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The development and implementation of a co-curricular transcript program at Rowan University

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THE DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION OF A

CO-CURRICULAR TRANSCRIPT PROGRAM AT

ROWAN UNIVERSITY

By
Catherine R. Ragan

A Thesis

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the
Masters of Arts Degree
of
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at
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Approved by___ _____
                                          Professor

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ABSTRACT

Catherine R. Ragan

The Development and Implementation of a
Co-Curricular Transcript Program at Rowan University

2001

Dr. James Coaxum

Master of Arts Degree in Higher Education Administration

The purpose of this action research project was to study the process of change while developing and implementing a Co-Curricular Transcript Program at Rowan University. The action research project included a content analysis of available literature, a case study with an existing co-curricular transcript program, program proposals to Rowan administration, focus group interviews and a survey of employers regarding the effectiveness of the co-curricular transcript in evaluating entry-level candidates. The result of this action research project is an online co-curricular transcript program at Rowan University. The results of the employer survey indicated strong support for the program. This project also resulted in a new resource of literature on the topic of co-curricular transcripts.

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This action research project studied the process of change while developing and

implementing a Co-Curricular Transcript Program at Rowan University. The result of

this study was a customized co-curricular transcript program designed through interaction

with Rowan University students, faculty, administrators and potential employers.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Introduction

Research over the past twenty-five years has indicated that a student's growth during the college experience can be attributed to both academic and non-academic factors (Astin, 1993; Kuh, 1991; Pascarella and Terenzini, 1991). Students involved in campus organizations, college sponsored events, volunteer work, and student leadership positions demonstrate additional growth in interpersonal skills, leadership abilities, and professional development (Astin 1993). This development of skills enhances a college student's education and provides opportunities that are not always available in the traditional curriculum, such as networking, public speaking, and conflict mediation (Kuh, 1991). Research has demonstrated that a hidden curriculum exists within college level education that is "unintended but inherent in a range of student experiences in and outside of class" (Mentkowski 2000, p. 303). This out-of-class experience impacts a college student's development by providing additional learning opportunities and expanding the traditional college curriculum to provide practical experience and build on the skills learned within the classroom.

This action research project recognizes the impact of out-of-class experiences on students and seeks to develop an official, university sponsored co-curricular transcript that highlights a student's development in campus activities and leadership positions. Therefore, the purpose of this project is to provide students with an opportunity to validate their experiences, learn from their own development and share that development with individuals inside and outside the college environment through a co-curricular transcript program.

Statement of the Problem

The first collegiate record-keeping system for American higher education was developed in 1838 to accurately document college courses completed (Wilson, 1975). The documentation of the academic experience was, at one time, solely recorded on an academic transcript (Wilson, 1975). Utilizing this system, student learning in college was confined to the education provided within the walls of a classroom. Although the actual assessment of a student's performance remained in the hands of the faculty, the Registrar was usually responsible for recording each student's progression towards graduation. Throughout the twentieth century, the system has evolved making the academic transcript a universally accepted document that provides faculty, college administrators, and future employers with a specific outline of a student's courses and the accomplishments within the course as determined by a final grade (Wilson, 1975). Classroom instruction, final exams, and academic transcripts are undoubtedly essential within the college experience; however as George Kuh (1991, p. 7) illustrates, " . . . neither credits nor grades accurately represent all of what students learn during college."

The definition of where, why and how a student learns is changing as students report learning within the co-curricular experiences. These experiences often includes internships, campus involvement, membership in organizations, participation in intramurals or intercollegiate sports, volunteer activities and elected student leader positions (Astin, 1993).

Since the implementation of the GI Bill in 1944, the profile of college students has changed (Olson, 1974). A typical college freshmen is no longer readily defined as a recent high school graduate in the 17-19 age bracket since students now range in a variety of areas including, for example, age, ethnicity, and marital status. In addition, the places where this eclectic student population finds an education experience has also diversified. Throughout the past two decades, students report that their education outside the classroom provides an additional source of learning (Kuh, 1991). This out-of-classroom education includes campus activities, on-campus employment, professional development, volunteer activities, and leadership positions. Kuh (1991) defines such involvement as "high-quality" when there is " . . . active participation in activities and events that are not part of the curriculum, but nevertheless complement the institution's educational purposes" (p.7). The personal and professional development that a student gains through involvement in these activities enhances in-class learning and provides practical, hands-on experience. Since campus involvement and leadership positions are growing synonymous with the acquisition of communication skills, interpersonal skills, and leadership development (Astin, 1993; Pascarella and Terenzini, 1991), student affairs professionals are seeking ways to emphasize the value of the out-of-class experience to students, faculty, parents, administrators and future employers.

Involved students bring the knowledge gained from co-curricular experiences into the classroom and demonstrate enhanced intellectual development (Pascarella and Terenzini, 1991). Furthermore, many institutions recognize the need to provide official documentation of learning related to campus involvement, professional development, and acquisition of leadership skills (Cooper, Healy and Simpson, 1994). The creation of such a document acknowledges the role of campus involvement in the education of a well-rounded student. According to research conducted by Cooper, students actively participating in leadership activities and involved in campus events " . . . report more positive educational and social experiences overall, increased intellectual and leadership development, success in academic and career goals, and are more likely to graduate" (1994, p. 98). In response to these reports of student growth and learning through out-of-class experiences, institutions are recognizing the value of implementing co-curricular transcripts as a means of servicing the involved student and providing additional motivation to students who remain uninvolved. Although a number of institutions nationwide document the out-of-class learning experience, the titles of the programs, the format of the documentation, the extent of the services, and the departments responsible for the program vary greatly (Brown and Citrin, 1979). Even with these variations, the most common titles for this documentation include co-curricular transcript and student development portfolio. A co-curricular transcript is most often described as an official university document which details a student's co-curricular involvement including professional development, elected student leader positions, memberships, honors, awards and volunteer activities. A student affairs office such as the Student Development or the Dean of Students most frequently handles the co-curricular transcript program. These

programs can also incorporate faculty-student mentoring components, student assessments, goal setting and student development through required attendance at workshops (Cosgrove, 1996).

Nationwide, institutions are following the trend of implementing a co-curricular transcript or development portfolio to assist students in documenting the out-of-class experience. Research is inconsistent regarding the offering of credit hours for out-of-class experiences, the best format for the transcript, and the inclusion of personal information on a transcript. Studies indicate, however, that there is a consensus amongst students, faculty, and parents over the use of a co-curricular transcript as a means of demonstrating the skills acquired through leadership activities and campus involvement (Brown, Baier, Baack, Wright, and Sanstead, 1979; Bryan, Mann, Nelson and North, 1981). Although some literature is available regarding the ways to implement a co-curricular transcript, little research is available regarding actual implementation of a program or why students chose to use the additional transcript.

Student involvement within the college experience influences an individual's cognitive development, interpersonal relationships, perception of self and overall attitudes and values (Pascarella and Terenzini, 1991). This learning through the co-curricular experience provides valuable intellectual, personal and professional development that deserves documentation similar to the record keeping system available for in-class learning experiences. Some institutions have implemented a co-curricular transcript to document student's skill acquisition through campus involvement. The evolution of the co-curricular transcript program stems from the experiences of the program coordinators at these institutions. Although the purpose of a co-curricular

transcript is a means of documenting growth of students throughout their college experience, particularly in the area of out-of-class experiences, institutions have struggled with the best methods to record co-curricular activities. In addition, limited research is available regarding the most effective programs and the benefits to students involved in the program. Also scant is research on the programs in existence and the challenges that the co-curricular program faces in the twenty-first century.

This action research project will focus on defining the most effective co-curricular transcript program for Rowan University and the process of change involved in the development and implementation of the program. The questions that this action research project will attempt to answer throughout its cycles include:

1. What is the process of developing and implementing a co-curricular transcript program at Rowan University?

2. What is the feasibility of implementing a co-curricular transcript program at Rowan University?

3. How do the members of the Rowan University campus community define the purpose of the program and what are their opinions regarding the format and publicity of the program?

4. Are the existing co-curricular transcripts effective in the documentation of student involvement?

5. Do co-curricular transcripts have an impact on increasing student involvement?

Through the research and data collection cycles of this action research project, the success of this project was measured by the successful implementation of a co-curricular transcript program at Rowan University that meets the needs of the students, administrators, faculty and employers.

Conclusion

As employers increase their expectations of college graduates and rely on higher education to provide students with the skills that are traditionally learned outside the classroom, student affairs professionals must design ways to demonstrate a student's acquisition of such skills. Research suggests that co-curricular transcript programs offer students the opportunity to not only document their co-curricular activities, but also connect their involvement with skill acquisition. This project seeks to serve the students at Rowan University by implementing a co-curricular transcript program.

Chapter Two:

Literature Review

Introduction

The early American college and university system provided elite students with an opportunity to obtain a classroom education and create networks with their classmates and faculty members (Horowitz, 1987). The relationships that evolved from the college experience enhanced the ideas learned in the classroom as students encountered new philosophies and ideas in both arenas. As American colleges and universities developed, a college education was offered to an increasing number of students. The philosophy of higher education was to "provide the discipline and the furniture of the mind" (Westmeyer, 1997, p. 35) as an opportunity to train the mind as a muscle as well as develop the character of a student.

As educational opportunities increased for American citizens and additional students began to enroll in colleges and universities, a system was created to assist with recording and documenting the college experience. This documentation, known as an academic transcript, provides identification information regarding a student's institution, credits earned, courses completed and progress towards graduation. As higher education has evolved in America, so has the academic transcript, transcending three eras from a

paper and pencil format through the typewritten era and into the modern computer age (Quann, 1980; Wilson and Olds, 1975).

As modern American society requires its citizens to document their education, skills, and experiences, additional records must be created to provide verifiable information regarding an individual's abilities. This documentation must provide verifiable data in a comprehensive, yet understandable format providing those seeking that information with an overview of an individual's abilities. No where is this more evident than in the field of higher education. Levin (2000) indicates that as the education system evolves, inevitably, "a transcript of each students competencies, including specific information that the student knows or the skills that he or she can perform, will be far more desirable" (p. B10) than an academic transcript or a degree.

Evolution of the Academic Transcript

The creation of the academic transcript in 1838 provided a student enrolled in an institution with a documented account of the courses taken and grades received (Wilson and Olds, 1975). The development of this record keeping method has unfolded with the growth of the American college and university system. Detailing the credits earned, grades received and cumulative grade point averages, transcripts provided administration, faculty members, and potential employers with information regarding a student's academic performance throughout college (Quann, 1980).

The evolution of the transcript is a result of many factors. The original transcript was a hand-written document that listed the credits earned towards graduation requirements. Changes in technology and composition of the student body lead to

keeping typewritten records that detailed courses, grades and necessary personal information for each student. Changes within the academic transcript have also resulted from both developments in technology such as the typewriter and the computer as well as the influence of "larger enrollments, increased student migration, [and] varying transfer practices" (Quann, 1980, p.361). The development of the American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers (AACRAO) improved the reliability of transcripts and established guidelines detailing the "essential items of information which should be included on an academic record" (Quann, 1980). Additional changes also occurred with the application of computerized databases to house student records. While these developments have allowed for the improvement of the academic transcript, they also brought new concerns. Decisions on appropriate information to list on records, concerns over forgeries, and debate over the most favorable formats for the transcript were all issues for registrars (Quann, 1980). Although the document has undergone numerous changes since its inception, the transcript continues to offer a permanent record of a student's academic achievement.

Changes in the format of academic transcript as well as changes in the expectations of new professionals in the work force have influenced the ways that people view a well-rounded college graduate. Completing course work to qualify for graduation is only one of the components of a well-rounded individual; society now expects that the modern, well-rounded college graduate will also possess the communication, interpersonal and professional skills considered essential to succeed. The activities outside the classroom often provide a learning laboratory for developing these skills, yet these activities to date have no place on the academic transcript at most institutions.

Research indicates that student involvement in co-curricular activities is important because it fosters leadership development and acquisition of interpersonal skills (Kuh, 1991; Astin, 1993, Pascarella and Terenzini, 1991). While we know that involvement in co-curricular activities can enhance a student's performance within college (Astin, 1993) and assist in the development of professional skills (Pascarella and Terenzini, 1991), the area that requires more research in relation to co-curricular involvement is the impact of documenting this involvement for students. More information is needed on the influence of mentors and self-assessment as a component of documenting co-curricular involvement and the influence these factors have on a student's continued involvement and attainment of leadership skills.

Defining Student Activities in the College Experience

Although academics plays a critical role in a college education, research suggests that the out-of-class experience can be of equal value to the in-class experience (Astin, 1993). Involvement in campus organizations, college sponsored events, volunteer work, and leadership positions demonstrate additional growth in interpersonal skills, leadership abilities, and professional development (Astin, 1993). Throughout the research on the impact of student involvement, a number of terms are used interchangeably to identify the learning taking place outside the classroom. These terms include student involvement, co-curricular activities, out-of-class experience, extracurricular activities and involvement in the co-curriculum. For the purposes of this study, the preferred terms for these student experiences will be co-curricular involvement and the out-of-class experience.

Regardless of the title selected to describe a student's activities, it is clear that students have made a conscious decision to enroll themselves in out-of-class learning experiences to enhance the skills they acquire in the classroom. This experience, which includes professional development, elected student leader positions, organization memberships, honors, awards and volunteer activities, is most commonly regarded as a student's co-curricular experience. Although many definitions exist for explaining the co-curricular experience, the most relevant description for this discussion defines co-curriculum as the "learning experiences organized as courses (for example, transition to college, transition to career); it may include planned or ad hoc student activities, student governance, experience in the workplace and family, civic commitments, and studies in other countries" (Mentkowski, 2000, p.302). Mentkowski (2000) further defines the co-curriculum by incorporating the concept of the hidden curriculum as a component of the co-curricular experience. Hidden curriculum is understood as the idea that " an institution's social learning context may be unintended but inherent in a range of student experiences in and outside class" (p. 303). The idea that a college curriculum is part of a social learning experience found within a traditional learning culture is a key to understanding the co-curriculum as it illustrates that learning is more than simply applying course material to real world issues.

The skills obtained through this co-curricular involvement also contribute to student's intellectual, personal and professional development (Astin, 1993; Kuh, 1991; Pascarella and Terenzini, 1991). Furthermore, researchers indicate that studies of college graduates reveal that involvement in campus activities had "a substantial impact on the development of interpersonal and leadership skills important to general occupational

success" (Pascarella and Terenzini, 1991, p. 477). Although the courses students complete in the traditional college curriculum are noted in detail on the academic transcript, few institutions offer students the opportunity to record the influential co-curricular experiences.

Importance of Student Involvement

Higher education institutions, regardless of size and mission, encourage student involvement in campus life. Changes within the student affairs profession had greatly increased the number of opportunities for student development and involvement in the campus culture. Furthermore, the evolution of student development theory has also aided in a better understanding of student needs in college and the opportunities for involvement and leadership that best fit those needs. Utilizing the seven vectors found within Chickering's Theory of Identity Development, student development professionals can aid students in their personal transition throughout the college years (Evans, Forney and Guido-DiBrito, 1998). Whereas organizational membership may be the best opportunity for someone in the "developing mature interpersonal relationships" vector, a student within the "developing purpose" vector may be better suited in leadership position with the opportunity to make "meaningful commitments to specific personal interests and activities, and establishing strong interpersonal commitments" (Evans, et al. 1998, p. 40). The application of student development theory to the practice of student affairs offers professionals the opportunity to understand the ways that a student develops and make transitions in college. Additionally, this understanding leads to a better

comprehension of the ways that student involvement and contact with members of the campus community can aid students in their development.

Student involvement incorporates multiple activities including faculty contact, peer group interaction, organizational membership, participation in college athletics or intramural, attendance at conferences, election to student leadership positions and volunteer activities (Astin, 1993; Kuh, 1995; Pascarella and Terenzini, 1991). Additionally, research indicates that involvement in such activities has many positive benefits to a student's learning within college (Astin, 1993; Pascarella and Terenzini, 1991; Mentkowski, 2000). Pascarella and Terenzini (1991) assert that student involvement, or extracurricular involvement, can "enhance self-confidence along with interpersonal and leadership skills" as well as enhance skills useful in interviewing and attaining employment (p. 624). The skills acquired and relationships formed as a result of student involvement in co-curricular activities during the college experience provide opportunities for students to develop experience and competence in areas outside the classroom education resulting in a more well-educated, service-oriented, civic-minded, productive, skilled, and capable college graduate (Astin, 1993; Pascarella and Terenzini, 1991; Mentkowski, 2000).

The research on student involvement is based on the understanding that students involved in the campus culture generally experience a higher success rate during college (Pascarella and Terenzini, 1991; Whitt, Nora, Edison, Terenzini, and Pascarella, 1999; Kuh, 1995). The role of the classroom experience as well as leadership development outside the classroom is critical components of student success. Students who involve themselves in campus activities, seek interaction with faculty and create a "niche" for

themselves on campus tend to achieve higher levels of success and retention (Kuh, 1995).

Each component of the educational experience– both the academic and co-curricular –

provides a source for acquisition of leadership skills and personal development.

Although students spend a great deal of time during their college career within the

classroom walls obtaining the skills useful for their course of study, the activities in the

co-curriculum are also useful in measuring levels of student learning and success.

Research indicates that students involved in co-curricular activities acquire interpersonal,

communication, and leadership skills that are applicable within their college experience

and successful transitions to their first job (Pascarella and Terenzini, 1991;Gardner,

1998). Research also indicates that graduates value their co-curricular experience,

particularly leadership roles, and view involvement in college as an influential factor in

successful attainment of employment (Pascarella and Terenzini, 1991). Involvement in

co-curricular activities "has at least modest implications for one's career. This may stem

from the fact that such involvements enhance self-confidence along with interpersonal

and leadership skills" (Pascarella and Terenzini, 1991, p. 624).

Although not always taken into consideration by faculty and administration, the

role of campus involvement, participation in activities that enable students to achieve

personal goals and establish social networks amongst peers are all essential in evaluating

the "well-rounded" and successful student (Brower, 1992; Cabrera, 1993). Brower's

study on retention and persistence examines the ways that students mold their college

experience and the ways that the experience molds them. Brower (1992) claims that

"students shape their environment by choosing to pursue their own tasks and goals while

their environment shapes them through its norms, expectations and opportunities"

(p. 445). This perspective allows the student to seek out the most beneficial opportunities and ascertain the necessary skills in order to achieve both short-term goals (campus involvement) and long-term goals (acquiring professional skills within the college experience). Involvement in campus organizations, interaction with faculty outside the classroom, and participation in campus activities all impact a student's decision to stay in college and attain a degree from a particular institution (Astin, 1993, Pascarella and Terenzini, 1991).

The out-of-class experience is influential in areas beyond student retention and persistence. Students indicate that leadership roles and organizational involvement provide them with additional skills that challenge their abilities and strengthen their leadership skills, including planning, organizing, managing, and decision making (Kuh, 1995). Learning to overcome personal and social challenges, developing informed personal opinions, acquiring critical-thinking skills and effectively assessing one's own progress and growth are all important components of the co-curricular experience. Gardner (1998) asserts that the responsibility of higher education is to prepare students by providing an education and the skills they will need for the work place. Research stipulates that employers believe college graduates will enter the work force with skills in building working relationships, understanding the structure of an organization, the ability to earn respect and credibility, an understanding of the organizational politics, and the ability utilize independent learning to ascertain how to accomplish goals within the organization (Gardner, 1998). The leadership and social skills developed during the college experience enable involved students to create professional opportunities,

networks and relationships. Involvement in social organizations allows students the opportunity to develop professional skills while still in college (Gardner, 1998).

Furthermore, leadership positions empower students to learn differently, seek out information and make connections between theory and practice. Research states that active involvement in the classroom as well as co-curricular activities offered by an institution can provide exposure to these skills and assist students in developing their own set of competencies that will help them succeed (Pascarella and Terenzini, 1991; Kuh, 1991; Astin, 1993). Involvement in campus activities enables students to gain experience in the socialization process, acquire skills in managing change, and work efficiently with others in an organization.

Kuh (1995) posits that an "intangible set of institutional qualities" that create an institution's ethos provides motivation for student's involvement. Therefore, it is clear that a student's desire to take on leadership positions is strongly attributed to the atmosphere of the institution. In addition, it is also evident that it is the responsibility of all involved – current students, faculty, student affairs professionals and other administrators – to develop an atmosphere conducive to student learning, leadership, and development (Kuh, 1995). Part of that atmosphere is both an attitude and apparent actions that demonstrate that the institution places value on the co-curriculum and student involvement in campus life.

Also critical to the development of student leadership within a campus culture is an understanding of diversity and human relations. Multiculturalism is an important component of education both in and outside of the classroom in the twenty-first century. In a campus environment where students "think of themselves in terms of their

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differences rather than their commonalties" (Levin and Cureton, 1998 p. 79), part of student development is teaching students how to work with one another. Utilizing leadership positions and campus involvement, students can learn to value the different perspectives of their peers rather than dismissing them as simply different than their own. In Exploring Leadership (Komives, 1998), Ragan illustrates this point by explaining that "Every individual can have a new perspective on a situation. No matter what your experiences are, they are different from mine and therefore we see things differently. Using this perspective in addition to one's own ideas allows for better communication, better solutions and better leadership" (p.151-152). Educating students on the value of other's views and the importance of incorporating individuals different from you into is an important facet of student development. This foundation can improve leadership, communication and interpersonal skills (Komives, 1998).

According to recent research, most students involved in campus activities and leadership positions experience growth in areas related to interpersonal skills, leadership ability, and professionalism. Research indicates that involvement in the co-curriculum is critical to achieving a well-rounded education as well as personal and professional development (Astin, 1993; Pascarella and Terenzini, 1991). However, research regarding the documentation of these experiences and the effect such documentation can have on a student's development is scant. More research is needed on how activities on a co-curricular transcript should be documented. The documentation of such experiences ensures employers that students are equipped with the skills that will foster success in the workplace. Although some institutions have implemented a strategy to assist students in

documenting their involvement and connecting with mentors, little research is available on the impact of these programs.

The Development of the Co-Curricular Transcript

Validating a student's co-curricular experience through an official document originated in the 1970's. Recognizing the demand for the "bottom-line product of a college education" (Cosgrove and Marino, 1997 p.55), Robert Brown created the first co-curricular transcript program, titled the "Student Development Transcript," at the University of Nebraska as a means of recording and validating the student experience. The program received support from the administration of the University of Nebraska. The University's support for the program provided Brown and other researchers the opportunity to conduct additional work to determine the new transcript's effectiveness with potential employers (Bryan, Mann, Nelson and North, 1981) and the importance of the new transcript to parents and students (Brown, Baier, Baack, Wright, and Sanstead, 1979). The response was favorable as each party reported that the student development transcript appeared to be an effective method of documenting this valuable out-of-class learning experience (Bryan, Mann, Nelson and North, 1981; Brown, Baier, Baack, Wright, and Sanstead, 1979; Cosgrove and Marino, 1997).

The development of similar programs at institutions across the nation throughout the 1980's indicates that other institutions also found this documentation of the co-curricular experience valuable. According to Hodges (1992), the co-curricular transcript has assisted student affairs administrators in their attempts to "create mentoring relationships, encourage a broader range of student involvement and ensure concise

record-keeping for future use" (p. 25). The co-curricular transcript provides student affairs administrators the opportunity to bridge gaps between administrators and faculty members and provides incentives for student involvement by providing a medium to document growth through involvement. By increasing student awareness of the benefits of student involvement, administrators and faculty members can help students develop the skills needed inside the classroom as well as outside of the classroom.

In an attempt to assess how many co-curricular programs existed and the effectiveness of the co-curricular programs, the National Association for Campus Activities (NACA) published a research study in 1986 of over forty-two responding institutions with co-curricular programs in place. The result of this study was a Co-Curricular Transcript Library that detailed a variety of formats for institutions without co-curricular programs to use as guidelines. The research reported that eleven programs had implemented a co-curricular transcript, thirteen programs implemented a co-curricular transcript with a mentoring component, and eighteen programs implemented a co-curricular transcript with a mentoring component and an assessment portion of the program. This library served as a guide for many institutions to begin the development of a co-curricular program on individual campuses using the study as an indicator of the most effective types of program and the individuals responsible for program implementation. As a follow-up effort, NACA formed the Educational Foundation Commission for Student Development to study institutions with implemented co-curricular programs. As a result, NACA published a resource guide in 1992 for institutions seeking information on developing co-curricular programs. The results of this survey indicate that most of the programs were coordinated by an administrator

within student activities, and funding for the program came from varied sources including grants, fees, student affairs and student activities budgets (NACA, 1992).

In addition, the NACA guide published in 1992 included detailed descriptions of the components of successful programs: mentoring, assessment, and record keeping. The mentoring component is a successful component of many programs and allows students to utilize faculty, peers and staff members as potential mentors depending on the institutions guidelines. Assessment is conducted using both formal and informal methods in successful programs and is completed to assist students in determining skill levels and goal setting to achieve desired skills. Finally, the record keeping component included verifying entries, completing data entry, accepting applications, and producing a co-curricular transcript. Although the guide supplies detailed information on a variety of programs, it reminds institutions that the most successful programs are customized to the campus using knowledge of the institution's specific needs and desires. The guide also highlights through survey results the challenges of implementing co-curricular program at an institution including financial and administrative support, and difficulties in determining the best format for the institution.

Types of Co-Curricular Transcripts

A co-curricular transcript program ideally has three components: a transcript, a mentoring module and an assessment module. The actual co-curricular transcript is the key component of the program while the other pieces are experimental pieces at various institutions. The mentoring module of the co-curricular program allows students to seek guidance from a member of the campus community regarding their out-of-class

involvement. The assessment component offers students an opportunity to assess their current skills and their future ambitions using a variety of standardized assessment instruments. Each of the three pieces adds to the co-curricular transcript program and enhances student involvement in co-curricular activities. However, not all components are an essential piece to every campus and they should be evaluated in light of campus and student needs.

The one critical component of a co-curricular transcript program is the actual transcript. Although the purpose of co-curricular transcript has been established a method of documenting the growth of students throughout their college experience, particularly as it relates to out-of-class experiences, institutions have struggled with the best methods to record this involvement. As previously mentioned, the strategy for documenting out-of-class experiences vary from institution to institution and, as a result, creates debate over the best formats for the transcript. The three major types of co-curricular transcripts that are currently in place include the student portfolio, the experiential checklist, and a competency-based checklist (Brown, Baier, Baack, Wright, and Sanstead, 1979).

The student portfolio resembles the model for an education or art student as it contains proof of activities and accomplishments throughout the college experience. According to Cole (1995), in utilizing portfolios to document achievement, two distinct techniques exist. First, the Process Portfolio provides students with an option to include all activities, from the start of their involvement through the end providing potential employers with a comprehensive view of a student's accomplishments and development through collegiate involvement. Second, the Product Portfolio method of maintaining a

portfolio is a selected works method that allows students to place their best work into the portfolio to demonstrate their areas of strength without showing their earlier involvement as to accentuate their most positive attributes (Cole, 1995). The implementation of a portfolio as a means of documenting student development through the out-of-class experience requires faculty involvement as mentors as a strong commitment from the individual student. Since the portfolio method requires the student to keep accurate records of their activities as well as developing a relationship with their mentor, it is a thorough yet complicated program to implement (Brown, Baier, Baack, Wright, and Sanstead, 1979; Cole, 1995; Elbow and Belanoff, 1997).

The experiential checklist begins as a set of ideals that a student wishes to accomplish and results in a co-curricular transcript that details the dates and positions that a student has held or the activities or professional development in which a student has participated (Brown and Citrin, 1999). This type of co-curricular transcript is popular since it can incorporate the role of an advisor or mentor as well as providing a straightforward method of documentation that is useful for individuals within and outside the institution. Experiential checklists are also flexible documents that can be completed by a student alone or with the guidance of a mentor.

The competency-based checklist is based on the skills acquired through a student's involvement or leadership positions. These skills are documented on a co-curricular transcript as a means of demonstrating development in particular areas and highlighting a student's strengths (Brown and Citrin, 1999). This type of transcript is typically more successful with the guidance of a mentor (Brown and Citrin, 1999); however it is growing more popular with the implementation of web-based programs

(Cosgrove and Marino, 1997). The skills listed within the competency-based transcript must be verified as skills acquired through a particular activity. This program emphasizes skills that employers find useful (Bryan, Mann, Nelson and North, 1981), as well as assisting students assess what they have learned through their co-curricular experiences with the guidance of a mentor.

Each of the described methods of implementing a co-curricular transcript requires the commitment of the institution and students in order to be successful. Regardless of the method selected, before a co-curricular transcript can be effectively implemented on a campus, its purpose must be clearly defined.

Research Related to Co-Curricular Transcripts

Since the concept of co-curricular transcripts originated in the 1970's at the University of Nebraska, numerous studies have been conducted in an attempt to evaluate the value of co-curricular programs. Attempting to assess the level of support from parents, students and administrators, a survey conducted in 1979 at the University of Nebraska concluded that strong consensus existed amongst involved parties regarding the transcript concept. The research suggested however, that differences in opinion existed in relation to the developmental areas detailed on the transcript and the assessment or grading component of the program. In addition, the research conducted by Brown, Baier, Baack, Wright and Sanstead (1979) also demonstrated that the parents, students, and administrators varied in support of the format for the transcript. Each format listed on the survey received support with the students favoring the portfolio method, parents supporting the experiential checklist, and academic officers preferring the competency

checklist. Although no one format can be universally applied since each campus has unique needs, the results of this survey provide some details on the levels of support for each format. This research suggests that multiple formats should be used since the survey revealed no preferred format. In addition, Brown, et al. (1979) indicates that "the rich variety of forms that student development itself can take should be reflected in the variety of recording forms, and a standard form comparable to the academic transcript should be avoided" (p. 391). As evidenced by the numerous formats implemented nationwide with varying levels of success, it appears that multiple formats assist institutions in selecting the program that best fits its needs.

A national survey published in 1981, conducted by Bryan, Mann, Nelson and North, assessed the value of the co-curricular transcript to employers. The results of the survey indicated a strong preference for a co-curricular transcript as part of an "applicant's credentials" with 71 percent of the responding employers indicate they "would definitely want" or "would prefer to have" a co-curricular transcript (Bryan, Mann, Nelson, and North, 1981). The results of this study emphasized the value of student involvement to employers and the usefulness of a verifiable document produced by an institution that details the student experiences in the co-curriculum.

With the outcomes of these two major studies, institutions began to look at the option of creating co-curricular transcript programs within their own institution. The University of San Diego experimented with a pilot co-curricular program for freshmen in 1982. Cosgrove (1996) indicates that this experimental study attempted to "evaluate systematically the effects on freshmen of their participation in a mentoring/transcript program" (p. 74). The results of the study reveal that students involved in the program

report higher levels of satisfaction with the university, an increased understanding of the opportunities available to them on campus, higher levels of self-confidence in relation to goals setting and attainment, and view the transcript as a "useful and practical instrument" (p. 75). These outcomes indicate that students involved in the program at the University of San Diego benefited from involvement in the transcript program and suggest that the this type of program can serve as a worthy addition to other colleges and universities.

The National Association of Campus Activities (NACA), as previously mentioned, has conducted two additional surveys to assess the usefulness of co-curricular transcripts. In both 1986 and 1992, NACA published informational packets detailing the programs in existence. This information provides a reference guide for institutions interested in creating co-curricular programs, but offers little information on the overall effectiveness of the individual programs. NACA does provide information, however, on the growing trend to utilize technology in the delivery of the program. Combined with research from Cosgrove (1997), the growing trend seems to link the co-curricular transcript with technology. As Cosgrove (1997) indicates, "given the '90's student's interests, use and interaction with computers, via e-mail and the Internet, it seemed that the computer was the obvious place for that interaction. Developing this interactive program meant venturing out of the domain of the confines of student affairs into other campus departments and deeper into the domain of technology" (p.56). Although no program has reached complete effectiveness with its student population, the number of students responding to an online program has increased from the paper application program (Cosgrove, 1997).

Conclusion:

Although some research exists on the effectiveness of co-curricular transcripts, given the need that exists to provide students with documentation of their out-of-class activities, more research is needed. Students who decide to enroll themselves in the institution's co-curriculum deserve to have the opportunity to detail their skill development and activities in formats similar to an academic transcript. Research is currently limited on the modern effectiveness of co-curricular transcripts in the search for employment and the most effective methods currently utilized by institutions to document student's co-curricular involvement. The need for co-curricular documentation on the collegiate level is obvious given the original rationale for many students' involvement as well as the competition that exists for employment opportunities beyond graduation. If higher education will effectively serve the needs of its students in the future, providing a service that documents a student's activities and skills is inevitable. Therefore, research must be conducted to determine the best formats for the students of the new millennium.

Chapter Three:
Methodology

Introduction to Project

The purpose of this action research project was to develop and implement an effective co-curricular transcript program at Rowan University located in Glassboro, New Jersey. A co-curricular transcript program, as previously defined, places value on a student's out-of-class activities by documenting professional development, elected student leader positions, organization memberships, honors, awards and volunteer activities on an official transcript verified and sealed by the University. Action research was selected as the appropriate mode of inquiry for this study as it provided the researcher the opportunity to conduct research and enact recommendations to improve an area of an organization. Conducted in both educational settings and professional arenas, action research allows practitioners to "hone their investigative skills, engage in systematic approaches to inquiry, and formulate effective and sustainable solutions to the deep-rooted problems that diminish the quality of professional life" (Stringer, 1999, p. 3). Additionally, the approaches utilized within action research reject the notion of collecting and evaluating data as a detached researcher. Instead, these methods favor procedures that directly involve all "subjects" and allow participants to benefit from the research (Stringer, 1999).

Utilizing action research within this project created numerous opportunities to gather information, work directly with those involved in the current activities of the organization, develop methods of communication that were most effective with those involved and effect the necessary change to improve the organization. Action research employs both qualitative and quantitative methods in order to obtain valuable data to enact the required changes. Quantitative methods including the distribution of a survey to employers who utilize the university as a source for entry level candidates provided insight into the responsiveness of the outside community to the new program. Also, employing qualitative procedures such as a case study and focus groups, data was collected that enabled this researcher to design the program with an understanding of the needs of the community and the existing constraints. As such, this action research project sought to work with the current administration in implementing the most appropriate format and design for a co-curricular transcript at Rowan University.

Description of Institution and Students

Prior to a discussion of the action research methods and strategies for data collection, an overview of the university and a description of the student body are necessary. Rowan University is a regional, comprehensive liberal arts university located in Glassboro, New Jersey with degrees from the baccalaureate to the doctorate level. Rowan's current enrollment is around 10,000 students including commuters, residents, part-time, and graduate students. Approximately 2,500 students live on campus. The university offers twenty-four undergraduate majors within six academic colleges including Business, Communication, Education, Engineering, Fine and Performing Arts

and Liberal Arts and Sciences. The university also offers over thirty graduate programs leading to masters and doctoral degrees (Rowan University Undergraduate Catalog, 2000-2001).

The Division of Student Affairs at Rowan University is led by Mr. Drew Calendrella who supervises the following offices: Dean of Students, Residential and Campus Life, Financial Aid, Bursar, Registrar, Admissions, Career and Academic Planning, Equal Opportunity Fund/Minority Achievement Program, Multicultural / International Affairs and the Counseling Center. Each of these offices are responsible for providing opportunities for student development, fostering mentoring relationships with students and assisting individuals achieve a balanced college experience. The development of a strong student affairs division has provided the university with the opportunity to offer students quality assistance, programming and guidance as they progress through their experience. Student affairs professionals provide assistance in both academic and student development.

In addition to the rigorous academic environment, the university also provides numerous opportunities for student learning outside the classroom including opportunities for leadership, personal growth and professional development. Leadership opportunities for the student body abound within student paraprofessional positions such as resident assistants, admissions ambassadors, peer educators, and orientation leaders. Additional opportunities include participation in intercollegiate athletics and leadership as an elected student officer in over 120 student government association chartered student organizations. A strong student government association as well as a thriving Greek population also offers a number of leadership opportunities. These positions as well as

organizational memberships and other opportunities provide students with a variety of options for involvement and development of personal and professional skills.

Description of the Action Research Project

The focus of this project was on the implementation of an effective co-curricular transcript program at Rowan University. The methodology selected for this project was action research as it provided an effective method for evaluating existing programs at other institutions and initiating a co-curricular transcript program at Rowan University. Action research provided the researcher with an effective way to conduct research with the intent to implement change (Bogdan and Bilken, 1998; Stringer, 1999). Using a linear format of a "look, think, act routine" (Stringer, 1999, p.19), this action research project used a cyclical process in data collection and analysis.

The project implemented a change within the Student Affairs division at Rowan University by creating a co-curricular transcript program. Five action research cycles were utilized within this project to develop and implement the program. The first cycle served as an opportunity to review the existing programs through a web based search and a content analysis of the National Association of Campus Activities research on co-curricular programs. Obtaining an internship working with a co-curricular program as a participant observer was the second cycle of research. The third cycle included the proposal to Rowan administration and the first draft of the program. As the fourth cycle, data was collected from focus groups gathering student feedback about the proposed program and the online structure of the co-curricular transcript. The fifth cycle focused on data from employers regarding the effectiveness of the co-curricular transcript in the

evaluation of entry level candidates. The data collected through these cycles provided significant information that allowed for the development and implementation of the co-curricular transcript at Rowan University.

Description of Action Research Cycles

Action research involves both qualitative and quantitative methods (Bogdan and Bilken, 1998). Data for this action research study was collected using qualitative methods including a case study with an existing Co-Curricular Transcript Program. The case study method allowed the researcher to take on an active participant observer role while facilitating on-campus focus groups, conducting interviews with administrators, and attending meetings where decisions regarding the program were made.   On the Rowan campus, open focus group meetings with Rowan student leaders, interviews and meetings with administrators were also conducted to gather data. Quantitative methods were also utilized in a survey distributed to a sample of employers who utilize the Rowan University CAP Center. Furthermore, a content analysis of the National Association of Campus Activities (NACA) research conducted in 1992 on Co-Curricular Transcript was competed in the review possible program offerings in the design of the Rowan program.

The cyclical nature of action research allowed the researcher to learn throughout the research process and utilize the "look, think, act routine" (Stinger, 1999, p. 19) previously mentioned as a means of effectively evaluating the phases of data collection. These methods were selected because they provide information from those currently involved in the operation of a co-curricular transcript program as well as those who will

be affected by the program at Rowan University. The following procedures identify the five phases of data collection utilized within this action research project.

Cycle one: Content Analysis and Preliminary Data Collection

Data Collection Strategy

The content analysis of the National Association of Campus Activities (NACA) research from the 1986 and 1992 study served as a means of effective data collection. Content analysis is a research method utilized to "characterized and compare documents" (Manning and Cullum-Swan, 1994, p.464). The rationale to utilize the NACA data centered on the need to learn about exiting programs. The NACA research offered an opportunity to review the structure, format, and design of numerous programs and examine their programs for links that would be successful at Rowan University.

Data collection from the NACA study as well as a web based analysis of five institutions including University of California, Riverside, the University of San Diego, University of Pittsburgh, Loyola University, Hamline University and the Richard Stockton College of New Jersey helped to create the first draft of the proposed Rowan Co-Curricular Transcript program. In addition to providing information regarding the types of offerings within the programs and the varying formats for the transcripts, the analysis of these institutions also lead this researcher to the next cycle within the action research project.

Cycle two: Case Study with a Co-Curricular Transcript Program

Data Collection Strategy:

The case study method offered an opportunity to conduct research while "spending substantial time, on site, personally in contact with activities and operations of the case, reflecting, [and] revising meanings of what is going on" (Stake, 1994, p.242). The rationale for selecting Richard Stockton College of New Jersey as the site for a case study within the confines of the action research project was two-fold. First, the college had a co-curricular transcript in place and successfully serving the student body. Second, the college shared many similarities with Rowan University such as size, student composition, and opportunities for out-of class leadership experiences. Through the case study experience at Stockton, the researcher gathered data regarding the program requirements, workshop offerings, name construction, and document composition.

From September 2000 to May 2001, I served as an Intern in the Office of Student Development at Richard Stockton College working with their Co-Curricular Program. In this role, I was able to also work as an active participant observer. Within an instrumental case study, a case is "often looked at in depth, its contexts scrutinized, its ordinary activities detailed" all in an attempt to better understand the issue at hand. (Stake, 1994, p. 237). Utilizing the methods within an instrumental case study approach, my role as an active participant observer provided the opportunity gather data and gain insight into a specific issue (Stake, 1994).

Data collection within this case study was conducted through interviews, focus groups, and direct involvement in the program daily functions. Interviews were used within this study as a means to "inquire into something that has presented itself as and

opportunity to learn about [a] practice" (Mills, 2000, p. 55). Interviews were conducted with the founder of the program, the current administrator of the program and other facilitators within the program. Focus groups served as an opportunity to "collect data through group interaction" (Morgan, 1997, p. 6) and therefore obtain new perspectives on the program and the co-curricular transcript. A focus group with ten Richard Stockton College of NJ students and student affairs professionals was conducted to ascertain their opinions of the program and its strengths and weaknesses from their perspective. Site visits to the Stockton campus were conducted on a weekly basis with over 35 total site visits over the course of eight months. All data collected was recorded in a field notes/ internship journal following each weekly visit. As an active participant observer (Stake, 1994), the researcher collected data, but also assisted in the improvement of the program through marketing plans, redesigning brochures and newsletters, working with staff to move the program online and communicating with students regarding the benefits of involvement in the program. These actions also provided a source of data as the reactions to the changes offered a genuine perspective on the existing program and the desired changes.

Cycle Three: Proposal to Rowan Administration and Plan for Implementation

Data Collection Strategy:

Following the collection of preliminary data, the content analysis of the NACA studies, and data collection through the case study, a proposal was presented to Rowan University student affairs professionals to solicit feedback in order to customize the Rowan program to the needs of the campus community. Proposals were originally

submitted to the Assistant Vice President for Residential and Campus Life. After receiving approval at this level, the proposal was brought to the Vice President for Student Services. Following this meeting, some revisions were made based on recommendations and suggestions from the Vice President. The program was then authorized to begin work with Instructional Technology in the development of the online component of the program. This cycle completed with an understanding that this program needed to be presented to students to solicit feedback as to whether this program would be effective in its current form or if additional changes needed to be made.

The development of this online program was a comprehensive component of this research. The first step in the development was the finalizing of a sample document. The second step involved the drafting the pages for the online program and the layout for the site that would offer students a user-friendly way of completing the program. Soliciting information from organizations and advisors in order to compose the online program was the fourth step. Working with the Instructional Technology to create the database and the website was the final step in the creation of the online program.

Cycle Four: Focus Group Meetings

Data Collection Strategy:

Open focus groups with Rowan students also provided an opportunity to gather information regarding the composition of the co-curricular transcript document and the construction of a name for the university's program. The focus groups conducted on campus were a "supplementary source of data" (Morgan, 1997, p. 2) allowing for a discussion on some of the research already conducted and gaining student insight into the

components still in progress. The focus group participants served as an invaluable source of information as they highlighted areas where students were unresponsive and assisted in development of marketing ideas to better present the program.

The focus group meetings were scheduled at two different times to best meet the needs of the Rowan student population. The first meeting was held during the open period at 11 a.m. when no classes are in session. The second meeting was held at 6 p.m. since it appeared to be a time period when most students were between classes and in the student center. Individual invitations were distributed to each organization inviting student leaders to attend this meeting regarding the implementation of a co-curricular transcript (Appendix A). The meeting was advertised through the University's online calendar, the school newspaper, and phone and email messages. The meeting covered the details of the program, anticipated implementation dates, and benefits to Rowan students. Students were asked for feedback and suggestions for implementation. A sign-in sheet was distributed asking for student's name and email so that they could stay informed of the transcript's progress. Detailed notes were taken of the meeting by the researcher. Furthermore, both sessions were videotaped for further analysis. A total of six students attended the morning session and five students attended the evening session.

Cycle Five: Survey of Employers

Data Collection Strategy:

The quantitative component of this action research project involved the mailing of 183 surveys to employers to gather information regarding the role of a co-curricular transcript in the evaluation of an entry-level candidate (Appendix B). Employers were

selected for the study based on their involvement with the university's career and academic planning center and their participation in a career fair or education expo over the course of the past academic year. This cycle provided an opportunity to gather data from employers through an anonymous survey. The rationale behind the survey was that it would provide information about the co-curricular transcript to employers who look to Rowan for potential employees as well as offering a source of statistical information to utilize in the presentation of the program to Rowan students.

The quantitative component of this action research project gathered data from employers across the tri-state area (New Jersey, Pennsylvania and Delaware) regarding the effectiveness of the co-curricular transcripts contents to evaluation of an entry-level candidate's application. The survey was sent to a total of 183 employers . Employers were selected based on whether or not they had participated in a career fair or education expo on the Rowan campus during the past academic year. The rationale for this selection was based on the idea that these employers were most accustomed to seeing applicants from Rowan and could therefore make judgments as to the current accuracy of student reported information on campus activities. The mailing contained a letter detailing the action research project, the rationale for their selection as a participant and a description of a co-curricular transcript. The mailing also included a sample co-curricular transcript and a brief survey. The survey consisted of five Likert scale questions with a that measured the responses to each question with four possible choices: Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, and Strongly Disagree. The survey sought to ascertain information on the importance of evaluating an entry-level candidate's leadership activities to employers and the effectiveness of the co-curricular transcript to employers in their assessment of a

candidate. A final open ended question asked the employers to provide their perspective on the role of leadership activities and campus involvement in the selection of an entry-level candidate. Employers were asked to return the survey in a business reply envelope provided with the mailing. The business envelopes were coded with numbers assigned to each employer in order to track response rate and conduct a follow-up mailing.

Conclusion:

By working with Rowan administrators, students and coordinators of a program at another institutions, this action research project resulted in the implementation of a co-curricular transcript at Rowan University. The data collected throughout this process provided feedback and suggestions from students, approval and recommendation by administrators and guidance and support from the current coordinator at Richard Stockton College of New Jersey. Gathering this information enabled the researcher to effectively construct a plan for implementation of co-curricular transcript that best fits the needs of the Rowan campus community.

Chapter Four:
Presentation of Data Findings and Analysis

Introduction

The development and implementation of a Co-Curricular Transcript program at Rowan University was conducted through five cycles of action research. The nature of action research is unlike traditional research. Action research cycles allow the researcher to develop a general plan and then make modifications and revisions based on what was learned from each cycle. Action research allows researchers to conduct inquiry and gather information regarding the ways an institution or organization operates and how individuals learn on a daily basis (Mills, 2000). Furthermore, the purpose of gathering information in the action research cycles is conducted "with the goals of gaining insight, developing reflective practice, effecting positive changes . . . and improving student outcomes and the lives of those involved" (Mills, 2000, p. 6). Analysis of this data was conducted in a reflective manner as the researcher continually works to create positive change within the institution or organization. As described by Kurt Lewin in Mills (2000) each cycle of action research is conducted while also exploring additional possibilities, opportunities and potential dilemmas. Over the course of this action research project, I went through five specific cycles, each one requiring further

development of the original concept. This chapter provides a narrative that presents the data of each cycle within the action research project and an analysis of the data collected.

Introduction to the Action Research Project Narrative

The decision to pursue the implementation of a co-curricular transcript program as my thesis project occurred during the spring 2000 semester within the Educational Research and Procedures course. While conducting research pertinent to this class, I realized that the trend of developing co-curricular transcripts was prevalent throughout student involvement research. I decided to pursue the topic with student affairs professionals on the campus and gauge their receptiveness to the idea of a co-curricular transcript program. From personal meetings with student affairs personnel, I learned that the topic had been discussed on the campus and there was a great deal of support for the program (Campus meeting, 5/10/01). After a meeting with Julie Peterson, Service Learning and Volunteerism and George Brelsford, Residential and Campus Life, I also learned that the obstacles preventing the development of a co-curricular transcript at Rowan included a lack of available information to design the program, concerns over staff support and inadequate finances (Personal Meeting, 5/11/00). Developing and implementing a program that best fit the needs of the Rowan community as my action research project appeared welcomed and received preliminary approval.

First Action Cycle: Preliminary Information Gathering

From April 2000 through September 2000, I conducted the first cycle of research. The first phase of this project was to collect information on programs that currently had

co-curricular transcript programs in place. By conducting web searches, I was able to locate a number of institutions locally and nationwide with Co-Curricular Transcript programs in place. Institutions with successful programs found within this study included the University of California at Riverside, the University of San Diego, University of Pittsburgh, Loyola University, Hamline University and the Richard Stockton College of New Jersey. Each program contained its own format for the final transcript and own unique qualities. The search also revealed that some programs had specific requirements for students participating in the program including mandatory workshop attendance and minimum GPA requirements. Furthermore, the differences in the data storage of each program was also evident in this search as some institutions ran programs online while others still did paper submissions and verification.

Conducting this research over the summer of 2000, I learned that a number of programs existed throughout the country with varying levels of success. The most interesting item found in this search was the differences that existed within the programs and how each program was customized to the particular campus. Additionally, I found that at least three schools in close proximity to Rowan either had programs or were developing programs. Both the Richard Stockton College of New Jersey and Temple University had successful programs in place. The College of New Jersey was in the process of developing a program. This factor alone indicated that if Rowan University wanted to continue to offer students competitive services, the student affairs division needed to create a program that offered our students this advantage.

The research conducted online also lead me to research conducted by the National Association of Campus Activities (NACA) in the 1980's and again in 1992. NACA's

research involved a nationwide study to determine the number of co-curricular transcript programs in place and the types of programs that existed. The data from the 1980 study revealed forty-two institutions with programs in place that varied in program offerings and student requirements. Through a content analysis on the NACA research, I reviewed each of the programs, examining the structure and format to determine what pieces might be transferable to Rowan University. This analysis provided detailed information on institutions with programs including copies of their transcripts, publicity, and verification forms. The research reported that eleven programs had implemented a co-curricular transcript, thirteen programs implemented a co-curricular transcript with a mentoring component, and eighteen programs implemented a co-curricular transcript with a mentoring component and an assessment portion of the program. An invaluable resource for anyone creating a Co-Curricular Transcript program, the NACA research offered an opportunity to examine the programs in existence, review their practices and then determine which pieces of the program would best adapt to a program at Rowan University.

This cycle of action research concluded in September 2000 with the beginning of the fall semester and the Change in Higher Education course. Although significantly more research was collected throughout the action research process, this research served as the foundation of knowledge to begin the rest of the study. The information gathered throughout this process was shared periodically in meetings with George Brelsford, Assistant Vice President for Residential and Campus Life over the course of this cycle. Through these meetings, the idea for the co-curricular transcript program continued to

receive support, although it was clear that more information and research was necessary in order to actually implement a program on the campus.

Through this cycle, current practices in the development of co-curricular transcript programs were revealed, formats from other programs were discovered and some preliminary opinions were formed regarding the type of program that would best fit the needs of the campus community. This cycle also provided information about the program at Richard Stockton College of New Jersey where I applied for an internship.

Second Action Cycle: Case Study at Richard Stockton College of New Jersey

Although the first cycle of research had provided a great deal of information about the types of Co-Curricular Transcript programs and the types of transcript formats that existed across the country, little hands-on knowledge was gained through this process. After learning that a program existed at Richard Stockton College of New Jersey, I decided to inquire about the possibility of visiting the program and obtaining an internship. During an interview with Tom O'Donnell, the Director of Student Development for Stockton, I gathered data regarding the existing program and was also offered the opportunity to work with the program as a graduate intern for the office of student development (Personal Interview, 6/14/00). The rationale for selecting Stockton as the case-study site was based on multiple factors. First, the program was successful but still growing. Second, the program was overseen by an innovative director who embraced change and encouraged me to develop marketing strategies that challenged the status quo. Third, the college was within one-hour drive of Rowan, which provided an opportunity to make frequent visits to the campus. This experience offered not only the

opportunity for hands-on learning with an existing and successful program, but I was also able to gather relevant data and obtain information about the creation of the program. From working directly with students involved with Stockton co-curricular transcript program to creating new publicity and marketing for the growing program, I developed a keen understanding of the ways the program operated and how it met the needs of the students of Richard Stockton College of New Jersey.

The Office of Student Development's Co-Curricular Transcript program at Richard Stockton College of New Jersey is called the Undergraduate Learning, Training and Awareness (ULTRA) Co-Curricular Transcript Program. Dr. Joe Marcheitti who now serves as the Associate Vice President of Student Affairs created the program over ten years ago. The programs original purpose was to provide "students with both structure and flexibility in exploring those co-curricular factors that generally contribute to their overall academic growth, personal/interpersonal development, and likelihood for success in college" (Stockton resource document, 1987, p.1). The program faced some unique challenges throughout the implementation process including concerns raised by the registrar over the housing of the "transcript" and the offering of non-academic credit hours for attendance at workshops. Additionally, the program faced early criticism as it appeared to discriminate against commuter students, evening students, graduate students and adult learners. The response to this criticism was to extend office hours until 10 p.m. with student workers and distribute publicity about the program across the campus (Personal Interview, 10/4/00). Through this interview, I gained a better understanding of the process of implementing a co-curricular transcript program.

As an active participant observer, (Stake, 1994) I worked with Stockton student affairs professionals in the Office of Student Development on the ULTRA co-curricular transcript program. From September 2000 to May 2001, I visited the campus weekly with over 35 total visits, worked with students involved in the program, facilitated monthly workshops, and assisted in the operation of the co-curricular transcript program. My experience within this internship/case study and the interaction with Stockton student affairs professionals and students led me to several different conclusions about co-curricular transcript programs.

First and foremost, I realized that although their format was working for the Stockton campus, it would not be as successful on the Rowan campus. The data collected on the Stockton campus revealed that the students attending the ULTRA workshops do so for a variety of reasons. Students attend because the program is mandatory for a class or their residence hall, because the subject is of interest to them, or because they think the program will offer them new knowledge. Rarely did students indicate that the reason they attended ULTRA workshops was to eventually obtain a co-curricular transcript (Focus Group, 11/16/00). Although this format and the program offerings appears to be working on Stockton's campus, such a format may hinder participation on the Rowan campus as students already attend workshops on campus without the draw of the transcript.

Furthermore, I realized through my participation at Stockton that an online program is the most effective format. The concept was revealed as I worked with Stockton's program and their attempts to move the program online. Currently, the Stockton program records all student participation in ULTRA programs in a mainframe

computer with an antiquated database. Once a student requests a transcript, the information must be transferred from the mainframe into a computer with the Microsoft template for the co-curricular transcript. The fear of the database crashing, the multitude of disks containing student information and the files stored in order to keep the program running indicate that a more centralized and accessible system may better serve the needs of those using and facilitating the system. The national trend of transferring co-curricular programs completely online is also affecting Stockton. The challenge of moving the program online is an expensive and time-consuming venture. My observation was that if a program can begin online, it may reduce some of the confusion and loss of data that can result in the move from a paper based program to an online version.

The data collected also revealed the need to market the program well to students regardless of the program structure. When I first arrived at Stockton to begin the case study research, I was informed in meetings that students lacked awareness of the ULTRA program and that those who were aware were indifferent. This attitude, presented by the student affairs personnel at Stockton, was one of the motivating points to recreate the marketing behind the program (Personal Meeting, 9/29/00). The student's indifference towards the program reinforced the fact that in order for the program to be consistently successful, it must be marketed well and periodically reinvented. My observations during the case study also indicated that the students were not aware of the program offering or the benefits of involvement in the program because they have grown to ignore the program. Because of its stagnant status, students indicated in focus group interviews that the program appeared out-of-date and therefore ineffective. This experience also highlighted the fact that the same lesson may prove true at Rowan. Understanding the

need for marketing and publicity of the program as an essential component of the program's success was a good lesson to learn early in process. (Focus group, 11/16/00).

Throughout this case study, I was able to collect data that not only enabled me to work effectively as an active participant observer, it also allowed me to draft a more finalized version of the Rowan co-curricular transcript program. Over the course of the eight month case study, I was able to collect detailed information on the necessary components involved in the implementation and successful running of the program. This information was then compiled and presented to members of the Rowan community to begin the actual implementation of the program.

Third Action Cycle: Project Proposals and Plan for Implementation

After completing the first two cycles of research within this action research project, a great deal of data had been collected regarding the effectiveness of co-curricular transcripts. Through a review of the literature, the observations from the case study, and the content analysis of the NACA research, enough data had been collected to begin drafting a proposal of the program and start the plan for implementation. The program proposal included the format for the co-curricular transcript and the outline of the online program.

A design of the sample transcript was started utilizing various components of other programs. The first draft of the document included student biographical information, organizational listings and positions held. The document would undergo a number of drafts during this cycle but the original draft stemmed from an analysis of what was already available to students on other campuses. An additional conclusion that

was drawn at this point from the analysis of the literature was that the Rowan document would not attempt to detail a laundry list of skills acquired through participation in an organization. This decision was reached after a discussion with student affairs professionals including George Brelsford and Drew Calandrella where it was determined that until we could implement a mentoring component into the program, the skills piece would not be verifiable by the university and therefore its value and the value of the transcript could be questioned (Personal meeting, 9/13/01). Through this meeting, we were able to finalize the foundations of the program. These foundations included the need for a professional document to represent the student to the outside community, an online program that would reduce the responsibilities for a professional staff member and the need to create a user-friendly program that would attract student interest and provide a valuable service to the campus community. The foundations provided a base for the program to continue to develop and grow with the interests and needs of the Rowan community at the heart of the development.

By fall 2000 semester, I had gathered enough information to begin my presentations to George Brelsford, Assistant Vice President for Residential Life and Student Programs, and James Coaxum, Educational Leadership Thesis Advisor. Although these meetings were conducted separately, they shared similar information. At each meeting, I discussed my findings regarding the possible implementation of a co-curricular transcript program and the feasibility of the program being implemented. Concerns regarding the feasibility of creating and maintaining the program arose during the meeting with George Brelsford. Additionally, concerns over logistical matters including cost of staff to maintain program and feasibility of online co-curricular

transcript program were raised. The program required little staff participation once it was created. The responsibilities of the staff member would include maintaining the website for dates, receiving submitted transcripts, reviewing verification forms, and printing final copies of the transcript for signatures and seals (Field notes, 9/20/00). The proposal received support from both meetings and I then developed the action research cycles required to complete the project.

My interest in creating this program was motivated by several factors. I believed that this program would benefit the undergraduates at Rowan University. From their freshmen year through their senior year, students could develop their co-curricular transcript and highlight their involvement in campus activities. Attendance at conference, organizational memberships, honors and awards, and leadership experiences could all be charted on one document for Rowan students. The co-curricular transcript could then be used for self-marketing at job interviews, graduate school applications, requests for recommendations and other opportunities. My personal motivation for this program was that I would have benefited from a program like this during my undergraduate career. A co-curricular transcript can be a useful document at any point within a student's collegiate experience and this program would provide that same opportunity to Rowan students.

The next step in the development of the co-curricular transcript program was the development of the online database. I began to draft a plan for the Rowan Co-Curricular transcript as a web-based program utilizing Cosgrove's (1997) research regarding the increase in student usage of online co-curricular transcript programs. The first step in this plan was a meeting with Instructional Technology to assess the feasibility of an

online co-curricular transcript program. The first meeting was conducted with Patrick Ackerman of Instructional Technology (Personal Meeting, 11/13/00). Through this meeting we discussed the possibility of setting up a web-based program through the Rowan website that would provide students with access to the transcript 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. We also discussed preliminary measures for verification and security of the student data. Finally we discussed who would create this program and how it would be constructed. Through this meeting, a rough draft of the online program was created. Furthermore, we started to map out a timeline for the creation of this program. A final result of this meeting was the transfer of the program to Dave Chezem since Patrick Ackerman was leaving the institution. A brief discussion with Dave Chezem followed the meeting and we set up a time to work on the outline of the online program in the future.

The early development meetings with all involved participants on the Rowan University campus provided a firm grounding in what was desirable and undesirable in the co-curricular transcript program. Beginning in January 2001, meetings were held with George Brelsford, the Assistant Vice President for Residential and Campus Life and Drew Calandrella, the Vice President for Student Services, to update them on the process, gain final approval on the transcript prototype, and troubleshoot for other obstacles on the horizon. This meeting highlighted the importance of a professional document in our representation to the outside community. Furthermore, this meeting revealed a need to survey potential employers to gather data on the effectiveness of the proposed document in the evaluation of a potential candidate.

Meetings with George Brelsford once again revealed a desire to have an online program that students maintained with few responsibilities for a professional staff member. Furthermore, the feasibility of adding the responsibilities to a professional staff member's responsibility rather that creating a new position to maintain the program was also discussed. Additional programmatic requests included the need for a document that represented the university professionally to potential employers and a need for a comprehensive program that met the needs of the current students, but provided room for growth. We also arrived at the decision to house the program in the Office of Residential and Campus Life. Decisions regarding the involvement of other offices remained undetermined (Field notes, 10/02/00).

Follow-up meeting were conducted with the Instructional Technology representative, Dave Chezem, to determine the best layout for the final format (11/12/00). With the construction of the online program, we determined that the final document must be created first in order to best design the specific details of the program. The process of developing this document came from a number of sources. First, the documents obtained through the case study provided templates to begin work on the Rowan co-curricular transcript document. These documents as well as the data collected from cycle one's content analysis of NACA research provided an excellent resource for determining categories and activities to be listed on the transcript. Furthermore, using sample online co-curricular transcript formats from schools such as the University of California Riverside and the University of San Diego, Dave Chezem and I discussed steps involved in implementing the online system. At this point, I also learned that a new staff member

was being hired by Instructional Technology to assist in the creation and design of the online co-curricular transcript program.

Over the course of the fall 2000 semester, additional research was collected and the program elements were revised and refined. In spring 2001, an outline of the program, the purpose and significance and the sample document was presented to the Vice President for Student Services (Personal Meeting, 2/12/01). During this meeting, the online format was discussed and questions were raised regarding the timeline of the implementation. The Vice President for Student Services indicated the need for a document that presented the university as a professional institution in the eyes of outside community, namely potential employers. Concerns over Instructional Technology completing the program within an established timeline were also addressed. During this meeting, I shared the progress thus far and the proposed deadline. The Office of Residential and Campus Life was selected to maintain and market the program. The Assistant Vice President for Residential Life and Student Programs was selected as the individual responsible for signing off on all official transcripts. A final draft of the co-curricular transcript was reviewed and approved by Drew Calandrella as well. The meeting was successful and the program, once again, received the approval necessary to move to the next step (Personal Meeting, 2/12/01).

Fourth Action Cycle: Conducting Student Focus Groups

The fourth cycle of this action research project consisted of student focus group interviews at Rowan University. Two focus groups meetings were conducted on March 1, 2001 with a total of eleven students participating. A follow-up focus group was

conducted on March 6, 2001 with a selected class of students in the Leadership Concentration program. This class was selected because a number of the original students from the first focus group were enrolled in the class and it offered an opportunity to discuss the program with student leaders who would utilize the program. These focus groups were conducted in order to gather data on Rowan student perceptions of the co-curricular transcript and student feedback on the layout and content of the transcript.

The focus group invitations were sent to all student organizations through the student government association mailboxes. A follow-up postcard reminder was also sent out through the same venue (Appendix A). A phone mail announcement was sent to notify all students of the event. The focus group meeting was posted on the University Calendar. Posters advertising the event were hung in each of the residence halls in open areas. All of these marketing attempts resulted in a small number of interested students who provided some interesting feedback on the co-curricular transcript.

The focus groups were an enlightening experience. The students offered a fresh perspective on the topic sharing their impressions and their questions. Student perceptions were very important to this cycle as it was the main opportunity to determine what would be the most effective means of marketing (Focus Group, 3/1/01; 3/6/01). As a result of the focus group and as an additional benefit to marketing of the program, an article about the co-curricular transcript was published in the school newspaper, The Whit, which highlighted the program and the reasons students should get involved (Appendix F).

The results of the student focus groups on March 1, 2001 indicated a number of concerns that were not previously addressed by this research project. Students attending

the sessions were introduced to the concept of a co-curricular transcript, provided with background on the origins of the concept, and were presented with the benefits to getting involved with the program at Rowan. Students were then asked to complete a sample transcript by filling in their current activities in the categories that were listed. The objective of this activity was to determine if students would understand which activities fell into particular categories. An additional purpose was to determine if additional categories needed to be added in order to meet student needs.

Students completed these categories and offered their perspectives on where they placed different activities. Students were then presented with the sample co-curricular transcript for Rowan (Appendix C). When students were asked if the categories were confusing or if they would have added categories, they responded no. The only exception to this response was the concern over entering sports related positions onto the transcript. One student indicated that they were not sure where sports activities would be placed and suggested that an explanation be made in order to clarify where such activities should be listed. Another student indicated that we could simply include each sport in both the leadership category and the involvement category and allow students to decide which category they believed the activity belonged. The confusion over this activity was an interesting part of the meeting as it indicated that students were learning about the program and growing in their understanding of the document. From this discussion, I determined that explanations for each category should be included online and a contact phone number should be available if questions arose during the process. One student also suggested the possibility of having an "ask for help" email address for students with questions about the process of completing the co-curricular transcript online.

Moving on from the involvement categories, students were asked what they would add to the paraprofessional section. Paraprofessional positions of Resident Assistant, Peer Referral and Orientation Staff and Admissions Ambassador were already included on the document. Student suggestions included EOF Map Summer Counselors and Student Crime Prevention Practitioners (SCPP) with a category marked "other" for students to list other on campus positions not traditionally included in paraprofessional experience. Each of these positions would have a one sentence description on the document briefly explaining the responsibilities of the position. One student indicated that some students might consider their student work positions paraprofessional experience, but since many student worker jobs exist, it could be included in an "other" category under paraprofessional experience. This would allow students to describe their responsibilities without the confines of a pre-scripted description. Following this discussion, students were asked for feedback on the other three categories: professional and educational development, service learning and volunteerism, and honors awards, and recognition. No students had objections or additions to these categories, but many did have questions as to what should be included in these categories. Students asked what kinds of activities should be included in the professional and educational development category. We discussed how attendance at conferences and assisting faculty with research projects could be placed under this category. We also talked about the importance of participating in these activities for personal development. No other questions arose from the other categories.

At the conclusion of the discussion on the format and contents of the co-curricular transcript, we began discussing the need to market the program and solicit feedback on

how to get students involved in the program once it was developed. The students present at the session offered some very valuable feedback. First and foremost, the focus group indicated that students were unaware of the program, confused by the name of the document and therefore uninterested in the transcript because they believed it had little bearing on their college experience. One student suggested that when students heard the word transcript, they automatically assumed academic transcript and determined for themselves that since they had not had involvement with the academic document, that this must be the same concept. This logical connection in the student's mind posed an interesting dilemma for this action research project. Without student involvement and interest, the program would never develop. However, the name "co-curricular transcript" seemed to be a deterrent since students were turned off by the name, but once a student understood the purpose of the document, they also understood the value. This discussion led to the possibility of renaming the program with an acronym. Students seem to like the idea of using an acronym and thought that it would improve student reception to the program. No ideas were generated at this point but I informed the students that I would continue to work on developing an acronym for the program and would seek their input throughout the process.

This part of the focus group discussion was really the most relevant to this study as it presented the most difficult challenge. The students needed to understand an overview of the program before they could make the decision to get involved. With only eleven students attending the scheduled focus group, it was clear the students who expressed the view that the general student body was uninterested in the program because they didn't understand it was fairly accurate. The fact that students would associate the

program with the academic transcript and therefore assume that it was a program out of their control posed a problem for this study. This discussion further emphasized the need to develop a marketing plan and an acronym to present to the students in order for the program to gain popularity and acceptance in the campus culture.

The focus group concluded with an opportunity for the students present to ask any remaining questions. A student asked during the second session how a student's past involvement and the verification of such activities that were previously unverified by advisors could be documented on a co-curricular transcript. Students were concerned that since membership records did not previously exist and advisors were not always the same year to year, that they could encounter problems recording their information and verifying it on the transcript. This posed another interesting dilemma as many students will fall into this category in the first few years of implementation. We discussed the fact these problems would be dealt with on a case-by-case basis seeking advisor verification whenever possible. When advisors are no longer available, other sources of verification will need to be used such as club minutes from meetings, election records and club membership forms.

The follow up focus group with the Leadership Concentration students was conducted on March 6, 2001. The twelve students in attendance were presented with eight possibilities for the program acronym that were generated by undergraduate and graduate students. The eight possibilities, in alphabetical order, included:

ALIVE   Activities, Leadership, Involvement and Volunteer Experiences

IDEA   Individualized Description of Experiences and Activities

IMAGE   Individualized Memberships and Activities Growth Experiences

IMPRESS	Individualized Membership, Participation and Record of Excellence for Successful Students
SMART	Service, Membership, Activities and Recognition Transcript
STAR	Student Transcript Activities Record
REACT	Record of Experiences and Activities Collegiate Transcript
VIGOR	Volunteer, Involvement, Growth and Opportunities Record

Students were presented the options and asked to rank them in order. The top choices included SMART, STAR, ALIVE and IMPRESS. This information was then tabulated and presented to the Student Government Association to seek additional student input on the final acronym for the program. At this time, the decision has not been reached on the official name for the program and the Student Government Association was still soliciting student feedback.

The acronym selected for the program would be an internal name only. The name presented to the outside community would continue to be the Co-Curricular Transcript. This was made clear to the students participating in this research project. Furthermore, it was made evident in the fifth cycle of the study, which included surveying employers on the topic of co-curricular transcripts.

Fifth Action Cycle: Surveying Employers

Throughout the course of this action research project, the question was continually raised regarding the usefulness of this document to potential employers. Although uses for the co-curricular transcript are not limited to a job search, the question

was pertinent. Utilizing the Career and Academic Planning Center, a database was created of employers who have utilized Rowan as a source for potential job candidates over the past year. The database consisted of 183 employers.

The survey instrument was created to answer questions regarding the effectiveness of the proposed co-curricular transcript in an employer's evaluation of a potential candidate. The survey instrument was created, reviewed and revised by members of the Educational Leadership faculty and then submitted to a field test. The employers selected for the field test were members of the Career and Academic Planning Center's Advisory Board. A total of six surveys were sent out to employers for the field test. Five of the six surveys were returned after follow-up phone calls. The results of the field test indicated that a few changes were necessary in the wording of the introduction letter to better express the purpose of the study. The responses of the field test employers indicated that the employers felt the instrument was easily understood and the directions, questions, and format were all user friendly.

The original mailing of the surveys began on March 12, 2001 with 183 employers. A deadline of March 26, 2001 was set for returning the survey. The mailing consisted of an introductory letter explaining the purpose of the survey, a description of the program, and directions for completing and returning the survey. Also included in the mailing was a postage paid return envelope, the employer survey and a sample co-curricular transcript. The return envelopes were coded to assist in the follow-up effort.

A total of 74 completed employer surveys were returned by the deadline. An additional six surveys were returned with incorrect address information. Since the response rate of completed surveys was only 42 percent, a follow up mailing was

conducted for those employers who had not responded to the original mailing. The follow-up mailing was sent on April 2, 2001 with a deadline of April 11, 2001. An additional 22 surveys were returned increasing the total number of surveys received to 96 with an overall response rate of 54 percent.

The survey contained the following five statements with responses based on a Likert scale consisting of Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, and Strongly Disagree:

- When reviewing the credentials of a candidate for an entry-level position, I usually look at an individual's leadership development through co-curricular activities.

- Entry-level candidates currently provide adequate information about leadership development and campus activities.

- The Co-Curricular Transcript provides valuable information about a potential entry-level employee.

- I would utilize the Co-Curricular Transcript in my evaluation of a potential entry-level employee.

- I would prefer to see a potential entry-level candidate's Co-Curricular Transcript accompany the resume and application materials.

A final open-ended question asks employers to explain their perspective on reviewing a potential candidate's leadership and campus involvement when evaluating for an entry-level position in their company. Space was provided on the survey to respond and employers were encouraged to use additional space if necessary.

Listed below are the responses of the employers to each of the survey questions:

1. When reviewing the credentials of a candidate for an entry-level position, I usually look at an individuals leadership development through co-curricular activities

Strongly Agree	41.7%
Agree	53.1%
Disagree	4.2%
Strongly Disagree	1.0%

2. Entry-level candidates currently provide adequate information about leadership development and campus activities.

Strongly Agree	8.5%
Agree	61.7%
Disagree	25.5%
Strongly Disagree	4.3%

3. The Co-Curricular Transcript provides valuable information about a potential entry-level employee.

Strongly Agree	43.2%
Agree	52.6%
Disagree	3.2%
Strongly Disagree	1.1%

4. I would utilize the Co-Curricular Transcript in my evaluation of a potential entry-level employee.

Strongly Agree	44.2%
Agree	49.5%
Disagree	5.3%
Strongly Disagree	1.1%

5. I would prefer to see a potential entry-level candidate's Co-Curricular Transcript accompany the resume and application materials.

Strongly Agree	51.6%
Agree	40.9%
Disagree	6.5%
Strongly Disagree	1.1%

The results of this survey indicate that 41.7 percent employers strongly agree that they look at an individual's leadership development through co-curricular activities when reviewing for an entry-level position. Less than 5.2 percent indicated that they did not use co-curricular activities in their evaluation. When asked about the current level of information provided about leadership development and co-curricular activities from potential candidates, only 8.5 percent indicated that they strongly agreed that the current information was adequate. At least 61.7 percent responded that they agreed that candidates provided adequate information, but 30 percent claimed that the information

was not adequate. Over half the employers stated that they would utilize the co-curricular transcript in their evaluation of a potential candidate. At least 92.5 percent indicated that they would prefer to see a co-curricular transcript accompany a resume and application materials.

As a result of this data from potential employers, it is clear that co-curricular transcripts would provide useful information for a great deal of employers. Furthermore, since 30 percent of employers currently believe that entry level candidates do not provide enough information, the co-curricular transcript would provide employers with a better perspective of an entry-level candidate's involvement and potential skills.

Employers also provided some interesting feedback on the open-ended segment of the survey indicating that they review candidate's co-curricular involvement carefully as it is indicative of leadership styles, time management skills, work ethic and ability to work collaboratively with a team. Employers indicated that "Co-Curricular activities are important to the potential performance of a candidate" and that "leadership skills, contribution, responsibility —these are all indicators of self-motivated employee" (Employer Surveys, 4/11/01). Another employer indicated that "A candidate's leadership and campus involvement weigh heavily in evaluating for an entry-level position" (Employer Surveys, 4/11/01). Furthermore, employers also indicated in the open ended section that the document was easy to scan, a good resource for verifying involvement and provided employers with detailed information on the purpose of the organization as well as the role the student played within the organization. Some employers offered criticism indicating that this would be an additional document to review in the application procedure and since other candidates would not possess the document, it would be

difficult to evaluate. Other employers indicated that the document should include skills attained rather than simply outlining the organization and the position held. The results of this feedback indicated that although some employers may not value the document, the majority of employers are interested in an entry-level candidate's experience outside the classroom and place a value on leadership activities and involvement in campus activities (Employer Surveys, 4/11/01).

Summary of Data Findings and Overview of Data Analysis

This action research study revealed a number of themes about change and the development of a new program in an existing campus culture. This study also revealed new information about employer opinions regarding the usefulness of a co-curricular transcript. The need for extensive marketing of the program in order to generate student interest and participation was a major finding of this study. The need for administrative support financial assistance was also a major finding that was critical to the implementation of the program. Finally, the level of interest and support of potential employers was a critical finding that helped to both secure administrative support and generate student interest.

The findings of this qualitative and quantitative action research project indicate that this program will provide a beneficial service to the students of Rowan University. Furthermore, the results show that employers place a value on the co-curricular activities and that these activities are used in the evaluation of a potential employee. The outcomes of cycle of this research project provide new insights into the implementation of a co-curricular transcript at Rowan University.

Chapter Five:
Recommendations, Reflections and Conclusion

Introduction:

The purpose of this action research was to develop and implement a co-curricular transcript program at Rowan University. The Co-Curricular Transcript program at Rowan University offers students an opportunity to create an online transcript that outlines an individual's co-curricular involvement including professional development, elected student leader positions, memberships, honors, awards and volunteer activities. The program, located in the Office of Residential and Campus Life, is part of the division of student services. Utilizing other programs from within the state and across the country, Rowan's program was created to best serve the students at the present time with recommendations for possible additions following the first year. The decision to place the program online was made to ensure that students would have access to the program outside of office hours. Furthermore, the successfulness of online programs and the transition from paper format to online programs on college campuses (Cosgrove and Marino, 1997) also helped shaped this decision.

The program at Rowan provides students with an opportunity to validate their experiences, learn from their own development and share that development with

individuals inside and outside the college environment. The completion of this program will offer students a unique opportunity to document their own achievements and present themselves with a professional document from the institution. As a service to students, this program is an invaluable resource that serves individuals throughout their college experience and beyond, from the freshman year through to alumni status. The online program was designed to be easily used by students throughout their college years with the ability to add activities and leadership experiences. The final document was designed to present the student's activities in a comprehensive, professional format that best served the students and potential employers.

The results from the research conducted in this study indicate that the document would be valuable to students and employers. Students from the focus groups indicated that the format was easily understood and the online availability would make the program more accessible. Employers indicated that this document would provide verified, useful information about a student's leadership activities and that the document would be useful in assessing an entry-level candidate. The input from the student body and student affairs professionals enabled the program to fit the needs of the campus community through a customized format that served the students well. The end result of this action research project is a unique program that offers students the ability to document their campus involvement while offering potential employers a verified document with information about a potential candidate that was previously unavailable from one resource.

Recommendations:

As this project enters its first year of implementation, there are many elements that may require modifications in order for the program to succeed. The following

recommendations are suggestions to help improve the first year and allow the program to continue successfully for additional students.

1. **Assign the program to a full-time staff member or graduate assistant.**

In order for this program to succeed, it must be delegated to an individual within the office of residential and campus life. This individual should be responsible for the maintenance of the online program, the marketing of the program offerings to the student body, the creation of transcripts once submitted and the assessment of the program after the first year.

2. **Conduct a semester assessment to determine the program's effectiveness.**

The evaluation component of this program is a critical piece as it will allow student affairs personnel to target issues within the program before they become larger problems. Following the first semester of implementation, an assessment should be conducted to determine how many students are utilizing the online program and how many transcripts were submitted. Other components of the program including the advisor verification, the marketing plan and the maintenance of the online program should be evaluated. Focus group sessions with students and meetings with student affairs professionals should be held in order to gather information on these topics. Evaluations should be conducted annually after the first year.

3. **Implement a mentoring and assessment component into program.**

Following the successful implementation of the record keeping component for the co-curricular transcript program, the program should continue to grow through the implementation of a mentoring and personal assessment component.

These two components will add to the success of the program by offering students the chance to connect with faculty and administration on the campus who can help students better understand the role of co-curricular activities in their personal development. The mentoring program allows students to match up with mentors who can help guide them through their activities serving as role models and offering guidance on leadership and other issues. The personal assessment component allows students to assess their own potential through tests such as the Myers-Briggs or Kolby assessment tools. These components were aspects of the program that I wanted to implement within the first year but the coordination of the two pieces proved too great a challenge to implement in the limited time span.

Reflections:

This action research project was a challenging thesis project. The development and implementation of the program was a time consuming and personally challenging, yet rewarding venture. The original five research questions posed at the beginning of this study were answered completely with the exception of one. The research questions were:

1. What is the process of developing and implementing a co-curricular transcript program at Rowan University?

   The process of developing and implementing this program was a time-consuming process that required the involvement of many individuals in the campus community. The process required constant communication with student affairs administration and the instructional technology staff. Additionally, the process required student input and communication in order

to develop a program that fit the needs of the student body and campus community.

2. What is the feasibility of implementing a co-curricular transcript program at Rowan University?

The feasibility of implementing the program is great. The process of implementation required students, administration, faculty and potential employers to "buy-in" to the program. As a result of this interaction, the program was feasibility implemented utilizing the suggestions of all interested parties. Furthermore, the feasibility increased as we designed an online program that offered students a user-friendly and accessible resource without the need for major financial resources from the budget.

3. How do the members of the Rowan University campus community define the purpose of the program and what are their opinions regarding the format and publicity of the program?

The members of the campus community define the purpose of the program as a service to students, which allows an individual to document their leadership growth and campus involvement. Furthermore, the program's purpose was to provide a verifiable source of information to potential employers in a professional manner that represents the student and the institution in a positive light. The campus favored an online format that allowed students easy access to the program without the confines of office hours. Additionally, the campus is working on designing effective marketing strategies that will enhance student's awareness of the program and the benefits.

4. Are the existing co-curricular transcripts effective in the documentation of student involvement?

Throughout the country, the existing co-curricular transcript programs are effective in their documentation of student involvement. The research in this project highlighted the fact that the programs are customized to each campus and this customization seems to be the most successful part of the program. Furthermore, the addition of the online co-curricular transcript program is increasing student participation in the programs and therefore, increasing the number of students benefiting from the program offerings.

5. Do co-curricular transcripts have an impact on increasing student involvement?

This one question was one that not answered throughout the course of the study. A question for further research is whether or not co-curricular transcript programs actually increase student involvement. The original motivation behind this question was the concept that if a student is not currently involved in the campus community, would the offer of a tangible reward, for instance the co-curricular transcript, provide motivation to become involved. Although the study was unable to answer that question, it remains an interesting factor within the co-curricular transcript field and one that requires additional research.

Each of these questions were addressed throughout the research project. The process of developing and implementing the program was a lengthy process. I learned a great deal about the ways I need to work with different groups of people in order to get

the task accomplished. For instance, there were some individuals that I could reach at any point through a phone call to solicit feedback, ask advice, or get approval. Other individuals required a more formal approach with scheduled meetings and official proposals. Furthermore, I learned that when one has the right connections, the process of implementing a program becomes much easier. Because of my involvement on campus on the undergraduate level, I was able to utilize many of those same connections to create this program. Therefore the feasibility of implementing this program greatly increased. As a past student leader, I was able to work with many of the current officers within the student government association to create the necessary forms and advertise to chartered clubs and organizations. My paraprofessional involvement allowed be the access to the Assistant Vice President for Residential and Campus Life that was required in order to fully implement this program. All of these factors culminated in the attempt to gather information about what the campus community desired in a co-curricular transcript program and how they wanted it to look. My research also indicated that most co-curricular transcript programs are successful in serving students. Many students are participating in these programs and finding them to be a beneficial experience that provides a tangible reward for campus involvement.

Conclusion:

The development and implementation of a co-curricular transcript program at Rowan University went through five cycles of the action research paradigm. The research involved in this project was conducted in order to develop a program that was customized to the Rowan campus. With campus involvement, this program was

developed and implemented research within the campus community and case-study research outside the campus community.

Over the course of this past year, this action research project has produced a strong online program that is based out of the Office of Residential and Campus Life. Overall, the implementation of this project was a rewarding experience that culminated in the actual implementation of the co-curricular transcript program. The one major fact that has become abundantly clear is that students who are involved in the campus community benefit from having a resource available to document their leadership growth and campus involvement. This project sought to ensure the programs success by making the program accessible and customized to the campus community. The co-curricular transcript program offers students this service through a convenient mechanism available at all times through a click of the mouse and a computer screen.

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Appendix A:
Rowan University Focus Groups Information

Looking for that Big Payoff from Your Student Involvement?

All members and officers of SGA chartered organizations

are invited to attend one of the following

OPEN FOCUS GROUP MEETINGS

to discuss the implementation of a

CO-CURRICULAR TRANSCRIPT PROGRAM.

Meetings will be held on Thursday, March 1st at

both 11 a.m. and 6 p.m.

in Student Center Multi-Purpose Room/Rat

For more information on this meeting or the Co-Curricular transcript, please contact Cathy Ragan at 856.256.4388

A co-curricular transcript is an official University document created by a student which details all campus involvement, leadership activities and awards. If this sounds interesting to you as an involved student, attend this meeting for all the information and to help design the program to best-suit your needs.

REMINDER POSTCARD

OPEN FOCUS GROUP MEETING
ON CO-CURRICULAR TRANSCRIPT PROGRAM

Attend this meeting to gather all necessary information on the new Co-Curricular Transcript Program planned for September 2001.

- *Find out How YOU Can Get Involved*
- *Provide YOUR Feedback on the design of the document*
- *Be the FIRST to Learn How To utilize the Program*

Attend either session this Thursday, March 1st

at 11 a.m. or 6 p.m. in the

Student Center Multipurpose Room/Rat

Contact Cathy Ragan at 256.4388 with questions regarding the Co-Curricular Transcript Program

OPEN THE DOOR TO YOUR FUTURE

Today

11 a.m. and 6 p.m.

OPEN FOCUS GROUP MEETING ON THE NEW CO-CURRIUCULAR TRANSCRIPT PROGRAM

This focus group will center on the implementation of a co-curricular transcript program. FIND OUT HOW YOUR STUDENT INVOLVMENT CAN BENEFIT YOU LATER IN LIFE BY ATTENDING THIS 45 MINUTE PRESENTATION

A Co-Curricular transcript is an official university document created by a student that details all campus involvement, leadership activities, sports, and awards. In fall 2001, Rowan students will be able to access an online Co-Curricular Transcript Program and begin recording their involvement and leadership on the campus.

YOUR PARTICIPATION WILL HELP SHAPE THE FUTURE OF THIS PROGRAM!
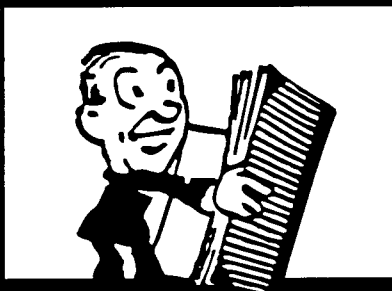
FIND OUT HOW YOU CAN BENEFIT FROM THE PROGAM BY ATTENDING THIS MEETING

Location of both Focus Group Sessions will be the S.C. Multipurpose Room/Rat

Appendix B:
Employer Survey Materials

Dear Friend of Rowan University:

The Student Services Division of Rowan University is currently implementing a co-curricular transcript program. A co-curricular transcript is an official university document that details the extracurricular activities and professional development of a student throughout his or her college years. Rowan University students will soon participate in this online program as a means of documenting the skills acquired through their extracurricular experiences.

You have been identified as an employer who utilizes the Rowan University Career and Academic Planning Office to recruit college graduates for entry level positions. As part of our research, we are asking employers like you throughout the tri-state area to provide feedback regarding the Co-Curricular Transcript Program to ascertain the usefulness of this program to potential employers. We ask that you take a few minutes to review the sample transcript provided and complete the attached survey.

We thank you in advance for your assistance and participation. Please return the survey in the self-addressed stamped envelope provided by March 26, 2001. Your responses will help us design the program to best fit the needs of both potential employers and the Rowan students. Please contact me with any questions regarding the development of this program at 856.256.4388. Again, thank you for your assistance.

Sincerely,

Cathy Ragan
Graduate Student
Higher Education Administration
Rowan University

Employers Survey for Rowan University's Co-Curricular Transcript Program

Please rate the following statements on the scale provided: Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, and Strongly Disagree. Your responses are greatly appreciated.

When reviewing the credentials of a candidate for an entry-level position, I usually look at an individual's leadership development through co-curricular activities.

Strongly Agree　　　　　*Agree*　　　*Disagree*　　　　　*Strongly Disagree*

Entry-level candidates currently provide adequate information about leadership development and campus activities.

Strongly Agree　　　　　*Agree*　　　*Disagree*　　　　　*Strongly Disagree*

The Co-Curricular Transcript provides valuable information about a potential entry-level employee.

Strongly Agree　　　　　*Agree*　　　*Disagree*　　　　　*Strongly Disagree*

I would utilize the Co-Curricular Transcript in my evaluation of a potential entry-level employee.

Strongly Agree　　　　　*Agree*　　　*Disagree*　　　　　*Strongly Disagree*

I would prefer to see a potential entry-level candidate's Co-Curricular Transcript accompany the resume and application materials.

Strongly Agree　　　　　*Agree*　　　*Disagree*　　　　　*Strongly Disagree*

Please explain your perspective on reviewing a potential candidate's leadership and campus involvement when evaluating for an entry-level position in your company. (Please respond on back of survey if more space is needed.)

_____

_____

_____

_____

Thank you for your participation in our survey.
Return all responses to Rowan University in the return envelope provided.

Appendix C:
Rowan University Co-Curricular Transcript

ROWAN
UNIVERSITY

Jane Smith
123 Anywhere Ave.
Any city, State 00000
smithj@rowan.edu

CO-CURRICULAR TRANSCRIPT

The Co-Curricular transcript is an official document of Rowan University designed to recognize and validate student certifications, honors, awards, leadership positions, organizational memberships and other significant activities not documented on the academic transcript. The transcript is maintained and verified by the Office of Residential and Campus Life and is considered an official document when signed by the Assistant Vice President for Residential and Campus Life.

LEADERSHIP EXPERIENCE

- **Student Government Association, 1999-2001**
  Campus organization centered on serving the Rowan students and fostering leadership development
      Position: Student Senator, Fall 1999 – Spring 2001

- **Sigma Sigma Sigma, 1998 – 2000**
  National social sorority dedicated to working with children and developing leaders
      Position: Treasurer, Spring 1999 – Spring 2000

- **PRSSA, 1998 – 1999**
  Public Relation Society Student Association
      Position: Service Chairperson, 1998-1999

PARTICIPATION IN STUDENT ORGANIZATIONS AND ACTIVITIES

- **Newman Club, 1998 – 2000**
  Campus organization centered on community service and religious beliefs.

- **RTVA, 1999-2000**
  Radio/Television/Video Association

- **Intramural Hockey Team, 1998-1999**
  Campus sponsored athletic team playing through entire season and playoffs

PARAPROFESSIONAL WORK EXPERIENCE

- **Resident Assistant, 1999-2001**
  Developed and enhanced the living and educational experiences of residential students

- **Peer Referral and Orientation Staff, 2000-2001**
  Facilitated sessions with incoming students emphasizing academic and co-curricular involvement.

- **Admissions Ambassador, 1998 – 1999**
  Serve as a representative of the University to incoming students emphasizing the numerous academic and co-curricular opportunities.

PROFESSIONAL AND EDUCATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

- **Emerging Leaders Conference, 2000**

- **Public Relations Research Assistant, 1999 – 2000**

- **Resident Assistant Training, 1999, 2000**

SERVICE LEARNING AND VOLUNTEERISM

- **The Big Event Participant, 2000**
  Served as a student volunteer in campus wide service project with surrounding community.

- **Phone-a-thon Volunteer, 1998**
  Alumni Association, Rowan University

- **Special Olympics Volunteer, 1998**

HONORS, AWARDS AND RECOGNITION

- **Rowan Scholars Scholarship, 2000**

- **Dean's List, Fall 1998, Spring 1999**

- **Member of the Year Award, PRSSA, 1999**

- **Outstanding Academic Achievement Award, 1998**

The entries on this transcript have been validated and are an accurate representation of the student' co-curricular activities while attending Rowan University

_____
Assistant Vice President for Residential and Student Programs

ROWAN UNIVERSITY, 201 MULLICA HILL ROAD, GLASSBORO, NJ 08028

Appendix D:
Student Organization Information

To: Advisors of All SGA Chartered Organizations
From: Cathy Ragan, Graduate Assistant, Residential and Campus Life
Date: March 1, 2001
Re: Implementation of a Co-Curricular Transcript

A Co-Curricular transcript is an official university document created by a student that details all campus involvement, leadership activities, sports, and awards. Beginning in fall 2001, Rowan students will be able to access an online Co-Curricular Transcript Program and begin recording their involvement and leadership on the campus. Once produced, a Co-Curricular transcript can be used for resume preparation, requests for recommendation letters, employment applications, graduate school application and to document personal and professional leadership growth.

In order to make this program valuable to students and members of the outside community, verification of a student's activities is required. The online transcript program is being designed to verify all student entries via an email request to the organization's advisor. In conjunction with the Student Government Association, a form is being developed to record membership records of all organizations. Once a student indicates that they are a member of a particular organization, a "request for verification" email will be sent to the advisor. A review of this membership record and/or communication with the organization's officers by an advisor will provide sufficient verification of a student's involvement.

This program is still in development stages but its anticipated implementation for student use is September 2001. You will receive more information as the program is developed. If you have suggestion, comments or concerns regarding this program, please contact Cathy Ragan at 256-4388. Your feedback is appreciated.

To: President, Greek Organization
From: Cathy Ragan, Graduate Assistant
Date: April 2, 2001
Re: Organizational Description Forms

As a service to the involved students of the Rowan campus community, the Office of Residential and Campus Life is creating a "Co-Curricular Transcript Program." This program, with your assistance, will prove very useful to the student body.

A Co-Curricular Transcript is an official university document created online by a student. The document details all campus involvement, leadership activities, sports activities, and awards. Beginning in fall 2001, Rowan students will be able to access an online Co-Curricular Transcript Program and begin recording their involvement and leadership on the campus. Once produced, a Co-Curricular Transcript can be used for resume preparation, requests for recommendation letters, employment applications, graduate school application and to document personal and professional leadership growth.

Your assistance is needed in order to complete this project. Every organization must complete an Organizational Description Form which asks for a one sentence description of you organization's purpose and goals. This description will then be added to the transcript and will serve as a point of reference for employers when they review the document.

The organizational description form is enclosed with this letter along with a sample of the co-curricular transcript document. Please complete the form and return it via interoffice mail to Cathy Ragan. You can also drop off the form to the Residential and Campus Life in Savitz. If you have any questions regarding this process or the new program, please contact Cathy at 256-4388. I thank you in advance for your assistance in making this program a success.

Appendix E
Organization Description Form

Attention Organizations:

Your assistance is required to represent your organization on the New Co-Curricular Transcript.

A Co-Curricular transcript is an official university document created by a student that details all campus involvement, leadership activities, sports, and awards. Beginning in fall 2001, Rowan students will be able to access an online Co-Curricular Transcript Program and begin recording their involvement and leadership on the campus. Once produced, a Co-Curricular transcript can be used for resume preparation, requests for recommendation letters, employment applications, graduate school application and to document personal and professional leadership growth.

Please complete the following information and submit to

Cathy Ragan		Annette McCully
Graduate Assistant		SFCB Advisor
Residential & Campus Life	OR	SFCB Budget Hearing
Savitz Hall		SGA Suite

Your cooperation is appreciated. Please return all forms during the
SFCB BUDGET HEARING PROCESS

Organization's Name: _____

President's Name: _____ Phone #: _____

Please describe in one sentence the overall purpose of your organization, as you would want it to appear on a document going to a potential employer.

_____

_____

_____

What are the current leadership positions within your organization?

_____

_____

Who is your organization's current advisor? _____

Does this individual plan to be your advisor in 2001-2002?   Y   N

Thank you for your cooperation.
Please return this form to Cathy Ragan or Annette McCully as soon as possible.
If you have questions regarding the program or this form, please contact 256-4388.

Appendix F:
Whit Article on Co-Curricular Transcript Program

news

New transcript will aid job-hunters

By *Michele Gordemer*

Rowan students will soon have a leg up on other job candidates in their career searches as the result of a new transcript that will enable students to document their extra-curricular and paraprofessional activities.

The Co-Curricular Transcript, as it is currently called, is a document that can supplement the resume and offer employers background on a candidate's leadership experience, said master's student Cathy Ragan, who is working to implement the program.

"[The transcript] will enable students to document their leadership growth... and professional development," said Ragan.

Unlike an academic transcript, the co-curricular one will document and verify student leadership positions, organizational memberships, service and volunteer activities, honors and awards and paraprofessional work experience.

Assistant Vice President of Residential and Campus Life George Brelsford said, "It's going to add the kind of information not included in a resume or that are difficult to explain in a cover letter. Employers will be able to see that a student is able to work in a group, can do pre-

sentations, can communicate with others ..."

What Ragan and Brelsford say is unique about the information in the co-curricular transcript, is that it will all be verified. The transcript will be available online in a save/submit format. Each time a student adds something to his or her transcript, an e-mail is sent to the adviser of the program or organization listed asking him or her to verify the information. Once verified, the message will then be sent to Brelsford who will sign-off on the transcript.

"Employers will know this stuff has been verified," said Ragan.

According to the Rowan graduate, the transcript has already been approved by Residential and Campus Life and the Vice President of Student Affairs Drew Calendrella, and the online format is now in the works. Brelsford said the program will be up and running by the summer but will not be available to stu-

dents until the fall semester.

Ragan, who is working toward her master's in higher education, said she discovered the program while researching for a project for her action thesis — a plan that must be researched, developed and implemented.

"I'm interested in working directly with students," she said. "I wanted to develop a program that will help student involvement."

In her research, Ragan found that area schools Temple University and Stockton State College have

> *"It's going to add the kind of information not included in a resume ..."*
>
> — George Brelsford

similar programs and that 71 percent of employers prefer a document of this nature in addition to a resume.

"The benefits will serve as an incentive for students to take advantage of the program," said Ragan. "[Students] may not remember what they were involved in their freshman year ... this program will help them document those activities in a presentable format that may make them stand out among other job candidates."