Student Attitudes about Class Absences, Class Attendance, and Requiring Attendance at Virginia Tech

by

Annmarie Long Hileman

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APPROVED:

Don G. Creamer, Chairperson

John A. Muffo

Steven M. Janosik

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STUDENT ATTITUDES ABOUT CLASS ABSENCES, CLASS ATTENDANCE, AND REQUIRING ATTENDANCE AT VIRGINIA TECH

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Annmarie Long Mileman

Committee Chairperson: Don G. Creamer
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(ABSTRACT)

Seventy-nine undergraduate students were interviewed in February, 1992, to determine attitudes about class attendance, class absences, and required attendance. Three hundred undergraduates were selected in a random sample; seventy-nine attended one of the six group interview sessions.

The reasons students gave for skipping classes included being lazy or tired, dislike of the professor, material for the class was seen as unimportant, bad or nice weather, early morning or late afternoon and evening classes (too tired), or having other things to do (sometimes work for another class). Class size also was discussed as having impact on skipping.
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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

Recently, faculty at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University (commonly known as Virginia Tech) have complained that student absences are increasing. Informal talks with undergraduate students on campus have more than confirmed these remarks from faculty. Students often have other priorities that compete with attending classes for which they are registered. Outside employment, as well as personal, social, and extracurricular activities all take a significant portion of students' time.

There is a limited amount of research available on the subject of absenteeism at the post-secondary school level. Much of the research on absenteeism focuses on elementary and secondary schools or on absenteeism in the workplace. Thus, research is needed to learn about the reasons for absences, the attitudes that students have about missing class, and what can be done to influence students about the importance that faculty and the administration place on class attendance. This exploratory study sought to provide insight into the problem at Virginia Tech.
Statement of the Problem

The problem addressed here is that of class absences among undergraduate students. Specifically, this study summarizes attitudes among undergraduate students at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University about class absences. In addition, it explores students' attitudes toward a mandatory attendance policy.

In the past, many institutions of higher education required attendance at all classes for which the student was registered. After examining the attendance policies of institutions most closely like Virginia Tech, it is clear that such policies are no longer used. Today, although attendance is encouraged, there are often no penalties for absenteeism.

The issue of absenteeism is important at the college level. Higher education is becoming increasingly expensive; thus, the student, the student's family, or perhaps even the government (if the student attended a state institution or received financial aid) is paying for students' education. An important component of students' education occurs in the classroom or as a result of the classroom
experience. Students who choose not to attend classes may miss a significant opportunity to learn.

Additionally, in an era of difficult economic times and budget cuts at many colleges and universities, the number of courses available to students may be limited. Students who want a course may have to wait for it. Enrollments are often limited for courses heavily in demand, forcing some students to remain in school longer to get necessary courses for a major. In this case, absences cheat other students out of opportunities. A student who has registered for a course but does not attend denies an opportunity for the student who could not get in and would have attended regularly.

Purpose of the Study

This study was funded by the Virginia Tech Office of Program Review and Outcomes Assessment. The purpose of this study was to discover and explore the reasons that undergraduate students at Virginia Tech have for skipping classes and the attitudes behind that behavior. It was hoped that a better understanding of why students skip classes would provide a better idea of how to change the behavior. Therefore, a second
goal of the study was to find possible ways to improve attendance. Recommendations for academic policy will be made based on the findings.

The question that guided the research was the following. What are the attitudes of Virginia Tech undergraduate students about attending class, skipping class, and institutional policies relevant to class attendance?

While information on absenteeism in elementary and secondary school levels and on absences at the workplace are plentiful, there is a shortage of current information on the subject of absences at the college level. More current information is needed on the problem. This study summarizes the available literature on class absences and attendance at the college level.

Definition of Terms

The following terms and definitions are provided for use in this study.

Class absences

Class absences were defined as any time a student does not attend a class for which he or she is officially registered. A legitimate excuse has been
defined as an illness, a job interview, or a death in the family. This study focused on absences that were not legitimate.

** Skipping **

Skipping a class is an absence for which the student has no legitimate excuse. Thus, skipping occurred when the absences was not for legitimate reasons.

** Organization of the Report **

This first chapter serves as a general introduction to the problem of class absences at the college level. Furthermore, it provides relevant information about the components of the study. Chapter two provides a review of relevant literature related to class absences and attendance from as far back as the 1930s. The third chapter focuses on methodology used for the study. Chapter four reports on the results and findings of the study. Chapter five includes a summary and discussion of the findings. Implications of the findings, as well as the limitations of the study, are also included in Chapter five.
CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

After examining the literature on absence and attendance, it is evident that there is a wealth of research about absenteeism at work and in the elementary and secondary school levels. Little published research exists, however, on absences in colleges and universities. One possible reason for this may be that attendance is rarely required at the college level. Therefore, attendance records are not kept, making research not only difficult, but irrelevant to many.

Variation is seen among the studies in the literature. Much of the information that does exist on college and university absenteeism is from the period of the 1930s through the 1950s, when colleges frequently required class attendance and had strict penalties for those students who failed to attend class. Many of these early pieces were not truly research, however. Instead, they were commentaries on the attendance policies at the institutions where the authors were employed.
There was a lapse in research on college class absences and attendance in the 1960s and again in the early to mid 1980s. Today, the problem is once again being studied (Craig, 1990; Janosik, 1992). The emphasis of the studies has shifted away from examining policies. Instead, studies now focus on students and their reasons for skipping classes. The question of whether or not academic performance is affected by skipping classes remains unanswered.

Link Between Class Attendance and Academic Performance

Numerous researchers have studied the relationship between class attendance (or lack of it) and academic performance (Anikeef, 1954; Chappell, 1930; Craig, 1990; Jenne, 1973; Jensen, 1951; Jones, 1931; Siciliano, 1978). The findings have been mixed.

Several studies have found that, in general, students with more absences were likely to have a slightly lower than average grade point average (GPA) than were students with fewer absences (Anikeef, 1954; Chappell, 1930; Craig, 1990; Jones, 1931; and Siciliano, 1978). In one study, however, it was concluded that absences had no significant effect on student achievement (Jensen, 1954).
Two articles written on the attendance policy of the Iowa State Teachers College (Lambert, Kadesch & Erbe, 1938; Nelson, 1937) described the implications of the school's optional attendance policy that was newly implemented at the time. The findings of the two studies were similar. No significant differences in academic achievement were found immediately after the mandatory attendance policy was changed to a policy that allowed the student to decide whether or not to attend classes (Lambert, et al., 1938; Nelson, 1937). However, Lambert, et al. (1938) recommended that the optional attendance policy be used only after the freshman year and that class attendance be required on the first and last five days of classes of each semester.

An optional attendance policy at a women's college in Alabama worked well for most students when initially studied (Clifton, 1941). Although attendance was no longer mandated, some improvement was seen in class attendance. Students who failed to keep up their grade point average were put back under the previous mandatory attendance policy.
In a study of nearly 300 undergraduates, both mandatory and optional attendance policies were examined (Baum & Youngblood, 1975). Requiring attendance not only increased attendance, but also increased academic performance and maintained students' satisfaction with the course and its material.

Some controversy exists over using mandatory attendance or punitive methods for regulating attendance, which have been said to offend some students (Black, 1952; Siciliano, 1978). In a study of reward and punishment methods for controlling absenteeism, attendance was slightly higher when a reward system was used (Beaulieu, 1985). However, the findings were not statistically significant at the .05 level (Beaulieu, 1985). Rewarding students for attendance at class was studied again more recently; this time, statistical significance was found at the .05 level (Hansen, 1990). Attendance was significantly higher under the system that rewarded students for their attendance, as opposed to a neutral system that neither punished them for absences, nor rewarded attendance (Hansen, 1990).
Differences between students’ academic performance in classes that used attendance in grading and classes that did not were investigated (Hovell, Williams, & Semb, 1979). Not surprisingly, when attendance was required and used in the computation of grades, increased attendance resulted when compared with the attendance before the new policy. Several recommendations were made based on their findings. It was suggested that attendance be required and that frequent opportunities for grades be given so students will have further incentive to come to class. One example of such an opportunity would be to give weekly quizzes or examinations in class. However, it also was noted that decreased attendance may occur when there is no opportunity to earn points (or take a quiz or examination) (Hovell, et al., 1979).

Reasons for Skipping Class

Finding out the reasons for students’ absences was the goal of some research. The five reasons most often cited by students for skipping classes were boredom, an off campus job, dislike of the professor, failure to see any benefit from attending, and nice weather (Galichon & Friedman, 1985).
A slight gender difference was found when the reasons for absences were examined (Kalab, 1990). Women were more likely than men to claim that they were absent due to sickness; men were more likely to say they were absent due to other class assignments. The excuses of oversleep, accidents, being lazy, or being drunk did not vary significantly by gender.

Who is More Likely to Skip Class?

Knowing the profile of the student who is more likely to skip class may assist in solving the problem. Students who felt that school had little influence on their future, had a high need to socialize, were less involved in campus activities and organizations, or who used alcohol or other drugs were more likely to skip class (Galichon & Friedman, 1985).

Similarly, findings showed that students who lived in a residence hall or apartment (as opposed to living with parents), students who used marijuana or frequently went to bars, and students who found the curriculum uninteresting, or those students who were sophomores and juniors were more likely to skip class (Kowalewski, Holstein, & Schneider, 1989).
Strategies for Improving Attendance

Knowing only why students miss class does not solve the problem. Instead, it is necessary to learn how to improve the attendance of students. Five possible strategies for improving attendance were summarized by Craig (1990). These strategies included using punitive methods, a counseling model, altering teaching styles to meet the needs of the students enrolled in the class, taking attendance regularly, and conveying to the students the penalties for excessive class absences (Craig, 1990).

One professor's attempt to reduce absences actually violated policy. Institutional policy limited the number of classes that freshmen could skip; upperclass students were allowed any number of absences without penalty. The policy was ignored, and a new rule was implemented in one professor's English classes that permitted absolutely no unexcused absences. Surprisingly, few complaints were made by the students in the classes (Brown, 1987).

Following the restriction on absences, higher academic performance, higher morale, improved class discussions, and fewer missed assignments and quizzes
were observed (Brown, 1987). Little additional work was required to maintain the policy (Brown, 1987). A few notes and telephone calls were made to students who missed class, and several students were advised to drop the class (Brown, 1987).

An Alternative to Class Attendance

An alternative teaching program called "elective class participation" sought to avoid the issue of class attendance (Wientage, Gaffney, & DuBois, 1970, p. 44). The program did not emphasize class attendance; instead, it required students to attend only the first class and the final exam (Wientage, et al., 1970). Work could be done in small groups or independently; thus, students could work at their own pace (Wientage, et al., 1970). Students enrolled in the program were older than the traditional college student age and often had family and job responsibilities in addition to school.

No significant differences were found between the academic performance of the students who participated in the experimental program and those who were enrolled in the course taught in the traditional classroom setting. Students were mixed in their reactions to the
effectiveness of the experimental teaching method; about half said they would participate in a similar program again, while the other half preferred the traditional classroom setting.

Attendance Policies at Colleges in the United States

Lotz (1954) surveyed 300 college catalogs to learn about attendance policies at various institutions; little uniformity in attendance policies was found among types of institutions. One might have expected that the policies of liberal arts colleges or those at research universities would be similar. Three items that affected the success of an attendance policy were discussed—faculty attitudes, students, and class size (Lotz, 1954).

Types of Attendance Policies

Four types of attendance policies were found in the literature (Wolff, 1954). These included "the No-Cut System, the Cut-Allowance System, the Unlimited Cut System, and the Multiple System" (p. 253). The "no-cut" policy was the most restrictive, allowing no unexcused absences (p. 253). The "cut allowance" system allowed the student a designated number of unexcused absences without penalty. The least
restrictive type of policy, "the multiple system" did not penalize students for unexcused absences, and it allowed the individual instructor or department to set a policy on class absences (Wolff, 1954, p. 253).

As part of the review of literature, university policies on attendance were examined using college catalogs on microfiche available from the Career Guidance Foundation (1991). The attendance policies of 14 institutions similar to Virginia Tech were examined. These institutions were seen as similar to Virginia Tech because, like Virginia Tech, all were research universities. Of the 14 institutions studied, eight had policies concerning attendance in their catalog and two listed the name of a separate book of policies for students. There was considerable variation in the policies. There were institutions that required attendance for all students and those that had no policy on attendance. There were also institutions that required attendance for freshmen or only in laboratory courses, while others allowed instructors to set their own attendance policy.
Costs of Absenteeism

In addition to academic problems associated with absences, there are other problems to be addressed. One researcher claimed that state universities cannot financially afford to allow students to skip class. A method for charging students for unexcused absences was discussed (Street, 1975). The number of unexcused absences may decline if students were charged for each absence.

Simple reasoning also finds that students who skip classes for which enrollment is limited are cheating the students who could not get into the class. It is frustrating to be denied entry into a class when other students choose not to attend it.

Other Burdens of Absences

At institutions that regulate attendance, once a student is absent, a determination must be made about the legitimacy of the absence. Many institutions allow students to make up the work that was missed during an excused absence. However, it is necessary to determine a fair procedure for the times that students miss class on a day that an examination was given.
There is a procedure that can be used to assign grades to students who are absent for legitimate reasons (Adams, 1989). Using this system, however, requires that the professor or dean investigate all student excuses to determine their legitimacy (Adams, 1989). This may involve more work than the professor or dean wishes to give, and it also requires a knowledge of basic statistical procedures (to actually compute the score for the missed examination) (Adams, 1989).

Conclusion

Brown (1987) claimed that the reason students cut class is because it is permitted. This appears to be true at many institutions. Galichon and Friedman (1985) cited boredom as the number one reason that students skip classes. Perhaps faculty need to use a variety of teaching methods in the classroom to keep the interest of the students. Perhaps the students need to be more committed to their own education. Perhaps it is time to rethink the importance of class attendance. Can we afford not to?

Several question remain. When do students perceive class attendance is important? What makes
students more likely to attend classes? One final question also remains. Do students perceive any relationship between academic performance and class attendance?
CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

Subjects

A random sample of 300 undergraduate students who were enrolled at Virginia Tech was taken in late January, 1992. Virginia Tech, as it is commonly called, was comprised of approximately 23,000 students during the Spring Semester, 1992.

A letter was sent to the Human Subjects Committee in February to obtain an exemption from their procedures. The reason for the exemption was that no names would be attached to the data. An exemption was granted by the committee (See Appendix A).

Letters were mailed to the selected students the first week of February, 1992. This letter briefly explained the purpose and the methodology of the study. The letter also asked for their participation in the study, which focused on class attendance and class absences at the university (see Appendix B).

Focus group interviews were conducted at Virginia Tech. Focus group interviews are a form of qualitative research. They are comprised of small groups of people, who focus their attention on a specific topic
(in this case class attendance and class absences). This method was used to get the students' perceptions in a non-threatening manner. Students sat around a table and talked freely about their opinions.

The interviews occurred on a Friday, Monday, and Tuesday at the end of February. These days were chosen due to the accessibility of the meeting rooms to be used for interviewing. In addition, an attempt was made for the interview days to be close enough together so that it would be unlikely for an event to occur that would interfere with the opinions given during interviews or with outcome of the study.

A 25 percent response rate was the goal for this study. It was anticipated that 75 students, or one out of four who were contacted, would agree to participate and attend an interview session.

Variables

Variables such as age, class year, gender, socioeconomic status (SES), and race were not examined. It was not expected that there would be significant differences in these areas, as the review of the related literature did not show evidence of such differences. Beyond that, it was the reasons that
students skip classes that were important for this study. There may have been differences in the number of classes skipped when examining some or all of the variables listed above. However, no significant differences were expected after an examination was made of the reasons cited in the literature for skipping classes. For this reason, demographic information about the participants was not collected at the interviews.

Preparation of the Researcher

A two-step process was used to prepare the researcher for this study. The first method of preparation involved preparing the researcher to do qualitative research and, more specifically, to do focus group interviews. Research articles and books to read were suggested. Next, a tutorial section was provided on how to perform focus group interviews.

The third step in the preparation was a pilot study performed at a small, private women's college. The pilot study was done under the supervision of the project sponsor, Don G. Creamer.

Six undergraduate women were interviewed in the pilot study group with the purpose of examining the
research questions as well as the manner in which the researcher performed the interview. The purpose of the pilot study was to learn how to conduct focus group interviews and to pull or extract the relevant information from the session. The pilot study was not an attempt to look for similar responses from students, as the college studied here is very different from Virginia Tech. Classes are often very small and some professors require attendance.

The questions asked in the pilot study were not changed for use in the actual study. However, the order in which they were asked differed slightly. A more general question about college was asked first to get the students involved in the group. More specific questions were moved to the middle and end of the list. This allowed students to get comfortable with the group members before revealing more personal information.

Design

Data were collected during six focus group sessions that were held in late February, 1992. Letters asking for participation in the study were mailed at the beginning of February. This letter informed potential participants that they would receive
$10 for their participation in the study. The letter also explained that the information given in the interviews would be used in a study as part of a Master's thesis in the College of Education. This was explained again at the interview sessions. Students were given an opportunity to ask questions about the study at the interview. Students indicated their willingness to participate in the study by returning reply cards over the next two weeks.

Follow-up telephone calls were made to confirm the time, date, and location of the interview. Students were informed that the sessions would last between an hour and an hour and a half. Two-hour time blocks were reserved, however, to allow extra time in the event that it was needed. Students were randomly selected to participate in the study. However, they were permitted to choose to attend any one of the six interview sessions.

Materials

The interview protocol included a series of questions that sought information about how undergraduate students feel about class attendance, the perception of its importance, perceived consequences of
absenteeism, and the reasons for those feelings. Reactions to the idea of a mandatory attendance policy were also solicited. The protocol used is included in Appendix C.

Interview sessions were held in a building located across from the library and near the student center. This building was considered to be a convenient location on campus. One room was used to conduct four of the six sessions; but because it was unavailable for all six, a second, slightly smaller room was used for two sessions. Both rooms were similar in physical layout. Each had a conference table with chairs around it. Additional chairs were set up around the perimeter of the room.

Interview sessions were held at six different times to allow everyone who wanted to attend an opportunity to do so. Sessions were held on Friday, Monday, and Tuesday mornings, midday on Monday and Tuesday, and on Tuesday evening. The largest number of students requested the Tuesday evening session. Although this session was well-attended, it had the highest number of students who said they would attend, but failed to do so. One possible explanation for this
was that the weather was pleasant during the other five
interview sessions but cold and rainy during the
Tuesday night session.

Procedure

Three hundred people, who were enrolled as
undergraduate students at Virginia Tech for the Spring
Semester, 1992, were randomly selected to participate
in the study. Students were identified from the
database of currently enrolled students at the
university. Students who were selected for the study
were mailed a letter describing the study and asking
them to participate.

The students contacted were given a choice of
sessions to attend. Students were told that they were
only permitted to attend one session. A postage-paid
response card was included in the mailing. The
instructions given on the card requested that the
students check off all of the times during which they
were willing to participate and to designate their
first choice session. The students were also asked to
give their name, telephone number, and the best time to
be contacted at that number. The reply cards were
addressed to the researcher in care of the project
sponsor at an academic division at the university (see Appendix B).

Of the 300 letters sent, four were undeliverable by the United States Post Office. Of the 296 students who were reached, three indicated a desire to attend but an inability to make any of the scheduled sessions due to class, work, or other activities. One hundred and twenty-three students returned the reply card and indicated one or more sessions that they were willing to attend.

The names on the reply cards returned were checked with the names on the original list of students invited to participate in the study. Thus, only students who had been selected to participate could actually attend a session.

Follow-up telephone calls were made to confirm participation in one of the group interview sessions. In the event that the selected student was not available when the call was made, a message was left on an answering machine or with a roommate if the he or she offered to take a message. Interestingly, many of the selected students had already discussed the study with their roommates. Several roommates of invited
participants asked how their roommate had been chosen to participate in the study.

Eighteen students could not be reached after several telephone calls. One hundred and five students had agreed to attend one of the six sessions after being contacted by mail and again by telephone. The purpose of the telephone call was to confirm the students' participation in the study. Two students who could not be reached by telephone did attend an interview.

As was explained in the introductory letter, the students were told that they were randomly selected from all undergraduate students enrolled at Virginia Tech to participate in the study. Students were also told that the study was on class attendance and class absences. The students were informed that the results would be used to write a Master's thesis in the College of Education at Virginia Tech. The students who participated in the group interview were reminded of this information at the session. In addition, they were told that their names would not be kept with the data. Names were not connected with the information in the session, and appeared only on the receipts.
(acknowledging receipt of the $10 for participation in the study), which were turned back into the university along with unused funds from the research grant.

Seventy-nine students (44 women and 35 men) attended an interview session. Interview sessions were taped. The subject of class attendance and class absences is not a sensitive one; therefore, taping the interviews was not expected to influence the outcome of the study. Taping the interviews did, however, allow the interviewer to become fully involved with the group while getting an accurate record of all necessary information. More information was saved without the need to quickly take notes or to involve an additional person to take notes.

Another advantage to taping the interviews was also found. Taping was helpful because of the large number of students at each group interview. It was difficult to determine how many students would actually attend the interview sessions. Due to the facilities used for interviewing students, the ideal size for this study was estimated at 10 students. The groups ranged in size from eight to 18. The average group size was
13 students. All six groups had a mixture of men and women.

Each of the six sessions lasted between one hour and one hour and fifteen minutes. However, due to the possibility that the session may have lasted longer, two hour time blocks had been reserved.

Students had been informed that $10 would be given for their participation in the study. The money was given in cash immediately following the interview session. Students were asked to sign a form acknowledging their receipt of the money. The names on the receipts were also checked against the original list of participants. This was a final assurance that only students who were selected for participation had actually participated in the study. Participants were told that these receipts would not be kept with the information collected at the interviews. The receipts were turned back to the university after all interviews were completed.

Following each interview, information from the session was analyzed. This allowed for a comparison of the current interview groups' attitudes with the attitudes of all of the previously interviewed groups.
This process helped to shape the future interviews. The questions asked remained the same for all groups. However, the amount of probing for further information differed among the groups.

After all interviews were completed, information from the six groups were examined for similarities and differences in opinions and attitudes. It was expected that the interviews would yield several categories of explanations for students' lack of attendance. Information from the interviews was summarized and significant quotes from participants will be included in the report of findings.

An attempt was made to explain the essential messages conveyed in the groups. What was deemed as important was frequently determined by the number of groups in which a response was heard. At other times, however, it was the apparent strength of the remark that merited its inclusion in the study. Here, the support of a comment from the group members was examined. Therefore, judgements about what to include in the study were made on the apparent strength of the comments made.
Discussion of Negative Results

Any time the response rate is lower than 100 percent, the potential for negative results exists. As is the case in many studies, the number of students who did not respond to this study was nearly 75 percent. A discussion of the possible impact is explained in the section on limitations in Chapter five.
Chapter 4
RESULTS
Three hundred undergraduates were selected in a random sample of all currently enrolled undergraduates at Virginia Tech. Seventy-nine students actually attended one of the six group interview sessions. The interviews took place during February, 1992. The purpose of the sessions was to determine the students' attitudes toward class attendance and class absences. The interview questions are included in the Appendix.

Conditions that Affect Students' Decisions to Skip Classes
The most common reasons cited for skipping classes included responses within two categories. The two categories emerged after examining the responses from all six sessions. The first category of responses was comprised of short term, temporary, and whimsical responses about why students skip classes. The second category, however, included responses that demonstrated longer term, cognitive justifications about why students skip classes.

Whimsical
This category included responses that were whimsical and reflected short-term thinking.
Approximately 80% of students' responses were in this category. Many of the responses given by the students to the question, "what are your thoughts on attending class?" reflected a lack of perceived importance on the part of the students. Common responses given included the following: "I was just too lazy" and "I just didn't feel like going."

Similarly, numerous students claimed to be too tired to attend class. The ranges of responses here differed, however. "I was just too tired after going out the night before" was a common response, heard by at least a few students in every session. Many followed this up by explaining that this was most commonly felt on Friday mornings. One student explained his typical Thursday night. "Everybody goes out Thursdays. By that time, you're ready for a break. You might plan to have a couple of beers, but somehow you end up drinking a lot more. Then, the alarm goes off at eight [Friday morning] and you just turn it off and roll over." Another student had a similar story. "I go out every Thursday and Friday night. It's the best time to go out and be with all of my friends. I don't drink a lot, but I do stay out late. The next
morning, there's no way I'm up for an eight o'clock class. I'm just too tired. This semester I got smart, though. I refused to take any classes before 10 [a.m.]."

Early morning or late afternoon and evening classes were often said to be the hardest to attend. "I'm just too tired after my day to go to a class that starts at four o'clock," claimed one student. Another student talked about how, as a junior, his attitudes about skipping classes have changed over time. "My first year I skipped all the time. My classes were all spread out. I hated going early in the morning, so I skipped a lot. Now I guess I grew out of it. I got tired of trying to make up the work I had missed in class. My roommates kept skipping, though. For two years, they hardly ever went [to classes] and now neither of them are here anymore."

A few of the students who claimed that they were too tired to attend class had some very different reasons for their behavior. "I work 30 hours a week to stay in school. I usually work nights, so when I have to take an eight o'clock [class], I'm just too tired to
go." In two other sessions, similar responses arose, but students cited job or family responsibilities.

Another commonly cited reason for skipping classes that fits in the whimsical category is the weather. One student claimed "the weather in spring semester is just too nice. It has to be a really good one [class] to make me want to sit inside all afternoon." Many students had similar opinions about why they skipped during nice weather. Another student, however, talked about the weather when conditions were less than favorable. "I hate the cold...and I hate to walk in the snow; the busses get so crowded, so I just stay home. I guess I used it as an excuse, but I never go to classes when it snows."

Another student had a slightly different perspective about snow. "Where I come from, we don't get much snow. My friends skip because they don't want to go out in it, but I confess. I skip because I do. I think the snow is pretty, and I love to play in it." Several students talked about bad weather and rain. One example of this was the student who claimed that the distance from her residence hall room to class kept her from wanting to go. "It's not a bad location,
really, but when it rains, it seems like such a far walk to my class." Similar responses to this were heard in each session. Some students talked about the location of their apartments instead of residence hall rooms, but the message was the same.

Having other things to do that were deemed as more important than class was a frequent claim. "Sometimes I do work for another class, like study for a test, instead of going to one [a class] that I wouldn’t get anything out of. I mean, why not study for a test. That last minute studying might get me a better grade." This theme was common to every session, as studying for a test for another class was preferred on examination day than was attending a different class.

Class size was also mentioned in every session as an important factor. Students claimed to be more likely to skip larger classes where they perceived their absences would not be noticed. Many students said that they felt their absences would go unnoticed in classes of 300 to 600 people.

One student’s story contained the perceptions of a student who was not from the United States and did not understand the lack of interest of American students.
"American students are different. They don't care about being here [in school]. They don't work hard, but they think they do. And there are no consequences for their actions. I came here to American to learn about my major, but also to learn about the people. Well, I don't like what I see. The students here don't care about their education if they don't ever show up for classes."

Cognitive

Approximately 20% of responses given by students were cognitive. This category included the more long-term reasons for skipping class. Only two reasons for skipping classes given by students fit into this category. One such reason that students gave for skipping class was the attitude toward the professor. In every session, this response came up more than any other. Students tended to talk about how they want to attend when they like the professor and prefer not to attend when they dislike the professor. "I want to do better if I like the professor, but I don't go if I don't like the teacher or if it's all in the book. A good professor makes it interesting." Another student felt slightly different. "I'd skip if I could, but you
feel guilty when you don’t go, especially in the upper-level courses when you’re more likely to know the professor."

Some students talked about professors in a more negative manner. "I had this one [professor] that was just impossible. It was a statistics class and he was apparently used to teaching graduate students. One day, he came into the classroom and there was a problem left on the board from another class. It was way over our heads and had nothing to do with what we had been learning, but he still spent half an hour doing the problem. I hated going ever since then, and I skipped a lot." Another student had a slightly different problem with a professor. "He told all of these stupid jokes. Every class started with a story or a joke that he thought was funny. After a couple weeks, they were always about sex. It made me so uncomfortable that I started coming to class late. When that didn’t work, I started to skip." Still another student had this to say. "One of my instructors was so bad that I never went. He was always talking about his research or bringing in guest speakers to teach. I don’t think he could teach anymore, so he talked about his research or
had other people lecture for him. I can’t believe my tuition paid for that! I wasn’t learning anything, so I saw no point in going."

The second reason in this category that students gave for skipping class was that they felt the material for the class was unimportant. Discussions of students centered around classes that were electives. The students explained that the credit was needed for the class, but that the information from the class was of little interest to the student. Essentially, the students felt that the class had little intrinsic value.

Many students talked about how going to class was not worth their time. "I generally go [to class], but of course, I’ll skip if the information is in the book. Sure. You don’t get anything out of going. You just sit there and you don’t get anything out of it. Why bother?"

Other responses

Many responses that did not fit into the categories above were also worth mentioning. Many of these were from students who claim that they rarely skip. The reasons given vary somewhat.
Numerous students talked about skipping more classes as freshmen. "You skip more at first, when you're a freshman and you have so much freedom. Later, you settle down and go more." Comments like that were made in every session, and frequently other upperclassmen would agree. One student claimed that her grades improved after she began attending regularly. "Your grades go up when you start going because you hear it [the material], you write it, and you read it." Other students in the group agreed. Finally, another student spoke of the negative consequences he saw after skipping. "My freshman year, I screwed off so bad. I didn't read or go to class. You just know how to work the system. You want to be here when you're a junior or senior. You learn to want to learn, but you have to pull yourself up."

Other students felt that students who skip do so after trying not to each semester. "You start out going and skip after the first test. When you do well [on the test], you get a little cocky." Another student had an interesting analogy for similar behavior. "People start out with good intentions. It
works like a diet. You start out well, but...something happens, especially if you can get away with it."

Several students discussed the amount of time and money needed to attend the university as a reason to attend class. "I go because I want to get good grades. My parents pay for me to be here, and I don’t want to let them down," explained another. One student who pays for her own education put it this way. "I’m paying so much money to be here. I think when you pay your own way, you care more. I don’t skip much because I want my money’s worth."

Some students attend class because they have a need to get the information. "If you skip one day in my classes, you’re lost! So everyone goes even if it’s dry as toast!" A similar comment was heard in two other sessions, and received strong support from students who were currently or previously enrolled in technical curricula, such as engineering. "The people who don’t skip are the one’s who want to work. A lot of people could get A’s if they’d just try," summarized another student. "When I skip, I spend all of my spare time catching up on what I missed, so I might as well go," concluded another student.
"A cute guy or girl will provide an incentive for people to go to class," mentioned one student. Quickly, several others spoke up. "Women come to school for long-term results--to find husbands; men come school for the short term--to party," claimed one male student. "Yeah, you've heard of the 'pre-wed' major," echoed another male student. Later in the session, he commented, "I guess I'm just as guilty. I'd have never gone to a certain class if this cute girl wasn't in there. I went every day and at the end, I finally asked her out."

Reactions to a Mandatory Attendance Policy

Students felt that they should be responsible for their own behavior and were not in favor of required attendance. Their reactions to the suggestion of a mandatory attendance policy were negative.

Students' feelings and reactions to a mandatory attendance policy were that it would be an insult, that students have the right to skip since they are paying for their schooling. Numerous students felt that requiring attendance would be too much like high school. The difficulty of enforcing a mandatory attendance policy at a large school like Virginia Tech
was also discussed. One student felt that if attendance was required, students would claim to be sick a lot.

The students' responses to the discussion of requiring attendance show that students are opposed to being told to go to class. Not one student supported the idea of a mandatory attendance policy at Virginia Tech. "It's an insult," claimed more than one student. "It's not high school anymore," was another comment expressed by many. The general theme heard was that students are adults and have a strong desire to be treated as adults. One angry student summed up the group's opinions with the comment, "No one should even bother to try to make us go [to class]."

Methods for Regulating Attendance

While many students were opposed to the idea of requiring attendance, others challenged the enforceability of such a regulation. "First of all, it's stupid, but second of all, it would be impossible to enforce." Comments such as this were heard in every session. Another example was one student who felt troubled by the possibility that a college or university would regulate the attendance of its
students. "The school loses nothing by non-attendance. Each student will learn things their own way, so the school shouldn’t care." Discussions of ways to enforce such a required attendance policy arose in the sessions, with responses ranging from realistic to ridiculous.

Sensible

The sensible and realistic responses came from students who were genuinely thinking about how a large university could keep track of class attendance. Several students suggested that the university use the honor code in conjunction with the regulation. One student suggested a way to prove students had attended class in a large class. He suggested that professors pass out paper that could be scanned by a computer each day so that students could submit it back with their social security number.

Unsound

The more unsound comments were far more common. Many students joked about passing out a piece of paper at the beginning of each class so that all students could sign their name. Others joked about asking the
professors to call out roll. "That would take up the whole class period in some classes," one student noted.

One student's idea brought high technology to the classroom. "When you have 500 students, how do you do it [take attendance]? Maybe the university should buy machines that you put your i.d. card through. It could record your social security number and print out a report each day for the professor."

Whether the ideas were seen as good or bad, it was clear that the students were not in favor of requiring attendance. Many students focused not on the manner in which the attendance of students would be monitored, but instead on how the students would avoid the requirement. Many students were afraid that the Student Health Center would face overcrowding. "People would play sick a lot," commented students in every session.

While many students were angry at the idea of requiring attendance, other students were opposed to requiring attendance on the grounds of economic reasons. "We're paying for it [the class, through tuition] and those of us who are out-of-state are really paying for it, so why should they [the faculty
and administration] care?" This and other similar comments were heard in five out of six sessions.

One student was opposed to requiring attendance because she saw some benefit to the lack of attendance of other students. "It's better when some people skip. Class isn't disrupted like in high school when people didn't want to be there. The class seems smaller and you get the attention you need when some people don't come."

Alternatives to Requiring Attendance

Instead of requiring attendance, students mentioned several things professors could do to increase attendance. These methods, which are discussed in the next chapter, can be grouped into two categories--positive methods that encourage or reward attendance and punitive methods to discourage or punish students for absences.

Other Issues

There were numerous other significant issues that came out of the interview sessions. One such issue was a difficulty understanding foreign Teaching Assistants (TAs). Students in every session talked about the frustrations of attending a class or going to a
teaching assistant for help, but feeling discouraged when the TA's English was not understandable.

Difficulties with registration for classes were also discussed in each session. The procedures for the drop/add period were especially criticized by the students. Numerous students claimed that the procedure used to force add a class had no uniformity. For example, one student spoke of a professor who admitted three out of 20 students by pointing to those three randomly. Most of the students felt that seniors should be given priority to add a class that would allow the student to graduate that semester.

Students also expressed a difficulty taking exams in the Squires (Student Center) Colonial Room. According to one student, "the lap desks don't give you enough space to take a math test, where you need the test papers, scrap paper, a calculator, and whatever else." Problems with other classrooms, such as McBride 100 were also discussed in each interview session. According to the students, the classes there are too large, making it difficult to see and hear what is going on in the class.
Other students complained about too many requirements in the Core Curriculum. Instead, the students were in favor of more choice for the student to select courses of interest.

Finally, several students complained that there is a lack of consistency between sections of the same course. One professor may teach one thing, while something very different is taught by another. The students saw a problem here when two students completed the same course, but the amount and the quality of what was learned may differ greatly.

Summary

Little variation was seen among students' comments about their perceived importance for class attendance and the reasons for class absences. Students felt that, as adults, they should be permitted to make their own decisions about whether or not to attend classes. Their reactions to requiring attendance at Virginia Tech were negative.
Chapter 5

DISCUSSION

Summary

Students cited numerous reasons for skipping classes, and were generally not supportive of a mandatory attendance policy. Instead of requiring attendance, students discussed the idea of allowing professors to use other methods to provide incentives to attend class.

As was reported in the literature, students have several reasons for skipping classes. Similar to the reasons given in the literature, in this study, the most common reasons cited for skipping classes included being lazy or tired, dislike of the professor, failure to see any intrinsic value of attending the class (e.g., the material for the class was seen as unimportant), extremely bad or extremely nice weather, early morning or late afternoon and evening classes (too tired), or other things to do (e.g., work for another class).

Class size was also mentioned in every session as important. Students stated that they were more likely to skip larger classes where they perceive their
absences would not be noticed. Many students talked about their Core Curriculum classes. These general courses are often taken by students in their first two years. The students complained that these courses often have large sections, which are comprised of hundreds of students. "How can the professor notice me when I’m one of several hundred students in the class?" one student asked. The students believed that the professors would be thankful to have a few less students; furthermore, they perceived that their absences had no bad consequences. One student seemed to sum up the feelings of many with this comment. "He [the professor] doesn’t know my name, doesn’t notice when I’m gone, so why not skip. What’s the purpose of being there?"

Students did not perceive that attendance was important to most of their professors. Some students felt that their professors preferred when some students skipped so the class would be smaller. Only a few students talked about professors who mentioned the importance of attendance in class or on a syllabus. Attendance may increase if faculty clearly communicated to students the value they place on class attendance.
Many of the reasons that students gave for skipping classes in the whimsical category showed a lack of involvement of students, as well as a lack of concern and maturity related to students' education. The lack of maturity of the students interviewed does not appear to be connected only with class attendance. Students claimed that they deserve to be treated as adults, yet their actions do not always support this desire. Many activities in which students frequently take part, such as excessive drinking and partying, are immature and demonstrate a lack of attention to the consequences of behavior.

The students interviewed gave the impression that without a requirement to attend classes, there was no need to attend. Students explained that their professors would not notice their absences. The attitude here is that class attendance is done only for the professor and not to learn.

One student from Tech's Corp of Cadets explained that there are negative consequences for skipping classes. "The cadets don't skip, because if we do, we get caught." Other students, who are not used to the military-like attitudes were surprised. The students
in the group felt that anyone who skips class should answer only to himself or herself.

Students mentioned several things professors could do to increase attendance, including giving bonus points for regular attendance, giving out questions that will be on the next exam or quiz, varying the format (e.g. discussion instead of lecture only), telling jokes and/or being excited about the material.

Other items mentioned that may improve attendance were giving pop quizzes or homework to be turned in, assigning a percentage of the students' grade for participation or attendance, having an adequate knowledge of the subject, and relating class material to everyday life.

Students were opposed to the idea of a mandatory attendance policy at the college and university level. Whether implemented for freshmen students, students with low grades, or for all students, there was little difference between the sentiments. Students felt that, as adults, they should be free to choose whether or not to attend classes.
Meaning and Importance of the Study

This study has shown the feelings and attitudes toward class attendance, class absences, and a mandatory attendance policy. These attitudes are to be considered when examining current policy if changes are to be made.

Students feel that they are adults and should be treated accordingly. Implementing a mandatory attendance policy without considering these attitudes may reflect negatively on the administration. However, if the goal is to increase attendance, the administration and the faculty should be interested in looking at the students' opinions about how to increase attendance.

The administration and the faculty may be interested to know that students skip classes for reasons such as the weather, laziness, or that there is little importance placed on class attendance when the test material is in the book.

Observations

Little variation existed in the responses given in the groups. Redundancy in responses given in the interview sessions was seen quickly; after just three
sessions, it appeared that no new responses were given. Most of the sessions were similar in the types of responses, the openness of the discussion, and the eagerness to share comments. It was as though old friends were coming together again.

Trust seemed to be established with little effort. Students freely agreed and disagreed with each other. The environment appeared to be supportive of those who disagreed on a particular issue. For example, when one student commented that she thought everyone should attend all classes, another brought up the personal attention she enjoys receiving. "I couldn't get that kind of attention if everyone who was supposed to be there came everyday. No way! When they skip, I take advantage of it."

There was one exception to the good rapport that existed within the groups, however. The fourth session proved to be unique, as the students in this session were far less talkative and needed much more prompting than those in the other five groups. This session was also the shortest, lasting just one hour. In all other sessions, at least two and as many as five students stayed after the session. Some had questions about the
expected findings, some wondered about how the subject was discussed in the literature, and some just wanted to wish good luck on the project. However, after about forty minutes, the students who attended the fourth session appeared to be restless and no one remained after that session.

Implications and Recommendations

The information acquired shows that the opinions and attitudes of the students interviewed are similar to those discussed in the literature. Students do not necessarily see serious negative consequences to skipping classes. Thus, many students skip classes, and do so for a variety of reasons.

The information obtained would be useful when examining the current attendance policy at Virginia Tech, especially if changes in the current policy were being considered by the administration. Faculty at Virginia Tech have complained prior to this study that over the past months, students have been skipping classes more than ever. The results of study would also be useful to help faculty understand the attitudes and opinions of their students.
If a goal is to increase attendance, faculty may be interested in looking at the students' opinions about how to increase attendance. Students mentioned several methods that professors could use to increase student attendance. These methods fall into two categories—positive methods and negative methods.

The first, more popular method involved positive reinforcement for those students who attend class. Methods in this category which would encourage attendance included giving bonus points for those who attend regularly, giving out questions that will be on the next exam or quiz, varying the format of the class (e.g. discussion instead of lecture only), telling jokes and/or being excited about the material, having an adequate knowledge of the subject, and relating class material to everyday life.

The second category involved more punitive or negative sanctions that may discourage skipping class included giving pop quizzes, giving homework that will be graded, and assigning a percentage of the final grade for participation or attendance.

Students generally felt that positive methods to encourage or reward attendance would do more to
stimulate a desire to attend than punishing a student for absences would. Six of the nine popular items named by the students were categorized as positive methods that rewarded or encouraged attendance. Only three items commonly mentioned by students as ways to increase attendance or cut down on absences were categorized as punitive methods. Items that made the list were mentioned in at least four of the six sessions and received support from others when discussed.

Limitations of the Study

There are several limitations of the study that are associated with the research method of interviewing. First, this study was dependant upon the participants of each group coming together with a level of comfort high enough to express diverse views and opinions in the group. This expression of opinions was the key to the participants' involvement and was required for the success of the interview method.

Secondly, a high level of responsibility was placed on the interviewer to establish a comfort level among the participants and to elicit useful responses from all group members. However, due to the
possibility of researcher bias, comments that were actually helpful may have been downplayed or ignored during the session or during the analysis.

Thirdly, it is also possible that the interaction and dynamics of the group caused some of the responses of the group to be overstated or understated by the participants. This behavior could give false data to the researcher. Perhaps the group members withheld information from the researcher. Or, it is possible that the views expressed by participants were not their true beliefs. The behavior of participants is often altered by the known fact that one is being studied.

A final limitation of the study is, perhaps, the most difficult to overcome. Of the 300 students in the sample, 217 chose not to attend an interview session. These students who chose not to respond—nearly 75 percent of the sample, may be those students who are most likely to skip classes. Thus, these students may have had better insights into the problem.

Additional Research at Virginia Tech

Another study on the subject of class attendance was done concurrently with this one at Virginia Tech (Janosik, 1992). This second study was funded, in
part, by the same source at the University. Several differences existed in the methodology of this study. Information was gathered from a larger sample of students. Surveys were used to gather data, and demographic information was collected from participants.

Interestingly, despite the differences between the studies, the reasons given for skipping classes were similar. The most common reasons cited for skipping classes appeared in both studies. These reasons included the attitude toward or opinion about the professor, being lazy, being tired, and doing work for another class. Furthermore, several of the comments given about incentives to attend class also appeared in both studies. These included the time that the class was offered, the skill of the professor, and the size of the class.

Suggestions for Further Study

This study was done at a state university. The state financially assists each resident who attends the university by paying for a portion of his or her education. Numerous students felt that because they were paying for their education, it was their choice to
attend or to skip class. Students did not appear to be aware that the state is also paying a portion of their educational costs. Therefore, it may be helpful to educate students about how much the state actually contributes.

It is also suggested that the topic of class attendance and class absences be studied further at the post-secondary level, as little data exists on this topic in the current literature.

A third recommendation is to study the topic of class absences while looking for differences in the type of institution attended by the students. The pilot study in this project was performed at a small, private women’s college. Here, the discussion was slightly different. Students were often in classes of less than 30 students; thus, the idea of skipping and being unnoticed is impossible. Therefore, it may be interesting to investigate the reasons that students at different types of college skip classes. Furthermore, the number of classes skipped may also differ by college type.

A final recommendation would be to examine the factors that may influence the opinions of
undergraduate students. Such factors include the students' grade point average, academic major, relationships with faculty members, the amount of contact out of the classroom with faculty members, the number of classes skipped, and the number of classes skipped by friends. All of these factors, as well as many others may have an impact on the class attendance and the reasons for class absences of undergraduate students.

Virginia Tech does not currently have a policy on class attendance. If the faculty have a strong desire to increase attendance, adding a policy that would require attendance may appear to be a solution to that problem. However, the students interviewed clearly favored positive methods that would reward them for their attendance instead of negative or punitive methods that punish them for absences.

Allowing professors to use attendance in the computation of grades would make a clear statement from the university that class attendance is desirable, important, and worthwhile. This would allow those professors who wish to increase attendance the ability
to do so by assigning a percentage of the students' grade to attendance.

A statement about the importance of class attendance from the university and again from faculty members may increase attendance. Clearly, the problem of how to take attendance in large classes remains an problem. Furthermore, the issue of students understanding the purpose of class attendance must also be addressed. Students have a strong desire to be in charge of their lives, and they dislike regulations that may overregulate their lives. However, allowing the professors the ability to use attendance would be an important first step.
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Appendices
Appendix A
P.O. Box 9512  
Hollins College  
Roanoke, VA 24020  

February 4, 1992  

Dr. Jim Fortune  
Administrative and Educational Services  
East Eggleston Hall--VPI & SU  
Blacksburg, VA 24061  

Dear Dr. Fortune,  

I am writing to you to request permission to proceed with research for my thesis. I am requesting that the Human Subjects Committee grant me an exemption for my project, as all information will be anonymous. That is, no names will be attached to the data at any point.  

Attached to this letter is a brief description of my project, an explanation of the methods to be used, procedures, and a list of questions to be asked at the interview sessions.  

My committee members are Dr. Don Creamer (Chairperson), Dr. John Muffo, and Dr. Steven Janosik. If you need any additional information, please feel free to contact me at your earliest convenience.  

Sincerely,  

Annmarie Long Hileman
February 12, 1992

TO: Annmarie Long Hileman  
Administrative and Educational Services  
Campus

FROM: E. R. Stout  
Associate Provost for Research

SUBJECT: IRB EXEMPTION / "Attitudes About Class Attendance at Virginia Tech"  
Ref. 92-034

I have reviewed your request to the IRB for exemption for the above referenced project. I concur with Dr. Fortune that the research fall within the exempt status.

Best wishes.

ERS/php

cc: Dr. Fortune
CERTIFICATION OF ADEQUACY OF PROJECTS
INVOLVING HUMAN SUBJECTS

RECEIVED

Principal Investigator(s): Anmarie Long Hileman

Department(s): College of Ed./ATIS, Counseling

Project Title: Attitudes about class attendance at VA Tech

Source of Support: Departmental Research __ Sponsored Research __ Proposal No. __

1. The criteria for "exemption" from review by the IRB for a project involving the use of human subjects and with no risk to the subject is listed below. Please initial all applicable conditions and provide the substantiating statement of protocol.

   a. The research will be conducted in established or commonly established educational settings, involving normal education practices. For example:
      a) Research on regular and special education instructional strategies;
      b) Research on effectiveness of instructional techniques, curricula or classro...

   b. The research involves use of education tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), and the subject cannot be identified directly or through identifiers with the information.

   c. The research involves survey or interview procedures, in which:
      a) Subjects cannot be identified directly or through identifiers with the information;
      b) Subject's responses, if known, will not place the subject at risk of criminal or civil liability or be damaging to the subject's financial standing or employability;
      c) The research does not deal with sensitive aspects of subject's own behavior (illegal conduct, drug use, sexual behavior or alcohol use);
      d) The research involves survey or interview procedures with elected or appointed public officials, or candidates for public office.

   d. The research involves the observation of public behavior, in which:
      a) The subjects cannot be identified directly or through identifiers;
      b) The observations recorded about an individual could not put the subject at risk of criminal or civil liability or be damaging to the subject's financial standing or employability;
      c) The research does not deal with sensitive aspects of the subject's behavior (illegal conduct, drug use, sexual behavior or use of alcohol).

   e. The research involves collection or study of existing data, documents, records, pathological specimens or diagnostic specimens, or which:
      a) The sources are publicly available; or
      b) The information is recorded such that the subject cannot be identified directly or indirectly through identifiers.

2. I further certify that the project will not be changed to increase the risk or exceed exempt condition(s) without filing an additional certification or application for approval by the Human Subjects Review Board.

Note: If children are in any way at risk while this project is underway, the chairman of IRB should be notified immediately in order to take corrective action.

Signature: __________________________ Date: __________

Jim C. Fortune, Chair, Human Subjects Committee for AES
Appendix B
February, 1992

Dear Virginia Tech student,

You have been randomly selected from all undergraduate students at Virginia Tech to participate in a study of attitudes and behaviors concerning class attendance. You are requested to take part in a group interview, for which you will be paid $10 to participate.

Participation in a group interview will take between an hour and an hour and a half. Your opinions and experiences will be used to write a master’s thesis in the College of Education.

All sessions will be held in East Eggleston Hall, located across from the library. The times available for group interviews are as follows:

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<td>Monday, Feb. 24</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>Tues., Feb. 25</td>
<td>9-11am</td>
<td>Room 301</td>
</tr>
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<td>6</td>
<td>Tues., Feb. 25</td>
<td>1:30-3:30pm</td>
<td>Room 107</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Tues., Feb. 25</td>
<td>7-9pm</td>
<td>Room 301</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A postage-paid reply card is enclosed for your convenience. Please check off all times that you are willing to participate and circle your first choice. If enough people do not sign up for a session, it may be cancelled. Thus, it is important that you respond with all times that you are willing to participate. Your participation time will then be confirmed by telephone, so please include your name, phone number, and the best time to call on the card.

Thank you for your help. I hope to hear from you soon!

Sincerely,

Annmarie Long Hileman

72
Yes, I'd like to participate in your study. I have checked all times that I am willing to participate and circled my first choice.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Date(s)</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Room</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Friday, Feb. 21</td>
<td>9-11am</td>
<td>Room 107</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Friday, Feb. 21</td>
<td>1:30-3:30pm</td>
<td>Room 301</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>Mon., Feb. 24</td>
<td>10am-12pm</td>
<td>Room 301</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Mon., Feb. 24</td>
<td>1:30-3:30pm</td>
<td>Room 301</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>Tues., Feb. 25</td>
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<td>Tues., Feb. 25</td>
<td>7-9pm</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

All sessions will be held in East Eggleston Hall.

Phone #_____________ Best time to call_____________

Name:
Appendix C
Appendix C

Interview protocol

1. Do you think there are consequences to missing class?

2. How likely are you to skip a class?
   - What are the most common reasons you miss class?
   - Are there any times/days you are more likely to skip?

3. Are there specific subjects/classes you are more likely to miss?

4. Would you be less likely to skip if attendance was required?
   - by the prof?
   - by the university?
   - by the department?

5. If you do miss class, how likely are you to make up the work/get someone’s notes?

6. If you do miss class, would your absence be noticed?
   (Is your professor likely to ask why you were not in class?)
Annmarie Long Hileman  
PO Box 9512  
Hollins College  
Roanoke, VA 24020  
(703) 362-6679

EDUCATION

9/82 to 5/86  Bishop Guilfoyle High School  
Altoona, PA

8/86 to 5/90  Pennsylvania State University  
University Park, Pennsylvania  
Bachelor of Science  
individual and Family Studies major; Sociology minor.

9/90 to 6/92  Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University  
Blacksburg, Virginia  
Master of Arts  
Counseling and Student Personnel

EXPERIENCE

8/90 to 6/92  Residence Director, Hollins College  
Roanoke, Virginia  
Responsible for the supervision and training of 9 Resident Assistants, Hall Council, and 200 undergraduate women. Also assist with programming and the interviewing, hiring, and training of the Residence Life Staff; coordinate opening and closing of the hall; manage budget for programming, entertainment, and supplies.

* As of 1/92 appointed the Housing Coordinator for the college.

Responsibilities include room changes, housing assignments for the next academic year, a monthly newsletter, and other assignments from the Dean of Students.

6/92 to 5/96  Resident Assistant, Pennsylvania State University  
University Park, Pennsylvania  
Responsibilities as a peer counselor, advisor, programmer, and disciplinarian of 56 undergraduates; assisted with interviewing of new staff, presented AIDS training to staff and at the Mid-Atlantic Association of College and University Housing (MACUHO) RA Conference.

8/96 to 5/98  Teacher's Assistant, Pennsylvania State University  
Department of Human Development and Family Studies.  
Trained upper-level undergraduate and graduate students in counseling skills, co-instructed skills laboratory and lecture, and graded assignments.

1/98 to 5/00  Co-instructor, Pennsylvania State University  
Department of Counselor Education.  
Co-instructed the required class for RA candidates; taught basic counseling skills and other skills related to the RA position with an emphasis on diversity and human relations.

PRACTICA

4/91 to 6/91  Housing and Residence Life, Hollins College  
Roanoke, Virginia  
Assisted with room assignments, rework the RA and RD staff manuals, planned RA and RD fall training, and assisted with judicial hearings.

1/92 to 5/02  Financial Aid, Virginia Western Community College  
Roanoke, Virginia  
Assisted with student interviews to determine financial need, verified student progress for aid eligibility, and assisted with workshops on aid programs. Also performed pre-loan and post-loan counseling in an effort to reduce default rates.

Signature: Annmarie Long Hileman