

**CHAPTER I**  
**INTRODUCTION**

Since the first public two-year college opened its doors in 1901, millions of adults, both young and old, native-born and foreign, have looked to this uniquely American institution to address a variety of educational needs. However, while the great popularity of two-year colleges is above question, debate has ranged across the decades about these institutions' niche in the educational spectrum.

Community colleges comprise the largest segment of American higher education with over 1200 institutions and five million students. Because these institutions are the first step for many students entering higher education, their effectiveness is crucial (Smart & Hamm, 1993).

Separating the first two years of collegiate education from the upper level was primarily a means of diverting students away from the universities, thus allowing universities to pursue the tasks of research and advanced professional training (Brint & Karabell, 1989). Until the 1950s, transfer programs accounted for 60 to 70 percent of total enrollment in four-year institutions, and student transfer rates routinely served as a critical measure of institutional success (Eells, 1931; Lombardi, 1979; Medsker, 1960;). An indication of community college transfer students' success was shown in a 1965 study, where 62%

of the 7000 community college students were found to have received bachelor's degrees within three years of transfer with the prediction that at least 75% would ultimately graduate (Lombardi, 1979).

In the 1960's, the major junior college functions were general education, transfer programs, and preparation for entry level employment, along with remedial course work. The student population consisted of recent high school graduates from families whose economic status was generally above the poverty level. There was a clear distinction between transfer course work and vocational education (Knoell, 1991). Although junior colleges in the early 1960s had open-access policies, there were no special efforts made to recruit students from ethnic minority or other disadvantage groups.

By the 1970s, the junior colleges were called community colleges and the student population had changed to one consisting of many part-time, older students who worked full-time, including many women. Community colleges in the mid-1980's; established equal educational opportunity and affirmative action programs to attract, prepare and enroll students from previously under-represented groups (knoell, 1991). As a result of these efforts, a larger proportion of lower socio-economic background students enrolled. Differences in social class imply, generally, less interest in general educational goals (Deegan & Tillary, 1985). The combination of the lower ability of the community college students' and their socio-economic backgrounds were perceived as

resulting in a less rigorous academic climate than may be found in four-year colleges and appeared to affect the community colleges' lower-division, transfer programs that were intended to lead to the baccalaureate degree (Eaton, 1994).

With such diverse characteristics, these adult students often followed their own educational scripts instead of the colleges' carefully defined one-and two-year plans of study, and a new vocabulary emerged in the last 20 years to describe their attendance patterns. While some community college students "dropped out," not to return, others "stopped out" for a semester or a year before continuing their course work. Still others were "reverse transfers" who enrolled in community colleges after attending and sometimes graduating from four-year institutions. Meanwhile, other students "swirled," transferring from one institution to another in no discernible pattern (Barkley, 1993).

In concert with this great diversity of students, both nationally and in North Carolina, today's community colleges continue to embrace a comprehensive mission which includes a clearly defined occupational component and a college-parallel component. The difference between these two functions is evidenced in a variety of ways. In North Carolina the technical programs look to the workplace for their content and competencies with the assumption that students enter these programs to gain skills for immediate application in the workforce. College transfer programs, by contrast, model their courses after those at the state's four-year institutions with the assumption that

their students will transfer to pursue baccalaureate degrees. Technical courses have not been designed as transfer courses. Further delineating the distinction between these two educational areas, some community colleges have two sets of general education courses, one paralleling those offered at universities and one designed for technical students (Vaughan, 1989).

This dual focus of community colleges is appropriate if students enrolled in technical programs do not seek to enroll in universities. However, several researchers (Barkley, 1993; Bender, 1990; Cohen & Brawer, 1989; Grubb, 1991; Knoell, 1991; Palmer, 1986) have discovered that a significant number of students in occupational programs do transfer to four-year colleges and universities. Cohen and Brawer (1988) have even suggested that the labels "transfer" and "occupational" are incorrect as indications of students' educational pursuits. In North Carolina, responses to a 1988 survey of 16,196 community college students suggested that an interest in transferring among technical students, as well.

This study was undertaken to generate theory as to what constitutes college-level course work. The outcomes should provide a basis for developing general theory relevant to identifying characteristics of what constitutes college-level course work.

#### Statement of the problem

Interestingly, no definition of college-level appears to exist in the literature as it applies to college course work.

While this absence of definition may be troublesome for four-year colleges and universities, this situation is of critical importance for the community colleges. The open access of community colleges, their extensive remedial programs, and occupational curricula have led many four-year college faculty and administrators to question the level of academic course work at two-year colleges, a situation which affects the transferability of course work. The absence of consensus about the defining characteristics of college-level course work has left higher education without norms for evaluating coursework. The development of defining characteristics of college level course work would assist curriculum designers in higher education as they address the issues raised by their critics, and in particular those critics who question the academic level of community college offerings. What is needed, before such development can occur, is a determination of the differences and similarities in defining "college level" between and among community college and four-year college faculty who teach college-level courses.

#### Purpose of the Study

The general purpose of this research is to identify any differences and/or similarities between and among selected faculty members at a community college and a university as to what they perceive to be the defining characteristics of college-level course work. To accomplish this purpose, the following

research questions will be addressed:

1. What are the perceived similarities and differences among community college accounting and business management faculty when they identify the defining characteristic of college-level course work?
2. What are the perceived similarities and differences among four-year college and university accounting and business management faculty when they identify the defining characteristics of college-level course work?
3. Do similarities and differences exist in the perception of community college and four-year university faculty when they identify the defining characteristics of college-level course work?

This research was a partial replication of a study done at a Maryland community college and university. The university has a student population of approximately 35,000 and is located within 20 miles of the community college, which has three campuses and approximately 30,000 students. The majority of the community college students that attend the university come from this community college campus. The faculty used in the study taught Mathematics and Biology. This study was designed to identify characteristics of "college-level" between and among two-and

four-year college and university faculty who teach the same courses (Miller, 1996).

### The Significance of the Study

The major significance of this study is that it provides a systematic exploration of a consensual definition of college-level course work. Similarities in college-level work as perceived by accounting faculty and business management faculty at a four-year institution and at a two-year institution served as the basis for the definition. The identification of defining characteristics of college-level course work should assist curriculum designers in higher education, especially business programs, as they address issues raised by their critics, and in particular, critics who question the academic level of community college offerings. What is needed, before such development can occur, is a determination of the differences and similarities in defining "college level" between and among community college and four-year college faculty who teach college-level courses.

The exploration of the defining characteristics of college-level course work will be valuable for several other reasons. The lack of a working definition for college-level course work affects the transfer of credit. Community college transfer students may have to repeat one or more courses at the four-year institution or may have to take more than the required number of courses to obtain a baccalaureate degree. This delay in degree completion has an economic impact on the student in terms of

additional tuition and delayed job market entry, and has major implications for federal and financial aid recipients and the cost to taxpayers (Bender, 1991). By defining college-level course work, transferring credit from community colleges to four-year institutions can be facilitated.

The academic image of the community college has been questioned by faculty and administrators of four-year colleges and universities because of the community college open-access policy, predominance of vocational/occupational course work, the extent of their remedial education programs, and their alleged declining academic standards. Richardson et al. (1983) presents the academic situation at an open-access institution in Literacy in the Open-access College. Quoting Boyer and Hechinger (1981) from their article Higher learning in the nation's service, they noted that the changes in the characteristics of those matriculating are only one part of the picture, once admitted, a more diverse clientele has exerted steady pressure on curriculum and teaching methods (Richardson, 1983). This study will help to eliminate many of the problems associated with the transfer of credit from the two-year colleges to the four-year institutions.

Two-year institutions want to ensure that every course designated as a transfer course or as a general education course will be transferable to a receiving institution. Four-year institutions want to be sure that the courses they are expected to accept meet the same standards required as courses within

their own curricula. Some university faculty have contended that many community college courses, though seemingly comparable based on catalog descriptions, lack the depth, rigor, and breadth of subject matter taught in the first two years of a baccalaureate institution (Diaz, 1992). A need exists for identifying defining characteristics of college-level course work that permits the transfer of credit as appropriate even when there is not an exact course equivalent within a receiving institution's curriculum.

Richardson et al, (1983) believed that due to the limited academic preparation of many of their students, community college instructors have lowered academic standards and student requirements. These authors also believe little if any outside reading is required of the community college student. Further, objective tests have been utilized rather than essays because of the poor performance by students on essay exams. This lowering of academic standards also means that rote memory is acceptable and often students have not been required to synthesize information or think critically. An acceptable definition of college-level course work will help eliminate differences required in student performance at both types of institutions.

Transferability of course work from two to four-year colleges is often not an easy process. The economic and time factors inherent in transfer are important factors for many groups (i.e. students and taxpayers). The student population is mobile, with students transferring from one institution to another at an expanding pace. If students are required to repeat

courses, or take additional credits after transfer, this proves costly to the institution, the state and/or local funding bodies, and to the student's tuition, and room and board, and extended time before entering the job market. This duplication of courses and extra expense can be reduced with a working definition of college-level course work.

Many state legislatures are mandating the strengthening of academic programs in high schools and colleges (Bender, 1991). North Carolina, is in the infant stages of developing articulation programs. The North Carolina General Assembly just passed House Bill 739 which mandates the setting up of a seamless education system between the community college system and 4 year state schools. The reason given for this is cost savings. Without the defining characteristics of college-level course work, there is no objective way to evaluate whether appropriate standards are being met.

#### Delimitation of The Study

The study is delimited to North Carolina institutions of higher education. The study is further delimited to accounting and business management course instructors at a community college and four-year university in North Carolina. This exploratory study was conducted with these professors using the technique of elite interviewing.

#### DEFINITIONS OF TERMS

**Elites** are individuals considered to be the influential, the

prominent, and well informed people in an organization with community and are selected for interviews on the basis of their expertise in areas relevant to the research. Elites respond well to inquiries about broad areas of content and to intelligent, provocative, open-ended questions that allow them the freedom to use their knowledge and imagination (Marshall & Rossman, 1995, p. 83).

**Open-access policy** is the practice of colleges and universities of accepting any candidate who presents a high school diploma or high school equivalency certificate. It is nonselective admission, instituted in some cases to render higher education more accessible to minority students. It is occasionally referred to as open door admission (Good, 1973, p. 108).

**Data bit** is each separate piece of information. A piece of text that fits a given category.

**Tacit knowledge** is that knowledge which is outside awareness.

#### Chapter Organization

The first chapter presents the rationale for the study and consists of the introduction, the statement of the problem, the purpose statement, and research questions. Chapter I also includes a section on the significance of the study, and the delimitations of terms used.

Chapter II includes the literature relating to standards in

higher education, the history of the community college tracing the evolving academic reputation of the community college, and references related to characteristics defining college-level course work.

In Chapter III, the methods used, selection of the interviewees, and the procedures for collecting and analyzing the data, as well as the method associated with interviewing are presented. Further data analysis procedures are explained.

Chapter IV will contain the outcomes of data analysis and findings in the form of patterns and associated categories derived from interview responses. It also relates the data to the research questions.

Chapter V will summarize the study, provide interpretations and proposed theory to the research questions, and present recommendations for further study.

## CHAPTER II

### REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The content of this chapter moves from a broad overview of the community college and its student body to the narrow focus of this study. The review of the literature focuses on : (a) The evolution of the public two-year college will be briefly traced from its inception to the present, (b) A portrayal of the changing community college student. (c) The issue of academic reputation of the community college. (d) A brief review of academic standards in higher education. (e) Issues surrounding the need for an exploration of the defining characteristics of college-level course work. This contextual background sets the stage for questions addressed by the study as well as theoretical basis for the research design.

#### Growth and Evolution of Two-Year Colleges

Junior colleges, the forerunners of today's community colleges, made their debut in American higher education modestly enough in the early part of this century, and their mission was relatively clear: to serve as a link between the high school and the upper-division courses of the university. Understanding the growth and development of the community college is very

necessary in helping to understand this study. The mission of the junior college was accomplished by offering graduating high school seniors the first two years of general education courses in an inexpensive and accessible manner so that these students could then transfer to universities as juniors to pursue their specialized study.

The name "junior college" was used extensively in the first half of the century to describe this institution which offered "two years of instruction of strictly collegiate grade" (Cohen & Brawer, 1989, p. 3). Bogue, who became executive director of the American Association of Junior Colleges, stated in 1925 that college-level courses offered by junior colleges "must be identical, in scope and thoroughness, with corresponding courses of the standard four-year college" (quoted in Cohen & Brawer, p. 4).

Even though the emphasis was clearly on university-level courses, during these years there was a continuing debate over the mission and purpose of the junior college. Awareness that not all junior college students could or would go on for a baccalaureate degree led to the suggestion that, "The development of the terminal function is an essential corollary of the success of the popularization function" (Ells, 1931, cited in Brint & Karabel, 1989, p. 36). One researcher stated that during the 1920s and 1930s "hardly a meeting of the association (American Association of Junior Colleges) failed to discuss terminal education" (p.41). Nevertheless, while this debate among

educators occurred regarding the purpose of these institutions (occupational or transfer) took place, students continued to enroll for the purpose of transfer.

This dual focus on transfer and occupational preparation grew and in 1944, received a major boost with the passage of the Servicemen's Readjustment Act or G.I. Bill (Vaughn, 1989). The stage was set for massive enrollment growth and for a significant reexamination of the two-year college. Three years later, the President's Commission on Higher Education for American Democracy issued its findings. The Truman Commission, as it was popularly called, suggested a name change from "junior college," which emphasized the transfer function to "community college" which suggested a broader, more inclusive function (Vaughan, 1989, p. 18). The commission suggested that the essential characteristics of community colleges were to learn their communities' needs, serve both young and older students, have integrated general education and occupational programs, maintain the college transfer function, and have comprehensive adult education programs.

The following decades were "the boom years" for American community colleges (Vaughan, 1989, p. 19). In addition to the G.I. Bill and the infusion of servicemen returning for additional education, other federal legislation expanded financial aid opportunities through the Higher Education Act of 1965 and the Basic Educational Opportunity Grants in 1972 (Vaughn, 1989) . The impact of these federal initiatives is seen in the numbers.

Public community colleges grew from 377 in 1958 to 1,049 in 1980 while the number of students soared from 585,240 to 4,826,000 during the same years.

With these new students and new funds, the same period saw a shift of emphasis from the college transfer function to the occupational one. The Vocational Education Acts of the 1960s made large sums of federal money available, and (Cohen and Brawer, 1987) suggest, "The career education cast of contemporary colleges is due in no small measure to the availability of these funds" (1987, p.21). This view is supported at the state level in a dissertation by Wiggs (1990). Talking about Blake, president of the NCCCS in the early 1980s, Wiggs writes "He saw the system as responding to the exigencies of the economy rather than to the felt needs of the student...For Blake, the issue was a pragmatic choice: he could get funding from the Legislature for vocational and technical training, but not for general education" (1990, pp. 237-238).

At the same time, the "felt needs" of the students were shifting from transfer to job preparation. During the seven-year period from 1970-77 alone, enrollment in occupational programs nationwide grew from less than 33% to more than 50% (Brint & Karabel, 1989, p. 116). Cohen and Brawer concur, "By the last third of the twentieth century, ...vocationalism had gained the day. College going was for job getting, job certifying, job training" (1989, p.21).

Enrollment patterns in North Carolina community colleges

parallel the national pattern to an extent. The percentage of students enrolled in technical programs grew from 47.3% in 1968 to 57.6% in 1988, while enrollment in college transfer programs dropped from 23.7% in 1968 to a low of 11.2% in 1979 (Shearon et al, 1990). However, enrollment in college transfer programs grew from 39,138 to 51,162 students between 1980 to 1993, reflecting, in part, the addition of new transfer programs. Equally significant was the finding that college transfer and general education programs were the only areas that did not have a decline in the enrollment of first-time freshmen (Nagy, 1994).

Where are community colleges today in terms of this evolution? Deegan and Tillery (1985) have suggested that the period from 1970-85 was the generation of the comprehensive community college, characterized by an expansion of services and breadth of mission in response to the great diversity of students and community needs. They argue that the next generation, which they extend to the mid-1990s, may focus on priorities and program balance within the institutions. Shearon and Tollefson (1989, p. 318) suggest that this period be labeled "The Search for a New Focus" as increasingly diverse publics look to the colleges for a variety of needs.

#### The Two-Year College Student

Cohen and Brawer (1987) note that just as the G.I. Bill of 1944 and subsequent federal initiatives contributed to massive changes in the nation's two-year colleges, they also opened wide

the doors of access to a new type of student. It is important to this study that the nature of the community college students be explained. The junior colleges in the early decades of the century were created to serve young high school graduates from middle and upper socioeconomic groups. By enrolling at the local junior college, these young people could live at home and mature before either moving on to the more rigorous upper-division course work of the university or entering the workforce (Cohen & Brawer, 1987). Consequently, through the two-year design of the junior college, those students unable to complete or incapable of completing upper-division course work could stop "naturally and honorably at the end of the sophomore year" (quotation by Ells, 1931, Cohen & Brawer, p. 9). And the numbers of students who continued their education beyond high school were quite small. In 1910 only 2.8% of young people between 18-24 years of age enrolled in a two-year or four-year college. In 1920 the percentage had inched upward to 4.5%, then 6.9% in 1930, and 8.4% in 1940. Clearly, post-secondary education was not an option for the majority of the nation's youth (Cohen & Brawer, 1987).

Servicemen who enrolled in colleges under the G.I. Bill were the first wave of a new type of student, and with each decade the two-year college student was less likely to resemble his or her traditional counterpart from the first half of the century. These "nontraditional students" were more representative of the population at large in their demographic and socioeconomic characteristics, and both their enrollment patterns and

educational expectations differed from the more traditional college students.

Demographically, the years from 1960 to the present saw the number of young, white, male students slowly decrease as members of other groups began to enroll in greater numbers. Nationwide, women represented about 40% of the total community college enrollment in 1970, but they had become a majority by 1980 (Warren, 1989). Concomitantly, greater numbers of students from racial and ethnic minorities looked to the community colleges for their post-secondary education. By 1980 two-thirds of undergraduate Hispanics and one-half of undergraduate African Americans were in community colleges. Finally, the average age of students increased, and the 18-to 22 year-old of earlier decades were eclipsed by an older population.

These changes are mirrored in North Carolina. Over the 20-year period from 1968 to 1988, the enrollment of women grew from 32 to 62%, and the percentage of students 22 years of age or younger decreased from 74% to 39%. Similarly, the percentage of minority students grew from 13.1% to 20.3%, although there has been a decrease in the enrollment of African Americans since 1979 (Shearon et al, 1990).

Socio-economically, the new student body comes primarily from working-class backgrounds with lower incomes and less parental education than their university counterparts; however, they are higher in these areas than the population at large (Cross, 1982) "The one phrase that might describe them better

than any other is 'upwardly mobile.' They seem determined to rise above the socioeconomic level of their parents, largely through the route of advanced education," (Cross, 1982, p. 67). Because these are older students, many of them work, and that affects both their enrollment patterns and their approach to education. These are predominately part-time students who "are more definite in what they want from college than are their full-time counterparts" (Warren, 1989, p.217). At the same time, these purposeful students also pursue education on their own terms; a college's carefully sequenced two-year program of study for a full-time student may become a four-year program for these nontraditional students.

North Carolina students have also reduced the number of hours they are in class and increased the hours they work outside of class. In 1968, 73% of students were in class more than 15 hours a week and only 21.4% worked full-time. By 1988, 71.6% of students were in class less than 15 hours a week and 48.2% worked full-time (Shearon et al, 1990).

Finally, Warren(1989) noted that the the level of educational preparation of these nontraditional students is lower, on average, than that of their traditional counterparts. Because they are older, more years have elapsed since they graduated from high school. Also, the open doors of the community college admit all students regardless of academic background.

## A Description of Transfer Students

Within this broad context of the two-year college and the two-year college student, the question arises, "Who are the community college students who transfer to four-year institutions?" Understanding the profile of community college students is important to this study. Cross succinctly defines some of the salient characteristics when she states: "Virtually all surveys, past and present, show that the more education people have, the more interested they will be in further education, the more they will know about available opportunities, and the more they will participate" (Barry, 1992, p.55). Other studies have reached similar conclusions (Lee & Frank, 1987; Cohen, Brawer, & Bensimon, 1985). Students most likely to transfer are most like their four-year counterparts. They are young, take academic subjects in high school and earn higher grades than average, come from middle class backgrounds, attend college full-time, and participate in more extracurricular activities. Kim's study (1991) of North Carolina students at community colleges who indicated that they intended to transfer reached many of the same conclusions. In this study first and second year community college students were being examined to find factors that effect their intentions to transfer. She found that age, parents' education, and enrollment status were determinants of transfer intentions regardless of program area.

Nevertheless, there are differences, between students who begin their college work at a community college and those who

begin at a university (Cohen & Braver, 1987). As might be expected, the majority of transfer students resemble other community college students in numerous ways. They are older, attend part-time, and are less integrated into college life than students are who are younger than they are on community college campuses. Only half are 24 years of age or younger. An average of 60% attend college part-time, and that figure approaches 80% in some states. A higher percentage of transfer students work than their university counterparts, and they work more hours. Family incomes, on the other hand, tend to be lower also than their university counterparts. High school academic records for transfer students indicate that higher percentage are the first in their families to attend college. "For most students who began at a community college, the university was not a feasible alternative," Cohen writes (1988, p.400).

These "typical," nontraditional students have a number of handicaps in reaching the university, not to mention the baccalaureate degree. Because of poor academic preparation, many begin college with a number of remedial courses. Because of part-time attendance, completion of transfer courses takes double or triple the time required for full-time students. Because these students attend part-time and do not live on campus, they tend to be marginally involved in college life. Some go from the parking lot to class to the parking lot. They rarely join organizations, have lengthy conversations with faculty or fellow students, or use the support services available to them.

(Gonzenbach, 1993)

These nontraditional students do have a strong sense of purpose, however, and, overwhelmingly, their purpose relates to the workplace. In one study of community college students in North Carolina who intended to transfer, 86% said they wanted to transfer to improve their career opportunities and 82% said they wanted to transfer to have a better opportunity to increase their income (Gonzenbach, 1993). In this aspect, community college transfer students resemble adult students already at the university.

#### Academic Standards in Higher Education

An appalling incoherence in American higher education has been an inability or unwillingness to take common action to rectify this incoherence exists, resulting in a lack of standards. (Adelman, 1986; Cohen & Braver, 1987; Rudolph, 1977). Colleges and universities appear to have made no attempt to integrate pedagogy into any single type of undergraduate curriculum (Carnegie Foundation for Advancement of Teaching, 1987), resulting in no absolute standards regarding college curriculums (Cohen & Braver, 1987). Unfortunately any definition, if there ever was one, of what clearly distinguishes between pre-college and college-level academic work has been lost (Adelman, 1986). A national academic accounting system exists that translates the undergraduate experience into units and grade points that are accepted despite wide variations in the content

and quality of instruction (Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, 1987). The degrees offered at American colleges simply record the successful completion of a number of requirements--generally common to most institutions, but which vary greatly in specific detail as to their intellectual content, subject matter, rigor, and difficulty (Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, 1987). The diversity among higher education institutions leaves colleges without generally recognized reference points in the quest for quality (Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, 1987). Course content and level are seldom considered when students transfer credits from one four-year college to another, but content and level are a consideration for community college transfer students, whose course work is often not considered as college level (Carnegie, 1987).

In 1984, two national reports on higher education were published. The National Institute for Education (NIE)'s report on Involvement in Learning: Realizing the Potential of American Higher Education was a response to A Nation at Risk: NIE's report presents its perception of the decline of American undergraduate education and included in its warnings a need for "an assessment of stated academic and social standards" (Simpson & Frost, 1993, p. 14). Another report published by the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH), To Reclaim a Legacy: A Report on the Humanities in Higher Education suggests a reshaping of the undergraduate curricula (Simpson & Frost, 1993). In 1985, the

Association of American Colleges (AAC) published Integrity in the College Curriculum: A Report to the Academic Community which looks at "the faculty's role in curriculum decay" (Simpson & Frost, 1993, p. 14).

In 1987, the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, published College: The Undergraduate Experience in America. For the report, Boyer surveyed 500 faculty and 4500 undergraduates and documented widespread deficiencies as to the purposes of the college curriculum (Boyer, 1987, cited in Simpson & Frost, 1993).

According to a 1992 report by the Aspen Institute, critics of American higher education note that widespread concerns about the quality and the content of the curriculum and criticisms of college faculty has increased. Concerns exist about how much and what college students are learning. Further, an apparent lack of interest in some higher education circles for measuring educational outcomes is fostered. The Aspen Report states that the weight of available evidence confirms that too little learning is currently offered at the undergraduate level. Also noted in this report is that effective teaching is critical and often goes unexamined as a component in determining how much learning occurs. Dissatisfaction is felt by many faculty members and administrators as well as students. Colleges and universities must change the fact, as well as the appearance, of low standards by increasing academic rigor (Aspen Institute, 1992). This point has even been made by college students.

Disgruntled undergraduates from 13 institutions demonstrated their concern when they held two conferences at Syracuse University during the 1980s devoted to figuring out ways to press their colleges to raise academic standards. Former Harvard President D.Bok is quoted as stating that undergraduate education has been accused of "winding down toward mediocrity" (Aspen Institute, 1992, p. 20).

American colleges and universities are divergent with many goals and missions. This diversity, while offering obvious advantages, also has shortcomings. Diversity conceals the question of whether or not there should be some common characteristics which define the education colleges offer their students (Carnegie foundation for the advancement of teaching, 1987). What is meant by college-level skills is ill defined and varies considerably from college to college (Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, 1987). Indecision exists about where an institution's responsibilities for teaching elementary skills end and where a college's responsibilities for teaching advanced-level skills begins (Carnegie Foundation for the advancement of Teaching, 1987).

Fundamental differences are evident between two-year colleges and four-year colleges that involve faculty and administrator's attitudes about the importance of knowledge, standards, and the academic experience itself (Eaton, 1988). Community college courses intended for transfer are deemed college-level by definition (Eaton, 1994). The four-year

colleges agree that community colleges courses are college level when they accept them in transfer. Faculty members at both two- and four-year institutions say that there is less rigor in the community college classes (Richardson & Bender, 1986, cited in Eaton, 1988). Community colleges need to utilize the same academic standards as the four-year colleges in order to prepare their transferring students for baccalaureate study.

#### Performance of Students after Transfer

A number of studies have examined the performance of community college students after they transfer to four-year institutions yielding a variety of results, both encouraging and discouraging. Understanding how the transfer student is doing after transfer to the four-year university gives some insight on the academic abilities of the students. This is critical to this study. The phenomenon of "transfer shock" was first reported in the 1960s (Knoell & Medsker, 1965), and its primary symptom is a drop in grade point average immediately following transfer. A number of reasons such as change of environment and lack of confidence have been cited to explain transfer shock which, some researchers agree, usually disappears after one or two semesters as evidenced by rising grades (Hughes & Graham, 1992).

Other researchers conclude that community college transfer students consistently perform at lower academic levels than native university students. A 1977 survey of 1,343 community college students who transferred to the University of California

at Los Angeles (UCLA) found that many were struggling academically (Lara, 1981). Two-thirds reported that they had doubled their efforts following transfer and were persisting, but one-third, even with more work, had fallen behind academically and dropped out. Likewise, a 1979 California State University study (Kissler, 1982) found that 50% of the native university students in their junior year graduated in three years, but only 34% of the transfer students who entered as juniors did. Finally, Pascarella and Terenzini (1990) concluded that transfer students were 15% less likely to graduate than were native university students.

Other researchers question the validity of these findings, especially since transfer students often represent a different population from traditional university students. Reviewing UCLA graduates between 1976 and 1978, Cohen and Brawer (1987) found that transfer students had grade point averages only 0.2 lower than native university students. They also found that transfer students took 1.4 years longer to earn a degree, suggesting heavier outside work loads and more part-time attendance at the university. Both earlier and later studies (Richardson & Bender, 1986; Bunn, 1993) reported similar findings. Focusing on North Carolina transfer students who graduate after entering North Carolina senior institutions, Bunn found that employment, race, and the perception of the quality of support services were related to the length of time required to graduate. While these factors lengthened that time, she concluded that, given enough

time, the students did graduate.

Finally, Warren (1989) suggests that most of the studies on academic performance of transfer students have examined samples of young students who entered the community college immediately after graduating from high school. "Those students represent less than a third of the community college population. The academic ability of the other two-thirds...has not been assessed," he states (p.220).

In North Carolina, performance data is collected yearly by the UNC-GA and distributed throughout the institutions of higher education in the state. In 1996, the Transfer Student Performance Report indicates that, on average, students who transfer from community colleges have slightly lower grade point averages than do native students.

#### Academic Reputation of the Community College

Community colleges have an image as less than academically rigorous institutions because they have open access, a preponderance of vocational courses, extensive remedial programs, and perceived as having lowered their academic standards to meet the needs of their student population (Brint & Karabel, 1989; Dougherty, 1992; Eaton, 1988; McGrath & Spear, 1991; Richardson, et al. 1983). Though well intentioned, community colleges' rejection of "national norms, cosmopolitan values, academic credentials, traditional standards and professionalism, as well as in its embrace of the local, parochial, anti-intellectual and

familiar, " (Rudolph, 1977, p. 285) placed themselves beyond consideration, except in a limited sense, as a college. Courses in the sciences have tended away from teaching research and experimental methodology toward terminology and concepts useful for understanding the effects of various treatments (Cohen & Brawer, 1987). Cohen and Brawer (1987) state that community colleges provide specialized courses for students with particular occupational or personal interests. Such courses have been developed in philosophy, especially ethics, and in mathematics, where computer science and technology have grown rapidly. Cohen and Brawer (1987) also noted that over 1/3 of all community college offerings in English and math are remedial. The threat to the "academic content of community college education did not come from career education. In fact, the technical programs often made rigorous demands on their students. The threat to the academic programs at community colleges came from colleges that offered a few presentations on television, a sizeable number of community service programs, and credit courses in hundreds of locations with non-credit options--all with no attempt to ensure that the presentations were educative" (Cohen & Brawer, 1987, p. 342). Eaton (1994) notes that through shifts in emphasis such as these, community colleges have "become ambiguous sites of quasi-educational opportunity" (p. xi). The threat to the academic content of community college education came also from the colleges' proudly stated policies that encouraged students to drop in when they want, take what they want, and drop out when

they want--a policy which results in the ultimate curricula disintegration. Many community college administrators take pride in their role in the economic development of their community, but regardless of the success of these programs, their institution loses its credibility if they do not also offer strong academic programs (Cohen & Brawer, 1987). The community college, while acting as a mote for higher education, "has generalized opportunity and cushioned failure. It has held out the promise of economic and social mobility and also verified low intellectual, social, and economic status" (Rudolph, 1977, p. 286).

When community colleges began to offer terminal one-and two-year occupational programs for those who were not interested in or unable to pursue a bachelor's degree, their becoming extensively involved with remedial work and duplicating programs previously associated with public secondary schools was not anticipated (Richardson et al., 1983). The cloud over the community college mission exists because many courses are at the developmental level. The population of open access students consists of the urban and rural poor or working class; various ethnic minorities, displaced homemakers or the new unemployed, and the lowest achievers from high school--a population which can hardly be thought of as college material (McGrath & Spear, 1991).

During the 1950s and 60s, one of the criticisms leveled at community colleges was that many of the community college liberal arts courses were taught by faculty recruited from high school

and so became modified versions of secondary education courses (Cohen & Brawer, 1987). Social critics such as Karabel (1972) and Clark (1960) allege that open-access colleges have perpetuated social inequities (cited in Richardson et al., 1983). Brint and Karabel (1989) were particularly harsh in their opinion that public two-year colleges brought to higher education the comprehensive model of American secondary education which includes open access, as well as relatively weak differences between curricular offerings and service opportunities. Community colleges are perpetually defending themselves against criticism because of their comprehensive mission (Deegan & Tillary, 1985).

Affirmative action efforts and active recruitment of minorities and non-traditional college students has increased these ranks (Knoell & Medsker, 1965). Students from lower socio-economic populations have less of a sense of the American higher education model (Knoell & Medsker, 1965; McGrath & Spear, 1991). The community college's comprehensive mission and concerns about the academic quality of the community college affect its status within the higher education community (McGrath & Spear, 1991). Community colleges employ a large number of part-time faculty, often reaching over 40% of the faculty ranks. These faculty have no ownership in the institution and are believed to reduce the collegiate control of the curriculum (Richardson et al., 1983). A perception exists that part-time faculty do not provide for meeting prerequisite knowledge for the next course. The nature

and quality of instructors lead to skepticism and doubt on the part of the four-year schools, and make the community college level of instruction vulnerable to question (Bender, 1990).

The fall of student abilities in 1970s caused academic expectations to lessen. This had a pronounced effect and by 1980, 90% of community college enrollment in liberal arts classes was in courses with no prerequisite (Cohen & Brawer, 1987). In addition, a strong emphasis on occupational courses began (Cohen & Brawer, 1987). During the 70s, several factors began to affect the community college's student population. There were decreases in the traditional college-age population overall (Richardson et al., 1983). Two-year colleges began to feel the need to seek new missions because the four-year institutions had begun to offer remedial instruction; and the decrease in traditional student populations in general caused college enrollment at both types of institutions to be low. The community colleges in response began to offer almost any educational program to almost any clientele (Richardson et al., 1983). They began to gear their programs to the demands of the market place rather than to traditional views of what ought to comprise a college education (Richardson et al., 1983).

The diverse student population at community colleges has exerted steady pressure on curriculum and teaching methods (Boyer & Hechinger, 1981; cited in Richardson et al., 1983). Fewer demands have been placed on students--fewer term papers, essay examinations, and required reading lists. Open-access community

colleges have had difficulty promoting standards for critical literacy, which has caused a credibility crisis at the four-year schools (Richardson et al., 1983). The area of competence most affected by the leveling down process has been literacy. Richardson (1983) raises the question as to whether the democratization of higher education has been achieved by leveling up the disadvantaged sectors or leveling down the opportunities previously available only to more advantaged groups of learners. As the student population at the community college has become more representative of the population at large, the standards of literacy have begun to approximate the standards that prevail in society at large (Richardson et al., 1983).

The open access of the community colleges has resulted in a completely changed academic culture; one that is quite different than is found in traditional colleges (McGrath & Spear, 1991). Students do not live up to expectations at many colleges, but at community colleges the students publicly challenge the appropriateness of academic requirements. Students fail, but at the community college it is often the teacher who is regarded with suspicion. Students at community colleges form an oppositional culture and the faculty often accede to its formation and maintenance--giving in to lower standards (McGrath and Spear, 1991). Community colleges should emphasize the value of such academic practices as writing, interpretation, argumentation, and analysis. Community colleges need to battle for rigor, substance, and distinctiveness as they answer the

question, open access to what? (McGrath & Spear, 1991).

Grading procedures have been altered in many open-access colleges to allow withdrawal through the last day of class without penalty. Eaton (1988) notes that community colleges' grading standards are often norm referenced [how students perform in relation to others taking the same class] while in the university, standards are criterion referenced [measured against a standard that does not change with variations in preparation or aptitude of others in the course].

Failure of many community colleges to monitor the student's progress has led to public skepticism about the institution's concern for students as learners (Richardson et al., 1983). many critics of the community college believe that the open-door policy has led to a leveling down of standards (Cohen & Brawer, 1989; Eaton, 1988; McGrath & Spear, 1991; Prager, 1993; Richardson et al., 1983). The community colleges ensure student eligibility for financial aid to take advantage of funding formulas. To prevent discouragement on the part of the student, they have begun to offer remedial courses for college credit (Deegan & Tillary, 1985; Richardson et al., 1983).

Due to open admission policies, and the resulting substantial remedial programs, courses at the Associate in Arts level "are being watered down to accommodate limited academic abilities" (Prager, 1993, p.39). This leveling down of course content, expectations and requirements resulted from the meeting of nontraditional students with a traditional faculty, ill-

prepared for the task of teaching this population. What developed was that the faculty were unable to improve student skills enough to meet their traditional expectations, and they re-negotiated with students regarding classroom relations, academic norms, and intellectual practices (McGrath & Spear, 1991; Richardson et al., 1983). Community college courses are no longer taught with the same attention to theory and detail found in the university (Eaton, 1988). When instructors lessen their expectations, or lower their standards via lectures; they demand less literate behavior from the students by replacing term papers and essays with multiple-choice exams. The norms of literate activity gradually dip as the rigor of academic work is negotiated away. When one has students who are mostly "requirement meeters" and specific or nonspecific information users versus faculty whose goals are information disseminators the response will be the watering down of requirements (McGrath & Spear, 1991).

University faculty contend that many community college courses, though similar in the catalog description, lack the depth and breadth of subject matter taught in the first two years of a baccalaureate institution (Prager, 1993). Faculty at the four-year institutions feel that they have no effective way to judge quality of courses or curricula at community colleges (Prager, 1993). They perceive that individual community college faculty modify courses so that the courses come to bear little resemblance to official catalog descriptions (McGrath & Spear,

1991). Faculty in four-year institutions want control over the nature and quality of the courses that satisfy various degree requirements (Knoell, 1991).

For more than a quarter of a century, even students of the community colleges have deplored the decline in quality (Prager, 1993). Qualified students who wish to earn legitimate college and occupational credentials are handicapped by college-level courses that are taught at less-demanding levels in order to accommodate under-qualified students (Deegan & Tillary, 1985).

Identity or image remains one of the most serious concerns of community college educators--a concern that has been with them almost from the beginning (Cohen & Brawer, 1989). It is necessary for community colleges to stress quality as well as access. Unless community colleges offer quality education, the promise of access is empty (Raisman, 1993). Community colleges need guidelines to improve--recognized reference points in an attempt to verify the quality of the education they provide (Eaton, 1988; Cohen & Brawer, 1989; Deegan & Tillary, 1985).

#### Transfer Rates

How many students transfer from community colleges to four-year institutions? While this is a straightforward question, the answer is not. This section will reveal the increase in and the impact of the numbers of transfer students and it will show some of the complications involved in determining these numbers. The biggest obstacle to defining a transfer rate is first creating an

accepted definition of a transfer student. Is completion of a certain number of courses or an associate's degree the chief criteria? Should only full-time students be considered or should the definition include the part-time student who takes a few courses and then transfers? Perhaps time spent at a college is a factor. Certainly, a transfer student is one who attends a community college for two consecutive years, but what of the student who attends a community college for a year, stops and works two years, and then enrolls at a university? Perhaps first enrollment matters, but this excludes the student who attends a university for a semester before dropping out, attends and graduates from a two-year college, and then returns to the university. On the other hand, intention may be a key. If an entering student states that his or her educational goal is a bachelor's degree someday, is the student considered on a transfer-track even if that student enrolls in technical courses?

As might be expected, the rates of transfer vary widely depending on the definition of a transfer student. In one sample, if total headcount at a community college was used in calculating the transfer rate, the figure would be anemic 3%. However, if the definition of a transfer student was limited to first-time, full-time students enrolled in college transfer courses, the transfer rate would climb to 59% (Palmer, 1986, p. 104).

"Questions about the colleges' success in providing eventual access to the baccalaureate have been raised for 75

years...."Cohen wrote (1992, p.33), concluding that "these issues have never been resolved satisfactorily". McIntyre states (1987, p. 14), "Transfer education is one of the most important, most criticized, and most difficult to measure of the functions performed by community colleges." Finally, Barkley admits to "...an increasing realization that it is virtually impossible to compare the transfer success..due to lack of a consistent definition of the transfer student and lack of a consistently used formula to arrive at transfer rates" (1993, p.39).

Nevertheless, in this period of accountability, a growing effort has emerged to adopt a uniform definition of a transfer student so that national data may be collected. To this end, the Ford Foundation agreed in 1989 to fund a multi-year Transfer Assembly Project directed by the Center for the Study of Community Colleges to stabilize a definition and collect data on transfer to four-year institutions (Cohen, 1992). Criteria for the definition were that it (a) be simple and clear and (b) utilize existing data at community colleges and universities. The following definition emerged: A transfer student is one who begins his or her college work at a community college, and earns a minimum of 12 semester credits within four years.

A total of 240 colleges whose student population included at least 20% ethnic minorities were invited to participate in the study, and the entire community college systems in California, Texas, and Illinois were among those who did. Following the enrollment of 269,000 students in 1984 through 1988, researchers

discovered that roughly half of them received 12 or more credits within four years and roughly one-fourth of those transferred to a four-year institution within four years.

Of note is the fact that these researchers chose not to limit their definition to students enrolled in college transfer courses nor to those who listed "college transfer" as their primary reason for attending the community college. Cohen (1992) defended this decision by stating that many students who enroll in community colleges decide to transfer after enrolling and that many technical and vocational students also transfer. He defends the decision of including only first-time college students instead of students with some prior college experience, explaining that part of the researchers' intention was to estimate the community colleges' impact on new students.

As with any definition, this one has elements open to question, and one is its exclusion of students with previous college experience. Increasingly, evidence exists to suggest that community college students are very mobile and may attend two colleges concurrently or several sequentially (Barkley, 1993). This newly recognized phenomenon has been named "swirling," and omission of these students from a study of those transferring would affect the results. A study of community college students in the San Francisco area revealed that 57% had attended at least two colleges. In another study, 16% of students at one Arizona community college had previously attended another community college (Barkley, 1993).

A number of organizations including the American Association of Community Colleges has endorsed the definition of a transfer student proposed by the Transfer Assembly Project, but acceptance is not universal. UNC-GA defines community college transfer students as those who enroll in public four-year institutions in the summer or fall and whose last courses for which they receive transfer credit are from a community college. While this definition does include students who "swirl," it also has shortcomings. It excludes students who enroll in the spring and students who are studying at two institutions concurrently. Neither does the definition consider the number of credits completed nor the amount of time between leaving one institution and enrolling at another. Thus, a student who completes two years of study at a community college, takes one course at a UNC institution, and then enrolls full-time at that institution is not considered a transfer student while a student who transfers one community college course completed 10 years ago is.

Another way to identify transfer rates is by looking at a student's intent upon entering a community college, but even these data are inconclusive. Nationwide, an estimated 75-80% of community college students say that a baccalaureate is the highest level of education they hope to obtain; But, when asked their primary reason for enrolling at the present time, one-third respond "transfer" (Cohen & Brawer, 1987). Percentages are lower for both categories among community college students in North Carolina (Shearon et al., 1990).

Despite the various inconsistencies, some agreement is emerging on the identification of a transfer rate, albeit within broad parameters. The Transfer Assembly Project concluded that the national transfer rate of all first-time students who earn at least 12 credits at a community college and transfer to a university within four years is between 22.1 and 23.7% (Bourque, 1994). However, a research associate at the center which conducted the study noted:

While the national rate remains around 22%, this rate does not reveal the many differences between institutions and states... While most of the states with comprehensive community college systems have transfer rates that fall closely in line with the 22% national rate, the most recent state transfer rates ranged from 13% to 40%. The state with transfer rate at the low end of the continuum was made up of community colleges that are mainly vocational and technical institutions (Hirose, 1994, pp. 66-67).

The North Carolina transfer rate, calculated using the definition of the Transfer Assembly Project except for the exclusion of spring transfers, is 15.6% (R.F. Hill, Jr., personal communication to A.M. Cohen, November 18, 1992).

Grubb (1991) determined that 29% of 1972 high school seniors from the national study on high school seniors who enrolled in community colleges transferred while 20% did in 1980. Another research team looked at 1980 high school seniors and concluded that 24% transferred after studying at a community college

(Palmer, 1986). Like the Transfer Assembly Project, these studies included all high school graduates who enrolled in community colleges, regardless of program or expressed intent to transfer. When only those who aspired to a bachelor's degree upon entering a community college were considered, the transfer rate rose to 34% for the class of 1980 and 46% for the class of 1981 (Grubb, 1972).

Regardless of how transfer students are identified, Cohen and Brawer claimed that "it is likely that any numbers that are used understate the magnitude of transfer because of the data that are missing" (1987, p.92). The reason they cite for this incompleteness is the lack of incentive at both sending and receiving institutions. Funding is not based on transfer rates.

#### Transfer Issues

The widespread lack of clarity about the requirements and standards of college-level course work affects the transfer of college credit. Even within the same state system of higher education, courses that transfer to one institution, may not be acceptable for transfer to another. Though cases exist where the reasons are not obvious, little recourse is available for the sending institution or the student. This situation exists even though the institutions involved are accredited by the same accrediting body.

Noncompliance in transfer often occurs because four-year colleges believe community college course work is not college

level (Dougherty, 1991; Mellander & Robertson, 1992; Richardson & Bender, 1986). In addition, four-year colleges are uncertain about what is to be required of those community college students who apply for advanced standing, especially those students who did not meet the four-year requirements on graduation from high school (Knoell, 1991; Palmer, 1986).

Community colleges use college parallel, college transfer, and college equivalent, to describe their academic programs. However these programs are described by the community colleges, many four-year colleges are reluctant to take community college transfers, accepting them only if it is not possible to fill their classes with their own freshmen as they proceed to the sophomore and junior year (Dougherty, 1992). According to Prager (1993), when students do transfer, their lower-division credits are less often recognized by senior colleges. Students lose credit because four-year colleges demand course equation rather than course comparability based on learning outcomes. He continues explaining that four-year colleges routinely refuse credit for community college courses that have no counterpart in their curriculum, such as many vocational education courses. Moreover, four-year colleges often deny credit to courses that they consider as belonging in the upper division. Four-year colleges often give no credit, or only partial credit, for community college courses for which a student received a "D," although four-year native students are not so penalized (Dougherty, 1992). Community colleges have been criticized for

making little effort to ensure that their transfer courses parallel university courses in credit hours, rigor, course sequencing, and prerequisites.

Each course has a cost for the state and, at many community colleges, for local jurisdictions as well. When students have to earn the same credits twice, the public pays for those courses twice. One promising method of resolving transfer problems is statewide agreement by faculty in various disciplines as to the lower-division requirements in various discipline areas. Established standards and criteria could serve as guidelines for public institutions as they evaluate courses intended for transfer. The North Carolina joint committee of community colleges and four-year institutions has designated an intersegmental study group to develop the definitions, agreements and policies necessary to implement transfer policy statewide. Dougherty (1992) argues that a discussion is needed as to why courses do not transfer; it is his opinion that it is due to lower standards and expectations at the community college. Those who call for higher standards in community colleges include Taylor and Rendon (1991), McGrath and Spear (1991), Grubb, (1992), and Dougherty, (1991). Even where two-year colleges are branches of four-year institutions, transfer is difficult because senior faculty are uncertain about the abilities of two-year students to complete four-year programs (Prager, 1993). Developing more coherent guidelines to serve the large number of transfer students who expect and deserve to continue their

education is essential (Prager, 1993). Prager goes on to question how long institutions can continue to ignore course work already completed in a two-year program in the current era of rising costs to higher education consumers (1993).

For more than a quarter of a century, students of the community college have deplored the decline in quality and quantity of community college transfers to senior institutions (Prager 1993). A successful transfer function depends less on what specific courses students take than on the strength of the classroom and the closeness of the fit between the academic cultures of the community college and that of the university (McGrath & Spear, 1991). Transfer is tied to the large issues surrounding higher education in the United States. The renewed emphasis on transfer challenges institutional assumptions and values (Palmer, 1986). Transfer is a function of teaching and learning and not simply a procedural matter dealing with program articulation and credit transfer. Two- and four-year colleges need to look at ways curricula, pedagogy, and academic standards shape transfer opportunities for community college students (Palmer, 1986).

The reason for grade shock upon transfer is the tougher standards of the four-year colleges (Dougherty, 1992). Poor preparation at the community college compounds this problem (Dougherty, 1992). In addition, transfer shock due to differing academic cultures is one of the reasons for the low degree completion rate of community college transfer students (Townsend,

1993). Over the years, university parallel courses at the community colleges have become weaker with the central concern being course matching (McGrath & Spear, 1991). The trend at community colleges toward less than college-level instruction has accelerated and the expectations in collegiate courses have changed (Cohen & Brawer, 1989). The success of the community colleges in enrolling large numbers of non-traditional students has affected what they offer (Cohen & Brawer, 1991).

Demographic changes and the increased cost of higher education have caused senior institutions to become increasingly dependent on community college transfer students. In many cases, more than half of the senior class of a four-year colleges began their college work in community colleges (Melander & Robertson, 1992). Issues of transferability of course work and transfer student preparedness to do upper-level four-year college work are becoming increasingly important.

While all of higher education would benefit from guidelines for college-level course work, such guidelines are particularly important for community colleges because of their image as less than college-level academic institutions. The lack of coherence in higher education in general makes it difficult for community colleges to utilize any criteria in the development of their curricula and to counter the questions raised about the academic level of their course work. According to the Chronicle of Higher Education (1993), 1,480 two-year colleges existed with 5,404,815 students in attendance at the publicly supported two-year

colleges. Approximately 20 to 22% (Cohen, 1993; Hull, 1993) of community college students transfer to four-year institutions with the intent of completing a baccalaureate degree. These numbers indicate that transfer is of great importance on the community college campus. Transfer is important because the community colleges serve as the point of first entry into higher education for many people who would not otherwise be able to attend college. More than one third of the people begin college in the U.S. at a community college and the figures are much higher for members of minority groups. These institutions are an essential component of a democratic system of higher education--one that seeks to acculturate the citizenry and to make opportunity for further education available to all (Cohen, 1984; testimony before California Post-secondary Education Commission). To facilitate the success of transferring students, two-year community colleges have an obligation to ensure that students receive collegiate-level instruction (Eaton, 1988).

Eaton, (1988) cites Bender and Richardson's study which indicates that the fundamental difference between two-and four-year institutions involves faculty and administrator's attitude about the importance of knowledge standards, and the academic experience itself. This difference has important consequences because pedagogy may affect the college level of a course. (Cohen, 1987; Eaton, 1994; Rudolph, 1977; McGrath & Spear, 1991). In this section this researcher emphasized some of the critical issues associated with transferring from the community college.

### College Level

This study focuses on developing a clear description of expectencies of college-level course work. The academic reputation of an institution is integral to the perception other academics have of its course work.

What is meant by college-level is ill-defined and varies considerably from college to college (Carnegie, 1987). However, references to college-level course work do appear scattered throughout the literature (Adelman, 1986; Cohen 1987; Eaton, 1994; McGarh & Spear, 1991; Richardson et al, 1983 ; Willingham, 1977).

According to Ferguson, Vice President for Academic Affairs, Bucknell University, (Adelman, 1986), college level learning has much to do with the liberal arts, with the development of the capacity to analyze, problem solve, communicate, and synthesize. Above all, college students must develop the ability to synthesize. High school students can be taught to analyze, but they are more likely to accept the authority of their teachers. College students are at a stage in their personal maturation when analysis for individual understanding is important, but they should also learn to put together the parts of their experience to become mature, independent adults. Emphasizing analysis creates students who are better at pulling things apart than they are at putting things together. "Synthesis is the hardest ability to develop and it relies on a prerequisite breadth of

knowledge acquired through a truly liberal education..."(p. 29).

Bernstein of the Ford Foundation, characterizes college-level learning as those courses that are not offered in most high schools, e.g. logic, anthropology, Latin American history, art history, history in general (not the social studies concepts taught without chronology)," real" economics, political science, and certain forms of math, such as calculus. Each offers a conception of reality. These college courses are taught, or should be taught through original texts, not mediated texts. To know that college-level learning is taking place, true/false and multiple-choice tests should be abolished. Students should be graded on the quality of their thinking. College-level learning is synonymous with continuous and disciplined writing (Adelman, 1986). Writing is essential to college-level learning since it disciplines thinking in a way that speaking does not. Whenever college students study they need to write--when they read, take notes, work problems, and prepare for examinations. Journal writing is encouraged if not required by many college professors. This private writing provides students with a way to think on paper (Cohen, 1993). A fair amount of writing is required in classes beyond note taking and journals. This writing consists of short essays, term papers, lab reports, and essay examinations. Essay writing provides the opportunity to organize bits of knowledge around a central theme. Term papers require the student to gather large amounts of knowledge into one document. Laboratory reports require the student to think about

the experiment and draw conclusions. In college writing, students gather information, process it in their minds, and transmit it to the written.

College-level learning is also about identifying and manipulating theories, concepts, and abstractions. This type of learning should require in-dept involvement with the reality of a culture different from one's own, including the historical, geographical, language, gender, class, and race perspective (Adelman, 1986).

Employers would like college graduates to have the ability to communicate, to analyze situations, and to identify alternative solutions, as well as have the human relations skills necessary to deal effectively and maturely with other employees and customer (Adelman, 1986).

While no group of educators can agree on what must be known by everyone, Cohen (1992) states that minimum standards, specific objectives, and enforced prerequisites in [community college] curricula can be sustained. Many local and state policy makers are beginning to suggest that such sequences will be enforced if not done voluntarily, and as a result community colleges will gradually but steadily gain additional approbation and respect from their constituents (Cohen, 1992).

An academic culture values reasoned inquiry and principled dispute (McGrath & Spear, 1991). Abstract reasoning is necessary as well as the ability to handle ideas and language well. Reading and writing is a matter of mastering semantic, syntactic

and orthographic correctness (McGrath & Spear, 1991). These skills are prerequisite to college-level learning. Critical reading and writing skills distinguish the educated and educable from the undereducated and functionally illiterate (Richardson et al., 1983). College level does not have to mean liberal arts, but that course content and level of intellectual challenge need to be present (Eaton, 1994). Cohen, (1987) in discussing liberal arts, states that it "forms the core of the curricular canon, a body of rule as strict and authoritative as any dogma set down by a church or government". In the liberal arts, much derives from the doctrine of contemplation. Rigor, expectation, and pedagogy are critical aspects of academic culture (McGrath & Spear, 1991). Most college instructors "believe in the value of a liberal education" (McGrath & Spear, 1991). The word liberal is a reference to the ability of education to free your mind. "The goal of a liberal education is to free you from biases, superstitions, prejudices, and lack of knowledge that characterized you before you came to college" (p. 65). "To free you of these restraints it may be necessary to provoke, challenge, and disturb you by presenting you with new ideas, beliefs, and values that differ from your previous perspectives" (McGrath & Spear, 1991).

Math and the hard sciences have rigidly structured disciplines, and they appear the safest from decline in cognitive level (McGrath & Spear, 1991). One test of the level of a course is the degree to which it makes intellectual

demands of its students; college-level courses teach reflection and use of intellect (Cohen, 1991). According to the American Council on Education, in college-level courses the emphasis is on learning basic principles that have broad judgmental applications. College-level courses generally involve specialization of a theoretical or analytical nature beyond the introductory level. Practices regarding collegiate level are writing, perfecting research, and problem solving, and pursuing subject matter outside the educational or career goal (Eaton, 1988). Several higher education discipline associations have developed criteria for their college-level course work. These professional organizations generally indicate what courses should be offered, the sequence of courses, and the topics that should be covered in each. In all, 38 learned societies were surveyed by the Carnegie Council on Policy Studies in Higher Education in 1975, with the main concern surfacing being how their discipline is taught (Carnegie, 1977).

Three characteristics are often considered important in defining college-level course work. College learning should imply a conceptual as well as practical grasp of the knowledge or competencies acquired; should be applicable outside the specific context in which it was acquired; and should fall within the domain usually considered degree credit (Willingham, 1977). Learning can be justified as college level by (a) relating learning to subject areas traditionally taught in colleges, (b) showing that it is at a level of achievement equal to what is

normal in college; (c) comparing specific learning to that acquired in college-level work; and (d) identifying learning as that acquired after high school and expected for professional acceptance (Willingham, 1977). Workshops, independent research projects, giving class presentations, taking essay exams, having class papers critiqued by professors, use of personal computers, frequent student-student interaction, seem to be associated to favorable cognitive outcomes. Finding ways to encourage such activities will substantially enhance student learning (Astin, 1993, p. 424).

This section serves to help to verify how ill defined this area called college-level really is. Pointed out are some scattered references to the term that were found as the researcher did the review of the literature. These references clearly demonstrate the need for a working definition of college-level course work, one of the purposes of this study.

#### Summary

This literature review has covered the growth and evolution of the two-year colleges providing insight into the development of the community college as an institution. A description of the two-year college student and the transfer student were provided to give a picture of the students attending community colleges. Further, the academic standards in higher education were expanded and related the performance of community college students after transfer to four-year institutions . Rates of transfer of these

students as they impact on higher education were then addressed. Issues that have surfaced as a result of this student movement were examined. Finally, literature that speaks to college-level work was summerized.