UNIVERSITÉ DE SHERBROOKE

Taux d'inscription, de rétention et de décrochage dans le programme de gestion du tourisme

Enrolment, Student Retention and Attrition in the Tourism Management Program

par

Lorelie Bouchard

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SUMMARY

This paper examines the factors motivating students to enrol in the Tourism Management program at Champlain College, St-Lambert and why a large number of students abandon the program before obtaining their DEC. There is a great deal of literature on student attrition, however there is little consensus on why students withdraw from college programs and the results cannot be easily generalized to this particular set of students at this time. Understanding the factors that influenced the students to choose Tourism Management at Champlain, St-Lambert and why they then leave before completing the six semesters will help with student success and with the marketing of the program.

The theoretical framework guiding the study is metacognition, a branch of cognitive psychology that deals with the awareness and understanding of one's thinking processes. Through a survey, students were asked to rank the general and specific factors that influenced their choice of Tourism Management as a program of study. Exit interviews were carried out with students who abandoned the program within the first year of study to determine the reasons for dropping out. Students who persisted in the program wrote journals describing their first year experience in order to identify any differences in metacognitive abilities with those who abandoned the program. The academic records of all students were also analyzed.

The major factors influencing students to choose the Tourism Management program were interest in travel and job opportunities available after graduating. The results from the exit interviews and journals also showed that interest in travel was the primary reason for enrolment. The knowledge that students had of Cegep and the Tourism Management program before enroling however was negligible, particularly among the group that abandoned the program within the first year of study. The analyses of the academic records of the 2007 incoming students showed that the

students with the lower high school grades were more likely to abandon the Tourism Management program than those with higher grades. The same is true for first semester and second semester Cegep grades.

The major reason why the students abandoned the program during the 2007/2008 academic year was a lack of interest or a dislike of the program, followed by financial difficulties. It is not clear however what the lack of interest can be attributed to and this may be an avenue for future research. As opposed to the students who persisted in the program, those who abandoned their studies had unrealistic expectations of the academic requirements, were unprepared for the workload, had more difficulty analyzing their own performance and had not set concrete goals for themselves.

The study shows several problem areas within the program. Of main concern is the lack of knowledge that students have of Cegep life and the Tourism Management program in general and the lack of preparation for Cegep level courses. The scheduling of courses and teaching methods within the program are other areas that need to be addressed. The paper concludes with a set of recommendations to possibly help remedy some of the problems.

ABSTRACT

Ce travail s'intéresse aux facteurs qui motivent les étudiants à s'inscrire au programme de tourisme offert au Collège Champlain de St-Lambert. Il cherche à établir les raisons qui font en sorte qu'un si grand nombre d'étudiants abandonnent le programme avant d'obtenir leur DEC. Plusieurs recherches ont été effectuées sur l'abandon scolaire, mais il n'y a pas de consensus quant aux raisons pour lesquelles les étudiants se retirent du programme collégial. Actuellement, il est difficile d'établir des liens entre les résultats de ces recherches et ce groupe d'étudiants. La compréhension des facteurs qui influencent les étudiants à choisir le tourisme au Collège Champlain et les raisons qui font en sorte qu'ils quittent avant d'avoir complété leur formation, nous permettront d'améliorer le taux de rétention des étudiants dans ce programme. De plus, cela favorisera le marketing du programme.

Le cadre théorique de cette recherche est la métacognition, une composante importante de la psychologie cognitive qui examine la connaissance et le contrôle qu'une personne a sur sa façon de penser. La métacognition est une variable qui différencie les étudiants qui réussissent de ceux qui abandonnent (Tardif 1997). La méthodologie de cette recherche comprend : un sondage, des entrevues, des comptes-rendus sous forme de journal et une analyse des résultats scolaires. Le sondage fut complété par tous les étudiants qui ont commencé le programme en tourisme en août 2007. Ce sondage avait pour but d'établir les facteurs qui ont motivé les étudiants à choisir cette discipline. Ceux-ci étaient divisés en deux volets soient : les facteurs généraux et les facteurs spécifiques. Les facteurs généraux comprennent l'intérêt pour les voyages et les informations obtenues auprès des orienteurs, des enseignants, de la publicité faite par les cégeps, des parents et des amis. Les facteurs spécifiques incluent les différents cours offerts tels que la géographie, l'informatique, l'administration, le programme de voyages, le stage en milieu de travail, la réputation du programme et de ses professeurs. Les entrevues ont été effectuées auprès de sept étudiants qui ont abandonné le programme entre décembre 2007 et juin 2008. Le but de ces entrevues était de déterminer les raisons de ces abandons. Les étudiants qui ont poursuivi leur formation en tourisme ont rédigé un journal dans lequel ils décrivaient leur expérience tout au long de leur première année d'études. Dans ce journal, ils devaient répondre à sept questions qui avaient pour but de déterminer les différences entre leurs habiletés métacognitives et celles de ceux qui se sont retirés du programme. L'analyse des dossiers des étudiants tenait compte des résultats scolaires du secondaire ainsi que des résultats académiques de la première année de cégep.

Les principaux facteurs qui ont motivé les étudiants à choisir le programme gestion du tourisme étaient l'intérêt pour les voyages et les opportunités d'emploi après l'obtention de leur DEC. La connaissance que les étudiants ont du cégep et du programme de gestion du tourisme avant de s'inscrire était toutefois négligeable,

particulièrement parmi le groupe qui a abandonné le programme durant la première année d'études. L'analyse des résultats académiques des étudiants a démontré que les candidats ayant des notes inférieures à l'école secondaire sont plus susceptibles d'abandonner le programme de gestion du tourisme que ceux ayant des notes supérieures. L'analyse arrive aux mêmes conclusions en ce qui concerne les candidats qui ont obtenu de faibles résultats académiques lors de la première et de la deuxième session du cégep.

Les raisons principales qui ont fait en sorte que les étudiants ont abandonné le programme durant l'année académique 2007-2008 étaient le manque d'intérêt pour le programme et les difficultés financières. Par ailleurs, nous ne pouvons établir de façon générale les causes de ce manque d'intérêt. Cela pourrait faire l'objet d'une recherche ultérieure. Par opposition aux étudiants qui ont poursuivi le programme, ceux qui ont abandonné leurs études avaient des attentes irréalistes en ce qui a trait aux exigences académiques, ils n'étaient pas préparés pour la charge de travail, ils avaient plus de difficultés à analyser leur propre performance et ils ne s'étaient pas fixé d'objectifs concrets.

L'étude a identifié plusieurs secteurs problématiques à l'intérieur du programme. L'une des problématiques principales est le manque de connaissance que les étudiants ont de la vie au cégep et du programme de tourisme en général sans compter le manque de préparation pour des cours de niveau cégep. L'horaire des cours et les méthodes d'enseignement à l'intérieur du programme sont d'autres éléments qui méritent d'être revus.

Les limites de cette recherche comprennent le nombre restreint d'étudiants qui ont accepté d'être interviewés et l'effet d'intervieweur. Étant donné que l'intervieweur était le professeur des étudiants et malgré le fait que ceux-ci n'étudient plus en gestion du tourisme, ils peuvent se sentir obligés de répondre à l'intervieweur de façon subjective. Les recherches futures pourront inclure un plus grand nombre d'entrevues menées par des intervieweurs expérimentés n'ayant eu au préalable aucun contact avec les étudiants et ce dans le but de favoriser une plus grande objectivité. Un autre domaine de recherche pourrait être l'analyse du fait que des étudiants très intéressés par les voyages finissent par se désintéresser complètement du programme.

Enfin et possiblement l'un des facteurs qui nous semble des plus importants est le besoin pour les étudiants du secondaire d'en connaître plus sur la vie au cégep et sur le programme de gestion du tourisme. Le document se termine par un ensemble de recommandations pour le Collège, le programme et les professeurs pour éventuellement aider à remédier aux problèmes identifiés.

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INTRODUCTION

This paper examines the factors motivating students to enrol in the Tourism Management program at Champlain College, St-Lambert and why a large number of students abandon the program before obtaining their DEC. The paper summarizes the literature on the factors influencing student choice and the reasons for student attrition and how metacognition influences student success. A description of the instruments of data collection (surveys, statistical analysis of grades, exit interviews and journals) is included and the findings are explained. The paper concludes with a set of recommendations to address the issues emerging from the findings.

CHAPTER ONE
STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

The Tourism Management program is a career program[1] at Champlain College, St-Lambert in Quebec. The program was first offered in the fall of 1986 and enjoyed an enrolment of two cohorts for the first 15 years of the program. During this time the program underwent two full curriculum revisions in order to advance with the technological changes and industry requirements. Retaining students through to graduation has always been a challenge, but this was not considered a major issue until recently. The current interest in retention and graduation rates is due in part to a decline in enrolment since August 2002. This decline has been partly attributed to the tragic events of September 11, 2001. The bombing of the World Trade Center in New York City made many people fearful and the tourism industry suffered a major setback with international tourist arrivals falling to numbers not seen in decades (WTO, 2004). The news reports at the time focused on many businesses such as airlines and tour operators filing for bankruptcy and laying off workers. Students, and their parents, did not want to spend three years studying in a field where there were very few employment opportunities. The low number of students registered in the program has meant a decline in the number of class sections and teaching hours. The number of students who began their studies in August 2005 and 2006 was higher than the previous three years, but as Table 1 demonstrates, they are far from the late 1990s level and attrition remains a problem.

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[1] Career programs are three-year technical programs leading to employment. They include core courses as well as general education courses (English, French, Humanities and Physical Education).

Table 1.1
Enrolment and Graduation

	2006	2005	2004	2003	2002	2001	2000	1999	1998	1997	1996	1995
Enrolment	48	51	34	38	22	50	55	64	76	64	81	76
Graduates	9*	17*	16*	19	13	24	31	36	35	38	36	35

*The number will increase due to off-profile students still registered in the program.
Source: Student Tracking Assessment and Reporting, 2009

The graduation rate of all career programs in the Cegep system reached a high of 51.7% with the 1996 cohort (Côté et al., 2003). This is for students who completed their *diplôme d'études collégiales* (DEC) within a five-year period, or the prescribed period of three years, plus an additional two years (PPT+2). The Tourism Management graduation rate (PPT+2) has fluctuated over the past decade between a low of 44.4% for the 1996 entering cohort and a high of 59.4% for the 1997 cohort. Although this is within the range of the provincial average, improvements should be made in order to secure the viability of the program and improve student success.

In order to increase the number of students enroled in the program almost all students who apply and have obtained their high school diploma are accepted. The viewpoint of the department, as well as several of the general education teachers, has been that many of these students, who would not have been admitted in the late 1990's, are not prepared for the rigors of a college program. The anecdotal conclusion is that many students are missing basic generic abilities such as reading comprehension. There has also been an increase in allophone and francophone students who are now studying in English for the first time. This makes for a hard first semester and the transition from high school to Cegep can be difficult for a large majority of students (Rivière, 1995; Kaszap, 1996; Roy et al., 2003). The first semester transition can be especially complex for those who are unprepared or are adapting to a new language of instruction. The largest dropout in the Tourism Management program occurs during the first year of the program.

A consensus has formed among post-secondary educators that there needs to be scholarly research done on teaching and learning in order to advance the practice of teaching. The explorations of this area should be conducted by academics from all disciplines, not just those in faculties of education (Atkinson, 2003). Very little research has been done on tourism students in the Cegep system, as there are only a small number of schools offering the program and an even smaller percentage of career students registered in this field of study. The Cegep system offers 115 different career programs; however 30% of all career students are registered in only 3 programs, 50% in only 7 programs and 75% in only 25 of the 115 programs (Côté et al., 2003). Tourism is not among the top 25 Provincial programs in terms of enrolment, therefore little has been done in terms of investigating the issues that the Tourism programs have faced in the past as well as today.

Understanding the factors that influence students to choose Tourism Management and why they subsequently leave prior to completing the six semesters may help with the viability of the program in several ways. First with the marketing and recruiting efforts of the program, second, with the fine tuning of the curriculum to make it more attractive for potential and current students, thirdly to improve student success and finally to help with retention rates. By enhancing our understanding of the students sitting in our classrooms, we will be better able to design and plan our courses to not only meet the ministerial objectives and industry requirements, but also to meet the students' needs as well as foster their success. This investigation can be categorized as the first domain of the scholarship of teaching: the scholarship of discovery (Boyer, cited in Atkins, 2003). The discovery will build upon the findings and conclusions from previous researchers and hopefully add new ideas on how to improve retention rates, which is the second domain, the scholarship of integration. The insight gained into the profiles of these tourism students leads to the third domain, that of application. This new knowledge will help in the redesign and implementation of new instructional strategies in the Introduction to Tourism course, so as to foster higher retention rates. One of the desired outcomes

of this research is that it leads to action, not only in the tourism classrooms, but also in the way the department and the Cegep think about and plan for the first year experience of tourism students. It will not only help the Tourism Management Program, but may also help other career departments at the same college dealing with similar problems as well as other Cegeps that offer Tourism.

The questions being asked by this study are: what factors influence the choice of tourism for new students and transfer students? And: what factors account for the decision to drop out during the first year of the program? The following chapter will summarize the findings of previous research on enrolment and attrition in Quebec, the United States, the United Kingdom and Australia.

CHAPTER TWO
LITERATURE REVIEW

In order to situate these research questions in a wider scientific context with a view to further operationalization and instrumentation, a literature review was conducted. Scholarly journals, articles and reports were researched and consulted through several databases including CBCA Education, EBSCO Host, ERIC, Inforoute (MELS) and Proquest. Research was also conducted at the Centre de Documentation Collégiale, where the PAREA documents are housed. The literature review can be divided into four main parts: the reasons why students choose a program of study; the factors leading to their decision to drop out of school including financial factors, satisfaction levels, students' expectations, academic performance and social factors; possible solutions to prevent students from dropping out and finally the role metacognition plays in student success.

1. STUDENTS' CHOICE OF PROGRAMS

Due to the lack of research on Tourism students in the Cegep system, it was necessary to look at studies done at the university and community college levels in terms of students' choice of majors. The literature shows diverse and contradictory factors influencing students' choices. Although, there is one common element, and that is students choose their programs because they have an interest in the subject being studied (Aloise-Young, 2003; Anderson, 1999; Malgwi, Howe, & Burnaby, 2005; O'Mahony, McWilliams, & Whitelaw, 2001).

The University of Plymouth in the United Kingdom carried out surveys and focus groups with new students in all majors for three years from 1996 to 1998 to determine how students choose their school and program (Anderson, 1999). They found that the majority of students choose the program they want to study before

choosing the school. Location and cost were then the primary factors in choosing the school. Course content and employment prospects ranked first and second in terms of program choice. Advice from parents and teachers were also rated as important. The school's open house was ranked as an important opportunity to obtain information, but not from the school's staff. According to Anderson, potential students prefer to speak to faculty and students already attending the school. They are very sceptical of recruiting efforts by staff when they visit high schools and during education fairs. Advertising also had a negligible impact on students' choice. The students who entered the Tourism Program at Champlain College, St-Lambert in 2005 also listed college recruiting efforts such as the website, open house and career days at the bottom of factors influencing their decisions to enrol in the program (Bouchard, 2005).

Malgwi, Howe and Burnaby (2005) sent e-mail surveys to 3800 undergraduate students at a large Northeastern United States business school in the spring of 2003, to determine what influenced their choice of major and what factors accounted for the change of majors among transfer students. In contrast to the study by Anderson (1999), they found that parents, teachers, guidance counsellors and the college's open house had a very low degree of influence. They found that the most influential factor was interest in the subject, for both males and females. The second most important factor for females was aptitude in the subject, for males however this was ranked fifth.   The men identified potential for career advancement, job opportunities and level of compensation as more important than aptitude. Students who changed their major ranked their influences in the same order as those who hadn't changed their major. This study only surveyed business majors, which limits the generalization of the results to other groups of students. Although the Tourism program is now trying to market itself as a sub-discipline of business with its name change to Tourism Management, it is not possible to claim that these results would apply to tourism students without further research.

A study done by O'Mahony, McWilliams and Whitelaw (2001) used focus groups and surveys to determine why students chose a hospitality degree program at Victoria University in Melbourne, Australia. This research is the most applicable to the group of Tourism students being studied as hospitality (accommodation and food and beverage) is a major component of the tourism industry. They found that the major influences in order of importance were the positive perception of the hospitality industry, friends and relatives working in the industry, media reports on the growth of the industry and career opportunities. The program itself was also seen as favourable because of the one-year internship, opportunities for travel and the reputation of the teaching staff. Scoring low in terms of degree of influence were parents, teachers, guidance counsellors and aptitudes and abilities from high school. This study was done in 1996, prior to the tragic events of September 11, 2001, which sent the whole tourism industry into a major decline. The industry has since rebounded and the number of tourists travelling now exceeds those of 2001 (WTO, 2004) but the positive media accounts and perceptions have not returned.

Bouchard (2005) surveyed the autumn 2005 incoming students to examine the factors that influenced high school seniors and transfer students to choose the Tourism Management Program at Champlain College, St-Lambert. The students clearly demonstrated an interest in travel and future job opportunities. When asked about both the general and program specific influences that attracted them to Tourism, interest in travel and the program's field trip component ranked first and job opportunities and the program's work certification ranked second. The *stage*, or externship, at the end of the students' studies, and which often leads to employment, was third in importance. This was consistent with previous findings, which ranked interest in the subject matter as having the highest influence. When comparing the results to those found at the Victoria University, the program specific factors are very similar. These students however did not see the perception of the travel and tourism industry positively. The findings of this study are also consistent with those done in

the Northeast U.S. and Australia in terms of which factors do not influence students; friends, relatives, guidance counsellors and teachers.

2. ADMISSION AND RETENTION

Although guidance counselors and admission staff have been ranked low in terms of influence in students' choice of programs, they are however the main source of information regarding schools and programs (Bouchard, 2005). Roman (2007) and Tinto (1993) both show a link between admission and retention. Admission officers and recruiters need to act as advisors as they often lay the groundwork for students' expectations. Tinto (1993) asserts that, "The beginning of the sequence of events leading to student departure can be traced to students' first formal contact with the institution, namely their recruitment and admission" (page 154). Retention exists when a student remains at one institution through to graduation (Derby and Smith, 2004). In the case of three-year Cegep career programs, graduation, or student success has been given a time limit, by Quebec's Ministry of Education, Sport and Leisure, of five years, often referred to as PPT+2 (Côté et al., 2003). Attrition refers to students leaving an institution prior to graduation. Derby and Smith (2004) classify these students as dropouts, stop-outs or persistents. Dropout students are those who leave an institution primarily because they are academically unprepared. Stop-out students are those who take a short break from studying but eventually re-enrol in the institution and persistent students are those who do graduate, but over an extended period of time. The Tourism Management program is interested in understanding the factors that lead to attrition in the first year of the program, whether the students dropout, stop-out or change programs. Students who change programs and graduate are not factored into an institution's attrition rate, but are an important loss to small programs, such as Tourism Management. Côté et al. (2003) found that 30% of all new Cegep students will change programs at least once.

There is a great deal of literature on student attrition, however there is little consensus on why students withdraw from college programs. In summary, Tinto (1993) explains that the combination of pre-entry attributes, goals and commitments as well as the students' experience and integration into the institution determine their decision to stay or leave college. There are several reasons for abandonment including financial difficulties, student satisfaction levels, student expectations, academic performance and social factors and they are summarized below.

2.1 Financial Factors

Many studies found that financial difficulty was the dominant cause of student withdrawals (Callender, 1999; Bennett, 2003). Bennet surveyed 377 students, representing 54% of the undergraduate students in a business major in the United Kingdom. The survey was an amalgamation of pre-existing inventories, questionnaires and new questions that measured variables such as students' commitment to and satisfaction with the program, the perception of the students' level of performance, their study habits, self-esteem, motivation and financial situation. The majority of the students came from low-income families and 67% reported that they worked at part-time jobs outside of school, but there was no significant correlation between the number of hours worked and academic performance. The results showed that the most powerful influence on a student's decision to dropout was the extent to which the student reported having severe financial difficulties. The second reason involved non-financial personal problems. The study also found that poor academic performance affects the decision to withdraw from school, but to a much lower degree than financial hardships.

Many American studies have found that financial hardships are the main reason given for leaving college, especially among minority groups (Gabriel et al., 2001, Georges, 2000; Hamilton, 2005; Opp, 2002). In contrast to the American system, the Cegep system prides itself on accessibility, equality, fairness and the

quality of education and success (Côté et al., 2003). There are no tuition fees, registration fees are minimal and with campuses located throughout the province, relocation for schooling is rarely necessary. However the number of Cegep students who have part-time employment while studying has increased from 20% in the late 1970s to 40% in the late 1980's and to 60% at the beginning of this century (Roy et al., 2003). Roy shows that 20 hours of work a week while studying is the tipping point between success and failure. Working less than 20 hours a week can actually be beneficial as it adds a positive element in social integration and the development of the student but working more than 20 hours has a negative effect on study time and academic success. The reasons cited for working while studying however were not to satisfy the basic necessities of life, but rather to gain independence from parents and to maintain status within our consumer society. Côté et al. (2003) found that only 15% of career students indicated that financial difficulties were the main reason for leaving Cegep.

2.2 Student Satisfaction and Expectations

Davies (2000) challenged the view that students who dropped out really did have more money problems than those who finished their degree. The British study compared student profiles of those who dropped out to those who successfully completed college, and financial hardships and conflicts between work and studies were the same for both groups of students. The distinguishing characteristic of those students who withdrew in Davies' study (2000) was a lower level of satisfaction with teaching quality and support. Reasons for withdrawal were found to be complex and students tended to dropout when personal, financial and/or employment problems concurred with a lack of confidence in teaching quality, helpfulness and availability of teachers and timing of classes. Furthermore Martinez and Munday (1998) interviewed and surveyed 9000 students and staff at 31 colleges in the United Kingdom and found similar results. Financial difficulties were found to have some influence on student withdrawal, but it was less commonly linked to younger students

than mature students. Their main findings, which can be related to the Cegep experience, are in the different attitudes that completing and non-completing students had on college life. Students who withdrew from college were less satisfied with the timetabling of their courses, their placement in the appropriate courses, the quality of the teaching and their relationships with the teachers, the assistance with progression to University or help with employment opportunities and they showed less intrinsic interest in their courses.

Alexson & Kemnitz (2004) indicate that new students' expectations in regard to curriculum and work required differ from expectations of their professors and this often leads to dissatisfaction. In addition, Kaszap (1996) studied Cegep students' perceptions of course requirements and their ability to meet those requirements. This information was gathered by surveying teachers and then 5 questionnaires were distributed to students in a variety of programs to determine students' perceptions. The differences between the teachers' and students' perceptions were then measured and the discrepancies were compared to students' grades. The study found that there is a link between students' perceptions and success. High school marks and gender influenced students' capacity to discern teachers' requirements and their ability to discern the degree of the teachers' insistence for each requirement. Females and students with stronger academic records accurately perceive course objectives and the tasks required to meet them and are more successful than males and weaker students.

2.3 Academic Performance

Mangum, et al. (2005) investigated several variables as possible factors for student dropout. They followed a cohort of 403 business students at a large private university in New York City over a four-semester period, which was 87% of the total class. Out of 403 students, 79 dropped out of the program during the research period. They analyzed data from three sources; course evaluations from all first semester

courses, the students' first semester grade point average (GPA) and a survey dealing with student satisfaction administered during the second semester. The study revealed that the predictors of dropout in order of importance are: first semester GPA, student satisfaction with first semester courses and financial difficulties. There was no significant relationship between dropping out and student perception of completing college or satisfaction with college rules and regulations or satisfaction with the curriculum. In addition, Szafran (2001) focused on the relationship between pre-entry attributes of university students, such as high school rank and SAT scores, institutional experiences, especially credit load and course difficulty and outcomes. The research also shows that the GPA after two semesters is the dominant predictor of retention and that students who take a heavier course load earn higher GPA's. Côté et al. (2003) found that between 26 and 28 hours was the optimum number of course hours for student success in the first semester of a technical program in Cegep. McCroskey and Payne (1986) found that students with high communication apprehension achieve lower GPA's than those with low communication apprehension, but there was no meaningful association between retention and GPA.

Rivière (1995) also found that students who dropped out did not have the prerequisites needed to succeed which led to motivational problems. The research also showed that those who dropped out had difficulty adapting to life at Cegep.

2.4 Career Students in Quebec

A major study was conducted on the factors of attrition among career students in the Cegep system (Côté et al. 2003). The researchers carried out surveys, analysed student profiles, and examined the Quebec ministerial objectives over which faculty have little or no control, such as the required number of credits and the weighting of these credits, the role of general education and the availability of financial aid. A total of 6305 students, who attended school between 1998 and 2000 and subsequently dropped out, completed a survey dealing with their withdrawal

from Cegep. Thirty six percent of the respondents indicated that their reason for leaving was directly related to the program they were studying. They either did not like the program (25%) or found the program too difficult (11%). This is similar to the previously discussed findings of Davies (2000) and Martinez and Munday (1998), although this study cannot determine if the dislike of the program is due to a lack of proper guidance in choosing a program, insufficient information about the programs and corresponding professions before enroling, or unrealistic expectations. A little more than 40% of the students who dropped out had changed programs at least once (Côté et al., 2003).

Finding employment was listed by 22% of the students as the reason for leaving Cegep, but it is in fact the main reason for leaving among mature students. This factor is negligible however in programs such as nursing or police technology because those professions require a DEC and certification in order to gain employment. In contrast, the tourism industry does not require any specific certification, although some sectors of the industry do require a higher level of education (Pageau, 2004). The tourism industry in Quebec is experiencing a lack of qualified workers, but many of the employers in the Montreal area do give preference to graduates of Tourism Programs, as they have the necessary training (Pageau, 2004). Other factors for withdrawal from Cegep are personal or family problems (16%), financial difficulties (15%) and for other reasons that are not specified (11%) (Côté et al., 2003).

Côté et al., (2003) also analysed the academic records of 1400 students who withdrew from the 25 most popular career programs in Cegep showed a direct correlation between high school grades and graduation. Students who left high school with higher averages were more likely to obtain their DEC. The researchers suggest that there is an interaction with many other factors, and grades cannot be studied alone in order to understand retention in career programs. They hypothesized that students with higher grades were better prepared for Cegep in terms of content

knowledge and study skills as well as having a more positive attitude towards studying; they had reached a level of metacognition not attained by those with lower grades. There is a large difference between the graduation rate of female students (60.2%) and males (43.7%). This gap has in effect been increasing in the last 20 years. Differences between the sexes are not a significant issue in the Tourism Management program as it has always been and continues to be predominantly female.

The first semester experience was found to be very important; 77.2% of students who pass all of their first semester courses will obtain their DEC, whereas only 18% will graduate if they fail half or more of courses. In the fall 2001 semester, 56.6% career students passed all their first semester courses. There exist gatekeeper courses, both in general education and program specific courses, which Côté et al. (2003) suggest should be more closely examined. Repeated failures or low marks in these courses are large stumbling blocks to obtaining a DEC as it puts the student off-profile. Off-profile students often face several obstacles, which can affect their motivation and desire to persevere. These obstacles include waiting a full year before taking the course again, not having the pre-requisites to register for subsequent courses, scheduling problems and no longer being in the same classes as their peers.

2.5 Social Factors

Roy et al. (2003) studied the social factors that determine student success in Cegep in order to identify and better understand the interactions between the factors and to propose possible intervention strategies to prevent dropping out. He divided the factors into four categories; the microsystems, or family situations, the mesosystem, which includes the students' activities at Cegep, at work and during their leisure time, the macrosystem or the students' values and beliefs and the exosystem, the politics, or things outside of the students' control. Through questionnaires and focus groups the study concluded that high school results and

extra-curricular activities were the most important factors in determining success. There was a strong link between the social dimensions. Students with higher high school grades had more family support, from both parents, emotionally and financially, worked less and were satisfied with their financial situation. All of these factors were positively associated with student success.

3. SOLUTIONS

Tinto (1993) argues that social and academic integration are the most important factors in the retention of students. While Roy et al. (2003) found that students who were involved in extra-curricular activities at their Cegep consumed less drugs and alcohol, had less materialistic values and were satisfied with their financial situation. This researcher even goes so far as to state that student participation in social activities on campus is a guarantee for higher marks and recommends that Cegeps develop a wide variety of extra-curricular activities to suit diverse populations. It is suggested that these activities be designed to help foster a sense of belonging to the college and the program of study. Other recommendations included increasing communication between students and faculty through course management systems and mentorship programs, better coordination among departments in terms of due dates of major assessment tasks and increased lab components and externships. Equally important, Côté et al. (2003) found that career programs that incorporated *stages* within their six semesters of study had higher retention rates than those that did not.

Roy et al. (2003) also recommend that there should be an increased focus on the first semester experience. As previously discussed, the transition from high school to Cegep can be difficult for many students. Hence, Roy et al. (2003) proposes two solutions to help with the transition. The first is for orientation sessions to be held where students can become engaged in student life at their college. In addition, professional orientation should also be included to foster motivation in their

programs. The second solution is to provide students with a series of workshops, such as stress management or effective communication. Ideally these workshops should be incorporated into a complementary course where students can develop a social and professional plan. Derby & Smith (2004) outline an existing orientation course at a Midwestern community college that is similar to the orientations and workshops described by Roy. The course is designed to facilitate self-development and accomplishes this by having students set personal and professional goals and work directly with an academic counsellor to establish an academic plan. One of the course objectives is to assists students in their transition to college by familiarizing students with college resources and by building a support network. Students can take the course during the day, at night, on the internet or in a one-week condensed format. Three cohorts of students were tracked between 1998 and 2002 and a significant relationship between enrolment in the orientation course and graduation was found. A larger number of students who took the orientation course obtained their degrees compared to the students who did not enrol in the course. Similar results were also found with a Student Life Skills program at Florida A&M University's School of General Studies (Hudson, Henderson, Henderson, 2002). They found that their program allowed for transitional issues to be discovered and resolved early in the first semester so that students had sufficient time to recover and be successful. Mangum, et al. (2005) argue that any type of orientation course must help students gain a more realistic perception of different faculty teaching styles and that they, not the instructors are accountable for their education.

The literature shows that students generally choose a program of study based on their interests and possible employment prospects. The traditional recruiting efforts done by colleges, such as open houses and career fairs, have little influence in students' decision making. Several researchers (Tinto, 1993; Roman, 2007) demonstrate a link between recruitment and retention rates, as the admission office is the first line of contact with the students, but there is no agreement as to the main reasons why so many students do not graduate. Several factors have been researched

and reviewed here including financial factors, expectations and satisfaction levels, academic performance and social integration. The participation in an orientation course as a possible solution to overcome high dropout rates has also been summarized.

4. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The paradigm guiding this study is metacognition, or thinking about knowledge, and has been defined by Flavell (1976, p. 232) as "…one's knowledge concerning one's own cognitive processes and products or anything related to them, e.g., the learning-relevant properties of information or data". Metacognition is embedded in the constructivist paradigm which is a learning theory where individuals actively create their own understandings based on their experiences, prior beliefs and ideas, and their engagement with new knowledge (Richardson, 2003). Constructivism naturally coalesces with metacognition as Bruning (1994) states that cognitive psychology puts emphasis on the necessity of students' to develop self-awareness and self-regulation of cognition. Richardson (2003) outlines five characteristics of constructivist pedagogy. First is the attention to the individual, second is the facilitation of group dialogue, third is the planned and unplanned introduction of formal knowledge, fourth is the provision of tasks where students can challenge, change or add and decide on existing and new perspectives and finally the development of students' metacognition.

Metacognition stresses the role of the student and their conscious control of learning. According to Tardiff (1997) there are two components of metacognition, knowledge and control, and each of these include cognitive and affective factors. The cognitive elements of knowledge include the understanding students have of the requirements and strategies needed to accomplish tasks. The perceptions and attitudes students have regarding their abilities to perform the task and the importance they place on it are part of the affective facets of knowledge. This perception will

affect their commitment, participation and persistence. If students view the task as unimportant their commitment will be low. The ability to analyze oneself as a student and determine the level of attention required is the cognitive element of control. The affective element is the student's attribution of their successes and failures to their own efforts. Students who use metacognitive strategies are able to plan, execute, and monitor, or control, the learning process in order to readjust if necessary.

Motivation is a component of metacognition, which Tardiff (1997) sees as a major variable that differentiates students who succeed from those who have difficulty learning. Motivation can be determined by how much students value the goals that have been set and whether they expect to succeed. Motivation is a function of the students' cognition about their tasks, the consequences of task completion and their ability to accomplish the task (Driscoll, 1994).

Batha and Carroll (2007) have shown that there is a relationship between metacognition and a student's decision making process and that the most influential aspect is the regulation of cognition, or the control and not the knowledge of cognition. They concluded that efficient decision makers question, monitor and instruct themselves in order to gain access to the information needed in order to make appropriate decisions, but even more important was the ability to formulate a plan of action and guide the execution of the plan.

A method of understanding students' approaches to knowledge and learning is the Perry Schema of Intellectual and Ethical Development as summarized by Moore (1993). The model describes nine stages or positions that students may progress through during their college studies. The first two stages are dualistic in nature. Students in stage one do not question knowledge and see the teacher as the holder of the truth. Stage two allows for different perspectives but they are viewed as wrong. The first acknowledgement that there is uncertainty occurs in stage three

where the learning now focuses on process and methodology. The focus in stage four is on how to think and students come to the realization that hard work is not always sufficient. The shift from stage four to five is very important as the students begin to see themselves as an active creator of meaning. Stages six and seven also represent a new reality for students as they see the need to make major life commitments. It is not until stage seven however that true commitments are possible and it is argued that very few undergraduate students reach this stage. There is a distinction between true commitments and considerable choices. In order to be considered true commitments students must have evaluated legitimate alternatives, experienced genuine doubt and affirmed their identity. The focus of stages eight and nine is the consequences of the commitment and the discovery that multiple commitments will be necessary.

5. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The purpose of this study is to examine motivational forces and students' metacognition in choosing the Tourism Management Program at Champlain College, St-Lambert and whether or not the low graduation rate can be attributed to the cognitive and affective elements of knowledge and control. Although past studies, as outlined in the literature review, have investigated why students choose college majors, their results cannot be easily generalized to this particular set of students at this time. Understanding these influences will hopefully help with the marketing of the program and with graduation rates. The factors leading to attrition are multidimensional with little consensus and many themes emerging from the literature. Research has been done on diverse student bodies in community colleges, Universities and Cegeps, but can those findings be easily generalized to tourism students? In order to identify the reasons behind how students chose the Tourism Management program, and explore the reasons why the attrition rate is so high, the following questions were examined:

1. What factors influence the choice of tourism for new students and transfer students?

Factors include recruiting efforts such as open house, educational fairs and advertising, sources of advice, and interest in the program, including knowledge about course content, opportunities to travel and employment opportunities in the tourism industry, among others. The students' level of knowledge of the requirements and strategies needed to succeed in the program were considered in several ways. The 2007 cohort of students were asked to complete an incoming questionnaire, administered during the first week of class. This questionnaire not only indicated why students chose the Tourism Management Program, but helped to gain some insight as to what they knew about the program before enroling and where they obtained their information.

2. What factors explain the decision to drop out of the Tourism Management program?

The factors presented in the literature review provide the basis for this discovery. The students who abandoned the program within the first year were asked to participate in an exit interview and those students who persisted through the first year were asked to complete a journal of seven questions. Tardiff (1997) argues that metacognition is an important variable in student success and the responses to the questions from both groups were compared to determine if there is a difference in their metacognitive abilities.

During the exit interviews, students were asked about their knowledge of Cegep and the program before they started and how it differed from reality. Questions regarding the transition from high school to Cegep and the adaption process were also included in the interviews. The same types of questions were asked of the students who persisted in the program.

The perceptions and attitudes of the students were also considered through the exit interviews and journal entries. Students were asked about the expectations they had about the program and Cegep and whether these expectations were met during the first semester. This was not limited to the classroom experience, but included the whole first semester college experience.

All students were asked about their ability to analyze their performance through a series of questions related to their preparation for Cegep. In addition, students who dropped out were asked during the exit interviews, about their decision making process in leaving the program and whether their grades played a role or not. Students, those who left as well as those who stayed at the end of the first year, were asked for the reasons they attribute to their successes and failures. The influences on the students' self-efficacy expectations, in particular, their past performance accomplishments and their vicarious experiences were also analyzed. Relationships between students' high school grades and gatekeeper courses in the students' first year of study were also examined.

The methodology used to answer these research questions is described in more detail in the next chapter.

CHAPTER THREE
METHODOLOGY

In order to find answers to the research questions it was essential to collect a mixture of quantitative and qualitative data. This blended approach was crucial as each method has its strengths and compensates for the limitations of the other. The quantitative data deals in facts and statistical accuracy; it is efficient but incomplete. The qualitative data allows for more detailed observations and helps to interpret or explain the quantitative data. In this study, quantitative data was used in order to determine the major factors that influence the students' choice of the Tourism Management program. It was also necessary to use academic records to determine if there was a correlation between high school marks as well as first year Cegep averages and graduation, as previous studies have shown. The qualitative data was gathered through interviews and journals and a comparative analysis was done in order to investigate why some students abandoned the program while others persisted. The use of qualitative data gives the research high internal validity. The external validity of the qualitative data can be measured by comparing the answers found in this study to the answers in the research of others. This chapter will describe the participants involved in the study, the research design and the ethical issues and their solutions.

1. POPULATION

The sample of this study is the total population of students who began the Tourism Management program in August 2007. During the first week of the semester, in August 2007, students received a copy of the Informed Consent Form (Appendix A) and the Explanatory Statement (Appendix B) and the research project was described. It was made clear that students were not required to participate and that non-participation would in no way affect their performance in the course as no

grades were attached to any research activities. All 39 students agreed to participate in the study. The registration lists for the Introduction to Tourism course showed a total of 41 students, but attrition began immediately with only 39 students attending classes. Within the first two weeks of the semester two more students left the program and four left after the midterm assessment deadline, leaving a total of 33 students writing final exams in December 2007. During the Christmas break three students decided not to return for the winter 2008 semester. During the second semester two students dropped out and six more left the program after the exam period in May 2008. At the end of the first year of studies, only 22 of the 41 registered students, or 54% remained in the program. All 39 students who attended the first week of classes of the Tourism Management program in the fall of 2007 completed a questionnaire. Only the students who abandoned the program at the end of the first semester until the end of the second semester were asked to participate in an interview. A total of seven students, or 64%, agreed. The students who persisted in the program until the end of the second semester were asked to complete a journal of seven questions and 13 of the remaining 22 students agreed to write the journal.

2. INSTRUMENTS OF DATA COLLECTION

The research design is surveys, statistical analysis, interviews and journals and is described below.

2.1 Survey

A survey dealing with the students' decisions to enrol in Tourism Management (Appendix D) was designed in stages. In June 2005, e-mails were sent to 58, then current students in the Tourism program asking them for the factors that influenced their choices. A total of 22 students responded. A list of factors was developed using the students' responses as well as information gathered from previous research that was outlined in the literature review, in particular the surveys

used by Malgwi, Howe and Burnaby (2005). A draft survey was presented to the participants of the Master Teachers Program as well as the faculty of the Tourism Management program. Feedback from both groups was incorporated. The survey asked for basic information such as student number, age, language spoken at home, the high school attended and if Tourism Management was their first choice of program. As the number of factors influencing students' choice of program was so large, it was decided to create two categories of factors: program specific and general factors. The program specific factors were all those that were directly related to the Tourism Management program and included the type of courses offered (geography, business, computer, industry related), the field trip component of the program (day trips and multi-day trips), the *stage* or work study and work certification as well as the reputation of the program and the teachers. The general factors were all those factors that did not pertain directly to the program and included among others, the students' interest in travel, their sources of information (parents, friends, graduates of the program, high school teacher or guidance counsellor, the media), college recruiting efforts (open house, career days, website) and industry related factors (job opportunities, level of pay, career advancement, experience as a tourist). A five-point Likert scale was used to evaluate both categories of factors influencing the students' decision to enrol in the Tourism Management Program. The scale ranged from no influence (1) to major influence (5). Transfer students were requested to answer questions relating to their previous Cegep programs and the number of semesters already completed. The survey was administered to the incoming groups of August 2005, 2006 and 2007

The survey for this study was administered during the first week of classes in August 2007. The survey took approximately 10 minutes of class time. It was given at the end of the Introduction to Tourism Management class, so that those students who did not wish to participate could leave. This course was chosen, as it is a required course for all students and no equivalence can be obtained. The survey was administered by the co-chair of the Tourism Department. All surveys were kept in a

sealed envelope until the end of the fall 2007 semester. The data was only made available to the researcher for analysis once the final grades were submitted.

All of the students agreed to participate. Of the 39 participants, 32 were female and seven male. Almost two thirds, or 24 of the 39 students, indicated English as their mother tongue and 10 indicated French as their mother tongue. The remaining students spoke Spanish (2), Serbo-Croatian (1), Arabic (1) and Dari (1). There were three mature students, aged 43, 22, and 21, and the remaining students were between the ages of 16 and 20. It was the first time in Cegep for 25 students and 14 students had transferred from other programs. Of the transfer students, eight had previously studied Social Science, two had studied Creative Arts, two had studied Modern Languages, one student had studied Graphic Communications and the remaining one student had been enroled in Early Childhood Education. The majority of the transferred students (71%) had studied at the Cegep level for two semesters, the others had completed four or more semesters.

In order to determine the general and program specific factors that were the most important in choosing the Tourism Management program, the data obtained from the survey was entered into the SPSS software. Measures of association and difference were performed to determine if there was a difference between first semester Cegep students and transfer students or if gender played a role as was the case in the study done by Malgwi, Howe and Burnaby (2005). In addition, because English is not the mother tongue of many of the students entering the program, language was also tested as a variable.

2.2 Statistical Analysis of Aggregate Data

A statistical analysis was done with the students' high school average, results from their English placement test, their first semester average and second semester average. Using SPSS, the data was analyzed using tests of significance and

measures of association to examine relationships and differences between the variables. It was impossible to determine if any gatekeeper courses exist in the first year of the program, as the registrar was unable to provide the necessary date in order to perform the analysis.

2.3 Interviews

The semi-structured interview schedule (Appendix E) explored the reasons for attrition. This type of interview was chosen as it gives the interviewer some control over the questions, but also allows for a greater scope of discussion. It is less formal than a structured interview schedule so students feel more at ease and allows them to open up and provide more insight into the questions being asked. The questions revolved around the factors of attrition discovered in the literature review which included expectations and satisfaction levels, academic performance, social integration and financial needs. Students were asked about their decision to enrol in Tourism, what their perceptions and expectations were before they began the program, how those expectations were met or not met, and whether they felt they were adequately prepared for Cegep. Students were also asked to describe the process they went through when deciding to dropout and what factors they attributed to their leaving the program or school. The questions were tested in July 2007 on a former student who left the program in December 2006. Several qualifiers were added to the main questions after the pilot test, in order to probe deeper and get the students to open up more. Keeping in line with the theoretical framework of metacognition within which this research project is conducted, a major goal of the questions was to determine if the students were evaluating their own state of knowledge, monitoring, reality testing and controlling their attempts to study.

Students who dropped out of the program at the end of the fall 2007 or winter 2008 semester were requested to participate in a 20 to 30 minute audio taped interview. The Academic Advisors agreed to ask students who officially left the

program to see the researcher. The students were under no obligation to participate and seven agreed to be interviewed. The interviews were conducted only after the students withdrew from the program to avoid any perception of coercion to stay. All but one interview was conducted in the researcher's school office. Due to scheduling constraints the remaining interview was done by telephone. Although the students had officially dropped out of the program when the interviews took place and the researcher was no longer the students' teacher, there is an interviewer effect. The data is affected by the identity of the researcher and in at least two interviews the students seemed embarrassed and awkward when discussing their feelings about the Tourism Management program with a teacher of the program.

The taped interviews were transcribed and a content analysis was performed. The objective of the content analysis was to ascertain patterns of behaviour and values to the responses. The answers to each question were grouped according to the categories that emerged from the responses. There were no pre-set codes. All audiotapes were kept in a locked cabinet and will be destroyed once the research has been accepted.

2.4 Journals

At the end of the winter 2008 semester, the 22 students still registered in the program, were asked to write a reflective journal on their college experience. The seven journal questions (Appendix F) were similar to the questions asked during the interviews with the students who dropped out in order to compare the metacognitive abilities of the two groups. The journal questions focused on the students' expectations of Cegep and the Tourism Management Program, the transition from high school to Cegep and their level of preparedness and what reasons they attribute to their successes and failures during their first year. The journals were written during the last 30 minutes of the Tourism in the USA & Mexico lab, so that students could type their answers. Any student who did not wish to participate was able to

leave and 13 of the remaining 22 students participated. The Tourism department co-chair collected all the journals and kept them until the final grades for the winter 2008 semester were submitted. A content analysis of the journals was performed in order to ascertain what, if any, differences exist between the students who abandoned the program and those who persisted after the first year.   The responses for each question were grouped according to the themes which emerged from the students.   The themes were similar to those that emerged from the interviews, allowing for a comparison between those that abandoned and those that persisted. As with the interviews and surveys, all journals, are being kept in a locked filing cabinet to which only the researcher has access.

3. ETHICAL ISSUES

A preliminary research proposal was submitted to the ethics committee at Champlain College, St-Lambert in May 2007. The committee asked for revisions to be made to the consent form and there was some concern as to the dual role of researcher and teacher and its effects on the students. The revisions to the consent form were made (Appendix A) and approval to conduct the research was granted in August 2007 (Appendix C). The participants of the research received the explanatory statement (Appendix B) and signed the informed consent form. The students were advised that there were no grades attached to any of the methods of data collection and that they did not have to participate.   Students were guaranteed that all information collected is confidential.   No information that could lead to the identification of any individual has been disclosed in any reports on the project and all the names of students used in the paper have been changed in order to maintain confidentiality and anonymity.

The research data was collected during the 2007/2008 academic year. The quantitative data is comprised of the surveys and academic records of all of the participants.   The exit interviews, given by several students who abandoned the

Tourism Management program, and the journals, written by many students who persisted in the program, forms the qualitative data. The results obtained through the use of these methods are described in the following chapter.

CHAPTER FOUR
PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

The research methods described in the previous chapter have led to findings that are organized into four sections. The first section deals with the students' choice to enrol in the Tourism Management Program. The decision to register can be attributed to general factors such as interest in travel, sources of information, recruiting efforts, employment opportunities and experience as a tourist as well as program specific factors which includes the types of courses offered, the field trip program, *stage*/work study and the reputation of the program and the teachers. The second section deals with the academic performance of the students and will present the statistical analysis of the students' grades from high school as well as those from the first two semesters in the Tourism Management program and its relationship with retention. The third section deals with the results from the exit interviews conducted with the students who abandoned the program. The students who agreed to be interviewed are described and their answers are presented according to the themes that emerged from the interviews. The final section pertains to the journals that the students who persisted in the program wrote at the end of their second semester. The responses are presented verbatim, they have not been edited. As with the interviews, the answers to the journals have been categorized according to the themes emerging from the students' responses.

1. CHOICE OF PROGRAM

The first research question pertained to the factors influencing students' choice of program of study at Cegep. The most influential general factor was an interest in travel with a mean (M) of 4.8 out of a possible 5, followed by potential job opportunities (M=4.4), potential career advancement (M=4.2) and experience as a tourist (M=3.9). Interest in geography and Champlain's reputation both had a mean

of 3.3. The students reported much lower degrees of influence from friends, parents, teachers and guidance counsellors. College recruiting efforts such as the website, open house and career days and fairs also scored low. A link with the industry such as working in the field or knowing someone who is currently working in the field also had very little influence. Figure 4.1 indicates all the general factors with a mean influence above 2.5 and Figure 4.2 indicates all general factors with a mean influence below 2.5.

Figure 4.1
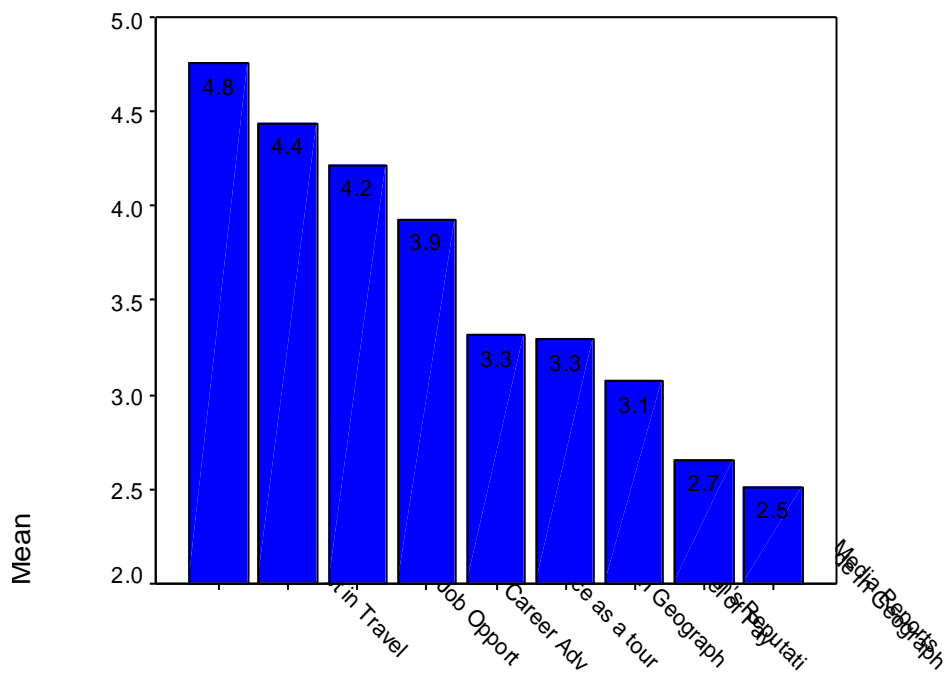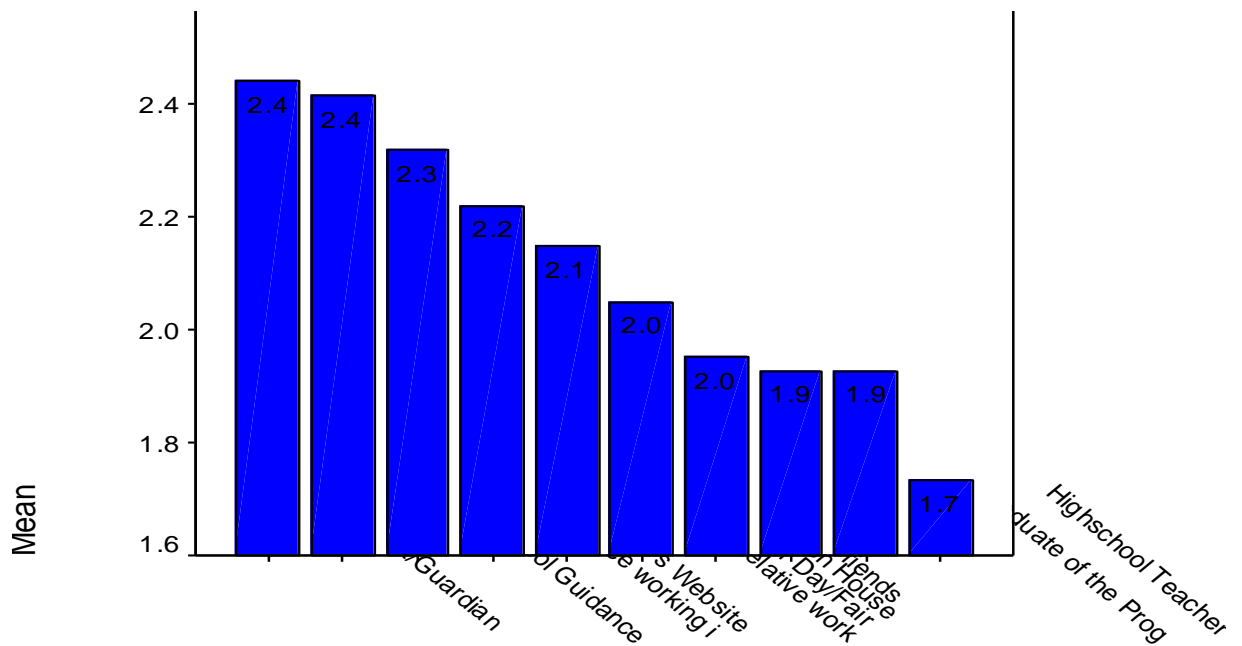**General Factors that Influenced Students to Choose Tourism Management**

Figure 4.2
General Factors with Little Influence on Student Choice

When asked about the program specific factors that influenced the students' choice, the multi-day field trip program ranked highest with a mean of 4.3. The work certification and *stage* followed with means of 4.1 and 4.0 respectively. Single day field trips and the program's reputation followed, both with means of 3.7. The reputation of the teachers (M=3.2) and the fact that the program has no math requirement (M=2.9) were ranked lowest (see Figure 4.3). The course offerings were not rated as high as the field trips or work related activities. Students showed the most interest in the destination/geography courses and industry related courses, both with means of 3.3, followed by the Management and Marketing courses (M=3) and lastly by the computer courses (M=2.2).

Figure 4.3
Program Specific Factors that Influenced Students' Choice
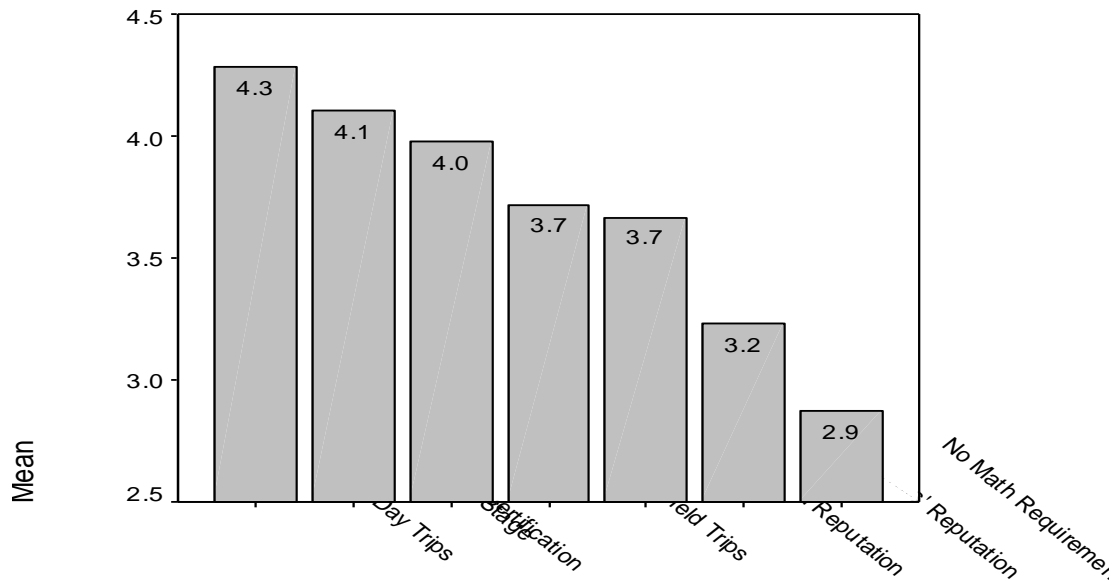
There was no statistical difference when comparing the influences that affected first year students and transfer students to choose the Tourism Management program. The same is true when comparing English students with those whose mother tongue was another language. No significance was found for any of the variables when subjected to a T-test. Due to the low number of males in the program, it is also impossible to determine if there is any significance due to gender.

2. STATISTICAL ANALYSIS OF GRADES

The academic records from high school and the first and second semesters of Cegep were analyzed and T-Tests were performed. Results show that students with the lower high school grades were more likely to abandon the Tourism Management program than those with higher grades. There is a significantly higher average of

high school grades for those who persisted in the Tourism Management program ($M = 73.60$, $SD = 7.10$) versus those who abandoned ($M = 65.96$, $SD = 5.57$), $t(37) =$ 3.72, $p = .001$. The same is true for first semester grades from Cegep ($M = 73.97$, $SD = 9.08$) for those who persisted versus ($M = 55.91$, $SD = 16.06$) for those who abandoned, $t(34) = 4.26$, $p = .000$ and again with second semester grades, ($M = 71.05$, $SD = 11.51$) for those who persisted versus those who abandoned ($M = 50.34$, $SD = 20.71$), $t(25) = 3.31$, $p = .003$. As figure 4.4 shows, the discrepancy of the grades between the two groups of students becomes greater over time. This pattern is repeated with the English placement scores, but the difference is not large enough to be statistically significant.

Figure 4.4
Student Averages
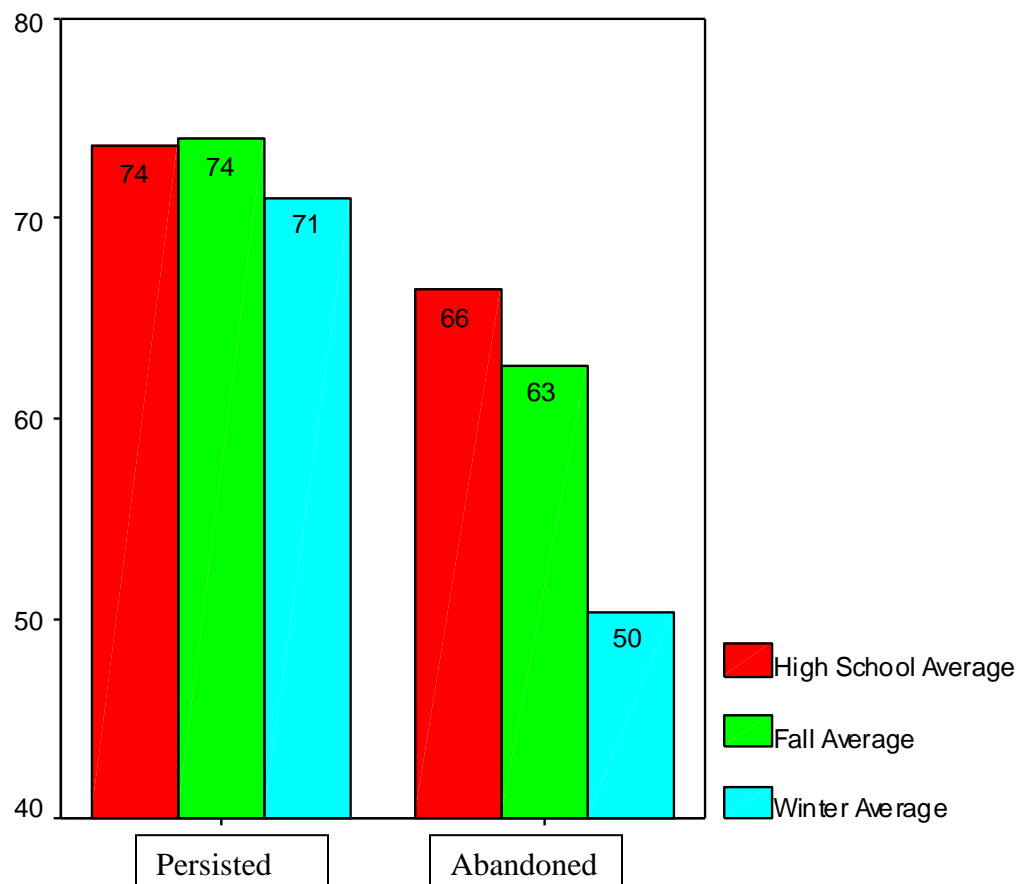
3. INTERVIEWS

This section deals with the interviews that were conducted with seven students who dropped out of the Tourism Management program within the first year. The interview schedule can be found in Appendix E. A brief description is given of each participant followed by the results of the interviews. The names of the students have been changed in order to protect their identities.

3.1 Description of Participants

Tammy officially left the Tourism program at the end of the first semester, although she had dropped four of her eight courses during the first semester, leaving her with only one Tourism course, one French course, one English course and a complementary course. She was 17 at the time she decided to transfer into Social Sciences and was still not certain if she wished to pursue her studies in nursing or become a secretary. She was not successful in her second semester and subsequently left school.

Annie left the program at the end of the first semester at the age of 18. She began the Tourism program with the intention of continuing her education at University. She realized that it would be more beneficial for her to change into commerce (Social Science with math) and has since graduated from that program.

John also left the program at the end of the first semester at the age of 17. He registered in Cegep because his parents pressured him to and failed four of the eight courses he was taking. He decided to leave the country and go and live with his cousins in Europe.

Sandy was a mature student who had already obtained a DEC in Social Sciences in 1983. She wanted to return to school in order to change her career.

Family and financial problems were her reasons for leaving the Tourism program at the end of the first year, even though she had very successfully completed two semesters.

Diane completed the first two semesters of the Tourism program with success, but had great difficulty adapting to the amount of time Cegep studies required. At 18 she decided she needed more time to enjoy life and possibly pursue a career in make-up.

Susan was missing one Humanities course in order to complete the Modern Languages program and receive her DEC when she started the Tourism Program. She passed the Humanities course during her second semester in Tourism and received her Modern Languages diploma. When she found out that she failed Tourism Marketing at the end of the second semester and would now be off-profile, she felt she could not spend another three years in Cegep and decided to leave school. She was 22 years old at the time and felt that staying in Cegep until she was 25 was a waste. She decided to work full time.

Karen began the program with a strong desire to travel and learn about new places, but struggled academically. She dropped three of her eight courses in the second semester and failed one. She left the program and school at the end of the second semester at the age of 18 with no plans on what she was going to do.

3.2   Interview Responses

The results from the interviews are organized around five topics, the decision to enrol in Cegep and the Tourism Management program, student expectations, the transition from high school and the students' level of preparedness for Cegep, the students' decision to leave the Tourism Management program and

finally their overall feelings of the program. It is important to note that not all students responded to all questions.

3.2.1 Decision to Enrol

The first question in the interview pertained to the student's decision to enrol in Cegep and the Tourism program. The majority of the students showed that they had some ambitions for the future, but this ambition was vague and not very focused. "To go to University" (Annie). "I wanted to finish one class that was left to do for my modern languages program" (Susan). "To figure out what I want to do. I thought Cegep was a place of learning and evolving throughout what you want to do in the future" (Karen). "Well cause I always like wanted to get more in life I didn't just want to do high school and then work, you know to get higher cause to get just basically more experience" (Tammy). "I decided to come to Cegep because I knew that if I took a year off from high school I would probably not want to come back, and I just wanted to see how far I could push it, you know how far I would like to go" (Diane). Only one response showed neither interest nor ambition. "My parents wanted me to come" (John).

Students were also asked why they chose the Tourism Program and they showed very little insight in to their decision making process, even with more probing. "Because I thought it would be…um…enthusiastic. Because we could go to University after" (Annie). "I figured it was going to be like chill" (John). "It looked really interesting and seeing I already had languages in my pocket, it would be easy" (Susan).

> I love to travel so I was thinking you know like if I get into the whole travelling it will be easier to travel, to get cheaper tickets and whatnot and I was like oh I am going to be interested, interested. I think I kind of rushed into it, I didn't really do any research of what I wanted to do because I was so excited, you know Cegep. (Tammy)

There were two students who did mention job opportunities and one did a little more research than the others by reading the course calendar. "Because of the job opportunities and I love to travel" (Sandy). "To see what king of jobs I could get" (Karen). "Because I liked the description of the tourism courses" (Diane). The students could be classified in position one of Perry's Scheme of Intellectual and Ethical Development as they did not question the decision they were making.

3.2.2 Student Expectations

Students were asked to think back to the time before they started Cegep and what their expectations were of the Tourism Management Program, the social aspect of the school and the academic requirements. They were also asked to describe any differences or similarities between their expectations and reality. It was quite clear that reality was very different from perceptions, and most students found that Cegep life, especially the workload was much harder than expected. "I was expecting less work- very light, laid back, do the work and still have fun" (John). "It is more difficult, the Tourism courses was okay but French was a bit hard, Humanities is quite hard too" (Annie).

> I didn't think that it would be that hard, because we think because it is our passion it would be easy. I really enjoyed the material but it was a lot more structure than I thought. I didn't know there was that many sector in tourism, so it was a lot more complete than I thought. (Sandy)

> I thought it was going to be easy. I didn't know it would be that demanding and that much homework. I thought it would be easy. I thought it would just be something that I will accomplish very quickly – actually as I entered the first class, I figured out that my initial idea has nothing to do with the reality that was waiting for me. (Susan)

> Honestly, it is more stressful then I thought when it shouldn't be because it is an interesting and fun industry. The amount of work given by some teachers is sometimes ridiculous for the amount of grades we get back from it and also the work given by the teachers is always at the same

times, which make student panic and stress over things that should be simple and clear to understand. (Karen)

I thought it would be easier than it is right now. When I realized I wasn't into the tourism, I dropped a few courses so it was easier, I only had four courses just to be a full time student. Yeah, so now it is pretty good. (Tammy)

Well I knew it was different, I didn't really expect much, I didn't have a preconceived notion because I knew it wouldn't be all partying, but I thought I would have more free time actually, but I am busier than I ever was. (Dianne)

When asked about the expectations of the Tourism specific courses, it was again clear that the students had done very little research into the program and did not have realistic expectations, especially about the computer component of the program. "It wasn't what I expected, there was more travel trade and less hospitality. I wanted hotel stuff" (John).

More like, more, maybe less, um. I thought that there wasn't going to be any French, English whatnot, I thought there would be real tourism classes, learning about the whole tourism industry. I wasn't expecting computer classes–I was expecting more to just learn about different countries and more about the whole travelling and Geography I was like ahh it was like my worst course in high school and now I have to do it again, it was bad times. (Tammy)

The program is very unorganized compared to what I thought it would have been, plus we students work way too much on the computers, which is horrible for our backs and eyes. The program has not enough hand on workshops to relate to real job experience and also many teachers are not what I was expecting to see in this program. I thought we were going to have fun and young and experienced teachers to show us the industry under a way our generation would understand it. (Karen)

Comparing to the languages, which is a difficult program, there is a lot of things to know and a lot of pressure from teachers. It was really something special actually that I wasn't expecting. A lot of difficulty with computers. Some students left the program because of the computer class. (Susan)

When asked to describe the expectations of the social atmosphere of the campus and the program, three students were disappointed with the lack of events and/or trips, while one student liked the fact that she wasn't part of a network. "I wanted more trips, more interesting" (John).

> It is difficult because I was expecting more, more social events, more lively, more social. It's quite like, everyone has their groups of people and they don't really mix up with everyone. I only had one friend from high school. I met a few new friends. (Annie).

> I thought Cegep was going to be a place of maturity and organization but unfortunately this Cegep compare to others is very similar to high school levels. I thought we were going to have more annual trips and excursions. (Karen).

> Oh really good – Its really good actually, it's not like Vanier you know its loud and everybody is there and here, here I can focus more and not so much of my friends and it like you know you come into class and do your own thing and leave. (Tammy)

The two mature students who were interviewed had opposing views on the social aspect of the program, with the younger of the two having more difficulties. "The students who were studying with me were younger than me, you can feel the three years difference-it was really difficult too" (Susan)

> Good, because I have two daughters in Cegep and since I am close to my daughters I still have the spirit, I am a kid at heart. I didn't feel excluded or anything. It's very friendly, very sociable, when people go into tourism they have to be social. I see the difference from other programs, we did the pizza lunch last semester and it brought the three years together and it's a great idea. We are a solid little family, teachers and students. (Sandy)

3.2.3 Transition from High School to Cegep and Level of Preparation

Although the reality of Cegep was different from the students' expectations and many found the courses difficult, when asked how they found the transition from

high school to Cegep, six students responded that they were prepared or that it was an okay transition, without too much difficulty. This again corresponds to Perry's position one as most are not inquiring as to why their courses are harder, and not questioning the changes as they started Cegep. "Not much harder than high school" (John). "I was prepared for the work, but I didn't want to do it. Sometimes is harder than others, but it was okay" (Annie).

> I didn't think it was difficult; it wasn't something I struggled with. I know I am more independent than when I was in high school. But um I felt pretty prepared for Cegep, because I did have some courses in high school like computers and English that helped prepare for the courses I did take in first semester. I adapted pretty well I think because I paid attention in class and I looked for what the teacher liked with their guidelines. I followed guidelines given to me and I made the best of what was given to me. (Dianne)

> I was. I wanted to come back to school. Last semester I could see that teachers expected less because most students were in adaptation from high school, so it also gave me a chance to adapt, because it had been many years since I had been in school. But second semester I could see a difference, teachers expected more and the kids were more serious, we knew if we failed a course we would lose a year. (Sandy)

> I was prepared for Cegep because I already had most of my English and French backgrounds, but I had a harder time with Humanities courses because it's on a different level of subjects and because the way teachers give assignments and tests on these topics, were harder to follow. I was not prepared for the way teachers teach in the Tourism program because they all have different way of teaching and it makes it confusing to relate everything, when things were taught different by different teachers. (Karen)

> This is more of a serious, you know like high school was for me not so serious part, but now when you get to Cegep it's more serious. You can't skip courses, you can't you know, everything is different, but more freedom, it's like teaching kids how to have more responsibility. (Tammy)

Only one student felt that the transition was hard.

> My transition from high school to college was difficult because in high school they don't prepare you enough. I never had the amount of homework to be done as we do have in college. Actually going to college the first semester was like going blinded somewhere you only read about. I was not ready for college at all. The high school I was in, did not give me any information about how is college and how should I do research and who could I ask to find proper answers. (Susan)

The students varied on their opinions about their grades with four students recognizing that they could have performed better and some even gave reasons as to why their marks were lower than they had hoped. There are some indicators of increasing metacognition as several students can attribute their successes and failures to their own efforts. However, most students have not moved beyond stage three of Perry's Scheme of Intellectual and Ethical Development, they are aware that there is uncertainty, but have not yet come to the realization that hard work is not always sufficient. "No not happy with my grades first semester because I was lazy. There was more homework and I kind of did everything last minute, and I wasn't enthusiastic about doing the work" (Annie). "I was doing okay, but I know I could have done way way better" (Susan). "I didn't do well, didn't do the work, skipped a lot" (John).

> Certain courses yes, certain courses no. Well in Public speaking, English French, Intro. to Tourism I think I can do a little better but I guess I wasn't so concentrated on it cause I knew I wasn't going to stay in the program but I liked that class, so it's the only tourism course I kept. (Tammy)

"Yeah, I think I have done well. I am satisfied with last semester's grades. This semester I know I am doing well in tourism courses, I guess I am not too sure about the general education courses" (Dianne). "Yes, my grades are better than when I was younger, alot" (Sandy).

> I honestly think that I'm a very good student since I've been in school, but classes like Research Methods, Humanities and many others are useless as courses because it is sooooo boring and uninteresting that

students either fail or loose effort since topics like that could be integrated into other courses to make it more interesting and easier to learn. I'm mostly having success in this program because I do most of my learning by myself, and I try very hard to complete my assignments and tests because I know that's what teachers are going to look at and not the effort put into it. (Karen)

Only two students indicated that their marks played a role in their decision to leave the program. The other five said it did not. "Yes, I wasn't happy" (Annie). "Yes. Because I was really unsatisfied with the marks I was disappointed in myself and that I didn't ask for help. It was my fault" (Susan).

The scheduling of courses is something that many students showed dissatisfaction with. "8:00 is really hard, but it could be okay" (Annie). "A lot of free time during the day to do nothing" (John). "The schedule was pretty good only when I dropped a few courses, before that bad times" (Tammy).

"I think I am still adapting to my schedule. I still find myself rolling around at 6 in the morning and no I don't want to go even though I know I have to. Sometimes I just get frustrated that I have to be here like all day. My high school day ended at 2:45 and I was at home by 3:15, and now there are days where I only get home at 6 o'clock. It is still taking me a while and I say why do I do this. I know there are good reasons, a good future if I continued with it" (Dianne).

It was difficult to adapt to the schedule since I had a lot of free blocks, so I would be tempted to skip my last classes all the time, especially because I would be working 25 and sometimes 35 hours a week since my parents couldn't help me out with the payments. (Susan)

I never really had a problem adapting to school because I'm a fast and easier learner, but I did have a hard time with how this school secretary system works- very rude, unhelpful and horrible organization and how the teachers are organized within their courses. The school relates way too much to how high school system's work and also the way schedules are done in June is way too early to decide if they want to come back next year. Registration should be in August. (Karen)

Once again, the adult student had a different response than the rest of the students. "I liked the schedule because the 8 o'clock almost all week and I am an early bird, so I like to have time after because at home I can't study so i stayed in school and studied. I liked the schedule" (Sandy).

3.2.4 Decision to Leave

Students were asked when they started to think about leaving the program and what the circumstances were. In several instances it was clear that the misaligned expectations of the program and Cegep life were at the root of the students' questioning their choices. "It wasn't what I expected" (John).

> When I started, when I was in all those geography courses and stuff I was like, well maybe this is not me. Destinations was kinda like a boring class, maybe because I wasn't thinking about like the whole tourism for Canada or like Montreal, more of the states and further countries where most people will travel. (Tammy)

> I was disappointed in the teaching and the class in general and the people, the social atmosphere. It was well, I was expecting more from the teachers, like more enthusiastic, the way they teach, most teachers were boring. (Annie)

> Honestly, I was very disappointed. I had so many issues with different teachers because there was no understanding on hard situations, especially when I had family problems and money problems. I thought the program makes students waste a lot of money and especially the ridiculous expensive books they make us buy when most of the time we don't use them or teachers ask for different ones because they have their own way of teaching different. (Karen)

> I first started thinking about leaving, maybe March I feel like I am stuck and I don't want to be stuck anymore. I don't want to be in a classroom. I want to be free to go and do other things. I was stuck in high school for so long and I felt that when I got to college I would have all this free time to do stuff and I don't, I don't like being stuck in a classroom. (Dianne)

Financial difficulty was the catalyst for the two mature students to think about leaving. "In February when actually I was sick and overworked. It wasn't easy for me to handle everything. It was too much and too many responsibilities" (Susan). "When the money started to be hard, coming in and all that. I found a way to be okay for the past two semesters, but there isn't any support for next fall" (Sandy).

Students were also asked for the main reason as to why they left the program. Disinterest was the main reason for four of the students. "Different reasons, um the most important reason was loss of interest, thinking maybe I want to do something else. Not liking the program" (Tammy). "I didn't like it and it was pushed on me" (John). "I wasn't really into it. In Mauritius I was in accounting, and then I came here and I read about the tourism program and I was happy, but this was kind of difficult for me" (Annie). "One reason is that I would like to pursue make-up and another reason is that I like change a lot" (Diane).

The financial difficulties was too much for the two mature students and one indicated that it would just take too long to finish her degree.

> "Three years and now four years is a lot a lot a lot. I was afraid that after all that I would find a little job because I knew that at the beginning you have to start at the bottom, but for me – damn it, I'm already 22 and starting at reception, hell, I can't accept that and I have to go for more than that" (Susan).

"It all comes down to money. The motivation is there, but I can't afford it" (Sandy).

Batha and Carroll (2007) have shown that the control portion of metacognition is important in the decision making process. There is little evidence to show however that the students used control skills in making their decision to leave the program. The students did question their interest in the subject and some did monitor their learning, but little research was done to find solutions or alternatives as to what they may study. Very few students had a plan for the future.

3.2.5 Overall Feelings

Even though the students had dropped out of the Tourism Management program, they did not speak negatively of their experience when asked to summarize their feelings about the program. Many had positive things to say, but the lack of interest in the subject or the possible job opportunities available was not what they wanted. The affective dimension of metacognition is important as the students are not interested in the subject, so they are not motivated and view the task as unimportant. Due to this the commitment to the program is low. "I really enjoyed the past year, if it was just up to me I would come back next semester, except I am scared a little bit because they say it is going to get harder" (Sandy).

> I really enjoyed it, looking back now, like I really would like to stay, I keep thinking maybe I should stay. But I really did enjoy it and there have been some times that there were courses that I didn't want to do, but they have all been beneficial I know things now that I didn't know then and that I never would have known were involved in tourism it has been a big learning experience and definitely a good program for anyone interested in tourism. It's definitely made me more anxious to get out, rather than sit in a classroom for the next two years. (Dianne)

"Well for Cegep, its um it was different, I like Cegep. The whole tourism program, it was fun, but it wasn't for me so basically I started to do more researching on what I want to do" (Tammy). "I did have some good times with many events, activities and I did gain a good bonding with students, but I don't see myself doing this for my career" (Karen). "It wasn't what I wanted. I just finished the semester" (Annie). "I need to take some time off with no pressure. It's not what I expected" (John).

> It is difficult to say because it is a mixture of everything. It was hard work that's for sure. It is less difficult but a lot a lot of work. It is difficult, irritating, and satisfactory; pleasing...You learn that it is all how you present yourself and how good you are with the professors. Three years is a lot. (Susan)

The seven students who dropped out of the Tourism Management program and agreed to be interviewed provided a great deal of information regarding their decision to enrol in the program, their expectations and their experiences. The main reason for leaving the Tourism Management program is a loss of interest in the program, indicated by five of the seven participants of the study. The two mature students indicated that financial difficulties were their reason for leaving the program.

4. JOURNALS

The students who were still in the Tourism Management program at the end of their second semester were asked to answer, in writing, seven questions (Appendix F). These questions were similar to the interview questions with the students who dropped out of the program. The results of the responses from the 13 participating students are organized around the students' expectations of Cegep and the Tourism Management program, the transition from high school to Cegep, their level of preparedness, what factors the students' attribute to their successes and failures and finally their overall feelings about the program. As with the interviews, not all students responded to all questions.

4.1 Student Expectations

When asked about the expectations students had of Cegep, nine out of 13 students mentioned the academic workload of Cegep and unlike those who left the program, the students who stayed in the program thought that it would be harder than high school. None of the 13 students thought that it would be easy. "I thought that in Cegep, I would be up late doing homework every night, but it's actually not like that at all, with the exception of the end of semester" (Student B). "I thought it was going to be much harder and more work than high school" (Student I). "I expected it to be a lot of work, more than in high school, and a lot more freedom. I thought CEGEP would be the same thing as high school, but a lot more work" (Student M).

"I thought it might be harder, that I would have more work to do but that the classes would be less boring. I also knew I was going to be the one deciding of my success" (Student J). "Before I started Cegep, I thought that it was going to be hard and very different from high school" (Student L). "I thought it would be more intense than in high school. I had not to work to hard at high school but in Cegep we need to be very organized" (Student G). "I had a hard time imagining it. Teachers made it look like there would be tons of work, little to no support and that basically you would be on your own" (Student C).

> I thought that I had to prepare myself for a whole course load of work because I was going in to a program that had nothing to do with what I had learnt in high school. There's not as much work as I thought there would be. I mean there is a lot of work but I imagined a lot more. I find that the work just builds at the end of the semester and at the start there is really none at all because there's always more of an Introduction. (Student E)

Three students discussed the social aspect of Cegep, expecting it to be fun. "Before I started school, I had this image that Cegep was the party lifestyle and that it would be a fun experience" (Student A). "I thought it would be more fun, very different from high school, and that I would have a lot more freedom than I had in high school" (Student J).

> Before I started school I thought Cegep would be a hole lot of fun, and many opportunities to meet new people, every body very friendly, lots of work but lots of parties also. My secondary school was very strict, so I thought Cegep would be the best place to work on my own without somebody pushing me. (Student H)

When asked what they thought the Tourism Management program would be like before you started school, the students gave the impression that they were more interested and informed about the content of the program than those who dropped out. Several students showed that they had done some research on their own as to what the program was all about.

I was really excited about the program, I pictured myself really enjoying the material we were going to cover and when I looked at the course descriptions before I applied. I felt like the Tourism program was my best bet because it was really the only thing that interested me and caught my attention. (Student M).

I thought that it would be a dynamic environment, with teachers who had plenty of travel experience and knowledge about worldly affairs. I knew from the academic advisor that it could teach me managerial skills as well as have travelling opportunities. (Student D)

Before starting school, I didn't really know what the tourism program would be like, other than looking at the courses offered. I didn't know any else who had taken the program, but after reading the program information on the website, I thought it would be interesting. (Student B)

I come from another career program so I had a good idea what it would be like. I knew that career programs require more involvement and work. There are more hours of course and a lot of homework. The counsellor at my other Cegep helped. (Student G)

I knew that the tourism program was going to be completely different from anything I have ever done. I thought it was based on geography and the different cultures found in the world. I knew that these weren't the only classes offered from what I read in the booklet. (Student E)

Friends also provided information about the program to three students. "I had some friends in the program a few years ago and so knew a bit what it would be like, but I did not expect so much marketing aspect to be taught" (Student C). "I heard from a friend and she told me the courses and the teachers were great and that the program in general was really good and entertaining. So I just wanted to try and see what it gives" (Student J).

I thought it was going to be very interesting because people had told me that you get to travel a lot and that you did not need to go to university. I also knew a few people that took the program and they also found it very interesting. (Student L)

A similarity with those who dropped out however was the expectation of opportunities to travel and some students did write that there were not enough

opportunities to travel. "At this point, tourism meant to me travelling and it is what I wanted to do" (Student J). "I thought we would travel more with school and that we would be included in the organization of trips. I would like doing exchanges with other countries because it is not as expensive" (Student G).

> I thought the tourism program would be a fun program. I thought the courses would be talking about the beautiful destinations around the world, that we would get to visit and we would be touching a little bit more about hotels. (Student H)

Career expectations were also high with this group. "I figured that tourism was a very large industry after my DEC I would have a large variety of employment to choose from" (Student A). "I had many expectations for CEGEP. I thought tourism program has more fun than the other programs. It felt as though by leaving school I was entering a really career" (Student F). "We also have the opportunity to know right away the kind of jobs were are going to get in the industry and I think I am going to enjoy myself in the tourism world" (Student J). "I knew this program had career opportunities at the end of my studies and I didn't want any other program that I had no clue where I was going" (Student E). "There are a lot of jobs that follow this program" (Student L).

Only two students said that that they didn't know what to expect and two said it wasn't different from what they expected. "I only knew that there would be geography involved, but I had no idea what else there was in the program" (Student K). "As for content and layout of the program I was not sure what to expect" (Student I). "There is not much different from what I thought" (Student F). "The program itself is what I expected. The surprises were discovering what I like and don't like in the tourism industry" (Student C).

There were three students who were surprised that the number of students in the Tourism Management program was quite small. "I knew it that it was going to be a lot of work. But I did not think that it was going to be as small a group" (Student I).

"I thought that the group was going to be a lot more different and larger. Where everyday you walked into a class and you didn't really know every one, instead we all know each other" (Student E). "I thought that the tourism program would have a lot more students than it does" (Student B).

4.2 Transition from High School to Cegep

When asked about their transition from high school to Cegep, there were varied responses with only three finding the experience to be relatively easy. "I really liked the transition from high school to Cegep. Even if classes start at 8 most days, I don't mind waking up early" (Student B). "I did not find the transition between high school and Cegep all that difficult" (Student A). "It went very well. I am a very organized person and I like to finish my work in advance" (Student G).

Many found the transition hard, but were able to quickly adapt. A large complaint however, was the scheduling of courses, including from one student who felt the transition was easy. "The Cegep is harder from school because of the schedule" (Student F). "It was very hard for me to adapt to 8 courses. But I quickly adapted" (Student M). "I just took a day at a time and see how things would turn out. It was kind of weird the first few weeks, but afterwards I just adapted" (Student K). "You have to adapt with the long breaks because in high school I never had long breaks like I do now. Now in college, you have more than two hour breaks some times" (Student L). "Long random breaks between classes and days where u start at 8am and finish at 6pm are not my idea of fun" (Student A). "4-5 years ago when I had 7 classes a semester it was difficult, but now with 4 having a schedule where I can work is very helpful" (Student C).

> I must say it was difficult, people were not the same, everything was brand new and I did not feel very comfortable in such a huge and unknown building. The courses were also so different from the ones I used to have in high school so it took a little while before I started getting good grades but I think it was the same for a lot of people. Therefore, I

adapt myself to pretty much anything pretty fast so it did not take long
before I started feeling more comfortable and before I started making new
friends. (Student J)

I had taken a year and a half off school before I started Cegep so it was
hard to adapt to a world without much freedoms. I crashed and burned
my first semester in social I failed half my classes and was put on
probation. But when I joined the tourism program some classes really
sparked my interest so I passed all my classes. (Student D)

Only two students saw the benefit of having breaks in the schedule and used
the time productively. "I like how we have big breaks in the schedule because it
allows me to get some work done at that time" (Student B). "It was very easy for me
to adapt to the different schedules. I feel that the schedules are a lot easier because
we have breaks where we can work on our homework" (Student E).

The other issue that students struggled with was with teachers and teaching
methods. "One of the hardest things to do was to adapt to some of the teachers.
Being in the same school from kindergarten to secondary 5 I was very used to the
teaching methods and ways of my teachers back home" (Student A). "I also had a
hard time with my teachers at first because at my high school, students and teachers
were very close and I realized that in CEGEP it is much harder to build a relationship
with a teacher" (Student M). "The teachers are, it depends on their personality. Only
think is the Cegep teachers' expect is more from the students" (Student F).

The transition from high school to Cegep was really bad for me, I have
lost a lot of time in Cegep doing all kinds of stupidity that I really regret
know. I skipped many classes and did not do some work because of
laziness, when I went to courses I was often forgetting my agenda so I
wasn't writing the work I needed to do which at the end made me late in
everything, my teachers on the other hand were nice but they seemed like
they care less than at my high school. (Student H)

Two students did write however that they liked the teaching methods. "I
also like having the same teachers throughout the program, because we get to know

what they are like. I thought we would have a lot more lecturing than hands-on type of classes, but I prefer this" (Student B). "I thought that it was going to be more theory and essay writing, and was pleasantly surprised with the varied methods of teaching and class exercises" (Student I).

4.3 Level of Preparation

The majority of students, eight of the 14, felt they were prepared for Cegep and gave explanations as to why this was the case. The preparation received at high school was mentioned as a factor by two students and work ethic was alluded to by three students. "I felt I was prepared for Cegep. I feel that my high school teachers prepared me well for Cegep work. The middle of the first semester was the hardest period for me" (Student A).

> Yes. High school teachers prepared me for the load of work I might have to assume once in CEGEP. I was definitely **not** prepared for the freedom of coming to classes or not and might've started my bad habit of procrastinating. (Student C)

> I honestly felt that the only reason I was prepared for CEGEP was because I have always worked very hard and have put my studies first. In high school I would spend probably 2-3 hours of homework per night therefore I knew how to work, and I knew how to work efficiently. If I had been lazy through-out high school I would have never been prepared for the work load given to us in CEGEP because it is SOOO much more than high school. (Student M)

"Yes because I was always working hard in high it was mostly my year and a half off that made me loose my good habits to much freedom" (Student D). "Yes, I started working at 15 years old so I was autonomous and I knew my limits" (Student G). "Yes, because I am a sociable person and I was really looking forward to start CEGEP and to live the experience of CEGEP" (Student K).

Yes, I mean when you have been in high school for 5 years, I think we all need to move on at some point, we need to get to a higher level where we are going to be able to test ourselves and our capacities and also try to find out what we like and where we want to go and how. (Student J)

Well after realizing that CEGEP was not very different from high school, I believe that I was somewhat prepared for it. Since there are few differences, apart from added responsibilities, there is not much preparing needed. (Student I)

Of the five students who felt they weren't prepared for Cegep, two felt that their high school did not prepare them enough; one stated there was a language barrier and the other two felt they weren't prepared because they didn't know what to expect. "I wasn't very prepared for it. They should have given us a course at sec. school that would prepare us in organizing our time or something" (Student H).

I wasn't really ready for Cegep because I wasn't doing well in high school and they didn't help us and I had to do extra schooling for the courses I failed and so, I was not prepared to handle what college was going to bring to me. (Student L)

"When I see the only problem is language. I think that the students who do not have language problem the Cegep is not hard" (Student F). "I didn't feel very prepared for CEGEP. I wasn't sure what to expect of the program, teachers or other students" (Student B).

In terms of feeling prepared, I'm going to have to say no. I felt as though every class I walked into I didn't know what to expect what we were doing and if I knew what I had to know for that class. I mean now I feel as though I have goals and so on, but then I didn't know what type of job I wanted, plus I wasn't aware of the different types of job opportunities that were available. My first semester I felt a bit lots but very comfortable. This semester how ever I feel as though im prepaired to take on anything. (Student E)

4.4 Successes and Failures

There were nine students who responded to the question regarding their successes and six of them attributed their success to their willingness to work hard at school, two students mentioned their parents and two students referred to their interest in the courses. "One advantage I have when it comes to doing homework, is when I want to do a really good job on a assignment, I work really hard on it because I know that I want to receive a good mark" (Student L). "I attribute my success to the work I have put in my homework and studies, I work hard, and I work long hours on homework but I must say that it really pays off" (Student M). "Willing to work" (Student K). "But if I pass it's because I have worked hard till the end" (Student H).

> The reason for my success is work. I did approximately 3-4 hours of homework per day. I used all my free time at school to work on my projects. I worked less than last year (I work 8 hours per week) so I have a lot of time to work on my homework. (Student G)

"I think the reason for my success is my attitude. I'm good with self-discipline and motivating myself to work hard. I also want to keep my parents and everyone back home proud" (Student B). "I have to attribute most of my success to my parents. If it we're not for them pushing me to succeed I would not be here today" (Student A). "...and for my successes it helped when the subject interested me" (Student D).

> I never failed any classes or any exams here in this program, I did in the other CEGEP I went to but it was because I was uninterested and I did not like being there and studying in what I was studying so I kind of left it on the side and I did not really care about school until I got to the tourism program here where I am interested. (Student J)

The main reason for failures was clearly procrastination and laziness. "The reason for any failure is procrastination. Sometimes I cram everything into the last minute" (Student B). PROCRASTINATION! But this year on top of that I think my relationships with friends and love interest have taken a lot of time" (Student C). "Procrastination has been my downfall my entire life. If only there was a way to get

it out of my brain. It has hindered me but at least I am still performing well" (Student I). "This year if I fail courses it will be because first I was at the last minute in almost all my work so, I wasn't doing a great job, and was handing in my projects late" (Student H). "Laziness" (Student K).

> There are days where when I need to do an assignment for school, I would leave it to the last minute because sometimes I wasn't in the mood to do it or I had other things to do. So laziness is what gets in the way when I don't do assignments. (Student L)

The large amount of work required of the students was seen as the main reason for failures by two students.

> I attribute my failures to the amount of work asked of us. I know when I need to work, although there are also times when I choose to do other things which often results in me doing less than I am capable of in school. (Student M)

> The only I don't like here is that we are given so much work all at once that it is almost impossible to do all of it. We have to pick the ones that are worth the most and work on them harder than on the other ones. (Student J)

Disinterest and lack of motivation were also cited by two students for their failures. "For my failures My reasons are lack of time and disinterest for some classes..." (Student D).

> I have not had any failures mark wise but I do feel like my grades could be much higher if only I was more motivated. I feel that even though I am in an interesting program I lack the motivation to complete my work. (Student A)

A language barrier and part-time work were each named by only one student. "The reasons I have problem is language" (Student F).

> I feel as though I might be working more than a should. Because of this I feel as though I'm pushing my school and I'm over working myself. I

have been sick many times this semester and I feel that I am over working my self. (Student E)

4.5 Overall Feelings

The final question asked students to summarize their feelings about their first year in the Tourism Management program. Only two students responded negatively, while the rest are generally happy about their first year experience although some students did point out some problem areas. "It was pure garbage, the classes where to general but I knew if I persevered it would get more specific the more the semesters went by" (Student D). "I really don't feel good because I have problem again language. Sometimes I feel sad that if my English would be better I would not have problem and I could do my class well and I would be happy" (Student F).

> I totally love it, the only negative point, it seems like the teachers are not always thinking about us and the students who have another life on the side. Some are working and living by themselves. It would be nice to have a more balanced atmosphere. Except this, I love everything about this program, I love the courses and the major part of the teachers, I love the outings we do and the other activities am most of all, I love my class, it feels like a family, at the end of the first year, we are getting to know each other. (Student J)

> I would say that it's been the best year of Cegep I have done, the people are nice and friendly, the content of certain courses are very interesting, and the ambiance is great. On the negative side I think it's a brutal come back to reality, tourism is not exactly what I thought it would be, and I'm not to sure if it's a "trip" or I really want to do this for the rest of my life. (Student H)

> In the first year of tourism, I found it a little interesting because I knew a little bit about what the program was going to be about and I knew that there were people who I knew that enjoyed the program. There were some courses I liked and some I didn't but that is normal for everyone because there will be courses in life that someone will not like. (Student L).

"Great year, I won't forget this first year even though I had my ups and downs, I learn a lot more than I expected but I can't wait to start my second year in tourism" (Student K). "I would have to say overall the tourism program has been interesting" (Student A). "I absolutely loved my First Year in Tourism. The content is great, so are the professors, the people, the activities, and knowing that I am going to go somewhere with my life afterwards is amazing" (Student I). "Liked it. Courses were simple yet full of information" (Student C).

> If I were to summarize my feelings form my first semester I would have to say that I was very happy that I chose a program that I enjoyed a lot. I felt comfortable that I had goals in my life for once. I never knew where I was going and what I really wanted to do. Now I know I want to work in the industry, just I'm not sure yet the job that's right for me. (Student E)

> I had a lot of fun making friends and becoming closer to everyone in my class, I also feel that the teacher/student relationship is much closer now than during the first semester. I feel that the teachers expect a lot from us, and push us a lot but it is for our own benefit. (Student M)

> I am impressed because I really like this program. I am very happy I have founded what I want to do in the future. I am impressed also by the amelioration I made in English; I never failed any exams and I have a very good average (better than in a French Cegep; 88%). (Student G)

> My first year in the tourism program was a lot of fun. The classes were interesting and all pretty unique in their own way. I really like the destination courses because I like geography. I also really like how our class becomes a family. My friends in other programs always hear me talking about the tourism program and they seem jealous that we're all friends and get to go on field trips. (Student B)

The greater part of the students who persisted in the program could be positioned in stage four of Perry's Model of Intellectual and Ethical Development as they have begun to focus is on how to think. A very few in this group could be considered in stage five as they have begun to see themselves as an active participant in their learning. This is consistent with other findings as Moore (1993) states that

very few undergraduate students at the University level with move beyond stage six. The majority of the students who abandoned the program would be positioned in stage three of Perry's model, although there may be a few who still view learning as dualistic, or right versus wrong.

This chapter has presented the findings from the survey questionnaire, the analyses of the academic records and the results of the exit interviews and journal questions. The significance of these findings and their possible implications are discussed further in the next chapter.

CHAPTER FIVE
DISCUSSION

The questions this study posed are: what factors influence the choice of tourism for new students and transfer students? And what factors explain the decision to drop out of the Tourism Management program? The reasons why students chose the Tourism Management program are presented and the decisions to abandon or persist in the program are discussed within the framework of the metacognitive elements of knowledge and control. Furthermore, the understanding students have regarding the program in terms of the requirements needed to succeed, their academic achievements, their perceptions and attitudes towards the requirements, their ability to analyze their performance and the attribution of their successes and failures are also presented. Finally, the motivation to drop out or continue in the program is examined and the decisions to abandon the program are summarized.

The 2007 incoming tourism students clearly demonstrated an interest in travel and future job opportunities. When asked about both the general and program specific influences that attracted them to the Tourism Management program, interest in travel and the program's field trip component ranked first while job opportunities and the program's work certification ranked second. The *stage* or internship at the end of the students' studies, which often leads to employment, was third in importance. This is consistent with previous findings which ranked interest in the subject matter as having the highest influence. When comparing the results to those found by O'Mahony, McWilliams, & Whitelaw (2001), the program specific factors are very similar. Champlain's students however did not have as positive a perception of the travel and tourism industry as those in the previously mentioned study. The findings of this study are also consistent with those done by Malgwi, Howe and Burnaby (2005) and O'Mahony, McWilliams, & Whitelaw (2001) about which factors do not influence students; friends, relatives, guidance counselors and teachers.

The results from the exit interviews and journals also show that interest in travel was the primary reason for enrolment. The knowledge that students had of Cegep and the Tourism Management program however was negligible, particularly among the group that abandoned the program within the first year of study. One student did not want any geography courses, which is fundamental to the study of tourism and three students were surprised by the number of computer related courses which is essential in today's workforce no matter the industry. It is clear in all the recruiting documentation that these two subjects are a major part of the curriculum. The students' lack of knowledge about the content of the program as well as the necessary skills and abilities needed to be successful is disquieting. The decisions to continue one's education at the Cegep level and choosing a program of study is a major commitment yet the students who abandoned the program showed little understanding of the importance of this task. The students who abandoned the program have not achieved the cognitive element of knowledge – or the ability to identify what they know and do not know. According to Perry's Scheme of Intellectual and Ethical Development they are still in the beginning positions of dualism, were they do not question their knowledge.

Côté et al. (2003) hypothesized that students with higher grades were better prepared for Cegep in terms of content knowledge and study skills as well as having a more positive attitude towards studying, as their study showed that students who left high school with higher averages were more likely to obtain their DEC. The analyses of the academic records of the 2007 incoming students showed similar results. The students with the lower high school grades were more likely to abandon the Tourism Management program than those with higher grades. The same is true for first semester and second semester grades. This is also consistent with the findings of Mangum, et al. (2005), Szafran (2001), and Roy et al. (2003). This is of particular importance to the Tourism Management Program as 24 of the 41 students in the incoming 2007 group had high school averages below 70% and only four had

averages above 80%. This is not an abnormal group; this is the typical type of students that are admitted to the Tourism Management program.

The affective element of knowledge is the perceptions and attitudes students have towards a task. There was a big difference in the attitudes of the students who abandoned the program versus those who persisted in regards to the academic workload that was required. As with the decision to enrol in the program, the students who dropped out gave the topic of workload very little consideration. They thought that the program would be fun and easy but they soon came to the realization that it was more structured and would require a great deal more work than they imagined. However those who stayed in the program thought that the program would be more difficult than high school and came prepared to work. This is similar to the findings of Kaszap (1996), which showed a link between students' perceptions and success, and the findings of Alexson and Kemnitz (2004) which showed that inaccurate perceptions often leads to dissatisfaction. The students who dropped out of the program clearly did not understand the requirements that Cegep and in particular the Tourism Management program would necessitate. It is not clear however if this misperception is what led to the disinterest in the program.

Although the students who dropped out of the program and participated in the exit interviews stated that the program was much harder than expected, all but one found the transition from high school to Cegep to be easy. The students stated that they felt prepared for Cegep and only two said their grades played a role in their decision to leave. This shows that the students had difficulty evaluating their own state of knowledge. This suggests that they did not have the ability to analyze their own performance and determine the level of attention required to succeed in their first year. The control element of knowledge is noticeably missing. The majority of the students who persisted in the program however felt that the transition was hard, but they were able to adapt quickly to their new reality. They felt they were prepared and many attributed that preparedness to their high schools and work ethic. The interest

in the material was another factor given for their successes in their courses. When students were asked to indicate what factors contributed to their failures, procrastination and laziness were the top culprits among the students remaining in the program. This was not so clear with the students who left the program. Lack of interest or motivation was cited by two students from each group. The large amount of work and lack of time to do it was cited by two students who are still in the program.

One issue that both groups of students had problems with however was their schedule. Students complained about long days beginning at 8:00 AM and ending at 6:00 PM, with long breaks between courses. It appears that most students do not know what to do with the large blocks of free time as only two students, who persisted in the program, indicated that they used the time productively to work on assignments. Similarly Davies (2000) and Martinez and Munday (1998) both found that students who withdrew from school were dissatisfied with the timetabling of their courses.

Studies have shown that students who succeed set goals for themselves. The belief that they can attain their goals is a factor in determining their motivation (Driscoll, 1994). The students who abandoned the Tourism Management program had some very basic goals when they began Cegep. These included going on to University, getting a job, or gaining experience. The problem was that the goals were quite vague with little details and not very focused on an end result. It was difficult for the students to ascertain whether they could reach their goals when they were unclear or far off in the future. The students who persisted in the program had high career expectations and felt they could attain the employment they wanted. This may be due in part to the Industry Field Studies course given in the second semester of the program. Students who dropped out before the second week of the winter semester did not get the opportunity to research and visit the many different tourism businesses in the Montreal area. Those who persisted in the program explored three possible

career paths which interested them in the tourism industry, which helped them to envision a clearer future and which may have influenced their continuation in the program.

Roy et. al (2003) showed a link between motivation and social activities on the Cegep campus. Students from both groups in this study did mention a lack of social events, in particular travel opportunities. More opportunities to travel inexpensively may increase motivation and interest in the program. Several students who persisted in the program used the word family to describe their feelings about the small group of students. Fostering that sense of belonging through more social activities may be an avenue the Tourism Management program should explore further.

The major reason for leaving the Tourism Management program was a lack of interest, or not liking the program. This was cited as the main reason from five of the seven students who participated in the exit interviews. It is clear that there was a misalignment between expectations and reality for two students who mentioned not liking the program. One student did not like the fact that there was geography and another student was not pleased when he discovered that the program was not hospitality oriented. There were two students who were disappointment with their classmates and teaching and one clearly blamed the teachers for boring, useless classes. The last student who cited a lack of interest mentioned feeling stuck and complained about a lack of freedom. This is consistent with the finding of Davies (2000) who found that students who dropped out had a low level of satisfaction with teaching quality and support. This also correlates with the findings of Côté et al. (2003) who found that 36% of Cegep students dropped out because they either did not like their program of study or found it too difficult. Martinez and Munday (1998) also found that students who left school had less intrinsic interest in their courses than those who stayed.

The literature reveals many studies where finances were the determining factor for students dropping out of school (Callender, 1999; Bennett, 2003; Gabriel et al., 2001, Georges, 2000; Hamilton, 2005; Opp, 2002). Côté et al. (2003) found that only 15% of career students in Quebec indicated that financial difficulties were the main reason for leaving Cegep. Of the seven participating students, the two mature students cited finances as the reason for not returning to school. Martinez and Munday (1998) also found that financial difficulties were more common among older students.

In conclusion, this study has shown that interest in travel is the main motivation for students to enrol in the Tourism Management program and that future job opportunities in the travel industry is second. It also shows that a lack of interest or a dislike of the program is the major reason why the students abandoned the program during the 2007/2008 academic year, followed by financial difficulties. It is not clear however as to what the lack of interest can be attributed to and this may be an avenue for future research. The study shows several problem areas within the program. First, students do not have enough information about Cegep in general and more specifically about the Tourism Management program before enroling. Secondly is that many students demonstrated that they were not prepared for the amount of work required in the program. It is clear that grades are a predictor of success or lack of it, the students with the lowest grades, in high school and during their first year at Cegep, were more likely to abandon the program than those students with higher grades. Other concerns include the scheduling of courses, teacher availability and teaching methods.

The findings of this study are summarized and lead to several recommendations for the college, the program and the teachers. The limitations of the study are raised and avenues for future research are suggested in the next chapter.

CHAPTER SIX
CONCLUSION

The purpose of this research was to determine which factors influenced students to enrol in the Tourism Management program at Champlain College, St-Lambert and why a large number of students abandoned the program before obtaining their DEC. The results of the surveys show that interest in travel and job opportunities were the main reasons why students chose to enrol. The statistical analysis of academic records determined that those with the highest grades in high school and the first year of Cegep were more likely to succeed and those with the lowest grades were more likely to drop out of the program. The exit interviews provided an opportunity to discover the main reasons for attrition. Lack of interest in the program was cited by five of the seven participants, with financial difficulties cited by the remaining two students. The comparison of results of the exit interviews and journals showed that the students who persisted in the program did use metacognitive skills more than those who abandoned.

This study has several implications for the Tourism Management Program and numerous recommendations can be made based on the findings.

1. Recruiting efforts need to be improved, including the implementation of a student for a day program where potential students can meet with current students and gain a better understanding of Cegep life and the Tourism Management program. More information and documentation for recruiting officers and high school guidance counselors needs to be developed. This documentation should concentrate on the numerous job opportunities available to our graduates. The placement rate of graduating students (90% in 2003 and the highest in the province, according to SRAM) should be much

more visible than it has been in the past. The educational field trip program should also be highlighted in all recruiting activities.

2. There needs to be a better coordination of classes to allow for more single day field trips. With better scheduling there would be less disruption to non-tourism courses. Inquiries should be made on different ways of alleviating the financial burden of multi-day trips, such as sponsorships and closer links to the industry, to allow more students to participate in this type of learning experience.

3. The Tourism department needs to work closely with the Registrar's office to try and coordinate better timetables for the students.

4. The curriculum has already been slightly modified to give the students a better understanding of the job opportunities available to them very early on in the program. One suggestion may be to find ways to link the business and computer courses to the tourism workplace as well as the impact it has on travel.

5. Many researchers have recommended an orientation or study skills course or have shown the positive impact these courses have on success rates (Roy et al., 2003; Derby & Smith, 2004; Hudson, Henderson, Henderson, 2002; Mangum, et al., 2005). Students enroled in the Tourism Management program should be given the opportunity to take such a course as one of their complementary courses during their first semester.

6. The teaching of metacognitive abilities should be a part of all of the Tourism courses as suggested by Richardson (2003). This may require teacher training in order to effectively model the cognitive and affective components of knowledge and control outlined by Tardiff (1997).

7. This type of survey should be done every year to track any changes in the students' perceptions and influences in order to readjust recruiting efforts.

One of the limitations of this research is the small number of students who

agreed to be interviewed. The students who dropped out during the first few weeks of the first semester were not asked to be interviewed as it was felt that they had not been in the program a sufficient amount of time to adequately respond to the questions. This left eleven students eligible and seven agreed to participate. Another limitation is the interviewer effect. The interviewer was also the students' teacher and in the case of the four students who abandoned the program at the end of the first year, they had the teacher for courses in both the fall and winter semesters. Although the students were no longer registered in the program, they may have felt the need to say what they thought the interviewer wanted to hear. The data may be affected by the student/teacher relationship. This may be a direction for future research. Exit interviews may be conducted by qualified interviewers with no prior relationship with the students. Another area of research may be the analysis of how students go from being very interested in travel to no interest in the program; what factors can be attributed to the lack of interest. Whether or not there are gatekeeper courses in the first year of the program is a question that remains unanswered and a topic for further research. Finally and perhaps more importantly is the question of how high school students can become more knowledgeable about Cegep life and the programs they have chosen.

It is expected that if these recommendations could be implemented, the number of students applying to the program and remaining through to graduation would increase.

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