

**The Impact of the Completion of a Basic Communication Course
on the Academic Success of Undergraduate Students at a Midwestern University**

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Abstract

The value attached to the basic communication course (BCC) completed by most undergraduate students should not be overlooked. In many instances, the skills fostered in the course could have a lasting impact and influence on an undergraduate student's success academically and professionally. "In the course, students are provided instruction in communication skills that can benefit them for a lifetime" (Morreale, Worley, & Hugenberg, 2010, p. 406). The purpose of this study was to investigate whether enrollment in a BCC in the first year of college at a Midwest regional comprehensive public university impacted freshman year cumulative GPA, academic major at the time of graduation, number of years to graduate, or cumulative GPA at the time of graduation. A quantitative non-experimental research design was used to analyze archived data for four research question hypotheses. The results from the study indicated students who successfully completed a BCC during the freshman year had a higher cumulative GPA at the end of the first year of college than students who did not complete a BCC during the freshman year. Those who successfully completed a BCC during the freshman year majored more frequently in business, education, science, technology, or mathematics at the time of graduation than students who did not complete a BCC during the freshman year. More BCC freshman year completers graduated in four years compared to non-freshman year BCC completers. Finally, cumulative GPA at the time of graduation was higher for BCC freshman year completers than those who did not complete a BCC during the freshman year. The findings of the current study may be of interest to academic departments, basic course directors, and parents, as they encourage and advise freshmen about enrollment in general education courses.

Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my parents, Jerry and Paulette, for their unconditional love, support, and confidence in me. My sister, Miranda, and my brother, Grant – providing laughter, discussion, and a bond never to be broken. To my babes, Seton, Campbell, Kye, Grayson, and Harrison – the absolute best distractions I could ask for as an aunt. To Bella and Stohli, the best dog companions. To my best friends (Brooke, Kylee, Andrea, and Chrissy), coworkers, and graduate teaching assistants throughout this process. Thank you. Thank you for listening and your words of encouragement and inspiration through this process. I appreciate your patience, laughter, tears, motivation, and celebratory moments while navigating through my doctoral program.

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Table of Contents

Abstract	ii
Dedication	iii
Acknowledgements	iv
Table of Contents	v
List of Tables	viii
Chapter 1: Introduction	1
Background	2
Statement of the Problem	8
Purpose of the Study	11
Significance of the Study	12
Delimitations	13
Assumptions	14
Research Questions	14
Definition of Terms	15
Organization of the Study	16
Chapter 2: Review of the Literature	18
Factors Related to Student Retention and Persistence in Higher Education	18
General Education Curriculum	22
Basic Communication Course	23
Communication apprehension (CA)	25
The nature of self	27
Summary	30

Chapter 3: Methods.....	32
Research Design.....	33
Selection of Participants	33
Measurement.....	33
Data Collection Procedures.....	34
Data Analysis and Hypothesis Testing	34
Limitations	37
Summary.....	38
Chapter 4: Results.....	39
Descriptive Statistics.....	40
Hypothesis Testing.....	42
Summary.....	50
Chapter 5: Interpretation and Recommendations	52
Study Summary.....	52
Overview of the problem	52
Purpose statement and research questions	53
Review of the methodology	54
Major findings.....	54
Findings Related to the Literature.....	54
Conclusions.....	55
Implications for action	56
Recommendations for future research	57
Concluding remarks	58

References.....	59
Appendices.....	69
Appendix A. Kansas Core Outcome Group Basic Course Competencies.....	70
Appendix B. Baker University IRB Approval.....	77
Appendix C. MU IRB Approval.....	79
Appendix D. MU Academic Major and Categories.....	81

List of Tables

Table 1. Frequencies and Percentages for Year of BCC Enrollment for Fall 2011/Spring 2012 Matriculants	40
Table 2. Frequencies and Percentages for Academic Major Categories	41
Table 3. Frequencies and Percentages for Years to Graduation	42
Table 4. Observed and Expected Frequencies for H1.....	44
Table 5. Observed and Expected Frequencies for H2.....	46
Table 6. Observed and Expected Frequencies for H3.....	48
Table 7. Observed and Expected Frequencies for H4.....	50

Chapter 1

Introduction

Communication matters to understand and create meaning in our lives, help create our social identity, and fulfill basic needs for human interaction (Cabrera & Weckert, 2013). In a postsecondary curriculum, one of the foundation classes offered to a first-year student is a basic communication course (BCC) to guide students when creating meaning and discovering social identity. An introductory communication course is valuable to college students beyond the classroom (Sidelinger, Bolen, McMullen, & Nyeste, 2015). Communication apprehension management, learning about self-identity, and becoming an effective communicator are BCC outcomes useful to graduates.

First-year students experience changes when attending college for the first time and basic communication course concepts such as self-esteem, self-confidence, and communication apprehension (CA) are not at the top of the list of things to be anxious about. A student enrolling in a BCC during the first year could provide coping skills for that student experiencing fluctuations in these areas. Dwyer and Fus (2002) concluded communication instruction makes a difference in three areas: perceptions of anxiety, self-efficacy, and public speaking competence.

Instruction in public speaking does contribute to student perception of decreased communication apprehension...This study suggests that it may be more important to help students enrolled in a required public speaking course increase their beliefs that they possess the skills necessary to succeed than to actually decrease communication apprehension. (Dwyer & Fus, 2002, p. 34)

The National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE, 2014) reported communication skills as number 16 in the top 19 attributes employers seek on a candidate's resume after the candidate has completed an undergraduate degree (NACE, 2014). According to NACE (2015), new hires must prove competency in both the job skill they were hired for as well as tangible and intangible attributes. These attributes include written and verbal communication skills, leadership, work ethic, team work, problem-solving, initiative, detail-oriented, flexibility/adaptability, interpersonal skills, organizational ability, strategic planning skills, friendly/outgoing personality, entrepreneurial skills/risk-taker, tactfulness, and creativity. This attribute list is directly related to communication concepts studied in a BCC.

Kyllonen (2013) concluded soft-skills assessment in employee recruiting, prescreening, and selection were on the rise. "Measurements of personality and behavior, situational judgment, motivation, dependability, and safety are being utilized" (Kyllonen, 2013, p. 20). According to Bedwell, Fiore, and Salas (2014), "Leaders in virtually every industry have expressed a need for strong, effective interpersonal skills" (p. 172). "The importance of interpersonal skills will continue to grow in all sectors of business as collaborative efforts continue to dominate the organizational landscape" (Bedwell et al., 2014, p. 183).

Background

A general education program which includes a BCC is part of the liberal arts foundation courses at the midwestern regional comprehensive public university (MU) where the current study was conducted. The liberal arts foundation courses include English composition, mathematics, basic communication, health, and introduction to

computers (MU, 2018a). Throughout history, several skills have been emphasized in a BCC. The skill of listening is a key component in a BCC. Johnson and Long (2007) examined three areas of listening. Critical, comprehensive, and empathic listening are most frequently taught in a BCC. Additional skills taught in a BCC are communication competence and management of communication apprehension.

Engleberg et al. (2017) researched the practicality of creating a Core Communication Competencies Group (CCCG) to identify applicable competencies for introductory communication courses after three years of face-to-face interaction with faculty members who teach and administer the course. Engleberg et al. (2017) identified seven competencies that should be included in a BCC:

- Monitoring and presenting yourself
- Practicing communication ethics
- Adapting to others
- Practicing effective listening
- Expressing messages
- Identifying and explaining fundamental communication processes
- Creating and analyzing message strategies (p. 6).

Engleberg et al. (2017) envisioned the use of the competencies in a single course:

The introductory communication course focuses on how people (self) create (message strategies), adapt (to others), express (verbal, nonverbal, mediated), and respond (listening) to messages that effectively and ethically (ethical communication) generate meaning (communication process) within and across a variety of contexts (message strategies). (p. 7)

The seven core competencies were accepted and approved by the National Communication Association (NCA) Executive Committee in January 2014 (Engleberg et al., 2017). Communication skills are important, and most higher education institutions include a BCC as part of the general education curriculum. “When asked to explain how introductory communication courses contribute to students’ general education curriculum and career success, an answer based on competencies reflects the knowledge, behaviors, and motivation” (Engleberg et al., 2017, p. 8). Adopting best practices for student success in an introductory communication course is an ongoing process that stems from various directives by the Kansas Board of Regents (KBOR) and have evolved over time (KBOR, 2018c).

In 1925, the Kansas legislature developed a version of the first higher education governing body equivalent to the modern-day KBOR (2018a). The mission for this legislative body is available on the KBOR (2018b) website:

The Kansas Board of Regents shall pursue measurable continuous improvement in the quality and effectiveness of the public postsecondary educational system in Kansas, while expanding participation for all qualified Kansans. To achieve that mission, the Board will demand accountability, focus resources, and advocate powerfully. (para. 1)

A climate of assessment is prevalent in the KBOR directives for each institution in its purview. Initiated in September 2010, KBOR approved a strategic plan, *Foresight 2020*, for the public higher education system in Kansas. As listed on the KBOR website, through a few phases of redesign, KBOR (2018c) identified three strategic goals:

- Increase higher education attainment among Kansans.

- Improve alignment of the state's higher education system with the needs of the economy.
- Ensure state university excellence (para. 3).

Public higher education institutions file a yearly report in January to update KBOR about institutional goals and alignment to *Foresight 2020* (KBOR, 2018c). The MU is part of the state higher education system that includes six public institutions that offer baccalaureate degrees.

In 2010, the KBOR set forth guidelines to approve and increase articulation among the state institutions with the Kansas Articulation and Transfer Agreement. Also, in 2010, Kansas Core Outcome Groups were developed to discuss outcomes of courses included in the Kansas system-wide transfer process (KBOR, 2018d). A BCC is included in the agreement and identifies observable and measurable actions students will perform successfully upon completion of the course. The basic course directors for each institution offering a BCC at four-year institutions, community colleges, and technical schools met several times between 2010-2017 academic years to delineate the core outcomes that all public higher education institutions in the state would require in general education courses (KBOR, 2018e). Appendix A includes a summary of the Kansas Core Outcomes for the BCC. In November of 2017, the 32 BCC directors from all Kansas public higher education institutions adopted the outcomes recommended by the National Communication Association (NCA) and updated course titles to reflect accuracy (KBOR, 2018f).

Learning BCC skills can impact academic success in college. According to Rubin, Rubin, and Jordan (1997), academic success may be connected to instruction in

communication skills. “Skill improvement, of course, is one goal of public speaking courses” (Rubin et al., 1997, p. 106). Becoming competent in oral communication which includes both speaking and listening, is a foundational skill in a BCC. Morreale and Pearson (2008) suggested oral communication competence is a prerequisite to academic, personal, and professional success. “The ability to communicate effectively and appropriately is learned and, therefore, can and should be taught” (Morreale & Pearson, 2008, p. 225).

Effective oral communication may play a critical role in groups considered at-risk. “In dealing with at-risk students, the educational mission cannot only be to achieve excellence; it also should be designed to attain inclusiveness” (Chesebro et al., 1992, p. 345). Sidelinger et al. (2015) described the importance of social and academic integration. “What happens in the classroom can be linked with students’ experience outside of the classroom, and what happens outside of the classroom also contributes to students’ success in higher education” (Sidelinger et al., 2015, p. 65).

Skills learned in a BCC can impact self-efficacy in college. Byrd and Lange (2002) stated, “The state of an individual’s identity development seems to influence the manner in which he or she both comprehends and attempts to cope with difficulties inherent to an academic situation” (p. 104). Byrd and Lange (2002) concluded although students are legal adults, they may not have the maturity to make confident adult decisions. Self-efficacy is malleable and is a concept learned in a BCC. “As a discipline which enhances relationships with one’s self, others, and society, communication is viewed as central to general education requirements” (Morreale, Osborn, & Pearson, 2000, p. 4). A student introduced and reaffirmed to basic communication course

concepts such as self-efficacy, can experience positive outcomes. “Efficacy beliefs change over time within the same individual based on the perceived success or failure of the tasks performed” (DeWitz, Woolsey, & Walsh, 2009, p. 23). Eccles and Wigfield (2002) concluded, “The self-efficacy construct can be applied to behavior in many domains” (p. 109).

According to Wright et al. (2013) students turn to peers when needing social support. Without oral communication skills, a student may have difficulty asking for help. “Communication competence has been linked to a variety of relational outcomes, such as locus of control when dealing with stressful situations” (Wright et al., 2013, p. 43). There are benefits to the instruction of communication competence. Rubin et al. (1997) stated, “Although college students seldom are considered at-risk, the relationships between apprehension and competence, here, are substantial and could be expected in not at-risk groups (academically talented) as well” (p. 106).

For a college student, choosing a major can benefit the college experience and subsequently be a positive gain to confidence. “Various factors that influence college student outcomes are determined by major. It is important to understand how students ‘fit’ with their major affects satisfaction and success” (Mathis et al., 2017). If satisfied with their major, skills learned in a BCC can assist graduates long term. A variety of different types of businesses and careers attribute communication skills to success (Morreale & Pearson, 2008). According to Morreale and Pearson (2008):

Good communication abilities are critical to success in the following positions and careers: leaders and managers, sales personnel, public relations and advertising professionals, engineers, actors and their agents, technicians, athletic

directors and coaches, accountants, franchise operation administrators, purchasing professionals, and contractors. (p. 232)

Basic communication skill differences between males and females in higher education are evident in the literature. “Gender differences have been reported in studies of communication apprehension, interpersonal communication, and classroom behavior” (Behnke & Sawyer, 2000, p. 190). Female students are more likely to exhibit lower self-confidence than males when receiving negative evaluation on their academic work (Behnke & Sawyer, 2000). Male and female high anxiety levels extend to oral presentations. “It seems reasonable to presume that similar results would be found for anticipatory state and narrowband trait anxiety in public speakers. Both situations are found in a public speaking academic context” (Behnke & Sawyer, 2000, p. 193). In a BCC, students are introduced to public speaking protocols to manage anxiety levels connected to giving a speech (Behnke & Sawyer, 2000).

Statement of the Problem

“Humans are born with the ability to vocalize; but not with the knowledge, attitudes, and skills that define communication competence. The ability to communicate effectively and appropriately is learned and, therefore, must be taught” (Morreale et al., 2000, p. 2). In a 2015 report by NACE (2015), it was reported job seekers need to possess several communication skills including written, oral, and interpersonal communication. According to Duck and McMahan (2015), communication has seven key characteristics including, “(a) communication is symbolic; (b) communication requires meaning; (c) communication is cultural; (d) communication is relational; (e) communication involves frames; (f) communication is both presentational and

representation; and (g) communication is a transaction” (pp. 6-7). Learning about these seven key characteristics may help students acquire skills that will contribute to academic success while in college and equip them with communication characteristics that will be valued by future employers. All faculty who require presentations in their classrooms may also reap the benefits of those students who learn about communication concepts and skills prior to entering upper level courses. Practicing communication concepts in coursework can promote team work, interpersonal skills, creativity, verbal communication skills, and problem-solving (Valenzano, Wallace, & Morreale, 2014).

For a new undergraduate student, college can be overwhelming and intimidating. Fostering new relationships, meeting new classmates, paying for groceries, figuring out parking, conducting research, focusing on academic writing, and sharing conversations with an instructor are just a small portion of what a new student is thinking about every day. Learning the attributes employers are looking for on a resume after they graduate is not necessarily on the mind of the new students. Understanding self, listening, and managing communication apprehension are communication skills valued by future employers (NACE, 2015). “Exploring the relational characteristic of communication a bit further, it can be maintained that relationships create worlds of meaning for people through communication” (Duck & McMahan, 2015, p. 11). In a BCC, students discuss, discover, and relate to the common communicative behaviors they are experiencing, thus creating the relationships needed to create meaning (Duck & McMahan, 2015). First year students can start mastering communication skills in year one. As a result, students have the potential to acknowledge communication traits and refine these attributes to navigate through their degree programs, increase their grade point average (GPA), and

improve interactions with parents, mentors, professors, and roommates for success in their first year and as they persist through graduation. These interactions shape self, actions, and roles in groups (Duck & McMahan, 2015).

Humans perform every day. An image is presented of who and what we believe about what kind of human we aspire to be. Metts and Cupach (2008) proposed this image represents self. An individual's self is identified by appearance, messages, and actions. For college students, understanding self can be a difficult concept to grasp. "Perception involves how a person views the world, organizes what is seen, and evaluates information, all of which will influence symbolic activity, that is, how we interact with everyone around us" (Duck & McMahan, 2015, p. 51). Understanding self for a first-year student can impact performance in classes and interpersonal relationships by creating awareness about who a person is and how a person uses communication. The concept of self, addressed in year one of college through enrollment in a BCC, could have an impact on when or if a student graduates (DeWitz et al., 2009).

Exposing first-year students to a BCC that introduces written communication, verbal communication, and interpersonal communication can help shape and identify students' concept of self. Duck and McMahan (2015) suggested critical thinking and listening should be added to this list of essential communication skills. Learning these skills could significantly impact college completion as students navigate relationships they are forming. In addition, employers are seeking graduates who possess these same skills (NACE, 2014).

Many aspects of the BCC have been researched since its inclusion in higher education. Researchers have examined the relationship between when a BCC is

completed in college (during or after the freshman year) and end of first year cumulative GPA or cumulative GPA at the time of graduation. In addition, limited studies have examined the relationship between when a BCC is completed in college (during the freshman year or after the freshman year) and academic major (art, social sciences, education, business, health sciences, science, technology, and mathematics), number of years to earn a college degree (6 or fewer), end of freshman year cumulative GPA, and college graduation GPA. Although research has been conducted about the BCC (Cohen, 2012; Dwyer & Fus, 2002; DeWitz et al., 2009) and its importance to student success, Cohen (2012) suggested the need for additional research that would provide a “student-based study to compare to course administrator-based findings” (p. 110). Although a few studies have investigated the relationship between when a BCC course is completed and end of first year cumulative GPA, GPA at the time of graduation, academic major, and number of years to graduate, no study has examined the impact of when a BCC is completed and these variables using a sample from one institution. Additional research is needed as the BCC continues to be a foundation course for first-year students at most undergraduate higher education institutions in the U.S.

Purpose of the Study

Four purposes guided this study. The first purpose was to determine if there is a difference in end of freshman year cumulative GPA (4.00-3.01, 3.00-2.01, 2.00-1.01, 1.00-0.00) between MU baccalaureate graduates who successfully completed (grade of A, B, or C) a BCC as a first-time full-time freshman and MU baccalaureate graduates who did not enroll in a BCC during the freshman year. The second purpose was to determine if there is a difference in academic major (art, social sciences, education,

business, health sciences, science, technology, and mathematics) at the time of graduation between MU baccalaureate graduates who successfully completed (grade of A, B, or C) a BCC as a first-time full-time freshman and MU baccalaureate graduates who did not enroll in a BCC during the freshman year. The third purpose was to determine if there is a difference in number of years to graduate between MU baccalaureate graduates who successfully completed (grade of A, B, or C) a BCC as a first-time full-time freshman and MU baccalaureate graduates who did not enroll in a BCC during the freshman year. The fourth purpose was to determine the difference in cumulative GPA (4.00-3.51, 3.50-3.01, 3.00-2.51, 2.50-2.00) at the time of graduation between MU baccalaureate graduates who successfully completed (grade of A, B, or C) a BCC as a first-time full-time freshman and MU baccalaureate graduates who did not enroll in a BCC during the freshman year.

Significance of the Study

A study identifying the differences between first-time full-time freshman who completed a BCC during their first year (fall 2011/spring 2012) and those who did not is important for several reasons. Examining when a student enrolls in a BCC and the impact of the time of enrollment on variables associated with academic success is a new realm of research. General education course directors could use the results from this study to develop a comprehensive plan for teaching basic communication skills or as part of a feasibility study to assist with curriculum changes. Administrators and faculty at the MU where the study was conducted will be interested in the results of the current study as they adapt policy changes related to the current general education course rotation. The KBOR may be interested in replicating the current study at the 32 public higher education

institutions within the state. Students who are considering enrolling in the basic course prior to entering college may also find value in the results of study. Finally, freshman students enrolling in the basic course may consider waiting to complete the BCC as a sophomore, junior, or senior, if delaying enrollment yields higher academic success.

Delimitations

“Delimitations are self-imposed boundaries set by the researcher on the purpose and scope of this study” (Lunenburg & Irby, 2008, p. 134). The researcher narrowed the focus of this study with the following delimitations:

1. The study was conducted at one four-year public Midwestern university.
2. This study addressed one general education communication course at the four-year public MU.
3. The researcher analyzed archival data for undergraduate students who matriculated to the MU as first-time, full-time freshmen in fall 2011 or spring 2012 who graduated in May of 2017 or earlier.
4. Undergraduate students who completed a BCC as a concurrent credit course in high school were not included in the study.
5. Undergraduate students who completed a BCC at a different four-year institution other than MU or at a community or technical college were not included in the study.
6. Undergraduate students who completed a BCC at MU between fall 2011 and spring 2017 were included in the study.
7. Undergraduate students who graduated after May 2017 were not included in the study.

8. Undergraduate students who enrolled in a BCC but earned a grade of D, U, or withdrew from the course were not included in the sample for the study.

Assumptions

Lunenburg and Irby (2008) defined assumptions as “postulates, premises, and propositions that are accepted as operational for purposes of the research” (p. 135). This study was conducted under the following assumptions:

1. The sample in the current study is representative of the total population of first-year students at one public Midwestern university.
2. Archival data were accurate and current.

Research Questions

Four research questions guided this study.

RQ1. To what extent is there a difference in end of freshman year cumulative GPA (4.00-3.01, 3.00-2.01, 2.00-1.01, 1.00-0.00) between MU baccalaureate graduates who successfully completed (grade of A, B, or C) a BCC as a first-time full-time freshman and MU baccalaureate graduates who did not enroll in a BCC during the freshman year?

RQ2. To what extent is there a difference in academic major (art, social sciences, education, business, health sciences, science, technology, and mathematics) at the time of graduation between MU baccalaureate students who successfully completed (grade of A, B, or C) a BCC as a first-time full-time freshman and graduated in 6 years or less and MU baccalaureate students who did not enroll in a BCC during the freshman year and graduated in 6 years or less?

RQ3. To what extent is there a difference in number of years to graduate between MU baccalaureate students who successfully completed (grade of A, B, or C) a BCC as a first-time full-time freshman and graduated in 6 years or less and MU baccalaureate students who did not enroll in a BCC during the freshman year and graduated in 6 years or less?

RQ4. To what extent is there a difference in cumulative GPA (4.00-3.51, 3.50-3.01, 3.00-2.51, 2.50-2.00) at the time of graduation between MU baccalaureate graduates who successfully completed (grade of A, B, or C) a BCC as a first-time full-time freshman and MU baccalaureate graduates who did not enroll in a BCC during the freshman year?

Definition of Terms

Definitions are provided for clarification of common terminology utilized throughout the study.

Basic Communication Course (BCC). According to the NCA (2018a), the basic general education communication course “focuses on teaching fundamental communication skills and theory to undergraduate students” (para. 3).

Communication apprehension (CA). McCroskey (1977) defined CA as “an individual’s level of fear or anxiety associated with either real or anticipated communication with another person or persons” (p. 78).

General Education. MU (2018b) defined general education programs as a means to “ensure that all students achieve a common set of learning outcomes that address the core skills essential for successful careers as well as the broad range of knowledge and ability required for success as twenty-first-century global citizen leaders” (para. 1).

Persistence. Voigt and Hundrieser (2008) indicated “Persistence is the enrollment headcount of any cohort compared to its headcount on its initial official census date. The goal is to measure the number of students who persist term to term and to completion” (p. 3).

Retention. National Student Clearinghouse Research Center (2015) defined retention as “continued enrollment (or degree completion) within the same higher education institution in the fall semesters of a student’s first and second year” (p. 7).

Self. McCornack and Ortiz (2017) stated the term self describes a student’s self-awareness based on an internal lens and social comparison.

Organization of the Study

This study is organized in five chapters. Chapter 1 provided an introduction, the background, statement of the problem, purpose of the study, and the significance as it pertains to higher education. Delimitations, assumptions, research questions, definition of terms, and the organization of the study were also included in this chapter. Chapter 2 provides a review of the literature. Major topics include persistence and retention in higher education, the role of the general education curriculum, an overview of the BCC, and the role of the Kansas Board of Regents in identifying core competencies for the BCC in Kansas public higher education institutions. Chapter 3 describes the methodology of the study including the research design, selection of participants, measurement, data collection procedures, and data analysis and hypothesis testing. Chapter 4 includes descriptive statistics and the results of the hypothesis testing. Chapter 5 provides a summary of the study including an overview of the problem, purpose statement and research questions, methodology review, and major findings. In addition,

the findings are related to the literature. Conclusions, including implications for actions, future research recommendations, and concluding remarks are also included in the final chapter.

Chapter 2

Review of the Literature

Chapter 2 provides a review of literature related to the major topics of the dissertation. First, research on factors related to student retention and persistence in higher education is summarized. Next, a review of the role of the general education curriculum in higher education is included. The literature review is completed with information about the focus on the BCC common topics included in the course, (communication apprehension and the nature of self).

Factors Related to Student Retention and Persistence in Higher Education

Research on student retention and success involves two factors in a student's academic life (McCroskey, Booth-Butterfield, & Payne, 1989). The first factor involves intellectual ability, experience, training, and student behavior in the classroom.

McCroskey et al. (1989) indicated the second factor includes communicative and social skills. Students bring and then continue successful development of those skills at the university. "Students who achieve academically and interpersonally will persist and graduate at a much higher rate than students who fail on one or both of these factors"

(McCroskey et al., 1989, p. 101). To determine the conceptual relationship between CA and indicators of student success in college, McCroskey et al. (1989) surveyed a cohort of incoming freshman at West Virginia University ($n = 1884$) over a four-year period by administering a measure of CA (Personal Report of Communication Apprehension) and obtaining grade point averages each semester for each student (McCroskey et al., 1989).

The authors reported,

Students with higher CA will earn lower grade point averages and are less likely to persist at the university. Even within those students who drop out, high CA leads to even lower GPA compared to low CA dropouts. Students with higher CA always implicated with poorer outcomes of academic achievement. (p. 104)

A student's persistence or the likelihood of dropping out is strongly predicted by academic performance and social integration (Conley, Travers, & Bryant, 2013).

Academic performance has been measured by a student's GPA. "GPA has been the most commonly used measure of students' academic success. It serves as a surrogate measure for the degree to which students have responded to the mutually reinforcing variables that comprise the college experience" (Zhou, 2010, p. 19). Currie et al. (2012) reported a connection between GPA and the ability to manage stress levels. "This suggests that for students starting college, the ability to handle the associated stress would be a good predictor of initial academic success" (Currie et al., 2012, p. 161). In the Currie et al. study, participants were undergraduate students in a fall semester course ($n = 133$) using a life skills data form (Life-Skills Development Inventory-College Form) in four categories: interpersonal communication, problem solving, physical fitness, and identity development. According to Habley, Bloom, and Robbins (2012), student preparation for success starts with high school transcripts. "Students with higher grade point averages, higher class ranks, higher admission test scores, high numbers of honors, and advanced preparation courses are those that succeed at a greater rate" (p. 130). Students cannot succeed in these areas to improve their academic preparation if their high school does not offer opportunities for dual enrollment, advanced preparation, or extra activities geared toward academic achievement (Jackson & Kurlaender, 2014). According to Habley et al.

(2012), “Academic performance is everyone’s problem” (p. 134). Habley et al. indicated outcomes beyond first-year persistence are important to a successful student. “Choosing a major, passing classes, engaging in university life, considering educational and career pathways are entwined with student success” (p. 137).

Identifying what motivates students in their academic performance has been studied by specifically targeting motivational theories. The theories tend to include self-worth and self-concept constructs (Habley et al., 2012). Robbins et al. (2004) tried to bridge the gap between the key determinants of academic performance and behavior. In a meta-analytic study, the researchers explored academic achievement and academic persistence outcomes. Habley et al. (2012) stated, “Student personality characteristics and traits, attitudes, and behaviors differentially influence a range of student success outcomes” (p. 137). These researchers identified this group of personality attributes as psychosocial factors. As college students evolve and change, a type of psychosocial development occurs. Habley et al. (2012) found that general motivational measures were predictive of academic performance and retention:

Overall, academic discipline (ability to do homework, attend classes, ask questions, and take responsibility for course performance) and commitment to college (an understood belief that college is important and finishing college is essential) were the strongest predictors of retention outcomes. (p. 159)

Tinto’s (1975) interactionist theory addressed a student’s background (race, gender, socioeconomic status, etc.) as it relates to persistence in higher education. These background factors “give rise to varying types of levels of commitment to goals and college” (Sidelinger et al., 2015, p. 64). Sidelinger et al. (2015) concluded, “Social and

academic integration in the classroom may foster student involvement in campus life outside of the classroom” (p. 65). College retention and experience success are two outcomes of successful social integration (Sidelinger et al., 2015). “It is important to consider the impact in-class interactions and experiences have on students’ out-of-class communication and behaviors” (Sidelinger et al., 2015, p. 65). These authors studied factors of instructor rapport, instructor clarity, student-to-student connectedness, out-of-class communication, self-regulated learning, and peer learning to determine their conclusions. The study was conducted in a public speaking course ($n=427$) at a public university. “Overall, the results of this study indicate that communication integration in the classroom facilitates students’ communication and academic behaviors outside of the classroom” (Sidelinger et al., 2015, p. 75). According to Morreale and Pearson (2008), “The millennial generation needs training in skills required to navigate a global world, including competencies related to electronic and intercultural communication” (p. 226). Conley et al. (2013) also researched the importance of social integration factors during the college years and stated, “College is a key developmental period of psychosocial risk versus resilience” (p. 75).

Attempting to navigate this stressful transition both academically and socially can influence persistence and retention of first year college students. Forming an identity can be challenging and stressful for a new student both academically and socially.

A characteristic tendency to procrastinate and avoid dealing with identity conflicts and issues during the first year of university may undermine the construction of a stable sense of identity by helping youth maintain a pre-existing foreclosed sense of self. (Adams, Berzonsky, & Keating, 2006, p. 89)

Without social integration among first year college students, loneliness may occur. Rotenberg and Morrison (1993) compared men and women first-year college students over two consecutive years. “Loneliness has been conceptualized as a person’s dissatisfaction with social relationships which is accompanied by a negative psychological state” (Rotenberg & Morrison, 1993, p. 1283). Rotenberg and Morrison’s (1993) expectations of men scoring higher on the Revised UCLA Loneliness Scale were confirmed with lack of social experiences and social competence affecting success in college (Rotenberg & Morrison, 1993).

General Education Curriculum

A general education curriculum includes a wide-range of topics, disciplines, applications, and skills in an undergraduate program that emphasizes the liberal arts. The purpose of the curriculum is to introduce students to a variety of subjects including written and oral communication, quantitative literacy, social science, art and humanities, and natural science to engage students in critical thinking in subjects other than their academic major. “It helps students develop a sense of social responsibility; strong intellectual and practical skills that span all major fields of study” (MU, 2018a, para. 2). The purpose of general education courses is to help students develop essential knowledge and skills that will assist them to navigate and ultimately graduate with an undergraduate degree (MU, 2017).

In a study by the Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U) it was stated that undergraduate student experiences provide a relevant and challenging general education curriculum through various initiatives (2019a). “The Liberal Education and America’s Promise (LEAP) is a national public advocacy and campus

action initiative. LEAP champions the importance of liberal education – for individual students and for a nation dependent on economic creativity and democratic vitality (AAC&U, 2019a, para. 1). Promoted by LEAP, a national leadership council comprised of educators, policymakers, and business and civic leaders developed the *LEAP Principles of Excellence* (AAC&U, 2019b). The principles are standards that challenge and provide guidance for education reform and renewal. The standards are a guide for any college or university. “The principles are intended to influence practice across the disciplines as well as in general education programs” (AAC&U, 2019b, para. 1). In the Teach the Arts of Inquiry and Innovation principle, educators are encouraged to “immerse all students in analysis, discovery, problem solving, and communication, beginning in school and advancing in college” (AAC&U, 2019b, para. 4).

Basic Communication Course

The BCC is a theory and skill level course that plays a significant role in the development of undergraduate students (Cohen, 2012). According to information reviewed on the NCA (2018b) website, personal growth, professional development, and the academic success of students may depend on the BCC course:

First, the course often provides the only training students receive in oral communication, a skill identified by employers as one of the most important they seek when making hiring decisions. Second, the course offers an opportunity for students to see how their education in other departments and majors can manifest through their use of communication skills, thus making the Basic Course one of the few General Education courses that connects material from their entire education. Third, the course is both a recruiting ground for potential new majors

by exposing them to the interesting and vast nature of our field, as well as the financial backbone of many departments. (para. 7)

The value attached to the BCC is not one to be overlooked as in many instances both academically and professionally, the skills fostered in the course could have a lasting impact and influence on an undergraduate student's success. "In the course, students are provided instruction in communication skills that can benefit them for a lifetime" (Morreale et al., 2010, p. 406).

The BCC is often the first course in the field of communication. As a general education requirement, a BCC is utilized in colleges, technical schools, and universities nation-wide. According to information reported on the NCA Basic Course Division website (2018a), a BCC may be the first exposure an undergraduate student has into the theory of communication and fundamental communication skills. Rooted in rhetorical traditions, the BCC has evolved since the days of Plato, Aristotle, Isocrates, and Quintillian (NCA, 2018b). The importance of a BCC and advocacy for universities to include this discipline of study in a general education program can be linked to retention (NCA, 2018b). Skills taught in the BCC can promote academic, personal, professional, and public lives (NCA, 2018a). "To ignore the course and its role in general education is to invite peril for the foundation of our departments and discipline" (Valenzano et al., 2014, p. 363). Changes in the higher education landscape have influenced the assessment measures imposed by state constituents and outcomes of the BCC. "The BCC is an economic essential as well as a vital undergraduate experience" (Morreale et al., 2010, p. 406).

In a BCC, frequent interaction between students and instructor coupled with assessment of performance is increased due to the skills-based performance element of presenting speeches. Skills-based performance means the ability to apply concepts and perform in an oral presentation and to complete speaker critiques as part of a listening component. Morrow and Ackermann (2012) indicated peer support or the perception of peer support can be a determining factor of retention and ultimately persistence of college students. Through peer critiques, students evaluate verbal and nonverbal delivery and demonstrate critical listening skills by identifying proper verbal citations of resources for a given topic (Morrow & Ackermann, 2012). “To ignore the course and its role in general education is to invite peril for the foundation of our departments and discipline) (Valenzano et al., 2014, p. 363).

Communication apprehension (CA). A factor that can disrupt effective communication is CA. CA is defined as “an individual’s level of fear or anxiety associated with either real or anticipated communication with another person or persons” (McCroskey, 1977, p. 78). According to Cohen, a basic communication course can significantly enhance a students’ perceived competence, which may reduce the high level of CA a student experiences in college (2012). CA has been found to have clear implications on a students’ academic and interpersonal success in college. Mehrley (1984) investigated the relationship of CA and attrition among first semester freshman at Indiana State University and found that dropout rates were significantly higher for those students with high CA. In a BCC, students revisit their past and present connection to this anxiety and learn to develop coping skills to alleviate avoidance behaviors, cognitive deficits, and performance failures in classroom presentations. McCroskey and Sheahan

(1978) noted that CA is also utilized by individuals beyond the classroom in their interpersonal relationship development while at college. “Students who experience CA in academic settings which require any form of oral communication will attempt to avoid the circumstances which entail communication” (McCroskey et al., 1989, p. 101). Students struggling with CA may find solace among their peers. Dwyer and Fus (2002) connected BCC instruction to lower perceptions of anxiety, self-efficacy, and public speaking competence. “Instruction in public speaking does contribute to student perception of decreased communication apprehension” (Dwyer & Fus, 2002, p. 34). Various interpersonal communication tasks influenced by CA include missing meetings, not performing in group work, and not communicating effectively with fellow peers while in college (McCroskey et al., 1989). McCroskey and Sheahan (1978) noted CA was associated with several withdrawal behaviors. Talking behaviors, or lack thereof, can influence a student’s residential housing choices and conflict resolution (McCroskey & Sheahan, 1978). “High CA individuals also develop fewer relationships with either peers or faculty in the college environment” (McCroskey & Sheahan, 1978, p. 41).

Hunter, Westwick, and Haleta (2014) purported biological sex as a factor in the preparedness and retention of students with CA:

It is possible that the effective reduction of public speaking anxiety (PSA) is a greater concern for female students than for males, as research has shown small but salient differences in PSA between females and males. For this reason, it is important to assess the changes in PSA by biological sex in the basic course. (p.

127)

According to Dwyer and Fus (2002), “Completion of a public speaking course should influence one’s perceived competency and level of apprehension with the expectation that at the end of the course, perceptions of competence will increase and levels of apprehension will decrease” (p. 31). Addressing CA and PSA are primary strengths of the communication discipline and one of the purposes of the basic communication course (Hunter et al., 2014, p. 125). “Public speaking instructors have long investigated ways to help students cope with CA” (Dwyer & Fus, 2002, p. 29).

The nature of self. A strong indicator for student improvement in communication skills is understanding self. According to Floyd (2011), the idea of self is “composed of ideas about who you are” (p. 72). Self-concept is linked directly to a person’s identity. It helps individuals understand who they are. In a BCC, students shape their self through interaction with classmates and through public speaking ability or lack thereof. “Supportive, constructive, and positive interactions with faculty and other students have been found to be associated with progress in dimensions associated with psychosocial maturity” (Adams et al., 2006).

According to De Janasz, Dowd, and Schneider (2018), “Understanding yourself - your internal states, preferences, resources, and intuitions - gives you the chance to understand your strengths and shortcomings. This is key not only to your ability to succeed, but also to your ability to work effectively with others” (p. 5). The idea of self is related to our formation and development of self-concept (Lane, 2010). Humans form self-concept through self-identity. “Healthy self-concepts can result in a realistic acknowledgment of our strengths and weaknesses, and therefore we may accept praise and defend viewpoints even when opposed by others” (Lane, 2010, p. 66). According to

Lane (2010), “Communication scholars contend that our self-concept is formed sustained, and changed by our interactions with others” (p. 64). In a BCC, students learn about self through management of CA, and their ability to manage CA can influence their ability to communicate effectively (Robinson, 1997). “CA is a problem for most students in the basic public speaking course, and the setting of the course is ideal for CA treatment” (Robinson, 1997, p. 189). Students presented with tools to manage their CA may become more confident in their communication abilities, which can ultimately shape their self-concept.

The ability to view self involves self-awareness. To achieve self-awareness, an individual must analyze self not only from an internal lens, but also consider social comparison. “Social comparison provides us with knowledge about ourselves in terms of how we measure up to others” (Lane, 2010, pp. 65-66). The act of social comparison considers others’ behaviors and comparison of oneself to a particular behavior (McCornack & Ortiz, 2017). In a BCC, speech presentations allow students to socially compare themselves with their peers. According to De Janasz et al. (2018), self-awareness can help individuals:

- Understand self in relation to others.
- Develop and implement a sound self-improvement program.
- Set meaningful life and career goals.
- Develop relationships with others.
- Understand the value of diversity.
- Manage others effectively.
- Increase productivity.

- Increase ability to contribute to organizations, peers, employers, community and family. (p. 6)

Numerous studies have indicated a connection between a student's confidence, self-efficacy, and ability to perform on academic tasks (Chemers, Hu, & Garcia, 2001; Wright, Jenkins-Guarnieri, & Murdock, 2012). Chemers et al. (2001) indicated self-efficacy is a central determinant of success:

Efficacy beliefs influence the particular courses of action a person chooses to pursue, the amount of effort that will be expended, perseverance in the face of challenges and failures, resilience, and the ability to cope with the demands associated with the chosen course. (p. 55)

Wright et al. (2012) reported that freshmen students' self-efficacy at the end of the first semester was associated with academic success. Furthermore, female students with high self-awareness were more successful. "At least two communication research reports have identified self-efficacy, one dimension of self-esteem, as being closely related to CA in interpersonal contexts" (Dwyer & Fus, 2002, p. 29). In a BCC, the nature and perception of self are explored to understand the core self and actions associated with learning about self. "Self-esteem strongly shapes your communication, relationships, and general outlook on life" (McCornack & Ortiz, 2017, p. 37). Communication competence stems from self-confidence gained in a BCC:

Students with ineffective listening skills fail to absorb much of the material to which they are exposed. Their problems are intensified when they respond incorrectly or inappropriately because of poor speaking skills. Students who

cannot clearly articulate what they know may be wrongly judged as uneducated or poorly informed. (Morreale et al., 2000, pp. 1-2)

Chemers et al. (2001) predicted confident students who enter college perform better academically than do less confident students, but past performance is not as predictive as expectations and current academic performance.

Summary

This chapter summarized the literature related to variables of persistence and retention in college. McCroskey et al. (1989) determined the two factors of success and retention. The first factor included intellectual ability, experience, training, and student behavior in the classroom and the second factor included communicative and social skills. “Students who achieve academically and interpersonally will persist and graduate at a much higher rate than students who fail on one or both of these factors” (McCroskey et al., 1989, p. 101). Academic performance has been measured by a student’s GPA. Zhou (2010) noted GPA as a common measurement used to assess academic success. A BCC is part of the general education coursework in the college curriculum. MU (2017) proposed the purpose of general education courses is to help students graduate and develop essential knowledge and skills. The literature review was completed with information about common BCC topics included in the course, including communication apprehension and the nature of self. Cohen (2012) determined a BCC can significantly enhance a students’ perceived competence, which may reduce the high level of CA a student experiences in college. CA has been found to have clear implications on a students’ academic and interpersonal success in college. Robinson (1997) noted students learn about self through management of CA in a BCC. According to Robinson learning

to manage CA can influence the ability to communicate effectively. Chapter 3 includes the methodology of the study including the research design, selection of participants, measurement, data collection procedures, data analysis and hypothesis testing, and limitations.

Chapter 3

Methods

Four purposes guided this study. The first purpose was to determine if there is a difference in end of freshman year cumulative GPA (4.00-3.01, 3.00-2.01, 2.00-1.01, 1.00-0.00) between MU baccalaureate graduates who successfully completed (grade of A, B, or C) a BCC as a first-time full-time freshman and MU baccalaureate graduates who did not enroll in a BCC during the freshman year. The second purpose was to determine if there is a difference in academic major (art, social sciences, education, business, health sciences, science, technology, and math) at the time of graduation between MU baccalaureate graduates who successfully completed (grade of A, B, or C) a BCC as a first-time full-time freshman and MU baccalaureate graduates who did not enroll in a BCC during the freshman year. The third purpose was to determine if there is a difference in number of years to graduate between MU baccalaureate graduates who successfully completed (grade of A, B, or C) a BCC as a first-time full-time freshman and MU baccalaureate graduates who did not enroll in a BCC during the freshman year. The fourth purpose was to determine the difference in cumulative GPA (4.00-3.51, 3.50-3.01, 3.00-2.51, 2.50-2.00) at the time of graduation between MU baccalaureate graduates who successfully completed (grade of A, B, or C) a BCC as a first-time full-time freshman and MU baccalaureate graduates who did not enroll in a BCC during the freshman year. Chapter 3 explains the research methodology used for this study. A description of the research design, selection of participants, measurement, data collection procedures, data analysis and hypothesis testing, and limitations is provided.

Research Design

This non-experimental quantitative study assessed archival data from MU. The variables of interest for the study were enrollment in and successful completion of a BCC with a grade of (A, B, or C) during the freshman year. The dependent variables included end of first year cumulative GPA (4.00-3.01, 3.00-2.01, 2.00-1.01, 1.00-0.00), academic major (art, social sciences, education, business, health sciences, science, technology, and mathematics), number of years to graduate, and cumulative GPA at graduation (4.00-3.51, 3.50-3.01, 3.00-2.51, 2.50-2.00).

Selection of Participants

The population for this study included ($n = 520$) undergraduate students at a public college or university who enrolled as first-time, full-time freshman in fall 2011 or spring 2012 who graduated with a baccalaureate degree within six or fewer years from the time of matriculation. Purposive sampling was used to determine the sample for the current study. The sample for the study included ($n = 440$) first-time, full-time freshman students who enrolled and successfully completed the BCC (A, B, or C grade) at MU.

Measurement

Archival data were obtained from the MU Institutional Effectiveness and Quality Improvement Office. Data were reported for all students who enrolled as first-time, full-time freshman at MU during the fall of 2011 or spring of 2012 who completed a baccalaureate degree in six years or less. Data points collected for first-time full-time freshman included enrollment status in a BCC (COMM 100) during the fall of 2011 and spring of 2012, semester and year of enrollment in a BCC, grade for the course, cumulative GPA (4.00-3.01, 3.00-2.01, 2.00-1.01, 1.00-0.00) at the end of the first year,

academic major at the time of graduation (art, social sciences, education, business, health sciences, science, technology, and mathematics), number of years to graduate (6 years or fewer, or did not graduate in 6 years), and cumulative GPA at graduation (4.00-3.51, 3.50-3.01, 3.00-2.51, 2.50-2.00).

Data Collection Procedures

Prior to collecting data, a request to conduct the study was submitted to the Baker University Institutional Review Board (IRB) on November 25, 2019. Approval to conduct the study was received on December 2, 2019, from the Baker University IRB committee (Appendix B). A request to conduct research was submitted to MU's IRB for approval on December 5, 2019. Permission to conduct the research was emailed December 16, 2019 (Appendix C).

Archival data were collected from the student database from the MU Institutional Effectiveness and Quality Improvement Office. Identification numbers were assigned to each set of student data to preserve student anonymity. Data were organized into a Microsoft Excel document for convenience and uploaded into IBM® SPSS® Statistics 25 Faculty Pack for Windows for analysis.

Data Analysis and Hypothesis Testing

The following section includes the four research questions, associated hypotheses, and statistical analyses.

RQ1. To what extent is there a difference in end of freshman year cumulative GPA (4.00-3.01, 3.00-2.01, 2.00-1.01, 1.00-0.00) between MU baccalaureate graduates who successfully completed (grade of A, B, or C) a BCC as a first-time full-time

freshman and MU baccalaureate graduates who did not enroll in a BCC during the freshman year?

H1. There is a difference in end of freshman year cumulative GPA (4.00-3.01, 3.00-2.01, 2.00-1.01, 1.00-0.00) between MU baccalaureate graduates who successfully completed (grade of A, B, or C) a BCC as a first-time full-time freshman and MU baccalaureate graduates who did not enroll in a BCC during the freshman year. A chi-square test of independence was conducted to test H1. The two categorical variables used in the analysis were end of freshman year cumulative GPA (4.00-3.01, 3.00-2.01, 2.00-1.01, 1.00-0.00) and BCC completion status (successfully completed with an A, B, or C freshman year or did not enroll freshman year). The observed frequencies were compared to those expected by chance. The level of significance was set at .05. An effect size is reported, when appropriate.

RQ2. To what extent is there a difference in academic major (art, social sciences, education, business, health sciences, science, technology, and mathematics) at the time of graduation between MU baccalaureate students who successfully completed (grade of A, B, or C) a BCC as a first-time full-time freshman and graduated in 6 years or less and MU baccalaureate students who did not enroll in a BCC during the freshman year and graduated in 6 years or less?

H2. There is a difference in academic major (art, social sciences, education, business, health sciences, science, technology, and mathematics) at the time of graduation between MU baccalaureate students who successfully completed (grade of A, B, or C) a BCC as a first-time full-time freshman and graduated in 6 years or less and MU

baccalaureate students who did not enroll in a BCC during the freshman year and graduated in 6 years or less.

A chi-square test of independence was conducted to test H2. The two categorical variables used in the analysis were academic major (art, social sciences, education, business, health sciences, science, technology, and mathematics) and BCC completion status (successfully completed with an A, B, or C freshman year or did not enroll freshman year). The observed frequencies were compared to those expected by chance. The level of significance was set at .05. An effect size is reported, when appropriate.

RQ3. To what extent is there a difference in number of years to graduate between MU baccalaureate students who successfully completed (grade of A, B, or C) a BCC as a first-time full-time freshman and graduated in 6 years or less and MU baccalaureate students who did not enroll in a BCC during the freshman year and graduated in 6 years or less?

H3. There is a difference in number of years to graduate between MU baccalaureate students who successfully completed (grade of A, B, or C) a BCC as a first-time full-time freshman and graduated in 6 years or less and MU baccalaureate students who did not enroll in a BCC during the freshman year and graduated in 6 years or less.

A chi-square test of independence was conducted to test H3. The two categorical variables used in the analysis were number of years to graduate and BCC completion status (successfully completed with an A, B, or C freshmen year or did not enroll freshmen year). The observed frequencies were compared to those expected by chance. The level of significance was set at .05.

RQ4. To what extent is there a difference in cumulative GPA (4.00-3.51, 3.50-3.01, 3.00-2.51, 2.50-2.00) at graduation between MU baccalaureate students who successfully completed (grade of A, B, or C) a BCC as a first-time full-time freshman and graduated in 6 years or less and MU baccalaureate students who did not enroll in a BCC during the freshman year and graduated in 6 years or less?

H4. There is a difference in cumulative GPA (4.00-3.51, 3.50-3.01, 3.00-2.51, 2.50-2.00) at the time of graduation between MU baccalaureate students who successfully completed (grade of A, B, or C) a BCC as a first-time full-time freshman and graduated in 6 years or less and MU baccalaureate students who did not enroll in a BCC during the freshman year and graduated in 6 years or less.

A chi-square test of independence was conducted to test H4. The two categorical variables used in the analysis were cumulative GPA (4.00-3.51, 3.50-3.01, 3.00-2.51, 2.50-2.00) at the time of graduation and BCC completion status (successfully completed with an A, B, or C freshman year or did not enroll freshman year). The observed frequencies were compared to those expected by chance. The level of significance was set at .05. An effect size is reported, when appropriate.

Limitations

“Limitations are factors that may have an effect on the interpretation of the findings or on the generalizability of the results” (Lunenburg & Irby, 2008, p. 133). This study had the following limitations:

1. Results could vary for freshmen who matriculated to MU a different academic year. BCC course availability at MU in different years may have impacted the

number of freshman seats available in the course. Instructors assigned to teach the BCC may have differed in style or quality of instruction.

2. It is unknown what impact enrollment in and successful completion of a BCC in an environment other than MU may have had on the variables included in the current study.
3. It is unknown what impact varied course schedules may have had on the academic success of undergraduate students.
4. It is unknown what impact variations in student comprehension of managing self and communication apprehension may have had on BCC completion or use of BCC skills after completion of the course.

Summary

Chapter 3 described the methods used in the current study. The chapter included the research design, selection of participants, measurement, data collection procedures, data analysis and hypothesis testing, and limitations of the study. The results of the hypothesis testing are presented in Chapter 4.

Chapter 4

Results

Four purposes guided this study. The first purpose was to determine if there is a difference in end of freshman year cumulative GPA (4.00-3.01, 3.00-2.01, 2.00-1.01, 1.00-0.00) between MU baccalaureate graduates who successfully completed (grade of A, B, or C) a BCC as a first-time full-time freshman and MU baccalaureate graduates who did not enroll in a BCC during the freshman year. The second purpose was to determine if there is a difference in academic major (art, social sciences, education, business, health sciences, science, technology, and mathematics) at the time of graduation between MU baccalaureate graduates who successfully completed (grade of A, B, or C) a BCC as a first-time full-time freshman and MU baccalaureate graduates who did not enroll in a BCC during the freshman year. The third purpose was to determine if there is a difference in number of years to graduate between MU baccalaureate graduates who successfully completed (grade of A, B, or C) a BCC as a first-time full-time freshman and MU baccalaureate graduates who did not enroll in a BCC during the freshman year. The fourth purpose was to determine the difference in cumulative GPA (4.00-3.51, 3.50-3.01, 3.00-2.51, 2.50-2.00) at the time of graduation between MU baccalaureate graduates who successfully completed (grade of A, B, or C) a BCC as a first-time full-time freshman and MU baccalaureate graduates who did not enroll in a BCC during the freshman year. Chapter 4 presents descriptive statistics for the sample and the results of hypotheses testing.

Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive statistics were utilized to describe the sample of the study. MU baccalaureate students included in the study were first-time full-time freshman in fall 2011 or spring 2012. A total of 520 first-time full-time students enrolled during the specified time. Students who matriculated to MU with an Associates degree were removed from the data base since they did not meet the criteria for inclusion in the study as first-time full-time students. Those who had completed a BCC as a concurrent credit course in high school were also excluded from the data base since they did not enroll in a BCC at MU. In addition, those who enrolled in a BCC during the freshman year but failed the course were also removed from the data base as they did not meet the criteria for successful completion. The data base included a total of 440 students (252 female students and 188 male students). Of the 440 included in the data set, 248 graduated in six years or less. Twenty-five students graduated between seven and nine years. These students were not included in the data base since they exceeded the six-year graduation limit criterion. One hundred sixty-seven students did not graduate from MU. Data for these students were also excluded from the data base.

Table 1

Frequencies and Percentages for Year of BCC Enrollment for Fall 2011/Spring 2012

Matriculants

BCC Enrollment Year Completion Status	<i>N</i>	%
Freshman	272	61.8
Sophomore	112	25.5
Junior	35	8.0
Senior	21	4.8

Academic majors of those who matriculated as first-time full-time freshmen during the 2011-2012 academic year who graduated within nine years ($n = 273$) are summarized in Table 2. Health Sciences included the highest number of graduates, whereas Art included the fewest graduates. Appendix D includes the complete list of majors.

Table 2

Frequencies and Percentages for Academic Major Categories

Academic Major Category	Students Graduated	%
Art	22	8.1
Business	47	17.2
Education	25	9.2
Health Sciences	82	30.0
Social Sciences	48	17.6
STM	49	17.9

Note. STM = Science, Technology, and Mathematics.

Table 3 summarizes the number of years to graduate for first-time full-time freshmen who matriculated during the 2011-2012 academic year. The data used in the hypothesis testing included students who graduated in 6 years or less ($n = 248$). The six-year time frame was based on the average number of years expected for students obtaining a bachelor's degree from a public 4-year degree-granting institution (National Center for Education Statistics, 2019). The data in Table 3 summarizes all students in the data set who graduated ($n = 273$) within nine years of matriculation.

Table 3

Frequencies and Percentages for Years to Graduation

Years to Graduate	<i>N</i>	%
2	1	0.4
3	5	1.8
4	101	37.0
5	111	40.7
6	30	11.0
7	15	5.5
8	8	2.9
9	2	0.7

Hypothesis Testing

RQ1. To what extent is there a difference in end of freshman year cumulative GPA (4.00-3.01, 3.00-2.01, 2.00-1.01, 1.00-0.00) between MU baccalaureate graduates who successfully completed (grade of A, B, or C) a BCC as a first-time full-time freshman and MU baccalaureate graduates who did not enroll in a BCC during the freshman year?

H1. There is a difference in end of freshman year cumulative GPA (4.00-3.01, 3.00-2.01, 2.00-1.01, 1.00-0.00) between MU baccalaureate graduates who successfully completed (grade of A, B, or C) a BCC as a first-time full-time freshman and MU baccalaureate graduates who did not enroll in a BCC during the freshman year.

A chi-square test of independence was conducted to test H1. The two categorical variables used in the analysis were end of freshman year cumulative GPA (4.00-3.01, 3.00-2.01, 2.00-1.01, 1.00-0.00) and BCC completion status (successfully completed with an A, B, or C freshmen year or did not enroll freshmen year). The observed frequencies

were compared to those expected by chance. The level of significance was set at .05. An effect size is reported, when appropriate.

The results of the chi-square test of independence indicated a statistically significant difference between the observed and expected values, $\chi^2(3) = 9.912, p = .019$, Cramer's $V = .200$. See Table 4 for the observed and expected frequencies. Students who did not complete a BCC during the freshman year had a higher than expected frequency ($n = 9.9$) for an end of freshman year cumulative GPA of 2.00-1.01 ($n = 16$).

The observed frequency for baccalaureate students who did successfully complete a BCC and graduated with a cumulative GPA at the end of their freshman year of 4.00-3.01 ($n = 81$) was higher than the expected frequency ($n = 73.4$). H1 was supported. The effect size indicated a medium effect. There is a difference in end of freshman year cumulative GPA between MU baccalaureate graduates who successfully completed a BCC as a first-time full-time freshman and MU baccalaureate graduates who did not enroll in a BCC during the freshman year.

Table 4

Observed and Expected Frequencies for H1

BCC Completion Status	Freshman GPA	f_{observed}	f_{expected}
No	4.00-3.01	58	65.2
	3.00-2.01	42	41.0
	2.00-1.01	16	9.9
	1.00-0.00	1	0.5
Yes	4.00-3.01	81	73.4
	3.00-2.01	45	46.0
	2.00-1.01	5	11.1
	1.00-0.00	0	0.5

RQ2. To what extent is there a difference in academic major (art, social sciences, education, business, health sciences, science, technology, and mathematics) at the time of graduation between MU baccalaureate students who successfully completed (grade of A, B, or C) a BCC as a first-time full-time freshman and graduated in 6 years or less and MU baccalaureate students who did not enroll in a BCC during the freshman year and graduated in 6 years or less?

H2. There is a difference in academic major (art, social sciences, education, business, health sciences, science, technology, and math) at the time of graduation between MU baccalaureate students who successfully completed (grade of A, B, or C) a BCC as a first-time full-time freshman and graduated in 6 years or less and MU baccalaureate students who did not enroll in a BCC during the freshman year and graduated in 6 years or less.

A chi-square test of independence was conducted to test H2. The two categorical variables used in the analysis were academic major (arts, social sciences, education, business, health sciences, science, technology, and math) and BCC completion status (successfully completed with an A, B, or C freshmen year or did not enroll freshmen year). The observed frequencies were compared to those expected by chance. The level of significance was set at .05. An effect size is reported, when appropriate.

The results of the chi-square test of independence indicated a statistically significant difference between the observed and expected values, $\chi^2(5) = 14.829$, $p = .011$, Cramer's V = .245. See Table 5 for the observed and expected frequencies. The observed frequency for baccalaureate students who did not successfully complete a BCC and graduated with a health science major ($n = 43$) was higher than the expected frequency ($n = 34.4$). The observed frequency for baccalaureate students who did not successfully complete a BCC and graduated with a social science major ($n = 26$) was higher than the expected frequency ($n = 21.2$). The observed frequency for baccalaureate students who did successfully complete a BCC and graduated with a business major ($n = 27$) was higher than the expected frequency ($n = 22.2$). The observed frequency for baccalaureate students who did successfully complete a BCC and graduated with an education major ($n = 18$) was higher than the expected frequency ($n = 12.1$). The observed frequency for baccalaureate students who did successfully complete a BCC and graduated with a science, technology, and math major ($n = 28$) was higher than the expected frequency ($n = 25.4$). H2 was supported. The effect size indicated a medium effect. There is a difference in academic major at the time of graduation between MU baccalaureate students who successfully completed a BCC as a first-time full-time

freshman and graduated in 6 years or less and MU baccalaureate students who did not enroll in a BCC during the freshman year and graduated in 6 years or less.

Table 5

Observed and Expected Frequencies for H2

BCC Completion Status	Academic Major	f_{observed}	f_{expected}
No	Art	8	8.0
	Business	15	19.8
	Education	5	10.9
	Health Sciences	43	34.4
	Social Sciences	26	21.2
	STM	20	22.6
Yes	Art	9	9.0
	Business	27	22.2
	Education	18	12.1
	Health Sciences	30	38.6
	Social Sciences	19	23.8
	STM	28	25.4

Note. STM = Science, Technology, and Mathematics.

RQ3. To what extent is there a difference in number of years to graduate between MU baccalaureate students who successfully completed (grade of A, B, or C) a BCC as a first-time full-time freshman and graduated in 6 years or less and MU baccalaureate students who did not enroll in a BCC during the freshman year and graduated in 6 years or less?

H3. There is a difference in number of years to graduate between MU baccalaureate students who successfully completed (grade of A, B, or C) a BCC as a

first-time full-time freshman and graduated in 6 years or less and MU baccalaureate students who did not enroll in a BCC during the freshman year and graduated in 6 years or less.

A chi-square test of independence was conducted to test H3. The two categorical variables used in the analysis were number of years to graduate and BCC completion status (successfully completed with an A, B, or C freshmen year or did not enroll freshmen year). The observed frequencies were compared to those expected by chance. The level of significance was set at .05.

The results of the chi-square test of independence indicated a marginally significant difference between the observed and expected values, $\chi^2(4) = 9.299, p = .054$. See Table 6 for the observed and expected frequencies. Although the finding is not statistically significant, the observed frequency for baccalaureate students who did not successfully complete a BCC and graduated in 5 years ($n = 59$) was higher than the expected frequency ($n = 52.4$). The observed frequency for baccalaureate students who did not successfully complete a BCC and graduated in 6 years ($n = 18$) was higher than the expected frequency ($n = 14.2$). The observed frequency for baccalaureate students who did successfully complete a BCC and graduated in 4 years ($n = 64$) was higher than the expected frequency ($n = 53.4$). H3 was supported. There is a difference in number of years to graduate between MU baccalaureate students who successfully completed a BCC as a first-time full-time freshman and graduated in 6 years or less and MU baccalaureate students who did not enroll in a BCC during the freshman year and graduated in 6 years or less.

Table 6

Observed and Expected Frequencies for H3

BCC Completion Status	Years to Graduate	f_{observed}	f_{expected}
No	2	1	0.5
	3	2	2.4
	4	37	47.6
	5	59	52.4
	6	18	14.2
Yes	2	0	0.5
	3	3	2.6
	4	64	53.4
	5	52	58.6
	6	12	15.8

RQ4. To what extent is there a difference in cumulative GPA (4.00–3.51, 3.50–3.01, 3.00–2.51, 2.50–2.00) at graduation between MU baccalaureate students who successfully completed (grade of A, B, or C) a BCC as a first-time full-time freshman and graduated in 6 years or less and MU baccalaureate students who did not enroll in a BCC during the freshman year and graduated in 6 years or less?

H4. There is a difference in cumulative GPA (4.00–3.51, 3.50–3.01, 3.00–2.51, 2.50–2.00) at the time of graduation between MU baccalaureate students who successfully completed (grade of A, B, or C) a BCC as a first-time full-time freshman and graduated in 6 years or less and MU baccalaureate students who did not enroll in a BCC during the freshman year and graduated in 6 years or less.

A chi-square test of independence was conducted to test H4. The two categorical variables used in the analysis were cumulative GPA (4.00-3.51, 3.50-3.01, 3.00-2.51, 2.50-2.00) at the time of graduation and BCC completion status (successfully completed with an A, B, or C freshman year or did not enroll freshman year). The observed frequencies were compared to those expected by chance. The level of significance was set at .05. An effect size is reported, when appropriate.

The results of the chi-square test of independence indicated a marginally significant difference between the observed and expected values, $\chi^2(3) = 6.150, p = .105$. See Table 7 for the observed and expected frequencies. Although the finding is not statistically significant, the observed frequency for baccalaureate students who did not successfully complete a BCC and graduated with a cumulative GPA of 2.50-2.00 ($n = 17$) was higher than the expected frequency ($n = 11.8$). The observed frequency for baccalaureate students who did not successfully complete a BCC and graduated with a cumulative GPA of 3.50-3.01 ($n = 45$) was higher than the expected frequency ($n = 42.9$). The observed frequency for baccalaureate students who successfully completed a BCC and graduated with a cumulative GPA of 3.00-2.51 ($n = 34$) was higher than the expected frequency ($n = 30.6$). The observed frequency for baccalaureate students who successfully completed a BCC and graduated with a cumulative GPA of 4.00-3.51 ($n = 43$) was higher than the expected frequency ($n = 39.1$). H4 was supported. There is a difference in cumulative GPA at the time of graduation between MU baccalaureate students who successfully completed a BCC as a first-time full-time freshman and graduated in 6 years or less and MU baccalaureate students who did not enroll in a BCC during the freshman year and graduated in 6 years or less.

Table 7

Observed and Expected Frequencies for H4

BCC Completion Status	Cumulative GPA	f_{observed}	f_{expected}
No	4.00-3.51	31	34.9
	3.50-3.01	45	42.9
	3.00-2.51	24	27.4
	2.50-2.00	17	11.8
Yes	4.00-3.51	43	39.1
	3.50-3.01	46	48.1
	3.00-2.51	34	30.6
	2.50-2.00	8	13.2

Summary

Chapter 4 included descriptive statistics and the results of the four hypotheses identified from the four research questions for the study. Students who successfully completed a BCC and completed their first year with a cumulative GPA of 4.00-3.01 was significant. There is a difference in academic major at the time of graduation between MU baccalaureate students who successfully completed a BCC as a first-time full-time freshman. Academic major categories of business, education, science, technology, and mathematics all proved significant. Students who successfully completed a BCC during the freshman year and graduated in 4 years was significant. A marginally significant difference was found between cumulative GPA at the time of graduation and those students who successfully completed a BCC as first-time full-time freshman.

Chapter 5 provides interpretations and recommendations based on the current study. The chapter includes the study summary, overview of the problem, purpose statement and research questions, review of the methodology, and major findings. Chapter 5 concludes with findings related to the literature, conclusions, implications for action, recommendations for future research, and concluding remarks.

Chapter 5

Interpretation and Recommendations

The purpose of this study was to investigate whether the enrollment of baccalaureate graduates who completed a BCC in their first year impacted freshman year cumulative GPA, academic major, number of years to graduate, or cumulative GPA at the time of graduation. Chapter 5 contains the study summary, overview of the problem, purpose statement and research questions, review of the methodology, and major findings. The chapter concludes with findings related to the literature, conclusions, implications for action, recommendations for future research, and concluding remarks.

Study Summary

Limited studies have examined the relationship between when a BCC is completed and the academic success of undergraduates. Although research has been conducted about the BCC (Cohen, 2012; Dwyer & Fus, 2002; DeWitz et al., 2009) and its importance to student success, additional research is needed as the BCC remains a foundation course for first-year students. This section provides an overview of the research problem and study summary. The research questions that guided the study are identified. A review of the research methodology and major findings from the hypothesis testing are presented.

Overview of the problem. “The ability to communicate effectively and appropriately is learned and, therefore, must be taught” (Morreale et al., 2000, p. 2). The NACE (2015) reported job seekers need to possess several communication skills including written, oral, and interpersonal communication. Practicing communication concepts in coursework can promote team work, interpersonal skills, creativity, verbal

communication skills, and problem-solving (Valenzano et al., 2014). First-year students can start mastering communication skills in year one. As a result, students have the potential to acquire communication traits and refine these attributes to navigate through their degree programs, increase their GPA, and improve interactions with parents, mentors, professors, and roommates for success in their freshman year and as they persist through graduation (Duck & McMahan, 2015).

Purpose statement and research questions. Four purposes guided this study.

The first purpose and research question determined if there is a difference in end of freshman year cumulative GPA (4.00-3.01, 3.00-2.01, 2.00-1.01, 1.00-0.00) between MU baccalaureate graduates who successfully completed (grade of A, B, or C) a BCC as a first-time full-time freshman and MU baccalaureate graduates who did not enroll in a BCC during the freshman year. The second purpose and research question identified if there is a difference in academic major (art, social sciences, education, business, health sciences, science, technology, and mathematics) at the time of graduation between MU baccalaureate graduates who successfully completed (grade of A, B, or C) a BCC as a first-time full-time freshman and MU baccalaureate graduates who did not enroll in a BCC during the freshman year. The third purpose and research question determined if there is a difference in number of years to graduate between MU baccalaureate graduates who successfully completed (grade of A, B, or C) a BCC as a first-time full-time freshman and MU baccalaureate graduates who did not enroll in a BCC during the freshman year. The final purpose and research question determined the difference in cumulative GPA (4.00-3.51, 3.50-3.01, 3.00-2.51, 2.50-2.00) at the time of graduation between MU baccalaureate graduates who successfully completed (grade of A, B, or C) a

BCC as a first-time full-time freshman and MU baccalaureate graduates who did not enroll in a BCC during the freshman year.

Review of the methodology. This non-experimental quantitative study assessed archival data from MU. The variable of interest for the study was enrollment in and completion of a BCC with a grade of (A, B, or C) during the freshman year. The dependent variables included end of first year cumulative GPA (4.00-3.01, 3.00-2.01, 2.00-1.01, 1.00-0.00), academic major (art, social sciences, education, business, health sciences, science, technology, and mathematics) at the time of graduation, number of years to graduate, and cumulative GPA at graduation (4.00-3.51, 3.50-3.01, 3.00-2.51, 2.50-2.00).

Major findings. Students who successfully completed a BCC during the freshman year had a higher cumulative GPA at the end of the first year of college than students who did not complete a BCC during the freshman year. Those who successfully completed a BCC during the freshman year majored more frequently in business, education, science, technology, or mathematics at the time of graduation than students who did not complete a BCC during the freshman year. More BCC freshman year completers graduated in four years compared to non-freshman year BCC completers. Finally, cumulative GPA at the time of graduation was higher for BCC freshman year completers than those who did not complete a BCC during the freshman year.

Findings Related to the Literature

Academic performance has been measured by a student's GPA. "GPA has been the most commonly used measure of students' academic success. It serves as a surrogate measure for the degree to which students have responded to the mutually reinforcing

variables that comprise the college experience” (Zhou, 2010, p. 19). The BCC is a theory and skill level course that plays a significant role in the development of undergraduate students (Cohen, 2012). Duck and McMahan (2015) described how acquiring communication skills early in the undergraduate experience resulted in student navigation throughout degree programs and increased GPAs. In the current study, students who enrolled in a BCC during their first year had a higher cumulative GPA at the end of their freshman year and at the time of graduation than those who did not complete the BCC during the freshman year. The current study supports the previous literature.

McCroskey (1989) stated, “Students who achieve academically and interpersonally will persist and graduate at a much higher rate than students who fail on one or both of these factors” (p. 101). Habley et al. (2012) concurred with the importance of academic performance and its relationship to persistence. Morreale et al. (2010) and the NCA (2018a; 2018b) linked academic success as well as personal growth and professional development to the BCC course. In the current study, more students who successfully completed a BCC as a first-time full-time freshman graduated in 4 years in comparison to students who did not complete a BCC during the freshman year.

Conclusions

Findings from the current study found differences in end of first year cumulative GPA, academic major, number of years to graduate, and cumulative GPA at the time of graduation between students who successfully completed a BCC during the freshman and those who did not enroll in a BCC the freshman year. A majority of students who successfully completed a BCC ended their first year with a cumulative GPA of 4.00-3.01 in comparison to those who did not enroll in a BCC the freshman year. The study results

indicated there is a difference in academic major at the time of graduation between MU baccalaureate students who successfully completed a BCC as a first-time full-time freshman and graduated in 6 years or less. Freshman year enrollees were more likely to major in business, education, science, technology, or mathematics in comparison to non-freshman year BCC enrollees. Students who successfully completed a BCC as a first-time full-time freshman graduated more frequently in 4 years in comparison to non-freshman year BCC enrollees. Cumulative GPA at the time of graduation was higher for those students who successfully completed a BCC as first-time full-time freshman than for those who did not enroll in a BCC during the freshman year.

Implications for action. Given the differences in end of freshman year cumulative GPA, academic major at the time of graduation, number of years to graduate, and cumulative GPA at the time of graduation, results of the current study should be shared with academic advisors and students matriculating to MU. As MU plans for effective advising and support to first-time full-time freshmen, the results of this study could be utilized to promote the value of enrollment in a BCC during the freshman year. Students should be advised to enroll in the BCC during the fall or spring of the freshman year. General education course directors could use the results from the study to develop a comprehensive plan for teaching BCC skills early in a student's academic enrollment. Results of the current study could also be shared with administrators at MU to promote examination of the impact of other general education course enrollments on student academic success factors. MU administration, department chairs, and faculty in business, education, science, technology, and mathematics could use the study results to map

enrollment guidelines for success. With rising higher education costs, MU could promote the 4-year graduation rate of students who enroll in a BCC during the freshman year.

Recommendations for future research. The current study only examined the BCC enrollment of one cohort of students – those who matriculated as first-time full-time freshmen during the 2011-2012 academic year. A multi-year longitudinal study could examine the impact of enrollment in a BCC during the freshman year on variables similar to those included in the current study. Data trends in the variables studied could be identified through analysis of multiple years of data, resulting in greater certainty in interpretation of findings. The MU also has a large virtual campus. The impact of BCC enrollment during the freshman year on variables similar to those examined in the current study with students who complete virtual coursework could be studied. A comparison focusing on how BCC instruction is offered, online or face-to-face, could be investigated. Data from a study comparing online with on-ground instruction in a BCC may assist academic advisors sharing success rates with students as decisions are made regarding which format of instruction results in the highest level of success.

In the current study only cumulative GPA at the end of the freshman year and at the time of graduation, college major at the time of graduation, and number of years to graduate were investigated. Future studies could also examine BCC enrollment and student growth in listening, managing CA, and self-confidence as these are tenets of an effective communicator (Dwyer & Fus, 2002). Finally, the current study was conducted at only one Midwestern regional comprehensive public university. Similar studies could be conducted at all four-year institutions in the midwestern state in which the current study took place. BCC time of enrollment in two-year institutions could also be

conducted. The importance of a comparison study would assist KBOR in updating transfer and articulation agreements between universities. Finally, a study could examine high school concurrent credit completion of a BCC. This is important as concurrent enrollment numbers increase. According to an article by the Community College Research Center (2012) students with dual enrollment or concurrent credit courses demonstrate increased persistence and earn a higher college GPA. A study comparing concurrent enrollment in a BCC and first year of college BCC completion could examine differences in the same variables used in the current study. Findings from this comparative study could lead higher education institutions to either promote dual enrollment in a BCC or a recommendation to enroll in the BCC during the freshman year of college.

Concluding remarks. The current study expanded understanding about the role of a BCC in undergraduate education. Students who enrolled in a BCC and successfully completed the course during the freshman year at a MU had higher cumulative GPAs at the end of the freshman year and at the time of graduation than students who did not enroll in the BCC until after the freshman year. A high percentage of freshman year BCC enrollees completed the baccalaureate degree within four years. Additionally, the encouragement by MU academic advisors to complete the BCC early in a degree program was supported by the results of this study. Students may benefit from the findings of the current study as they make decisions about when to enroll in a BCC – during or after the freshman year. The current study findings may be of interest to academic departments, basic course directors, and parents, as they encourage and advise freshmen about enrollment in general education courses.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Kansas Core Outcome Group Basic Course Competencies

Discipline: Communication

General Course Title: Public Speaking

Date Developed (and any modification): January 2001; updated 2004; updated September 2007, September 2011, October 2012, October 2017

Comments:

Minimum Core Competencies for Speech: The following document is published by The National Communication Association (NCA) and has been adopted by the Kansas Speech Educators in Higher Education Interest Group as the minimum core competencies for the BCC (January 2001). This document was updated in 2004 and again in 2007 to reflect accuracy in course titles and course numbers (September 2007).

Core Outcomes:

SPEAKING COMPETENCIES (Quianthy, 1990): Speaking is the process of transmitting ideas and information orally in a variety of situations. Effective oral communication involves generating messages and delivering them with attention to vocal variety, articulation, and nonverbal signals.

- I. **The Competent Speaker must complete a minimum of four speeches that include a written assignment, peer review and requires increasingly rigorous research and must be delivered in front of a live synchronous audience.**
 - A. Faculty are asked to consider, when evaluating student speakers, that an audience should include five appropriate persons.

- II. **The COMPETENT SPEAKER must be able to compose a message and provide ideas and information suitable to the topic, purpose, and audience.**
 - A. Faculty are asked to consider, when evaluating student speakers, that the competent speaker should be able to demonstrate skills included below.
 1. **Determine the Purpose of Oral Discourse**
 - a. Identify the various purposes for discourse.
 - b. Identify the similarities and differences among various purposes.
 - c. Understand that different contexts require differing purposes.
 - d. Generate a specific purpose relevant to the context when given a general purpose.

 2. **Choose a Topic and Restrict It According to the Purpose and the Audience**
 - a. Identify a subject that is relevant to the speaker's role, knowledge, concerns, and interests.
 - b. Narrow the topic adapting it to the purpose and time constraints for communicating.
 - c. Adapt the treatment of the topic to the context for communication.

3. Fulfill the Purpose of Oral Discourse

- a. Formulate a thesis statement.
 1. Use a thesis as a planning tool.
 2. Summarize the central message in a manner consistent with the purpose.
- b. Provide adequate support material.
 1. Demonstrate awareness of available types of support.
 2. Locate appropriate support materials.
 3. Select appropriate support based on the topic, audience, setting, and purpose.
- c. Select a suitable organizational pattern.
 1. Demonstrate awareness of alternative organizational patterns.
 2. Demonstrate understanding of the functions of organizational pattern, including the following:
 - i. Clarification of information.
 - ii. Facilitation of listener comprehension.
 - iii. Change of attitude.
 - iv. Relational interaction.
 - v. Selection of organizational patterns that are appropriate to the topic, audience, context, and purpose.
- d. Demonstrate careful choice of words.
 1. Demonstrate understanding of the power of language.
 2. Select words that are appropriate to the topic, audience, purpose, context, and speaker.
 3. Use word choice in order to express ideas clearly, to create and maintain interest, and to enhance the speaker's credibility.
 4. Select words that avoid sexism, racism, and other forms of prejudice.
- e. Provide effective transitions.
 1. Demonstrate understanding of the types and functions of transitions.
 2. Use transitions to accomplish the following:
 - i. Establish connectedness.
 - ii. Signal movement from one idea to another.
 - iii. Clarify relationships among ideas.

III. The COMPETENT SPEAKER must also be able to transmit the message by using delivery skills suitable to the topic, purpose, and audience.

A. Faculty are asked to remember, when evaluating student speakers, that the competent speaker should be able to demonstrate abilities included below.

1. Employ Vocal Variety in Rate, Pitch, and Intensity

- a. Use vocal variety to heighten and maintain interest.
- b. Use a rate that is suitable to the message, occasion, and receiver.
- c. Use pitch (within the speaker's optimum range) to clarify and to emphasize.
- d. Use intensity appropriate for the message and audible to the audience.

2. Articulate Clearly

- a. Demonstrate knowledge of the sounds of the American English language.
- b. Use the sounds of the American English language.

3. Employ Language Appropriate to the Designated Audience

- a. Employ language that enhances the speaker's credibility, promotes the purpose, and the receiver's understanding.
- b. Demonstrate that the use of technical vocabularies, slang, idiomatic language, and regionalisms may facilitate understanding when communicating with others who share meanings for those terms, but can hinder understanding in those situations where meanings are not shared.
- c. Use standard pronunciation.
- d. Use standard grammar.
- e. Use language at the appropriate level of abstraction or generality.
- f. Use a conversational mode through self-presentation and response to feedback.

4. Demonstrate Nonverbal Behavior that Supports the Verbal Message

- a. Use appropriate paralanguage (extraverbal elements of voice such as emphasis, pause, tone, etc.) that achieves congruence and enhances the verbal intent.
- b. Use appropriate kinesic elements (posture, gesture, and facial expression) that achieve congruence and enhance the verbal intent.

- c. Use appropriate proxemic elements (interpersonal distance and spatial arrangement) that achieve congruence and enhance the verbal intent.
- d. Use appropriate clothing and ornamentation that achieve congruence and enhance the verbal intent.
- e. Select and use an appropriate presentational aid to enhance audience understanding and increase impact of spoken message.

LISTENING COMPETENCIES: Listening is the process of receiving, constructing meaning from, and responding to spoken and or nonverbal messages. People listen in order to comprehend information, critique and evaluate a message, show empathy for the feelings expressed by others, or appreciate a performance. Effective listening includes both literal and critical comprehension of ideas and information transmitted in oral language

IV. The Competent Listener must be able to demonstrate literal comprehension.

- A. Faculty evaluating student listening are asked to consider that the competent listener should be able to exhibit the abilities included below.

1. Recognize Main Ideas

- a. Distinguish ideas fundamental to the thesis from material that supports those ideas.
- b. Identify transitional, organizational, and nonverbal cues that direct the listener to the main ideas.
- c. Identify the main ideas in structured and unstructured discourse.

2. Identify Supporting Details

- a. Identify supporting details in spoken messages.
- b. Distinguish between those ideas that support the main ideas and those that do not.
- c. Determine whether the number of supporting details adequately develops each main idea.

3. Recognize Explicit Relationships among Ideas

- a. Demonstrate an understanding of the types of organizational or logical relationships.
- b. Identify transitions that suggest relationships.
- c. Determine whether the asserted relationship exists.

4. Recall Basic Ideas and Details

- a. Determine the goal for listening.
- b. State the basic cognitive and affective contents, after listening.

V. The Competent Listener must be able to demonstrate critical comprehension.

A. Faculty evaluating student listeners are asked to consider that the competent listener should be able to exhibit abilities included below.

1. Attend with an Open Mind

- a. Demonstrate an awareness of personal, ideological, and emotional biases.
- b. Demonstrate awareness that each person has a unique perspective.
- c. Demonstrate awareness that one's knowledge, experience, and emotions affect listening.
- d. Use verbal and nonverbal behaviors that demonstrate willingness to listen to messages when variables such as setting, speaker, or topic may not be conducive to listening.

2. Perceive the Speaker's Purpose and Organization of Ideas and Information

- a. Identify the speaker's purpose.
- b. Identify the organization of the speaker's ideas and information.

3. Discriminate Between Statements of Fact and Statements of Opinion

- a. Distinguish between assertions that are verifiable and those that are not.

4. Distinguish Between Emotional and Logical Arguments

- a. Demonstrate an understanding that arguments have both emotional and logical dimensions.
- b. Identify the logical characteristics of an argument.
- c. Identify the emotional characteristics of an argument.
- d. Whether the argument is predominantly emotional or logical.

5. Detect Bias and Prejudice

- a. Identify instances of bias and prejudice in a spoken message.
- b. Specify how bias and prejudice may affect the impact of a spoken message.

6. Recognize the Speaker's Attitude

- a. Identify the direction, intensity, and salience of the speaker's attitude as reflected by the verbal messages.
- b. Identify the direction, intensity, and salience of the speaker's attitude as reflected by the nonverbal messages.

7. Synthesize and Evaluate by Drawing Logical Inferences and Conclusions

- a. Draw relationships between prior knowledge and the information provided by the speaker.
- b. Demonstrate an understanding of the nature of inference.
- c. Identify the types of verbal and nonverbal information.
- d. Draw valid inferences from the information.
- e. Identify the information as evidence to support views.
- f. Assess the acceptability of evidence.
- g. Identify patterns of reasoning and judge the validity of arguments
- h. Analyze the information and inferences in order to draw conclusions.

8. Recall the Implications and Arguments

- a. Identify the arguments used to justify the speaker's position.
- b. State both the overt and implied arguments.
- c. Specify the implications of these arguments for the speaker, audience, and society at large.

9. Recognize Discrepancies between the Speaker's Verbal and Nonverbal Messages

- a. Identify when the nonverbal signals contradict the verbal message.
- b. Identify when the nonverbal signals understate or exaggerate the verbal message.
- c. Identify when the nonverbal message is irrelevant to the verbal message.

10. Employ Active Listening Techniques When Appropriate

- a. Identify the cognitive and affective dimensions of a message.
- b. Demonstrate comprehension by formulating questions that clarify or qualify the speaker's content and affective intent.
- c. Demonstrate comprehension by paraphrasing the speaker's message.

Appendix B: Baker University IRB Approval



Baker University Institutional Review Board

December 3rd, 2019

Dear Marcella Marez and Tes Mehring,

The Baker University IRB has reviewed your project application and approved this project under Expedited Status Review. As described, the project complies with all the requirements and policies established by the University for protection of human subjects in research. Unless renewed, approval lapses one year after approval date.

Please be aware of the following:

1. Any significant change in the research protocol as described should be reviewed by this Committee prior to altering the project.
2. Notify the IRB about any new investigators not named in original application.
3. When signed consent documents are required, the primary investigator must retain the signed consent documents of the research activity.
4. If this is a funded project, keep a copy of this approval letter with your proposal/grant file.
5. If the results of the research are used to prepare papers for publication or oral presentation at professional conferences, manuscripts or abstracts are requested for IRB as part of the project record.
6. If this project is not completed within a year, you must renew IRB approval.

If you have any questions, please contact me at npoell@bakeru.edu or 785.594.4582.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Nathan D. Poell".

Nathan Poell, MLS
Chair, Baker University IRB

Baker University IRB Committee
Scott Crenshaw
Sara Crump, PhD
Jamin Perry, PhD
Susan Rogers, PhD

Appendix C: MU IRB Approval

OFFICE OF SCHOLARSHIP AND SPONSORED PROJECTS

DATE: December 9, 2019

TO: Marcella Marez, M.S.

FROM: [REDACTED] IRB

STUDY TITLE: [1535686-1] The Impact of the Completion of a Basic Communication Course on the Academic Success of Undergraduate Students at a Midwestern University

IRB REFERENCE #: 19-0214

SUBMISSION TYPE: New Project

ACTION: DETERMINATION OF EXEMPT STATUS

DECISION DATE: December 9, 2019

REVIEW CATEGORY: Exemption category # 4

Thank you for your submission of New Project materials for this research study. The departmental human subjects research committee and/or the [REDACTED] IRB Administrator has determined that this project is EXEMPT FROM IRB REVIEW according to federal regulations.

Please note that any changes to this study may result in a change in exempt status. Any changes must be submitted to the IRB for review prior to implementation. In the event of a change, please follow the Instructions for Revisions at [REDACTED]

The IRB administrator should be notified of adverse events or circumstances that meet the definition of unanticipated problems involving risks to subjects. See <http://www.hhs.gov/ohrp/policy/AdvEvtGuid.htm>.

We will put a copy of this correspondence on file in our office. Exempt studies are not subject to continuing review.

If you have any questions, please contact Whitney Jeter [REDACTED]. Please include your project title and reference number in all correspondence with this committee.

Appendix D: MU Academic Majors

Table D1

Academic Major Categories

Major	<i>N</i>	Category
Accounting	3	Business
Accounting (Public Accounting)	2	Business
Agricultural Business	4	STM
Agriculture (Agronomy)	4	STM
Agriculture (Animal Science)	6	STM
Agriculture (Beef Cattle Mgt)	1	STM
Art	1	Art
Art (Graphic Design)	8	Art
Art (Interior Design)	2	Art
Art (Studio Art)	3	Art
Athletic Training	1	Health Sciences
Biology (Biodiversity/Conservation)	1	STM
Biology	2	STM
Biology (Botany)	1	STM
Biology (Cellular/Molecular Biology)	1	STM
Biology (Medical Technology)	1	STM
Biology (Pre-Med/Pre-Dentistry)	1	STM
Biology (Pre-Physical Therapy)	2	STM
Biology (Wildlife Biology)	1	STM
Biology (Zoology)	2	STM
Business Education (Teacher Licensure)	1	Education
Chemistry	2	STM
Communication	2	Social Sciences
Communication (Advertising)	1	Social Sciences
Communication (Public Relations)	1	Social Sciences

Table D1

Academic Major Categories

Major	<i>N</i>	Category
Communication Sciences/Disorders	3	Health Sciences
Computer Sci (Technology Studies)	1	STM
Computer Science	1	STM
Computer Science (Mathematics)	1	STM
Computer Science (Networking)	3	STM
Early Childhood Unified	3	Education
Elementary Education	6	Education
Elementary Education (Early Childhood)	1	Education
Elementary Education (Team)	7	Education
Elementary Education, Honors	2	Education
Elementary Education (Early Childhood)	1	Education
English (Literature)	1	Social Sciences
English (Writing)	1	Social Sciences
Finance	1	Business
Finance (Banking)	2	Business
Finance (Economics)	1	Business
Foreign Language (Spanish)	1	Social Sciences
General Science (Biology)	1	Social Sciences
General Studies (Child Develop)	3	Social Sciences
General Studies (General Business)	1	Social Sciences
General Studies (Health Promotion)	1	Social Sciences
General Studies (Historical)	1	Social Sciences
General Studies (Leadership)	1	Social Sciences
General Studies (Networking)	1	Social Sciences
General Studies (Psychological)	2	Social Sciences

Table D1

Academic Major Categories

Major	<i>N</i>	Category
Geography	3	STM
Geology	1	STM
Global Business English	1	Social Sciences
Health and Human Performance	1	Health Sciences
HHP (Exercise Science)	3	Health Sciences
HHP (Fitness Programming)	3	Health Sciences
HHP (Health Promotion)	6	Health Sciences
HHP (K-12 Teaching/Coaching)	1	Health Sciences
HHP (Recreation)	7	Health Sciences
HHP (Sport and Exercise therapy)	2	Health Sciences
HHP (Sport Management)	1	Health Sciences
History	1	Social Sciences
Info Networking & Tele (Comp Networking)	1	Business
Info Networking & Tele (Media Studies)	1	Business
Info Networking & Tele (Web Development)	2	Business
Info Networking & Tele (Web & Mobile)	1	Business
Information Networking & Telecommunications	1	Business
International Business/Economics	1	Business
Justice Studies	3	Social Sciences
Management	1	Business
Management Information Systems	1	Business
Management (Human Resource Mgmt)	1	Business
Marketing	4	Business
Mathematics (Teaching)	1	STM

Table D1

Academic Major Categories

Major	<i>N</i>	Category
Music (Music Education)	3	Art
Music (Music Technology)	1	Art
Music	4	Art
Nursing	23	Health Sciences
Organizational Leadership	7	Social Sciences
Physics	4	STM
Political Science	2	Social Sciences
Psychology	13	Health Sciences
Secondary Education	4	Education
Social Work	6	Health Sciences
Sociology	3	Social Sciences
Speech-Language Pathology	1	Health Sciences
Technology Studies (Construction Mgt)	1	STM
Technology Studies (Industrial Tech)	4	STM
Technology Studies (Technology)	1	STM
Tourism and Hospitality Mgmt	6	Business
Tourism and Hospitality Mgmt	5	Business
Total	440	

Note. Academic majors categorized from MU Departments and Colleges (MU, 2020).