT composite score of 17 and higher.

This document is a three-manuscript dissertation required to meet the requirements of the Doctor of Education (Ed.D.) Degree at the University of Mississippi, which is informed by principles from the Carnegie Project on the Education Doctorate (CPED). The study provides:
• an overview of developmental education;

• an overview of the Emerging Scholars Program;

• analysis of the data, the results of the data examined;

• the findings which reveal that the grade point averages (GPAs) of students in the Emerging Scholars Programs decreases from the fall semester to the spring semester indicating a programmatic disconnect; and

• recommendations on how the study can enhance academic performance of students in the Emerging Scholars Program and how future research should consider methods for improving and enhancing students’ academic experiences.

The Emerging Scholars Program (ESP) at Mississippi Valley State University was initially labeled the Summer Developmental Program and is still referenced as such; however, the name was changed in 2018 by the then Director of the program who wanted students to think of themselves as scholars and not as a group of isolated, academically deficient students. The program is an intensive nine-week residential summer program that concentrates on high school subject areas that are essential to student retention/persistence in first-year college courses, including: English, mathematics, reading, and academic support labs which consist of academic advising, personal and career counseling, peer tutoring, and learning and study strategies. Eligibility requirements to participate in the ESP include that a student has graduated from high school or earned a GED and has not enrolled or attended college prior to application, applied and been denied regular admission to a respective Mississippi Public University because they did not meet the requirements for admissions which include:

• completion of the College Preparatory Curriculum (CPC) with a minimum of a 3.20 high school grade point average (GPA) on the CPC;
• completion of the CPC with a minimum of a 2.50 high school GPA on the CPC or a class rank in the top 50%, and an ACT composite score of 16 or higher;
• completion of the CPC with a minimum of a 2.00 high school GPA on the CPC, an ACT composite score of 18 or higher; or
• meet the NCAA Division I standards for student athletes who are “full-qualifiers” or “academic redshirts” accepted as equivalent to the admission standards established by the Board. (IHL Board of Trustees, 2018).

Students that pass the program are eligible to enroll in the fall term at any public Institution of Higher Learning (IHL) in the state of Mississippi. This program was funded from 2002 to 2011 for students with financial need as a result of the Ayers v. Musgrove (2001) desegregation settlement agreement and intended to increase equality to underserved and underprepared students in the state of Mississippi who did not meet the curriculum requirements, the ACT/SAT requirement, or both. The settlement agreement set out the state’s duties with respect to the enhancement of programs and facilities at the three historically black institutions which included Mississippi Valley State University.

The Emerging Scholars program at MVSU accepts approximately 100 potential full-time recent high school graduates annually during the summer and is considered a feeder program for the university (Bettinger & Long, 2004) because most of the students who pass the program requirements continue their education at MVSU. While the focus of the program is to prepare students for college level work, students are also exposed to life as a college student and gain insight on how to balance their academic and social responsibilities.
CHAPTER II: INTRODUCTION OF DEVELOPMENTAL EDUCATION

During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, higher education institutions followed the "European model of education where most instruction was delivered in Latin as many textbooks were only available in Latin" (Caferella, 2014), which created the underprepared student. Underprepared students were provided with "tutors" to help them master the coursework. It was during this time developmental education was born and can be traced back to the opening of Harvard College in 1636 (Arendale, 2002; Cafarella, 2014). This form of tutoring is considered the early stage of remediation.

The United States experienced its most significant transformation by increasing access for a "more diverse population" that included people of color, women (Stewart & Colquitt, 2015), and veterans; however, the expansion of higher education increased the number of underprepared students entering higher education institutions requiring remediation. This caused an increase to access to higher education, providing an opportunity for underprepared students to attain skills necessary to succeed in college (Bettinger & Long, 2005) and a postsecondary career (Landscape,1999). Academic success is attainable, as indicated by data clearly suggesting that, with appropriate assistance, underprepared students can be as successful in higher education as students who are better prepared (Boylan, 1999). Remediation is a part of the fabric of education in America. Students needing help to become prepared to pass required coursework is not new in higher education, but the need has increased and transformed since being referred to as “tutoring” (Arendale, 2002, p. 19) in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries to operating under
names like pre-collegiate, college preparatory, remedial, foundational, transitional, basic skills and developmental studies (Arendale, 2002; Cafarella, 2014).

The first formal developmental program was established at the University of Wisconsin in 1849 to provide remediation. Developmental education expanded in the 1960s as the government and higher education focused on serving underprepared students, and the term "developmental education" was coined in the 1970s (Brier, 1984; Arendale 2002; & Center for Community College Student Engagement, 2016). Arendale (2002) states that developmental education assumes that all students are developmental and can grow in multiple dimensions of their academic skills. This explanation is quite different from prior research, especially that which uses remediation and developmental education interchangeably. Boylan, Bonham, and White (1999) describe developmental education as "holistic development of the individual student and is rooted in developmental psychology,” placing the student at the center of the learning experience (Boylan, 1999, p. 87).
CHAPTER III: THE TRANSITION

The transition from high school to college has proved to be challenging for some students, as the research indicates most first-year students have difficulty transitioning because of both “educational and personal reasons,” (Hope, n.d.) and one challenge that affects students and institutions alike is meeting students at their respective level of unpreparedness to properly prepare them for the rigor of college coursework. A 2007 ACT report observed that “as many as 75% of students who were ACT tested were not ready for college-level Mathematics, English, Social Science, or Natural Science” (Fowler & Boylan, 2010). America has shifted from a large proportion of young people not entering or progressing through postsecondary education to an increased number of high school graduates who are encouraged to enter higher education, regardless of their academic performance (Reindl, 2007), although it is evident that many students clearly are not prepared for college-level work, (Ark & Ryerse, 2017; Arum & Roksa, 2011; Fowler & Boylan, 2010) and are highly deficient in basic skills including reading, writing, and math required by many four-year intuitions (Arum & Roksa, 2011; Lattuca & Stark, 2011).

In addition to not being sufficiently prepared academically, some are also not prepared for the social change which can be overwhelming to developmental students, especially if they are not engaged within the first two weeks of class (Pruett & Absher, 2015). According to The Education Trust's report "Meandering Toward Graduation," as cited in Ark and Ryerse (2018), only four in 10 students complete a course of study that makes them eligible for college, and less than one in 10 completes a course of study that prepares them for college and career. One of the factors impacting students’ unpreparedness, according to data analysis from the Center for
Community College Student Engagement (CCCSE) and the Survey of Entering Student Engagement (SENSE) is a strong disconnect between students’ perceptions of their preparedness and knowing what is required to complete college (SENSE & CCCSE, 2016). It is suggested that remedial programs in higher education are a result of “poorly functioning high schools, especially inner-city high schools” (Attewell, Lavin, Domina, & Levey, 2006), but many of the students that participate in the Emerging Scholars Program are from rural schools that face challenges of racial inequity (Kominiak, 2018) combined with academic barriers that include limited access to advanced courses, lower math and reading scores, socioeconomics, and distances to college all which limit students’ academic achievement (Lavalley). These schools are located in counties within a 50-mile radius of the University and the top feeder districts include Leflore, Washington, Coahoma, Holmes, Bolivar, Sunflower, Humphreys, and Tallahatchie (MS IHL Website). The official performance ratings the 2016 and 2017 academic years of the districts listed above were D or F according to the Mississippi Accountability Reports. Rural students and the schools they attend receive little attention in either policy or academia at the same level of their urban and suburban counterparts (Lavalley, 2018). To exacerbate the challenges of poor education in rural areas, Mississippi has the highest child poverty rate in the nation with the Mississippi Delta having “clusters of concentrated rural poverty,” (Lavalley, 2018) one of the lowest high-school graduation rates, and for years has posted some of the lowest scores in the country on national standardized exams (Mader, 2014).

Nonetheless, being unprepared does not exclude students from obtaining a degree from a four-year institution of higher learning, but those students will often require assistance to get to a level to succeed in the courses that will count towards their degree.
Furthermore, research also shows that attaining a higher education degree provides social mobility and increases earning potential, thus giving hope to many secondary students who aspire to attend a college or university (Allensworth, Gwynne, de la Torre, 2014). It is very important that “every student graduate from high school college and career ready, regardless of their income, race, ethnicity, or disability status,” (Blueprint, 2010) and that students who plan to go to college need to get the message that college requires very strong levels of effort and engagement in both the middle grades and in high school (Allensworth, et al., 2014).
CHAPTER IV: THE PROBLEM OF PRACTICE

The U.S. Department of Education (2003) reported that in fall 2000, developmental courses were offered at 98% of the nation’s community colleges, 80% of the nation’s public, four-year institutions, and 59% at four-year private institutions in 2000. The need for remediating underprepared students has grown exponentially. During the early years of higher education, remediation did not seem to have a negative stigma associated with it, as it was considered to catch students up to those students that did not require remediation (Arendale, 2002). Research shows that a large number of students who are placed into remedial/developmental programs drop out during their first year because of the negative stigma perceived by others with remedial education, which can be discouraging and result in lowering students’ self-esteem, reducing their educational expectations, increasing their frustration with being able to succeed in college, and confronting the view that they do not belong in college (Deli, Amen, & Rosenbaum, 2002). However, there is evidence of a positive relationship with the successful passage of developmental courses, including higher grades and increased persistence (Boylan, Bonham, & White, 1999; Stillman, 2009). Although there is a difference between developmental education and remediation, for this study, developmental education and remediation will be used interchangeably as it is commonly done so in research focused on remediation and/or developmental education. ¹

¹ This paper is a comparison of academic performance of developmental students and non-developmenta students; however, the term remedial is used to avoid the overuse of either of these two words. Therefore, “developmental” and “remedial” will be used interchangeably (Bailey, Jeong, & Cho, 2008).
In Mississippi, according to Complete College America (2018), for every 100 students that enter college straight out of high school, 30% are enrolled in math remediation, and 33% are enrolled in English remediation. Taking remedial or developmental courses in college is by no means limited to economically disadvantaged students or students with low academic skills, or to students who have had a weak curricular preparation in high school. While college remediation is correlated with weak academic skills or preparation in high school, there is only a partial overlap, yet colleges across the country, including those in Mississippi, have adopted strategies related to remediation. As shown by history and confirmed by researchers Attewell, Lavin, Domina, and Levey (2006), “students in bachelor’s degree programs who passed at least one of their remedial courses were more likely to persist in college” (p. 891).

McCabe’s research (as cited in Fowler & Boylan, 2010), noted that developmental education programs should have two primary goals: (1) to ensure that every student is prepared for the academic rigors of progressive courses in a particular content sequence and (2) to ensure that students are not allowed to enroll in a sequence of courses until they are prepared to be successful in that course (pp. 82-83). The geographical location of the college or university can also impact the academic readiness of students matriculating from high school to the institutions and the need for developmental education.

Mississippi Valley State University (MVSU), is a public four-year institution located in the distinctive northwest section of the state which lies between the Mississippi and Yazoo Rivers. Leflore County specifically is part of the Mississippi Delta Region which is mostly rural. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, 2012-2016 American Community Survey 5-year estimates, the population is 73% African American out of the total population of 30,500.

The specific variables that will be measured for this study include:
• ACT composite scores;
• high school grade point average (HSGPA); and
• college term grade point averages.

These variables will be analyzed for two academic years; 2015/2016 and 2016/2017 to compare the academic performance of two groups of students, Emerging Scholars and non-Emerging Scholars. Similarly, a study performed by Komarraju, Ramsey, and Rinella (2013) used ACT scores and high school GPA to examine differences in college readiness between students who scored in the upper half and lower half on the ACT and those who were above the median and below the median for high school GPA (p. 105). These variables in part are predictive in academic performance and persistence of this specific cohort of first time, full-time students (Stewart, Lim & Kim, 2015).

Having described and identified the problem for this study, which is to analyze the academic performance of students that begin their academic career in the Emerging Scholars Programs compared to those students who do not. The paper will next describe positionality, followed by a discussion of the Carnegie Project on the Education Doctorate (CPED) principles, a combined literature review and conceptual framework, and the methodology.
CHAPTER V: POSITIONALITY

The number of students who leave high school believing that they are prepared for college only to find out they are not is troubling to me, especially for students in the Mississippi Delta who hope and dream of earning a college degree to gain social mobility. In preparation for this doctorate program, several prior professional assignments enhanced my understanding of developmental education programs and the intended objectives and outcomes related to student success. Specifically, I wanted to learn more about the key developmental education program at my home institution and to conduct this proposed research to further strengthen its developmental education offerings in the Emerging Scholars Program. I believe that this study is critical to how MVSU provides programming to successfully ready this cohort of students for integration into a rigorous course of study.

Background and Assumptions

I moved to the Mississippi Delta in 1992 from Southfield, Michigan, the fourth state I had lived in prior to my relocation. Adjustment to the curiously close Delta community was challenging as I had never encountered being approached by people to find out who I was and who were my relatives. My move to Mississippi was a result of a life transition. Believing that the stay would be temporary, my goal was to earn a bachelor’s degree and move back to Dallas, Texas. As a non-traditional student, there was a sense of intimidation being in classes with recent high school graduates believing they would be intellectually superior, only to discover that was not the case. Initial observations and thoughts were that the environment lacked mobility and created what might be termed the Delta Mentality, defined as a fixed mindset; accepting a
lifestyle without question or lacking the desire to change and better one’s present or future condition. What was learned is that for people to consider change, they must be informed of options, pathways, or tools that would allow change. Learning and understanding the history of the Delta, the idea of the Delta Mentality was dispelled, and over time, there were opportunities that allowed me to help others, which provided a deeper understanding of the culture. Having earned undergraduate and graduate degrees from Mississippi Valley State University (MVSU), being a resident of Leflore county for over 20 years, I have become very familiar with the poverty, disparities, and inequalities that exist within the secondary educational system in the Delta. The system is challenged to provide educational instruction that would minimize high school graduates from having to take remedial courses in college and, I believe that there is much to be done to bridge the gap to college readiness.

**Professional Positionality**

A career change from banking to higher education introduced me to this research, a world for which I had limited knowledge. It would take more than five years before becoming aware of the developmental program at MVSU and its purpose. Being unfamiliar with remediation/developmental education at the college level, I associated the word developmental with special education, a familiar topic. Thus, developmental for me translated to deficiency. It would take another five years and working directly with university presidents before gaining in-depth insight about the various programs at the University and the impact on graduation rates, retention rates, enrollment, funding allocations, etc. Through various discussions, I learned the importance and significance of academic success of participants in the Emerging Scholars
Program and how that could translate to increased enrollment and retention if participants in the Emerging Scholars Program chose to continue at MVSU

This topic is of interest because there continues to be a need for additional studies highlighting the existence of inequalities and disparities in access to higher education, and a greater need for students to be informed of the requirements and expectations to be college ready. I witnessed firsthand the inequalities and disparities related to access in education after becoming involved in the secondary school system through my children and later returning to MVSU to complete my master’s degree. It was at this point I recognized and understood the why’s and how’s of so many students being left behind educationally. While conducting research for a paper in preparation for this doctoral program and reading “The Forgotten Middle” by ACT (2008), the following statement captivated me, concerned me, and forced me to think of students who have a desire to pursue a postsecondary education and prepare for specific careers without being properly informed: “the level of academic achievement that students attain by eighth grade has a larger impact on their college and career readiness by the time they graduate from high school than anything that happens academically in high school” (p. 2). This statement was determined after an examination of factors, that include; background characteristics; eighth-grade achievement; standard high school coursework; advanced/honors high school coursework; high school grade point average; and student testing behaviors. All of which influence students’ college and career readiness per their performance on the ACT. The student included data from a longitudinal study approximately 216,000 members of the 2005 and 2006 high school graduating classes who had taken ACTs College Readiness System (EXPLORE (eighth grade),
PLAN (tenth grade), and the ACT test) and were planning to attend college immediately after high school. Scores from the EXPLORE test in English, Mathematics, reading, and science show a stronger relationship with eleventh or twelfth-grade ACT scores which translates into college and career readiness than any of the other aforementioned factors as illustrated in Figure 1.

Figure 1.1. Relative Magnitude of Effect in Predicting Eleventh/Twelfth-Grade College and Career Readiness (All Students): The Forgotten Middle (2008)
The statement also caused me to reflect on my secondary experiences and not being able to recall a conversation or receiving guidance related to college readiness which made me think about how current students learn about the pathway to college, especially in the Delta where opportunities seem so limited.

Being an employee of MVSU provided the opportunity to understand the importance of students attaining certain levels of academic achievement prior to beginning their college careers because of the emphasis placed on student success at the University and from discussions with colleagues and elected officials. This engagement has increased my awareness for the need of more data driven assessments, analysis, and evaluation to improve student success using extant variables that have enhanced persistence.

Other reasons for wanting to study this program are related to my assumptions that students enrolled in this program are highly deficient educationally, and it is highly unlikely that these students will matriculate beyond their first year because of a combination of cognitive and non-cognitive factors, including economic, social, and family characteristics (Stewart, Lim, & Kim, 2005) coupled with developmental education as a part of their college career. This research seeks to provide insight into how the predictive variables can inform the institution of the academic performance of students who began in Emerging Scholars Program compared with students who did not by looking at what can be done on the K-12 level to minimize the number of students needing remediation as well as what can be improved in higher education,
specifically, the Mississippi Delta where the majority of students attend failing school districts as defined by the criteria established in accordance with federal and state laws (MS Dept. of Education).

**Future Plans**

I am hopeful that the findings from this research will result in ongoing monitoring of the academic performance of the students that began their academic career in the Emerging Scholars Program as well as additional data collection and analysis beyond their first academic year to ensure that “a holistic approach” (U. S. Department of Education, 2017, p. 7) to improve student success is taken and that best policies are employed as identified by thirty years of research such as that cited by Boylan, Bonham, and White (1999). Additionally, being able to share the results of this study may contribute to additional collaboration with secondary schools on ways to improve academic performance of students before they complete high school as well as those students who matriculate through the Emerging Scholars Program at MVSU.
CHAPTER VI: CARNEGIE PROJECT ON THE EDUCATIONAL DOCTORATE

As a doctoral candidate at the University of Mississippi, pursuing a Doctorate of Education in Higher Education, this study is required to address a complex problem, provide recommendations that “promote issues of equity and social justice, and connect theory and methodology to practice” (Perry, 2015). This program is important to the future of continued access to higher education to a growing diverse and underserved population who desire an opportunity for a better life; specifically, students who

The American dream promises social justice, equity, and equality, tenants embedded in the Carnegie Program for the Educational Doctorate (CPED); regrettably, that is not the case as America’s history is a story of populations overcoming and working to overcome social injustice, inequity, and inequality. Barriers that continue to plague the Mississippi Delta as it relates to access to a quality education include poverty, a teacher shortage (Wright & Davis, 2019), inadequate educational institutions, social inequalities, and racial injustice. While efforts to create equality cannot be denied, there is more to be done to bridge the gap between inequality and quality to ensure access to a quality education. A quality education is the foundation for success, as it prepares people to create productive and meaningful lives, to be active and engaged citizens in a democratic society, and to make choices that will improve their lives and the lives of those around them (Ma, Pender, & Welch, 2016).
CHAPTER VII: LITERATURE REVIEW AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Theories and extant research informing this research project focus on two distinct, although not mutually exclusive schools of thought, developmental/remedial education and student success. Remediation is deeply rooted in education’s history, and there is some form of remediation available at most colleges and universities in America. The increase in academically underprepared students has resulted in a substantial body of research on developmental education. It is believed that remediation should be the job of the community colleges, (Boylan, Bonham, & White, 1999). However, Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) have a long history of improving the basic skills of students admitted with academic deficiencies (Jones & Richards-Smith, 1987) and “seem to provide positive environments to foster student subject matter competence and academic skill despite their fairly substantial resource disadvantages” (Mayhew et al., 2016).

In recent years, more attention has been given to the cost of remediation, with some arguing that more needs to be done on the high school level to prepare students for the rigor of college level work, yet institutions of higher education have been tasked with identifying which factors have the greatest influence on achievement outcomes (Heller & Cassady, 2017), especially when funding is taken into consideration. And, in some cases, philosophical disagreement of remedial courses at four-year institutions and because it is less costly at two-year institutions have caused a shift of remediation courses to community colleges (Bettinger & Long, 2005). Many legislators and other elected officials argue that public schools should prepare students for college and that taxpayers should not have to pay twice for the same
education (Boylan, 1999). Regrettably, elected officials are unclear about what remedial education is, whom it serves, how much it costs, and who should provide it according to Merisotis and Phipps (as cited in Davis & Palmer, 2010). According to Boylan (1999), taxpayers are not paying twice; furthermore, they are not paying for it once (p.1). Saxon and Boylan (as cited by Cafarella, 2014) argue that the overall cost of remediation to the states is relatively small as it accounts for less than 10% of the entire cost of higher education (para. 8). Nevertheless, many students still leave high school without the prerequisites for college attendance. The argument should be for equitable funding that would provide access to instruction to prepare all high school graduates for entry into college (Boylan, 1999), as well as a long-term vision for developmental education as it is a need that has existed for over three and a half centuries (Cafarella, 2014).

This problem of practice is highly supported by a body of evidence that demonstrates a strong relationship between predictive variables and persistence, including GPAs, ACT scores, and HSGPAs. In Reason’s (2003) review of literature related to the effects of student characteristics on retention, one of the major concluding points is that “high school grade point average, college entrance examination scores, first-year college GPA, race/ethnicity, and gender should be included as predictor variables in all retention studies” (p. 187). Kreysa’s (2006) research examined differences in persistence among remedial and non-remedial students considering high school experience, college experience, and demographics, which included standardized test scores, grade point average, minority status and gender. The study found that cumulative grade point average was an accurate predictor for increases in graduation rates for both cohorts of students (pp. 253-262). Murtaugh, Burns, and Schuster’s (1999) study of resident and non-resident undergraduate students analyzed demographic and academic variables that
included high school GPA, standardized test scores, race, and gender to improve retention (p. 355). The findings from the study determined that all predictors except gender, showed statistically significant associations with retention (p. 361). In the case of student success at MVSU, the focus is on the academic performance of one cohort of students identified as Emerging Scholar Program participants, students who are not college ready and must take remedial courses over time.

Student success, developmental education, and have been analyzed for decades with researchers theorizing, analyzing, and studying which variables influence students to continue or discontinue their educational pursuits beyond the first year. Numerous strategies and initiatives have emerged to improve developmental education, more so at two-year institutions than at four-year institutions as evidenced in “Achieving the Dream: Community Colleges Count,” which focuses on improving the graduation and transfer rates of low income and minority students (Ashburn, 2007). The U.S. Department of Education suggests the following for improving outcomes for students in developmental education: (a) using multiple measures to assess postsecondary readiness; (b) offering co-requisite college-level courses; and (c) implementing comprehensive, integrated, and long-lasting support programs.

Stewart, Lim, and Kim (2015) examined factors that predicted persistence between students placed in remedial courses and students not placed in remedial courses at a four-year research institution. Such studies often compare academic outcomes for two cohorts of students, developmental and non-developmental, measuring academic and non-academic variables, to predict retention to graduation or goal attainment, whether it is a degree, a certificate, or other educational purpose (Bettinger & Long, 2005).
The theoretical framework for research related to retention has been built around Vincent Tinto’s (1975, 1987) landmark theory of student departure from institutions of higher learning. Tinto’s theory analyzes academic and non-academic characteristics that influence persistence (Kreysa, 2006). The characteristics include socioeconomic status, high school experiences, community of residence, sex, academic ability, and race (Kreysa, 2006), characteristics that were also used in Pruett and Absher’s (2015) research. They performed a quantitative study, examining variables to determine their impact on retention of developmental education students at two-year institutions. Prior research has found that passing developmental courses is related to higher grade point averages and to students being more likely to pass their first credit bearing associated course and improved persistence overall (e.g., Attewell et al., 2006; Bettinger & Long, 2005).

Themes’, cited in Murtaugh, Burns, and Schuster (1999) study on student retention, cited several themes that are focused on: (1) examining the relationship between precollege characteristics of freshman students (e.g., high school GPA and SAT scores) and their success at a college or university; (2) examining the causes of student attrition with intervention recommendations to decrease the number of students leaving school before completion; (3) describing and evaluating specific campus programs established to improve retention of all students; and (4) exploring the relationship between innovative or improved teaching techniques and student retention along with precollege characteristics which can be useful predictors of student retention. Researchers have also identified variables that have been determined to be highly weighted in predicting persistence. In a study by Stewart, Lim, and Kim (2015), the relationship between ACT composite scores, high school GPA, first-semester college grade point averages and persistence were examined, and it was found that high school GPA and first-
semester college GPA were significant predictors of persistence (p. 12). Other variables examined by researchers include demographic characteristics such as: race, gender, age, and socioeconomic status; prior high school academic experiences that included ACT composite score and high school grade point average; and postsecondary experiences inclusive of college cumulative grade point average after the first semester through the end of the third semester. Developmental courses, coupled with associated credit bearing courses, have been statistically analyzed in prior research and determined to be predictors that influence persistence (Stewart, Lim & Kim, 2015; Shields & O’Dwyer, 2017) as well as the interaction between these variables according to an analysis by Peltier et al. (as cited by Reason 2003).

Definition of Terms

For this study, the following definitions will be used:

- **developmental/remedial education** is coursework that is designed for students who have not met certain standardized test and placement scores set by institutional and/or state policies (Preston, 2017), including a continuum of services ranging from remedial courses to tutoring or learning assistance centers (Boylan, Bonham, & White, 1999).

- **retention** refers to continued matriculation at the same institution (National Student Clearinghouse Research Center, 2016).

- **academic performance** is the grade point average (Kuh, Kinzie, Buckley, Bridges & Hayek, 2006), calculated at a specific time, usually the end of a semester.

Types of Retention Programs

While there is a substantial body of research related to remediation, developmental education, student success, and persistence/retention at the college level, there seems to be a lack
of consensus on whether remedial education is effective (Calcagno & Long, 2008; Bettinger & Long, 2004). Programs have been developed and promoted at two- and four-year institutions.

Several of the programs that have been developed to meet the goals of readying underprepared students for college level work include summer bridge programs that have long been utilized by postsecondary institutions to improve the college readiness of students (Wathington, Pretlow, & Barnett, 2016). Summer bridge programs offer intense remedial instruction in math, reading, and/or writing, along with an introduction to college, to help underprepared students build competencies prior to entering college (Barnett et al., 2012).

Another type of illustrative program, Pathways to Success (PWAY), was created and implemented at a public two-year college located in a rural area in the southern United States to enhance the freshman experience as measured by increases in success in developmental education coursework, cumulative GPA, and one-year retention rates, and comparing non-PWAY students to PWAY students to determine effectiveness (Fowler & Boylan, 2010).

A proven successful program that assists students who are not ready for the rigor of college level work is Supplemental Instruction (SI), an academic assistance program created at the University of Missouri-Kansas City in the 1970s (Arendale, 2002). The program seeks to increases academic performance and retention through selected collaborative learning and study strategies and is designed to avoid remedial stigma because of the program’s relationship to developmental education. SI does not require a pre-screening, as it is available to all students and focuses on historically difficult courses identified by faculty and data assessment. This model is used at universities and colleges throughout the United States, as well as other countries because it has proven to be highly effective. Most importantly, SI shifts from individuals to the environment (Arendale, 2002). A collaborative environment that involves not only the faculty,
but all members of the institution where students have a clear understanding of expectations, is very important for student success (Tinto, 2012).

**Variables and Statistical Methods**

Variables related to persistence, according to Peltiner et al. (as cited in Reason 2003), are gender, race and ethnicity, socioeconomic status, high school grade point average, college grade point average, as well as the interactions between the variables. A review of existing research revealed similar trends in retention studies, with high school grade point average and SAT/ACT scores being significant predictors of retention and appeared in a large number of retention studies, such as a study by Tross, Jeffrey, Osher, and Kneidinger (2000), which examined the retention of 844 first-year students at one university in the southeastern United States using a stepwise multiple regression analysis which revealed that high school GPA and SAT/ACT score accounted for 29% of the variance in retention.

Levitz, Noel, and Richter’s (1999) research revealed a linear relationship between SAT/ACT and retention. Different studies revealed different results as it related to gender; some found that gender was significantly related to retention and others reported that women were more likely to persist than men. Bettinger and Long (2004) examined a longitudinal dataset of approximately 8,000 first-time, full-time freshmen of traditional age from nonselective, four-year colleges in Ohio. Using a matching methodology, the characteristics of math remediation and class participation were explored, analyzing the impact of remediation on student outcomes. The researchers used regression models, including conditional logistic regression, multinomial logistic regression, and linear regression. The findings revealed that underprepared students who complete remediation courses are more likely to persist, at least in the first year. Kreysa (2006) used a logistic regression analysis, and the findings revealed that there were no differences
between the graduation and retention rates of remedial and non-remedial students, suggesting that the remedial education program was successful in assisting students. This study was limited to generalizations beyond the institution, as the subjects included in the study came from one institution. It was recommended that further research be done on the correlation of low socioeconomic states with poor academic preparation for college.

In a more expansive research program, Calcagno and Long (2008) used a regression discontinuity design and performed various statistical analyses. It was found that remedial math courses had a statistically significant impact on the likelihood of passing college level algebra and college level English as well as a positive impact of fall-to-fall persistence. Pruett and Absher’s (2015) quantitative study used preexisting data from a national survey of 23,665 community college students from 718 institutions in the United States who were classified as developmental/remedial students. The purpose of the study was to determine which variables significantly impacted retention of developmental education students in community colleges and to explore the predictor variables identified that contributed to an increase in the retention rates of this same cohort of students. The researchers used a binary logistic regression to determine if ten independent variables had any effect on the dependent variable retained or not retained. Of the variables analyzed, the study revealed that cumulative grade point average was the most statistically significant indicator in explaining the retention status of developmental students.

However, Goudas and Boylan (2012) stated that some of the research related to developmental education is flawed especially with findings that remedial education is not effective when the academic performance of students who take remedial courses shows no improvement when compared to non-remedial students. The purpose of remedial courses is not for non-remedial students to increase their academic performance, but to improve the academic
performance of the remedial students. They argued that one of the continual problems for recent researchers is that there are no apples-to-apples comparison data because students who take developmental courses may be fundamentally different from students who never needed remediation.

In a study by Stewart, Lim, and Kim’s (2015), using Tinto’s longitudinal model of institutional departure by Stewart, Lim, and Kim (2015), the researchers examined 3,213 students at a four-year public research institution in Oklahoma who were required to enroll in state mandated remedial noncredit courses if they scored below 19 on ACT subject tests demonstrating minimum competencies in mathematics, English, reading, and science, and did not demonstrate proficiency by an approved entry-level secondary assessment and placement test. Using an ex post facto design to test hypotheses and SPSS to perform multiple types of statistical tests, including descriptive and inferential statistics, and multiple regression analysis, to analyze the status of each variable. It was found that 60.5% of remedial students persisted for five or more semesters, and 39.5% persisted for four semesters or less and 73.2% of non-remedial students persisted for five or more semesters, whereas 26.8% persisted less than five semesters. Additionally, high school and college grades were consistently reported as strong predictors of persistence.

In addition to research on retention, a recent study by Shields and O’Dwyer (2017) compared students enrolled in remedial courses with those who were not enrolled in remedial courses to determine the influence of enrollment in remediation and their attainment of a degree at two-year and four-year institutions. Data were collected through student interviews and transcript data from the Beginning Postsecondary Students Longitudinal Study and Postsecondary Education Transcript Study. The sample was grouped by two-year colleges and
four-year colleges. Best-practice guidelines for multilevel model building were used, therefore multilevel multinomial logistic regression analyses were performed. The outcomes were based on the highest credential attained within 6 years of initial college enrollment at any institution. Limitations included selection bias, with results not necessarily valid for older students and for generalization. It was suggested that additional research could include institutional policies and practices related to remedial placement and student experiences.

This study will attempt to better understand student outcomes, as measured by GPA, for students enrolled in a developmental program at Mississippi Valley State University. A study examining students in developmental education may be helpful in comparing developmental students with non-developmental education students to ultimately increase retention rates and graduation rates for students enrolled in developmental education at the institution.
CHAPTER VIII: METHODOLOGY

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

(1) Is there a significant difference between the first-semester freshman year GPA’s of students who participated in the Emerging Scholars Program at MSVSU and those who did not?

(2) Is there a significant difference between the second-semester freshman year college GPA’s of students who participated in the Emerging Scholars Program and those who did not?

Design of the Study

This study involved a quantitative analysis of data collected by MVSU’s Department of Information Technology on all first-time freshman students enrolled during the 2015/2016 and 2016/2017 academic years. The analysis compared the two cohorts, grouped by ACT composite scores; cohort one (1) included students with an ACT composite score of 15 and less, and cohort two (2) included students with an ACT composite score of 16 and greater. Scholars have examined the extent to which demographic characteristics, such as race and gender, and academic preparation characteristics, including high school GPA, ACT scores, and other tests scores, influence academic performance. These variables were included in this study to account for potential demographics effects.

Independent t-tests was the statistical procedure utilized using the statistical software Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) to measure the mean and sig (2-tail) value of each
predictive variable to test for the relationships between independent and dependent variables. The dependent variable was academic performance, which is the GPA for fall and spring terms, and the independent variable was the two cohorts of students, which was used to determine if there was a significant effect of the independent variables on the dependent variable to predict retention/persistence.

Participants

This study was conducted at a Mississippi Valley State University, a four-year public historically black college/university (HBCU) that is also identified as a regional institution. The enrollment for the academic years 2015/2016 and 2016/2017 for which the study was conducted was 2,309 and 2,455 respectively. The total sample size for this study is 506 recent first-time, full-time students of which 90 began their academic career through the Emerging Scholars Program in the summer of the prior to the 2015-2016 academic year and continued to the 2016-2017 academic year and 416 first-time, full-time students who did not begin their academic career through the Emerging Scholars Program during the same time period. The participants in each cohort were continuously enrolled and were measured at two different intervals—the first semester and second semester of the 2015/2016 and 2016/2017 academic years to determine if the Emerging Scholars Program was beneficial to their academic performance.

Data Collection

Three types of data were collected for this study: (1) demographic information that included race and gender; (2) high school academic preparation information, such as high school grade point average, composite high school grade point average, and ACT composite score; and (3) academic and programmatic postsecondary information, including cumulative grade point average and whether or not the student participated in the Emerging Scholars Program. The data

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2 Enrollment figures were retrieved from Mississippi Valley State University Fact Books 2015-2016 and 2016-2017.
were collected through the institutional database for the first and second semesters of the academic years 2015/2016 and 2016/2017 (Fowler & Boylan 2010).

**Data Analysis**

The outcomes from these data were used to determine if grade point average is the most statistically significant variable that influenced the student remaining enrolled for respective fall spring semesters. The variables analyzed were the same that have been statistically analyzed and determined through prior research to be predictive indicators related to student success (e.g., Stewart, Lim & Kim, 2015; Shields & O’Dwyer, 2017; Pruett & Absher, 2015).

**IRB Statement**

As the University’s Chief of Staff and Legislative Liaison at Mississippi Valley State University, I have access to data needed to perform this study, but being ethically responsible, the required and established Institutional Review Board (IRB) process was utilized to obtain the data, which presented minimal risk because the students were not identified by name in the data that were made available for analysis.
CHAPTER IX: CONCLUSION

Although the scope of this research project places limitations on the extent to which the findings can be generalized; it will provide insights for future research. For example, it has the potential to inform the comparative study of developmental education across state institutions as well as between/among HBCUs in Mississippi and across the nation. Additionally, this project has the potential to provide MVSU with information that can be used to strengthen and/or revise its strategies to improve students’ academic performance and success. Finally, the results will provide insights into how the Emerging Scholars Program performs relative to similar programs across the state and nation.
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MANUSCRIPT TWO
CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

Education prepares people to create successful and meaningful lives, to be active and engaged citizens in a democratic society, and to make choices that will improve their lives and the lives of those around them (Ma, Pender, & Welch, 2016). Furthermore, the purpose of institutions of higher learning should be to serve both academically underprepared and prepared students for a successful academic career; however, there “are signs of a society that has a long way to go to meet its promise of equal opportunity for all” (Ma, Pender, & Welch, 2016). The role and effectiveness of high schools in the United States are under serious scrutiny (Baker, Clay, & Gratama, 2005), especially with the number of K-12 reforms that have not seemed to improve college readiness of high school graduates (Callen, Finney, Kirst, Usdan, & Venezia, 2006).

For more than two centuries, a variety of services and interventions have been established (Boylan, Bohman, & White, 1999) to ready students for a successful academic careers, with developmental education viewed as a means to help “students achieve the requisite knowledge and skills to meet the standards of the regular courses” (Damashek, 1999). The most common service is the developmental course designed to teach information, concepts, and skills considered to be prerequisites to success in college and in the workforce. Developmental educators also provide courses that teach skills and concepts that are not considered prerequisites and are generally not taught in high school, including courses in study skills and strategies and critical thinking (Boylan, 1999). The goal of developmental education or remediation is to aid otherwise underprepared students for a successful academic career and to encourage persistence.
and graduation. Developmental education is viewed as a necessary component of higher education (Attwell, Lavin, Domina, & Levey, 2006) to help improve the academic performance of students who would not otherwise persist (Kreysa, 2007).

Most every college and university in the United States has some type of program to address the needs of underprepared students and to ready them for college courses (Boylan, Bonham, & White, 1999). There exist many formats of programs that have been established to address developmental education, including: (1) Summer Bridge Programs that differ widely in programmatic components and implementation (Cabrera, Miner, & Milem, 2013), but they similarly offer intense remedial instruction in math, reading, and/or writing, along with an introduction to college to help underprepared students build competencies prior to entering college (Barnett et al., 2012); (2) Supplemental Instruction (SI), an academic assistance program that seeks to increase academic performance and retention through selected collaborative learning and study strategies, shifting students from individuals to the university environment (Arendale, 2002); and (3) learning communities that consist of unique programs that address a central theme or problem with a common goal of increasing academic performance of students (Cabrera, Miner, & Milem, 2013; Tinto, 2012), while also promoting student involvement and retention by linking courses with students to create a team resulting in interdisciplinary or multidisciplinary learning environment (Tinto, 2012).
CHAPTER II: SUMMARY OF PROBLEM OF PRACTICE AND DISSERTATION IN PRACTICE

This research provides insight into a developmental program that is intended to positively impact a student’s academic career and college experience. The Emerging Scholars Program (ESP), a Summer Developmental Program at Mississippi Valley State University (MVSU), is a result of the Ayers v. Musgrove (2001) settlement agreement that attempted to dismantle the remaining vestiges of a de jure segregated postsecondary system in Mississippi. While it was not a complete solution to inequalities that plagued Mississippi’s three Historically Black Institutions, the settlement did provide a platform for access with respect to the addition and enhancement of academic programs and the creation of support programs. More specifically for purposes of this study, the agreement provided financial assistance for persons attending Summer Developmental Education Programs, as relayed in a report to the Mississippi Legislature from the Joint Legislative Committee on Performance Evaluation and Expenditure Review (PEER) titled Mississippi’s Compliance with the Ayers Settlement Agreement (2009).

The Emerging Scholars Program is an eight-week intensive residential summer program focusing on “high school subject areas (English, reading, and mathematics) applicable to success in first-year college courses, supplemented with academic support that includes academic advising, counseling, tutorials, and assistance with learning strategies and study skills” (IHL SD Manual, 2018). This program is for prospective first-time freshmen who do not meet the admissions standards to be admitted to one of Mississippi’s eight public institutions of higher learning. The development of the general guidelines for the program are from a collaborative effort between the Mississippi Institutions of Higher Learning, which has oversight of the eight public universities, and various faculty and staff members from these eight institutions. For
students that are admitted to a University after completing the program, they are required to participate in a year-long Academic Support Program that includes classroom, individual and computer assisted instruction along with career counseling in a laboratory setting (IHL SD Manual, 2018).

Throughout the years, MVSU’s department that houses the Emerging Scholars Program has undergone several iterations, including name changes due to leadership changes. Currently, University College is the umbrella unit under which ESP falls, which is under the supervision of a Dean who reports to the Vice President for Academic Affairs for the University, making it a component of academics rather than student services (Raab & Adam, 2005). With each iteration of the unit came different objectives and the creation of programs that focused on specific student needs. With the last change, several programs were added to connect and engage with students, including an Early Monitoring Alert Program, which provides academic enrichment and support to students who are identified by their professors as at-risk or are on academic probation, and Rise to Be, a Minority Male initiative designed to increase the retention and academic success of African American male students (MVSU website). After several conversations with MVSU faculty and staff who are familiar with the program and having observed the various changes to University College and its leadership over the years, it was revealed that the program is needed but has not seemed to be consistently successful partly because the department has functioned as an independent unit or has been perceived as an independent unit, seeming to have more buy-in from individual departments, rather than the University as a whole. There are no known assessments of students who participate in the ESP and continue their academic career at MVSU from which to compare data, so the data collected
for this study may be considered baseline data that may provide a starting point for future assessment and research.

In 2018, the Summer Developmental Program was labeled the Emerging Scholars Program in an effort to make students feel that they were a part of the University and not members of an isolated group of students with academic deficiencies because stigmas attached to underprepared students are real and can impact students negatively (Basic Skills Agency, 1997). The decision to change the name and move beyond a siloed program affirms research findings which indicate that being placed into remediation may produce a stigma, or “Scarlet Letter” effect, as perceived by other students and faculty, and if students feel singled out as poor performers, this may discourage additional effort (Bettinger & Long, 2004) to follow a plan for academic improvement. The purpose of remedial education programs is to help improve the academic performance of students who would not otherwise persist, and when those underprepared students improve, the program is considered effective (Kreysa, 2007).

This Dissertation in Practice is a result of the researcher’s interest in the effectiveness of the Emerging Scholars Program by examining the academic performance of the students who begin their academic career in the Emerging Scholars Program and then continue their academic career at Mississippi Valley State University by comparing the GPAs of Emerging Scholar students with non-Emerging Scholars students who were continuously enrolled from fall semester to the spring semester during academic years 2015/2016 and 2016/2017. The exploration of this program is to possibly give an indication as to the effectiveness of the program, further examining various variables that have been used in prior research, such as High School GPA, ACT Composite Scores, and demographic characteristics, such as gender and race. For example, high school GPA and first-semester college GPA have been found to be significant
predictors of persistence (Stewart, Lim, & Kim, 2015). Furthermore, ACT and HSGPA are two of the most heavily researched and relied upon college-readiness indicators in the United States (Gaertner & McClarty, 2015) and are variables commonly used in research related to developmental education (Stewart, Lim, & Kim, 2015; Reason, 2003). The ACT is also considered to be a contributor to overrepresentation of Black students in developmental education (Preston, 2017), as Black students are impacted by developmental education at a higher rate than students from other ethnic backgrounds according to Complete College America, (2016).

**Research Questions**

The following research questions guided this study:

1. Is there a significant difference between the first-semester freshman year GPA’s of students who participated in the Emerging Scholars Program at MVSU and those that did not?

2. Is there a significant difference between the second-semester freshman year college GPA’s of students who participated in the Emerging Scholars Program and those that did not?

**Definition of Terms**

For this study, the following definitions were used:

- **developmental/remedial education** is coursework that is designed for students who have not met certain standardized test and placement scores set by institutional and/or state policies (Preston, 2017), including a continuum of services ranging from remedial courses to tutoring or learning assistance centers (Boylan, Bonham, & White, 1999).

- **retention** refers to continued matriculation at the same institution (National Student Clearinghouse Research Center, 2016).
• **academic performance** is the grade point average (Kuh, Kinzie, Buckley, Bridges & Hayek, 2006), calculated at a specific time, usually the end of a semester.
CHAPTER III: DATA OVERVIEW

The study was performed at Mississippi Valley State University (MVSU), a four-year public institution, designated as a Historically Black College or University (HBCU). MVSU was established by the Mississippi Legislature in 1946 to train teachers for teaching in the public schools of the state.

It shall also be the object of the said college to establish and conduct school, classes or courses, for preparing, equipping and training citizens for the State of Mississippi for employment in gainful occupations, in trade, industrial and distributive pursuits whether such students are qualified by educational requirements or not, (MS Code, Education § 37 127 1 and 37 127 3).

Data Collection

The purpose of this study is to examine academic performance by analyzing various variables, including ACT composite scores, high school GPA, first-semester college GPA, and second-semester college GPA of two distinct groups of first-time freshmen enrolled in MVSU during the 2015/2016 and 2016/2017 academic years. During the 2015/2016 academic year, the fall enrollment was 2,309, and for the 2016/2017 academic year, the fall enrollment was 2,455 (MVSU Factbook, 2016/2017). The total sample for this study was 509 students and includes students from both academic years, 2015/2016 and 2016/2017, of which 90 (18%) were identified as Emerging Scholars and 419 (82%) were identified as non-Emerging Scholars. Of the 509 students included in this study, 252 identified as females—43 Emerging Scholars and 209 non-Emerging Scholars—and 254 identified as males—47 Emerging Scholars and 207 non-
Emerging Scholars. Three students did not identify with either gender; therefore, they were not included in the study. All students included in the study identified as African American.

**Method**

Data for this study were extracted from the MVSU database that is stored on the institution’s Banner System following approval of the study from the Institutional Review Boards at the University of Mississippi and Mississippi Valley State University. The students were selected by using the Panorama Image Database Management Systems (PIDMS), which allowed concealing their identity from the researcher by assigning a unique set of numbers to the student records and replacing any identifiable information. Data were explored for outliers (Heller & Cassady, 2017) and records with missing variables were removed. Participants in the study were continuously enrolled from the fall to spring semester. Emerging Scholars (n=90) and the second group was non-Emerging Scholars (n=419). These data were analyzed with SPSS using a t-test for independent samples (Fowler & Boylan, 2010) to determine if there is a significant difference between the first semester GPA of Emerging Scholar students and non-Emerging Scholar students and if there is a significant difference between the second semester GPA of Emerging Scholar students and non-Emerging Scholar students.

**Limitations**

As other researchers have asserted (e.g., Goudas & Boylan, 2012), there are limitations in research on developmental education that compares students who begin their academic career with remedial courses and those who do not. The comparison of developmental students to non-developmental students might lead to erroneous conclusions related to the effectiveness of a developmental course (Perkhounkova, Noble, & Sawyer, 2005). Students who take developmental courses start out with weaker academic skills making it difficult to identify a
causal between remedial education, and these students may be fundamentally different from students who did not need or receive remediation education classes (Goudas & Boylan, 2012). To get a better idea of the effectiveness of the Emerging Scholars Program, however, the baseline data gathered in analyzed in this study can be useful, despite the limitations with the comparison being undertaken. For instance, this data could form the basis of additional analyses of students enrolled in the Emerging Scholars Programs, such as expending analysis to include gatekeeper courses (Goudas & Boylan, 2012). Student retention and academic performance may be related to other variables or a combination of variables (Sparkman, Maulding, & Roberts, 2012), such as non-cognitive factors as described in Bandura’s Social Cognitive Theory (SCT) that categorized factors associated with student performance that must be taken into consideration when analyzing students’ performance and achievement. Such interactive factors include personal factors, behavioral responses, and environmental conditions (Heller & Cassady, 2017). The current study did not attempt to analyze or otherwise consider such factors.
CHAPTER IV: PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

The data were analyzed through SPSS by performing an analysis of the dependent variable, academic performance, which is the student’s GPA for the fall and spring term and the independent variable, which is based on the two cohorts of students, the Emerging Scholar students and non-Emerging Scholar students enrolled during the 2015/2016 and 2016/2017 academic years. The t-tests indicate the extent to which the sample means of each variable statistically differ (Boatman & Long, 2010). The variables associated with this study, high school grade point average (HSGPA), composite ACT scores, and college GPA, are often used in analyzing retention, persistence, and academic performance (Reason, 2003). The findings of this study suggest that participants in the Emerging Scholars Program as well as those students not enrolled in the Emerging Scholars Program experienced statistically significant decreases in GPAs from the fall to spring term.

The GPA mean for Emerging Scholars for the first semester Emerging Scholars as shown in Table 1.1 is 1.87 and the mean GPA for non-Emerging Scholars during the first semester is 2.76, which is greater than that of the Emerging Scholars.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
<th>Std. Error Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TGPA First Semester 1 (Emerging Scholars)</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>1.8724</td>
<td>1.00055</td>
<td>.10547</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TGPA First Semester 2 (Non-Emerging Scholars)</td>
<td>416</td>
<td>2.7552</td>
<td>.85817</td>
<td>.04208</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 1.1.* Descriptive statistics for comparing first semester 2015/2016 and 2016/2017 term GPAs for Emerging Scholars vs. Non-Emerging Scholars
Independent Samples Test

Levene's Test
for Equality of Variances

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Sig. (2-tailed)</th>
<th>Mean Difference</th>
<th>Std. Error Difference</th>
<th>95% Confidence Interval of the Difference Lower</th>
<th>Upper</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TGPA</td>
<td>7.240</td>
<td>.007</td>
<td>-8.580</td>
<td>504</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>-.88277</td>
<td>.10288</td>
<td>-1.08490</td>
<td>-.68064</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First Semester</td>
<td>Equal variances assumed</td>
<td>-7.774</td>
<td>118.93</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>-.88277</td>
<td>.11355</td>
<td>-1.10761</td>
<td>-.65793</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Equal variances not assumed</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Alpha level of .05

Table 1.2. Independent Sample T-test for comparing first semester 2015/2016 and 2016/2017 term GPAs for Emerging Scholars vs. Non-Emerging Scholars

H₀ = There is no significant difference in the first semester mean GPA of Emerging Scholar students and the non-Emerging Scholar students.

H₁ = There is a significant difference in the first semester mean GPA of Emerging Scholar students and the non-Emerging Scholar students.

The sig value as shown in Table 1.2 for the first semester is .000 which is less than alpha (.05), therefore we reject the null hypothesis. The sig value of .000 indicates that there is a significant difference in the Average GPAs for participants in the Emerging Scholars Program (1.87) and those not participating, with those not participating having a significantly greater Average GPA (2.76).
The second semester mean GPA for Emerging Scholars as shown in Table 1.3 is 1.73 and the second semester mean GPA for Non-Emerging Scholars is 2.59, which is greater than that of the Emerging Scholars.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
<th>Std. Error Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TGPA Second Semester 1 (Emerging Scholars)</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>1.7321</td>
<td>1.12096</td>
<td>.11816</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TGPA Second Semester 2 (Non-Emerging Scholars)</td>
<td>416</td>
<td>2.5935</td>
<td>1.00408</td>
<td>.04923</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 1.3. Descriptive statistics for comparing second semester 2015/2016 and 2016/2017 term GPAs for Emerging Scholars vs. Non-Emerging Scholars

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Mean Difference</th>
<th>Std. Error Difference</th>
<th>95% Confidence Interval of the Difference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TGPA Second Semester</td>
<td>- .86140</td>
<td>.11924</td>
<td>-1.09567 to -.62713</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equal variances assumed</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TGPA Second Semester</td>
<td>- .86140</td>
<td>.12800</td>
<td>-1.11480 to -.60800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equal variances not assumed</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Alpha level of .05

*Table 1.4. Independent Sample T-test for comparing second semester 2015/2016 and 2016/2017 term GPAs for Emerging Scholars vs. Non-Emerging Scholars

The sig value as shown in Table 1.4 for the second semester is .000, which is less than alpha (.05), therefore we reject the null hypothesis. The sig value of 0.000 indicates that there is a significant difference between the second semester Average GPA for participants in the Emerging Scholars Program (1.73) and those not participating in the Emerging Scholars Program (2.59). The results of the analysis show that there is a significant difference in the second semester average GPA of Emerging Scholar students compared to non-Emerging Scholar
students and that the second semester average GPA of non-Emerging Scholar students is significantly greater.

The results of the analysis indicate that additional research is required to include additional variables, such as curriculum patterns, support programs, and intervention programs. The High School GPA (HSGPA) includes content mastery, student’s personal behaviors, course preparation and class participation (McNeish, Radunzel, & Sanchez, 2015). The mean of the HSGPA for students’ in the Emerging Scholars Program is 2.35 and the mean of the HSGPA for students’ not in the Emerging Scholars Program is 3.04, which is greater than that of the Emerging Scholars as shown in Table 2.1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
<th>Std. Error Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>HSGPA 1 (Emerging Scholars)</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>2.3504</td>
<td>.46167</td>
<td>.04866</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HSGPA 2 (Non-Emerging Scholars)</td>
<td>416</td>
<td>3.0373</td>
<td>.51981</td>
<td>.02549</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 2.1. Descriptive statistics for comparing HSGPA for Emerging Scholars vs. Non-Emerging Scholars*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Levene’s Test for Equality of Variances</th>
<th>t-test for Equality of Means</th>
<th>95% Confidence Interval of the Difference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>Sig.</td>
<td>t</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HSGPA</td>
<td>Equal variances assumed</td>
<td>3.066</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Equal variances not assumed</td>
<td>-12.503</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 2.2. Independent Sample T-test for comparing HSGPA for Emerging Scholars vs. Non-Emerging Scholars*

*Alpha level of .05
$H_0 =$ There is no significant difference in the mean High School GPA of Emerging Scholar students and the non-Emerging Scholar students.

$H_1 =$ There is a significant difference in the mean High School GPA of Emerging Scholar students and the non-Emerging Scholar students.

The sig value as shown in Table 2.2 for the HSGPA is .000 which is less than alpha (.05), therefore we reject the null hypothesis. The sig value of .000 indicates that there is a significant difference between the mean HSGPA of Emerging Scholar students and the non-Emerging

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group Statistics</th>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
<th>Std. Error Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ACT Composite</td>
<td>1 (Emerging Scholars)</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>14.09</td>
<td>1.056</td>
<td>.111</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2 (Non-Emerging Scholars)</td>
<td>416</td>
<td>18.74</td>
<td>2.658</td>
<td>.130</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.1. Descriptive statistics for comparing ACT Composite Scores for Emerging Scholars vs. Non-Emerging Scholars

As shown in Table 3.1, the mean of the Composite ACT scores is 14.09 for Emerging Scholars participants and 18.7 for non-Emerging Scholars participants, which is greater than that of the Emerging Scholars.
### Independent Samples Test

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Levene's Test for Equality of Variances</th>
<th>t-test for Equality of Means</th>
<th>95% Confidence Interval of the Difference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Sig.</td>
<td>t</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACT Composite</td>
<td>49.374</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>-16.305</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>27.123</td>
<td>356.481</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Alpha level of .05

*Table 3.2. Independent Sample T-test for comparing ACT Composite Scores for Emerging Scholars vs. Non-Emerging Scholars*

H₀ = There is no significant difference in the mean Composite ACT score of Emerging Scholar students and the non-Emerging Scholar students.

H₁ = There is a significant difference in the mean Composite ACT score of Emerging Scholar students and the non-Emerging Scholar students.

The sig value for the Composite ACT score as shown in Table 3.2 is .000 which is less than alpha (.05), therefore we reject the null hypothesis. The sig value of .000 indicates that there is a significant difference between the Composite ACT score for students in the Emerging Scholars program and students not in the Emerging Scholars Program which is not surprising as one of the identifiers to participate in the Emerging Scholars Program is a composite ACT score of 16 and below.

The results of initial analysis of the Average GPA for both groups, the Emerging Scholars and students not participating in the Emerging Scholars Program found a decrease in the Average GPA from the first semester to the second semester. The Composite ACT score, and HSGPA mean is significantly greater for the students not participating in the Emerging Scholars Program.
Scholars Program than those participating in the Emerging Scholars Program. As such, it was decided to perform an additional analysis on gender, a “student entry characteristic” (Shields & O’Dwyer, 2017), that has often been included in similar types of studies (e.g., Kreysa, 2006; Kuh et al., 2006) to see if there is a significant difference in the average mean by gender of the Emerging Scholar students and the non-Emerging Scholar students during the first and second semesters. It has been reported that there have been relatively consistent findings that gender was predictive of persistence, with women more likely to persist than men (Peltier and others as cited in Reason, 2003, p. 177). Additionally, findings from other research revealed academic performance differs between males and females in that females performed better than males (Sparks-Wallace, 2007).

The first semester means by Gender as shown in Table 4.1 for females participating in the Emerging Scholars Program is 2.21 and the first semester mean by Gender for males participating in the Emerging Scholars Program is 1.57; the mean for the females is greater than the mean of the males during the first semester. The first semester means by Gender for females not participating in the Emerging Scholars Program is 2.87 and the first semester means by Gender for males not participating in the Emerging Scholars Program is 2.64; the mean for the females is greater than the mean of the males during the first semester as shown in Table 4.2.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group Statistics</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
<th>Std. Error Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TGPA FirstSEM GPA</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>2.2060</td>
<td>.94053</td>
<td>.14343</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>1.5672</td>
<td>.96436</td>
<td>.14067</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 4.1. Descriptive statistics for comparing first semester 2015/2016 and 2016/2017 term GPA by Gender for Emerging Scholars*
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
<th>Std. Error Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TGPA FirstSEMGPA 1 (female)</td>
<td>209</td>
<td>2.8725</td>
<td>.8679</td>
<td>.05975</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 (male)</td>
<td>207</td>
<td>2.6368</td>
<td>.8379</td>
<td>.05824</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 4.2. Descriptive statistics for comparing first semester 2015/2016 and 2016/2017 term GPA by Gender for Non-Emerging Scholars*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group Statistics</th>
<th>Levene's Test for Equality of Variances</th>
<th>t-test for Equality of Means</th>
<th>95% Confidence Interval of the Difference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Sig.</td>
<td>t</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TGPA FirstSEM GPA</td>
<td>1.174</td>
<td>.282</td>
<td>3.176</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equal variances assumed</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equal variances not assumed</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Alpha level of .05

*Table 4.3. Independent Sample T-test for comparing first semester Average GPA by Gender for Emerging Scholars*

H₀ = There is no significant difference in the Average Gender mean of female and male students participating in the Emerging Scholars Program for the first semester.

H₁ = There is a significant difference in the Average Gender mean of female and male students participating in Emerging Scholars Program for the first semester.

The sig (2-tailed) value for the first semester of females and males participating in the Emerging Scholars Program shown in Table 4.3 is .002 which is less than alpha (.05), therefore we reject the null hypothesis. The sig value of .002 indicates that there is a significance difference in GPAs by Gender; females (2.21) and males (1.57).
**Independent Samples Test**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Levene's Test for Equality of Variances</th>
<th>t-test for Equality of Means</th>
<th>95% Confidence Interval of the Difference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Sig.</td>
<td>t</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TGPA</td>
<td></td>
<td>.320</td>
<td>.572</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FirstSEMGPA</td>
<td></td>
<td>.320</td>
<td>.572</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equal variances assumed</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equal variances not assumed</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Alpha level of .05

**Table 4.4.** Independent Sample T-test for comparing first semester Average GPA by Gender for Non-Emerging Scholars

H₀ = There is no significant difference in the Average Gender mean of female and male students not participating in the Emerging Scholars Program for the first semester.

H₁ = There is a significant difference in the Average Gender mean of female and male students not participating in Emerging Scholars Program for the first semester.

The sig (2-tailed) value for the first semester of females and males not participating in the Emerging Scholars Program as shown in Table 4.4 is .005 which is less than alpha (.05), therefore we reject the null hypothesis. The sig value of .005 indicates that there is a significance difference in GPAs by Gender—females (2.87) and males (2.64)—and, thus, indicating that females outperform males in the first semester for both groups, Emerging Scholar students and non-Emerging Scholar students.

**Group Statistics**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
<th>Std. Error Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TGPA Second Semester</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>1.8960</td>
<td>1.17887</td>
<td>.17978</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>1.5821</td>
<td>1.05554</td>
<td>.15397</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 4.5.** Descriptive statistics for comparing second semester 2015/2016 and 2016/2017 term GPA by Gender for Emerging Scholars
### Group Statistics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
<th>Std. Error Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TGPA Second Semester</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>209</td>
<td>2.6657</td>
<td>1.03703</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>207</td>
<td>2.5206</td>
<td>.96671</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 4.6. Descriptive statistics for comparing second semester 2015/2016 and 2016/2017 by Gender for Non-Emerging Scholars*

The second semester Average GPA by Gender for females participating in the Emerging Scholars Program is 1.90 and the second semester mean Average GPA by Gender for males participating in the Emerging Scholars Program is 1.58 as shown in Table 4.5, the mean for females is greater than that of the males. The second semester Average GPA by Gender for females not participating in the Emerging Scholars Program is 2.67 and the second semester Average GPA by Gender for males not participating in the Emerging Scholars Program is 2.52, as shown in Table 4.6, the mean for females is greater than that of the males.

### Independent Samples Test

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Sig. (2-tailed)</th>
<th>Mean Difference</th>
<th>Std. Error Difference</th>
<th>95% Confidence Interval of the Difference</th>
<th>Lower</th>
<th>Upper</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Equal variances</td>
<td>.760</td>
<td>.386</td>
<td>1.333</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>.186</td>
<td>.31392</td>
<td>.23553</td>
<td>-.15414</td>
<td>.78198</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equal variances</td>
<td>.1326</td>
<td>.84634</td>
<td>.188</td>
<td>.31392</td>
<td>.23670</td>
<td>-.15673</td>
<td>.78456</td>
<td><em>Alpha level of .05</em></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 4.7. Independent Sample T-test for comparing second semester term GPA by Gender for Emerging Scholars*

H₀ = There is no significant difference in the Average GPA by Gender of female and male students participating in the Emerging Scholars Program for the second semester.
H₁= There is a significant difference in the Average GPA by Gender of female and male students participating in the Emerging Scholars Program for the second semester.

The sig (2-tailed) value for the second semester of females and males participating in the Emerging Scholars Program as shown in Table 4.7 is .186 which is greater than alpha (.05), therefore we fail to reject the null hypothesis. The sig value of .186 indicates that there is not a significant difference in GPAs by Gender; females (1.90) and males (1.58), between the females and males participating in the Emerging Scholars Program.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TGPA Second Semester</th>
<th>Levene's Test for Equality of Variances</th>
<th>t-test for Equality of Means</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Equal variances assumed</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Sig.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>.708</td>
<td>.400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equal variances not assumed</td>
<td>1.477</td>
<td>412.491</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Alpha level of .05

Table 4.8. Independent Sample T-test for comparing Gender for Non-Emerging Scholars

H₀ = There is no significant difference in the Average GPA by Gender of female and male students not participating in the Emerging Scholars Program for the second semester.

H₁= There is a significant difference in the Average GPA by Gender of female and male students not participating in the Emerging Scholars Program for the second semester.

The sig (2-tailed) for the second semester of females and males not participating in the Emerging Scholars Program as shown in Table 4.8 is .141 which is greater than alpha (.05), therefore we fail to reject the null hypothesis. The sig value of .141 indicates that there is not a significant difference between Average GPAs by Gender of females and males that are not
participating in the Emerging Scholars Program. The additional analysis indicates that females that are participants in the Emerging Scholars Program and females that are not participants in the Emerging Scholars Program outperform the male students in the first semester as there is a statistical significant difference; however, as it relates to the academic performance of the students during the second semester, there is not a statistical significant difference between the females and males; Emerging Scholars and non-Emerging Scholars, confirming Reason’s (2003) statement that there are mixed findings on gender and academic performance (Reason, 2003), and varies throughout different studies.
CHAPTER V: DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

American postsecondary institutions have a long tradition of providing developmental education for underprepared students. However, because of the time and money invested into various programs some question if the programs are educationally beneficial to students (Perkhounkova, Noble, & Sawyer, 2005). Unfortunately, not all students receive a fair and equitable education prior to college (Preston, 2017).

The results of this study suggest that there may be some disconnect between the programmatic structure of the Emerging Scholars Program, including the academic plan and the post program completion academic plan for the Emerging Scholars. Also, the results of this analysis provide a clear indication that further evaluation of the Emerging Scholars Program could benefit students who participate in the program. From the data gathered and analyzed, several questions, similar to ones noted in previous research (e.g., Fowler & Boylan, 2010), are ripe for further consideration. Namely, is the Emerging Scholars Program achieving desired results in terms of improving outcomes for students who arrive to campus “with weak academic skills?” (Community College Research, 2010). Does the staff possess the pedagogical experience to properly instruct the students in this program? This question is addressed by Preston (2017), who noted that “inexperienced personnel” serving as instructors which may lead to poor outcomes (p. 7); however, institutions must provide the faculty and staff with the support and time they need for preparation of content and activities (Tinto, 2012). In general, programs such as the Emerging Scholars Program benefit students by periodic and systematic reviews to help
ensure that program objectives are being met. Another potential area of study that may be interesting is the relationship of gender and academic performance.

In addition to the aforementioned questions, further analysis of other data related to the two (2) cohorts, such as curriculum patterns, connectedness of the academic support programs to the respective academic programs may provide insight into why the GPAs of participants in the Emerging Scholars Program are not improving as intended after an eight-week intensive summer program focusing on specific subjects—English, reading, and mathematics—followed by a year-long academic support program to supplement their respective coursework. The year-long support program includes peer tutoring, monitoring grades beginning mid-term, an academic support laboratory that focuses on time management, study habits, and other skills needed to navigate the university environment. Support services are necessary to enhance a collaborative academic experience that espouses the tenants of academic and social experiences (Hinton, 2014) and should be aligned to key first year courses a critical time, because early success increases the likelihood of future success (Tinto, 2012).

In a recent conversation with a staff member closely associated with the program, I shared the results of my analysis, specifically, the decrease of GPAs of Emerging Scholars students from the fall semester to the spring semester and it was explained that one issue identified which has been addressed is the need for additional intermediate courses so students are not taking courses that are too rigorous in their first year. A student’s first year is considered as one of the most critical times of a student’s academic career because the beginning of the first term is a very stressful for students, especially for first-time college students and developmental students can easily be overwhelmed and fail to become engaged during that critical period. Student engagement, whether activities with faculty or other students, can sometimes be the
difference in student persistence, as has been documented in previous research (e.g., Kuh et al., 2006). If students are not engaged within the first two weeks of a class, they may fall behind academically and may not be able to catch up (Pruett & Absher, 2015; Tinto, 2012).

Additionally, students need to have a sense of belonging to the intuition and peers as “it enhances students’ attachment or commitment to the institution” according to Karp, Hutches & O’Gara (as citied by Tinto, 2012, p 27). Additional study of the Emerging Scholars Program and its participants could help the institution learn about how additional factors affecting persistence, such as engagement or the need for additional courses, could potentially boost persistence and, ultimately, graduation for these students.

Tailoring specific programs to students’ characteristics to better serve students and transition them from developmental courses to college level courses by using varied methodologies, teaching strategies, and intensive review formats (Kuh, et al., 2006) is important for increasing student academic performance.
CHAPTER VI: SUMMARY OF THE MANUSCRIPT

The study was conducted to analyze the academic performance of two (2) cohorts of first-time freshman students at Mississippi Valley State University—(1) Emerging Scholar students and (2) non-Emerging Scholar students—by comparing their term grade point average (GPA) at the end of the fall and spring semesters during the 2015/2016 and 2016/2017 academic years. The first cohort included students that began their academic career in the Emerging Scholars program, a developmental education program intended to close the academic deficiencies gap for college readiness. The second cohort of students included first-time freshmen that did not participate in the Emerging Scholars Program. The results of the findings suggest that students that did not participate in the Emerging Scholars Program outperformed the students that did participate in the Emerging Scholars programs. The GPAs of the Emerging Scholars and non-Emerging Scholars decreased from the first semester to the second semester.

There are increasing calls for programs to demonstrate that they made a difference (Cabrera, Miner, & Milem, 2013). It is challenging to scale one successful approach to developmental programs when the needs of the students differ (Preston, 2017). Moreover, developmental education programs should not use only one approach because it could be ineffective due to the various levels of students’ preparedness (Preston, 2017; Boatman & Long, 2010). Setting high expectations and then supporting and holding students accountable for reaching them is an effective strategy for encouraging student success (Kuh et al., 2006). Building on the findings in this manuscript and the literature reviewed in Manuscript One, Manuscript Three explores recommendations that may enhance and strengthen the Emerging
Scholars Program to improve the academic performance of these students to align with goals and objectives of the University related to persistence, retention, and graduation.
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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

Remediation has been an integral part of American higher education and has been embedded in the very fabric of the nation’s higher education system for over three centuries (Phipps, 1998). Many colleges and universities offer programs to address the deficiencies of students who have been identified as underprepared for the rigor of college courses because students fail to meet their respective admission standards. These programs, usually referred to as remedial or developmental, consist of various components, objectives, and a common outcome; to promote college retention and improve completion rates by providing students with academic and social tools, explicitly focusing on math, reading, English, and the transition from high school to college. Much has been written over the past 20 years regarding the impact of various program components on the success of developmental students, including first-term GPA and retention, and the importance of engagement during a student’s first year of which have been found to have some relationship to the success measures (e.g., Arendale, 2002; Fowler & Boylan, 2010; Preston, 2017). Developmental students face tremendous barriers (Bailey & Cho, 2010), ones that disproportionately affect Black students who gain access to higher education (Preston, 2017).
CHAPTER II: PROBLEM OF PRACTICE

This study looked at the Emerging Scholars Program, an eight-week intensive, residential developmental program at Mississippi Valley State University with a focus on preparing recent underprepared high school graduates who did not meet the admissions requirements for entry into one of Mississippi’s eight public universities. Focusing on variables that measure academic performance, HSGPA, ACT composite scores, and term GPA data from the first and second semester from two academic years, 2015/2016 and 2016/2017 were analyzed, comparing two groups of students; students who began their academic career as participants in the Emerging Scholars Program and students who were not participants in the Emerging Scholars Program. The results of the analysis were to see if there was a significant difference in the academic performance between the two groups. In addition to the analysis of HSGPA, ACT composite scores, and term GPA, the analysis was expanded to include gender to see if there was a significant difference in academic performance between females and males who participated in Emerging Scholars Program and those who did not participate in the Emerging Scholars Program.
CHAPTER III: SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

This study of the Emerging Scholars Program followed standards applied in previous research on developmental programs (e.g., Boatman & Long, 2010; Shields & Dwyer, 2017) by comparing two groups of students attending Mississippi Valley State University: students participating in the Emerging Scholars Program and students not participating in the Emerging Scholars Program. Analyses were conducted of similar variables used in prior studies that included ACT Composite scores, HSGPA, and fall and spring term GPA means. The findings of this study suggest that the academic performance of the participants in the Emerging Scholars Program did not improve from the fall semester to the spring semester as intended. Their GPAs decreased as did the term GPAs mean of the students that did not participate in the Emerging Scholars Program. However, the findings do not suggest that the program is ineffective (Goudas & Boylan, 2012), but confirms the need for an examination of additional factors as increases in academic performance has been a common outcome evidenced in extant research when comparing students enrolled in developmental programs with students not enrolled in developmental programs (Fowler & Boylan, 2012; Shields & O’Dwyer, 2017).

Specifically, the following questions guided this study:

1) Is there a significant difference between the first-semester freshman year GPAs of students who participated in the Emerging Scholars Program at MVSU and those who did not?
2) Is there a significant difference between the second-semester freshman year college GPAs of students who participated in the Emerging Scholars Program at MVSU and those who did not?

As noted, the characteristics/variables analyzed included HSGPA, race, gender, GPA, and ACT Composite scores, which have been widely used in other research (e.g., Gaertner & McClarty, 2015; Stewart, Lim, & Kim, 2015; & Reason, 2003). For the first research question, the first semester mean GPA for Emerging Scholars is 1.87, and the first semester mean GPA for non-Emerging Scholars is 2.82, which is a significant difference between the two (2) cohorts. As for the second question, the second semester mean GPA for Emerging Scholars is 1.73, and the second semester mean GPA for Non-Emerging Scholars is 3.37, a significant difference between the two cohorts. Though not an initial research question, additional analysis was conducted based on gender to determine if there was a significant difference between male and females. The mean for the first semester for females who participated in the Emerging Scholars Program is 2.21 compared with 1.57 for males, a significant difference as the sig (2-tail) is .002 which is less than alpha. For those students who did not participate in the Emerging Scholars Program, the mean for the females is 2.87 and 2.64 for males, a significant difference as the sig (2-tail) is equal to alpha. The results of the first semester show that females from both groups (i.e., Emerging Scholar students and non-Emerging Scholar students) outperformed the males. The mean for the second semester of females who participated in the Emerging Scholars Program is 1.90 compared with 1.58 for males, which is not a significant difference as the sig (2-tail) is .187 and is greater than alpha. For those students who did not participate in the Emerging Scholars Program, the mean GPA of the females is 2.67 and 2.52 for males, which is not a significant difference as the sig (2-tail) is .141, which is greater than alpha. The results of the second
semester analysis did not show a significant difference in academic performance between females and male Emerging Scholar participants or non-Emerging Scholar participants (i.e., as it relates to the sig (2-tail) value), although the means for the females in both groups are greater.
CHAPTER IV: IMPROVING THE PROGRAM

Assessment and evaluation remain critical in higher education and is needed to report program cost, goals, and outcomes. (Goldwasser, Martin, & Harris, 2017). Most recommendations and proposals to increase student academic performance and programmatic outcomes include some type of improvement plan that addresses the students holistically and expresses a concern of students of color (Murtaugh, Burns, & Schuster, 1999).

The results of this research suggest that it is likely an opportunity for enhancement and improvement of academic programming exists. As previously stated, data collected and analyzed in this study are considered baseline data, confirming that the lack of analysis on the effects of remediation is partly due to a lack of data and the need for additional empirical evidence (Bettinger & Long, 2004; Komarraju, Ramsey, & Rinella, 2013) that focuses on developmental students without comparing them to non-developmental students. There are many suggested approaches to effective remediation, including: evidence-based programs; performance-based measures and outcomes; and continuous comprehensive evaluation of programs (Goudas & Boylan, 2012). Cultural competency strategies that are sensitive to the variations in student needs most often found on college campuses should also be included in a comprehensive evaluation plan, especially teaching practices that attend to the specific cultural characteristics of underrepresented communities in postsecondary settings (Preston, 2017; Goudas & Boylan, 2012). The aforementioned components and concepts are frequently mentioned in extant research and are considered to contribute to the success of students in developmental programs (Booth et al., 2014; Boylan, Bliss & Bonham, 1997). To address ways to improve the Emerging
Scholars Program at MVSU, an outline of an improvement plan is offered consisting of four components from which to build upon: 1) assessment and placement; 2) student engagement; 3) instruction improvement; and 4) a systematic program evaluation as the results of the analysis did not show the improved academic performance desired for participants in Emerging Scholars.

**Assessment and Placement**

Assessment and placement of entering students are common in higher education (Saxon & Morante, 2015). Assessments have two primary uses; improvement of student learning and growth and accountability for internal enhancement (Volkwein, 1999) to maximize students’ academic performance (Goldwasser, Martin, & Harris, 2017). Placement tests are considered a “high-stakes test,” a standardized cognitive assessment to inform placement without non-cognitive factors (Safran & Visher, 2010). The test is intended to provide a snapshot of students’ academic skills to inform placement (Saxon & Morante, 2015).

The ACCUPLACER is utilized for placement for developmental programs in Mississippi Institutions of Higher Learning, including the Emerging Scholars Program at MVSU. There is a pre-test and a post-test with established cutoff scores informing which courses the students are to take during the summer program and the subsequent semester (IHL SD Manual, 2018). It has been noted in several studies that placement in developmental courses is a concern because students often take the placement exams without understanding the significance or purpose and that the results are used to make decisions with significant consequences (Safran & Visher, 2010). A comprehensive assessment should include student experiences as well as a review of the program which could be beneficial in ensuring that students can adjust their study behaviors and faculty their teaching as the courses progress (Kwan, 2011). Assessment can be used with other components, such as an early warning system to identify students at risk, appropriate
interventions, and support (ACT Engage, n.d.). It has been agreed that for assessments to be effective, they must be frequent, early, formative, and summative; and the process should be “seamless, transparent, and efficient” (Tinto, 2012; Boylan, Bonham & White, 1999; Saxon & Morante, 2015), and should be used to inform learning and teaching (Garcia, 2014). While assessments expose strengths and weaknesses, they are necessary for the improvement of teachers, learners, scholars, and administrators (Volkwein, 1999).

**Engagement**

While academic preparation is considered one of the most critical factors for academic success, another factor that supports academic success is student engagement, which has shown a positive correlation between engagement and student achievement (Breakthrough, 2009). Student engagement adds value to the student experience and has been cited as another indicator of student success and is often linked to student involvement, defined as “the time and effort students devote to their studies and related educational relevant activities,” (Kuh et al., 2006). A key factor as to whether a student will successfully matriculate depends on the extent of participation in educationally effective activities (Kuh et al., 2006).

The findings from a review of data collected from the College Student Expectations Questionnaire (CSEQ), the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE), and the Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE) revealed that student engagement was an intermediate outcome and a factor for student success. The data from the NSEE revealed the grades of lower ability students were positively affected by engagement (Kuh et al., 2006).

While students must take active steps to become involved in their campus, the campus community must embrace their students in their diversity (Octcalt & Cox, 2002), as the students need to feel connected and a sense of belonging (Breakthrough, 2009; Tinto, 2012). As the world
becomes more diverse, so does the need for educators to understand the different cultures of their students so “they can translate that knowledge into effective instruction and enriched curriculum,” (Banks, McGee & Cherry, 2001, p. 176, as cited by NEA Policy Brief, 2008).

Additionally, advising and tutoring are also included as a part of student engagement as evidenced by the results of a 2007 study by Gerlaugh, Thompson, Boylan, and Davis, 2017 that named tutoring and advising as the service participants believed to be most important outside of the classroom (p.2). Advising and tutoring are usually included in student guidelines as expectations. Academic advising focuses on the growth of the student through a collaborative student-faculty process-oriented approach with the students rather than authoritative advising (Fowler & Boylan, 2010). Additionally, tutoring has been identified as an important way of facilitating student engagement and has been viewed as part of the teaching-learning process and a basic strategy for improving students’ academic success (Morillas & Garrido, 2014, as cited by Faroa, 2017, p.2). Tutoring for underprepared students has been found to be most influential when it is of a high quality and when the tutors receive training (Boylan & Saxon, 1999).

**Program Evaluation**

Improvements may also be made by establishing ongoing systematic criteria to evaluate all components of the program. There is not a standardized or national construct used to assess the quality and outcomes of the many diverse developmental programs (Goldwasser, Martin, & Harris, 2017). The purpose and importance of program evaluation are to investigate which parts of a program are working well and which are not, and to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the program (Gerlaugh, et al., 2007). Effective evaluation systems appear to be linked to student success according to a study by Boylan, Bliss, and Bonham (1997) that assessed the efficacy of developmental education from a sample of approximately 6,000 students from 160 institutions. It
was cited in the same study that students in programs that had ongoing systematic program evaluation were generally more successful than students who were in programs that were not evaluated. Evaluations are seen as critical to ensuring the quality of services designed to help prepare students for the rigors of undergraduate work (Garcia & Paz, 2009) and this is a method to ensure that institutions are providing students with the best education possible (Goldwasser et al., 2017).

Additionally, HBCUs must continue to be sensitive to the fact that the results of poor academic performance affect the students, their families, and institutions. It is an economic and emotional drain on the students and their families, and the institutions loss of funding, and failure to achieve the mission and goals of the institution (Jones & Richards-Smith, 1987).

**Non-Academic Components**

A common theme mentioned in the research reviewed is that more research is needed to include non-academic or non-cognitive variables, because these factors matter when it comes to academic achievement (Breakthrough, 2009). Such factors include social engagement, which encompasses a sense of connectedness with faculty and the institution; socioeconomic status, and other performance and personal attributes (Tinto, 1990; Raab & Adam, 2005; Saxton & Morante, 2014). It is essential to consider how these variables intersect with the student’s personal life and their college life (Saxton & Morante, 2014). ACT (2007) cites the following as nonacademic factors that are important to student success:

1) Individual psychosocial factors, such as motivation (academic discipline, commitment to school, and self-regulation (e.g., emotional control, academic self-control);
2) Family factors, such as attitude toward education, involvement in students’ school activities; and

3) Career planning that identifies a good fit between students’ interests and their postsecondary work.

While not all institutions test for non-academic factors when testing developmental students, the ACCESS program at Prairie View A&M University (PVAMU) centered on eight non-cognitive variables developed by William Sedlacek through the application and recommendation letters to predict academic success. Those variables included: positive self-concept; realistic self-appraisal; demonstrated community service; knowledge acquired in a field; successful leadership experience; and preference of long-range goals over short-term, immediate goals and ability to defer gratification to attain goals (Raab & Adam, 2005).

Although cognitive ability might inform students capabilities, non-cognitive factors such as personality and motivation can help explain what the student may achieve and potential areas for development (Komarraju, Ramsey, & Rinella, 2013)
CHAPTER V: IMPROVING INSTRUCTION

Having prepared faculty is critical to student success. Improving instruction can be accomplished by increasing professional development in addition to collaboration between developmental and non-developmental faculty. Unfortunately, professional development activities are not always consistent, nor do they always reflect what the instructors need to know to support student retention and completion (Boylan, Calderwood, & Bonham, 2017), such as establishing a clear course structure with defined goals and objectives of a course and ensuring that students understand the expectations of the instructor (Boylan & Saxon, 1999). It has been recommended that one method for improving instruction is to use a program of study that benchmarks best practices in developmental education, reflects a model that uses instructional methodologies, and support services to improve retention and success. Instruction for developmental students should be delivered using a variety of methods, such as self-paced computer courses, learning communities, and integrated learning labs, as faculty who work with developmental students must be among the best prepared of all faculty (University of Hawaii, n.d.).

Funding for the Emerging Scholars Program ended several years ago as per the Ayers v. Musgrove (2001) settlement. Program improvement and increased academic performance may be improved through continued external funding especially as it relates to the development of instructors who may have little to no training on how to teach and are, thus, asked to yield the highest educational returns with limited investment (Kolodner, as cited in Preston, 2017, p. 16). Furthering the development of the faculty could help enhance the Emerging Scholars Program as
well as increasing the desired outcomes of readying underprepared students for the rigor of
college courses. Funding is also critical to HBCUs whose “historic role” (Preston, 2017) has
been to provide Black students with academic deficiencies additional academic support (Preston,
2017).
CHAPTER VI: PROMISING DEVELOPMENTAL PROGRAM PRACTICES

During the review of literature for this study, two programs at HBCUs, Morgan State University, a public 4-year HBCU, and Claflin University, a private 4-year HCBU, were identified as showing promise of increasing academic performance after evaluating the state of their current programs and then making changes through a collaborative effort to improve student outcomes. Either program can be used as a reference or guide as MVSU outlines its plan to enhance and improve the Emerging Scholars Program. At Morgan State University, the Arts and Humanities department collaborated with the developmental education department and developed integrated developmental reading, English and history courses. The approach of the integrated courses was also from Afro-inclusive perspective, with a focus on an effort to connect the majority African American student population with the African diaspora in the world history course. The participants included 102 students that were divided into two (2) groups, experimental and control. The experimental group participated in the integrated curricula course, and the control group participated in the previously established developmental course. Both groups took pre-, mid-, and post-tests throughout the semester to measure their progress. It was determined that the revised curriculum was impactful as the results showed that there were significant differences between the two (2) groups, with the experimental group showing increased academic performance. The students were able “to see the connection between reading, writing, and critical thinking” because the same textbook was used for each course, so what they learned in the reading course, they wrote about in the English course. Having the same topics
presented in several different formats not only allowed the students to be familiar with the content but forced them to think more critically (Preston, 2017).

In response to the state of South Carolina’s elimination of developmental courses from four-year institutions, Claflin University established co-requisite courses for English and math. The English course included mandatory attendance at the writing center, and the math course included mandatory attendance at the math lab with peer tutors. Some students who were identified as developmental were placed in the co-requisite courses, and the other developmental students were placed in entry-level English and math courses that did include the writing center and math lab. While both groups had multiple interventions, one of the main issues noted was the inconsistent presence of peer tutors impacted student’s attendance at the writing center and math labs, especially after their grades did not reflect improvement. The faculty also determined that students would experience more success if the peer tutors attended the individual courses and work with faculty, (Preston 2017).

One of the conclusions from this project was that one approach to developmental education can be ineffective and, in some cases, harmful because of students’ level of preparedness, and because of this finding the students were categorized into three academic levels: severely underprepared, moderately underprepared, and slightly underprepared. (Preston, 2017).

In addition to the programs at Morgan State University and Claflin University, Prairie View A&M University (PVAMU), another public HCBU, established itself as a leader in developmental programs after the Texas legislature expressed concerned on the continuous increase of underprepared students in state colleges and the increasing cost associated with it. PVAMU developed the Academy for Collegiate Excellence and Student Success (ACCESS)
under the leadership of the former PVAMU President, Charles A. Hines. ACCESS began in 1996 as a pilot bridge-to-college summer program. The program was built around a constructivist model, focusing on math, reading, and composition, while also concentrating on learning strategies to address weaknesses in problem-solving and critical thinking. The primary components of the program were: intensive residential, summer, precollege academics; and a holistic, centralized series of student support services that included 1) academic enhancement, 2) effective advisement, coupled with highly centralized support services, and 3) a structured academically focused residential environment. The students that continued at PVAMU were placed in the Panther Learning and Community Experience Program (PLACE). The program was very intentional in its faculty selection who continuously received training. After several years of ACCESS and PLACE, PLACE became the forerunner of the university-wide effort to improve the first-year experience for all PVAMU freshmen, which materialized as University College (Raab & Adam, 2005), a centralized and multifaceted program seen as a model to develop the student-centered university. (Raab & Adams, 2005; Boylan, Bliss & Bonham, 1997).
CHAPTER VII: OVERVIEW OF PROGRAM ENHANCEMENT COMPONENTS

It is essential to demonstrate the impact of the program and in some cases, justify their existence (Cabera, Miner, & Milem, 2013). Furthermore, HBCUs must find innovative strategies to increase student success to strengthen the relevancy of the institutions that successfully prepare students (Lee & Keys, 2013). A successful developmental program must include assessment, continuous monitoring, interventions, faculty and peer support, and offer students an opportunity to share factors that influenced their success which could increase the number of students retained beyond their first year (Wathington, Pretlow, & Barnett, 2016). Collectively, this information would help identify any disconnects between the students and the program as well provide insight of the structure of the program and its relationship to the expectations to the course requirements outside of the program.

Several institutions, including, Morgan State University, Claflin University, and Prairie View A&M have made great strides in improving the academic performance of developmental students. Some, if not all of the changes made can be considered for improvement of the Emerging Scholars Program at MVSU.
CHAPTER VIII: PRACTITIONER REFLECTION

The decision to further my education while considering the opportunities that could come from having a doctoral degree was exciting. During the first semester, through readings, conversations, viewings, and lectures, I was introduced to a segment of higher education that I was unfamiliar with, that highlighted various challenges students encountered to gain access to affordable and equitable education at an institution of their choice. This new knowledge, although exciting and stimulating, showed me just how much more work must be done so every person that has the ambition to be a part of the higher education community can become a reality. The CPED Program increased my desire to learn more about social justice, equity, and equality and its impact on higher education. I was excited to share what I had learned, which often resulted into robust discussions that allowed me to consider different perspectives and to really think beyond my view of higher education, outside of my experiences as a non-traditional student and beyond my administrative role. The CPED Program enlightened and challenged me to think deeper and broader about higher education. I not only viewed higher education through the lens of a practitioner and a student but also as a parent. Now when I think about and discuss higher education, my thoughts and conversations include access, diversity, equality, and social justice, coupled with the question “how can I make a difference?” One of my biggest takeaways from the program is my heightened awareness and increased sensitivity of the challenges other minority groups endure. One would think that being a member of a minority group,
consideration, and knowledge of challenges faced by other minority groups is equivalent to other minority groups, but as a woman of color, my focus has been on navigating my life as well as teaching my children how to do the same through environments filled with so many knowns and unknowns that can impact our daily lives negatively. I have learned that I was not only as sensitive and thoughtful of other minority groups as I had thought, but I was very unaware of the commonalities we shared.

Because of this program, I have grown as an individual, personally and professionally. The lens I now look through is more comprehensive and diverse, especially as it relates to education and the continuous challenges in the state of Mississippi, specifically, the Mississippi Delta where teacher shortage is at a crisis level and students struggle to learn required subject matter (Wright & Davis, 2019). This, to me, is blatant inequality, especially when 100 miles away, students have every resource needed for success and are thriving academically. Too often lack of success of developmental students is blamed on students rather than the inequities within the education system (Preston, 2017), especially in predominately Black K-12 school settings where there are weak college preparatory curricula, ineffective and insufficient guidance counselor services, unqualified teachers, minimal and outdated school materials, and inadequate school facilities (Kozol as cited in Preston, 2017, p.11).

As a first-generation college student, I believe my advancement educationally and professionally is in part because of the quality education I received at MVSU. I am an example of why HBCUs are relevant as they were created to educate all (Jones & Richards-Smith, 1987), specifically African Americans who historically were denied the opportunity to learn. Throughout their existence, HBCUs have done a remarkable job in training doctors, lawyers, dentists, teachers, and other professionals throughout the first half of the 20th century (Freemark,
2015). Although HBCUs is only 3 percent of America’s colleges, their role in the sciences has been incredible, producing over 50 percent of black STEM graduates (Leichter, 2016). HBCUs remain a viable educational pathway for first generation, underprepared students in an environment where they are nurtured while being prepared to be academically successful.

I desire to help students, especially students in the Mississippi Delta who have ambitions to pursue a college education by providing information and sharing my story as to how I finally achieved my goals. My growth through this CPED program has been transformative, causing me to reflect on my life frequently had I been adequately informed beginning at the middle school level of the advantages and opportunities of college and how that relates to careers, and how students just like me continue to want for more and are not receiving the guidance on how to fulfill their dreams, because most students expect to go to college, but like me, they may not be clear on the pathway forward.

Future studies of the Emerging Scholars Program could include attendance policies, academic advising, effective teaching practices (Sparkman, Maulding, & Roberts, n.d.), personal interviews or customized questionnaires which may result in a greater scope of data that may provide additional useful information (Kreysa, 2007). Colleges and universities should also focus their efforts on helping students assigned to remedial courses to make continued progress toward their degrees (Boatman & Long, 2010) and institutions that want their students to succeed must find a way to support initiatives over a long-term period, because programs should be implemented to succeed and endure (Tinto, 2012).

Additionally, future research should include more years of data and other variables such as curriculum patterns of both groups; students participating in the Emerging Scholars Program and students who do not participate in the Emerging Scholars Program.
CHAPTER IX: DISSEMINATION OF FINDINGS

The findings of this study will be shared with the University President in an effort to bring more attention to the importance of collecting and analyzing data, not only from the students who begin in the Emerging Scholars Program, but also from first time freshmen students who do not begin their academic career in the Emerging Scholars Program as the results suggest that a systemic problem may exist being that the GPAs of both groups of students decreased from the fall to the spring semester. These results speak to the need of establishing an evaluation system that will identify the strengths and weaknesses of the program to enhance the improvement of students’ outcomes and to be more intentional in following students more closely from their freshman to sophomore year. In addition to these findings, the discussion would also include the importance of retaining these students and what that means to the financial health of the University especially as state funding for universities and colleges continue to decline. It is incumbent upon university leadership to maintain a holistic vision of the needs of its students and the needs of the university. Additionally, there is a need for increased collaboration between K-12 and MVSU to improve student performance during the transition from high school to college (Callen, Finney, Kirst, Usdan, & Venezia, 2006), as well as the expectations of a college student.
CHAPTER X: SUMMARY OF MANUSCRIPT

This Problem of Practice is a result of the researcher wanting to know more about the Emerging Scholars Program at Mississippi Valley State University, a program developed as a result of the Ayers v. Musgrove (2001) settlement agreement to close the equality gap of students who desired to continue their education. Specifically, the research was interested in the academic growth of the students that participated in the program. The framework of the program was developed by designated staff from the eight public universities and academic staff from the Mississippi Institutions of Higher Learning. While the foundation of the program is the same across the university system, additional programmatic components have been added to improve and enhance student outcomes. The specific focus of this study was to determine whether the Emerging Scholars Program is effective in preparing recent high school graduates who were identified as underprepared students for the rigor of college courses by not meeting the admissions requirements. By analyzing the academic performance through the GPAs of Emerging Scholar Program students and non-Emerging Scholar Program students, a comparison of both groups was performed on the first and second semester GPAs obtained through the university’s database.

Recommendations to improve and enhance the program come from previous research that has been reviewed during this research process that showed successful results as it relates to the outcomes that the institution wanted. A noteworthy program described by Raab and Adam, (2005), the Academy for Collegiate Excellence and Student Success (ACCESS), developed at Prairie View A&M, a HBCU located in rural Texas, in response to the Texas legislature’s
concern over the increased number of underprepared high school students and the cost associated with remediation. ACCESS is a “multifaceted, highly intrusive, “tough love,” that has three significant functional elements: (1) academic enhancement; (2) effective advisement and centralized support services; and (3) a structured, academically focused living environment. The ACCESS program offers two primary components: (1) an eight-week summer residential program referred to as an academic boot camp with a tough-love theme, and (2) a holistic, centralized series of student-support services during the freshman year that is intensive a proven university college model and has been successfully distributed throughout the United States to address multiple challenges encountered by first-year students.

The success of any program to assist underprepared students’ rests with an institution that fosters student success (Kuh et al, 2006) “focusing on its own behaviors and establishing conditions that promote desired outcomes,” (Tinto, 2012).
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National Educational Association Human and Civil Rights Department. (2008), Promoting educators’ cultural competence to better serve culturally diverse students. (Policy Brief No. 13). Washington, DC.


VITA
LA SHON F. BROOKS

EDUCATION

MISSISSIPPI VALLEY STATE UNIVERSITY

Master of Business Administration
May 2009

Bachelor of Science in Business Administration
May 1998

MISSISSIPPI SCHOOL OF BANKING, UNIVERSITY OF MISSISSIPPI

Certification
April 2005

Outstanding Performance Recognition—Bank Simulation Class

LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT AND CERTIFICATIONS

Delta Regional Authority (DRA) – Delta Leadership Institute
2017

American Council on Education (ACE) – ACE Women’s Network
2016

Mississippi Economic Council (MEC) - Leadership Mississippi
2016

American Council on Education (ACE) - Spectrum Aspiring Leaders Program
2015

American Council on Education (ACE) – Advancing Women’s Leadership
2015

EXECUTIVE LEVEL PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

MISSISSIPPI VALLEY STATE UNIVERSITY

Chief of Staff & Legislative Liaison
2005 – PRESENT

2013 - Present

• Member of the senior management team of the university.
• Work closely and effectively with the President to keep him well informed of issues and events.
• Provide leadership to build relationships crucial to the success of the University and manage a variety of special projects for the President.
• Successfully completes critical aspects of deliverables, including drafting acknowledgment letters, personal correspondence, and writing speeches as requested.
• Advise, inform, support, assist, coordinate, and collaborate on initiatives for the President.
• Represent the President in selected internal and external interactions with faculty, staff, committees, and community leaders.

• Provide oversight for new and ongoing projects and initiatives. Manage operations of the President’s office including managing multiple budgets in excess of $1 million.

• Serve as liaison with Governing Board, working on issues that include legal matters, tenure and promotion appeals, contractual agreements, faculty complaints, and policy.

• Lobby the legislature, track legislation, at the state level on behalf of the University with and on behalf of the President. Also, work with state delegation on the federal level.

• Organize and participate in outreach to local, state and federal officials, and alumni inclusive of facility tours, issue briefings, and participation in legislative/advocacy committee meetings.

• Work with faculty and staff to coordinate various annual activities and create programs that will enhance the development of faculty, staff, and students.

• Oversight of the Mass Transit Department and Information Technology.

Executive Assistant to the President & Office Manager 

2011 - 2013

• Represented the President by welcoming visitors, answering questions, and providing direction.

• Reviewed correspondence; coordinated all travel arrangements including transportation and lodging; managed the President’s calendar; scheduled meetings, prepared itineraries, and agendas.

• Served as Secretary for the Executive Cabinet.

• Prepared reports and written correspondence.

• Reviewed all incoming communications via mail and email, responding and/or redirecting where appropriate.

• Served as liaison to University employees, the Governing Board office, and external constituents.

• Managed the annual operating budget of the President’s Office.

• Ensured compliance with state and federal documents requiring the President’s signature.

• Managed and protected confidential and sensitive information.

Compliance & Monitoring Officer for Financial Aid 

2007 – 2011

• Researched, interpreted, and assisted with developing, updating, and implementing policies and procedures for Title IV to ensure compliance with federal and state regulations throughout the University.

• Coordinated and performed internal audits using various sampling plans and analysis. Including file review, identifying regulatory and policy noncompliance through written reports, and recommending corrective actions.

• Served as the liaison in audits performed by the University, the Department of Education, and other external agencies, prepared audit responses and assisted with the completion of Federal Reports

• Made presentations throughout the University on regulatory changes and requirements.

• Assisted with developing the Default Prevention and Management Plan, including, but not limited to analysis of unofficial rate data, preparing an appeal utilizing reports from NSLDS and servicers, and contacting student borrowers about repayment options.
Academic Instruction
Department of Business Education
• OMP 330 - Organizational Behavior (formal and informal functions of organizations)
• OMP 360 - Principles of Management (foundations and traditional approaches of management principles)

• Performed reviews of state and federal grants to ensure program initiatives and fiscal objectives were met.
• Interpreted applicable laws and regulations regarding grant contracts and administration to ensure compliance with established regulatory, administrative and financial policies, procedures, and sound business practices.
• Worked effectively with a variety of staff, reviewing work products to ensure compliance.
• Prepared formal reports with recommendations to resolve discrepancies.

STATE BANK & TRUST COMPANY 1994-2005 GREENWOOD, MS

Community Reinvestment Act Officer (CRA)/Director of Outreach Initiatives 2003 – 2005
• Ensured accuracy of CRA public files for 27 locations.
• Monitored branch activities, donations, and services that were CRA reportable.
• Identified projects and community-based organizations to enhance CRA performance.
• Provided CRA training for bank personnel and responded to CRA inquires.
• Presented various modules of the FDIC Money Smart program to community groups.
• Made presentations to community organizations, high schools, and universities on the subjects of work ethics, banking, credit, and other topics as requested.
• Assisted with branch openings and closings.

Assistant Vice President, Central Purchasing 2003 – 2005
• Researched, proposed, and implemented online purchasing for office and printed supplies for the entire bank.
• Streamlined processes and reduced redundancies through reviews of vendor performance, refining and enhancing the examination of bids from vendors to ensure a successful cost reduction with resulted in a $100K annual cost savings.
• Solicited and negotiated bids for various maintenance contracts and services.
• Reviewed and authorized payments for all expenses incurred system wide.
• Provided training to designated staff on purchasing policies and procedures.
• Monitored and analyzed spending for all banking units and prepared reports on bank expenditures for Senior Management on a monthly, quarterly, and yearly basis.
• Collaborated with Operations Manager to redesign banking forms system wide.
• Maintained and audited real estate and property files for the bank including timely payment of Ad Valorem taxes to the county and municipal authorities.

Other positions held: Assistant Asset Protection Officer, Branch Manager, Commercial Lender, Assistant Compliance Officer 1997 - 2003
**Funded Projects**

Assisted in garnering funding for University repairs, renovation, and maintenance $30,000,000
Butler, Snow, O’Mara, Stevens & Cannada Foundation – Moving Out for a Healthy Life $25,000
USDA – NRCS – MS – Restore Wildlife Habitat Within the Mississippi Delta $64,500
The Department of the Army – Water and Sewer Compliance Project - $200,000

**Service**

**Mississippi Valley State University**
- Special Occasions Committee (Coordinate campus events)
- Commencement Committee (Secure speaker and logistics)
- IHL Tuition Study Task Force 2016
- YANKY 72 Memorial Ceremony Committee (Campus Co-Coordinator)
- Green & White Day at the Capitol
- Community Reception with Governor Bryant 2016
- Voter Registration Drives and Workshops
- Soul Bowl Blood Drives
- Annual Choral Program (Reader)
- Presidents Inauguration Committee Chair (2013 and 2018)

**Community**
- Salvation Army – Bell Ringer and Angel Tree Distribution
- Mission Mississippi Leflore County Chapter - Steering Committee

**Professional Affiliations**

Delta Council – Board Member 2018 - Present
ArtPlace Mississippi – Board Member 2016 - 2018
Rotary International – Greenwood 2014 - Present
Greenwood Conventions & Visitors Bureau - Institutional Board Member 2014 - 2018
Mississippi Delta National Heritage Area - Institutional Board Member 2014 - Present
Women in Higher Education Mississippi Network – Institutional Representative 2013 - Present
Leflore County Chamber of Commerce 2013 - Present

**Professional Training**

U.S. Department of Education Regulatory Workshops, Conferences, and Webinars 2006 – 2013
USA Funds Regulatory and Professional Development Workshops and Webinars 2006 – 2013
Gulf States Regional Center for Public Safety Innovations, U.S. Department of Justice 2010
FDIC Conference on Compliance & the USA Patriot Act 2004
Federal Home Loan Bank Seminar 2004
FDIC Money Smart, Train the Trainer 2004