The Utility of College Awareness Programs for Middle School Students:
An Evaluation of the First Look Program at UNC Chapel Hill

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Contents

Introduction 3
Literature Review 7
Methodology 27
Results and Analysis 35
Discussion 51
References 70
Appendices 75
The Utility of College Awareness Programs for Middle School Students:
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The need to attain post-secondary education has been increasing steadily over the years. As the economy has shifted from an industrial economy to one that is based on service, information, and technology, receiving some form of college degree has become almost necessary. In fact, according to Georgetown University’s Center on Education and the Workforce, 63 percent of job openings will require workers who have at least some college education by 2018 (Carnevale, Smith, & Strohl, 2010). Receiving a college education has not only become a requirement for a significant percentage of jobs in the economy, but also, it has shown to have profound impacts on many other aspects of one’s life including: larger earnings over a lifetime, lower unemployment rates, better health, higher marriage rates, and greater civic involvement (Rose, 2013). In fact, recent data suggests that those with a bachelor’s degree can earn on average 1.5 million dollars more throughout the course of one’s lifetime than those with only a high school degree (Carnevale et. al, 2010). Given the necessity as well as the benefits that a college degree has to offer for future generations, every student should have the opportunity to pursue a college degree.

According to an ACT policy report on College Readiness, many students have ambitious educational and career aspirations, however, they often lack the basic information about how to fulfill these post-secondary goals (Noeth & Wimberly, 2005). In order to encourage and prepare students to get on the pathway towards attending a degree-granting institution and fulfilling their career goals, many different programs have been developed to increase college access for students.
One of the first steps to enable college access is to increase the awareness of college opportunities. According to the National College Access Network website, “college access programs are non-profit organizations designed to increase the number of students who pursue education beyond high school. The mission of these organizations is to open doors to postsecondary education by providing financial counseling, last dollar scholarships, college visits, career guidance, tutoring, and test preparation courses” (‘Community-based initiative,’ n.d., para. 1). Therefore, programs such as these seek to make students mindful of the college environment by providing information about college or allowing for students to experience college for themselves. College access programs can come in many different shapes, sizes, and forms and can target many different aspects of college. Also, these programs have been sponsored by many different organizations including: the federal government, state governments, colleges and universities, schools and school districts, foundations and philanthropic organizations, and private businesses (Perna, 2002). Despite these programs’ differences, their goals appear to be the same. Based on data from the 2012 National Survey of Pre-College Outreach Programs, of all the programs evaluated, the top program goals consisted of: 1) increasing the likelihood of attending college (93% of respondents), 2) increasing college awareness (92% of respondents), and 3) providing exposure to college (91% of respondents) (Swail, Quinn, Landis, & Fung, 2012).

Although promoting college for all in educational reform is prominent, pre-college outreach programs mostly target a specific population. The population that these programs aim to reach is students who are economically or academically disadvantaged (Swail et. al, 2012). The data reported by the 2012 National Survey of Pre-College Outreach Programs indicated that 85 percent of the programs target low-income students, first-generation college students, and
historically underrepresented minorities (Swail et. al, 2012). These programs generally work
with high school aged students within these marginalized groups to help them prepare for the
college admissions tests (SAT/ ACT) and admissions procedures, discover financial aid
opportunities to pay for college, find mentors to help them succeed, and show them what real
college campuses look like by giving students the opportunity to visit a college campus.

An enduring problem with these college access efforts is that some high school students
wait until their junior or senior year to plan for college. By that point, many of these students
realize that they did not take the proper high school courses necessary to be accepted into college
(Perna, 2002). This creates a gap between those who want to attend college and those who
actually enroll in college. In fact, according to data collected in 2006, more than 90% of students
reported aspirations to attend some form of college, while actual enrollment in college was only
57% (Kirk, Lewis, Scott, Wren, Nilsen, & Colvin, 2012). While other factors, such as financial
aid, may impact their data, a delay or even a late start in college planning remains problematic.

Although programs targeting high school students are important, pre-college outreach
programs have the possibility for more success by targeting students earlier. Middle school
serves as a crucial turning point for many students. It is a period of time in which the students are
maturing and becoming young adults, meaning that they also begin to plan for the future. In fact,
according to Gizenburg’s Theory on occupational choice, there is a tentative choice phase that
occurs between the ages of 11 and 14 in which the most important career development processes
begin to develop (Wahl & Blackhurst, 2000). As students between the ages of 11 and 14 progress
through middle school, they should also be made aware of their future educational possibilities in
order to further supplement these crucial career development processes. Therefore, according to
an ACT policy report on college readiness, many educational organizations and the US
Department of Education recommend that students begin planning for college as early as sixth grade (Noeth & Wimberly, 2005, p. 2).

College awareness in middle school can stimulate important steps towards college access. Intervening early enables students to select high school courses that meet college entrance requirements, provides motivation and incentive for achievement, encourages students to get involved in extracurricular activities within their school community as well as their local community, and helps them begin to think about how they are going to secure financial aid for their college education. Awareness and planning for college at an early age gives students ample amounts of time to properly align themselves with their future educational goals and begin to identify as a college-going student.

Despite the gains that early college awareness programs can have on jumpstarting the college planning process in middle school, the number of pre-college outreach programs actually targeting this age group is minimal. According to the 2012 National Survey of Pre-College Outreach Programs, 65 percent of the programs targeted high school students, while only 38 percent of the programs targeted middle school students (Swail et. al, 2012).

Even within this 38 percent, the amount of programs dedicated solely to middle school students is further limited. When looking at the pre-college outreach programs that were surveyed from North Carolina, two out of the seven programs listed middle school students as a part of their target population, and of these two programs neither one was targeted solely for middle school students (Swail et. al, 2012). The number of pre-college awareness programs aimed specifically at middle schoolers should be increased throughout the nation and across the state of North Carolina in order to help spur early college awareness, early college planning, and increased college enrollment.
One early college awareness program that operates within North Carolina’s Institutes of Higher Education solely for upper elementary school and middle school students is the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill’s First Look Program. This program’s primary goal is to “ignite a child’s dreams of a college education” (Julian-Fox, 2012, p. 1). It is a one-day college immersion program meant for 5th, 6th, 7th, and 8th grade students and is primarily led by college students at the university.

This research will evaluate the landscape of college awareness programs for middle school students and will both audit the First Look program based on best practices and analyze the existing evaluation data provided by the program. Scholarship surrounding current national college access programming will guide the First Look audit by reviewing First Look’s mission statement and programming documents. Additionally, archival participant questionnaires will be analyzed. This evaluation seeks to assess the effectiveness of the UNC-CH First Look program as an early college awareness program for middle school students. These findings can specifically enhance the First Look program and the analyses can set direction for broader policy and practice implications for future college access at the middle school level.

**Literature Review**

In order to properly evaluate the First Look program, a broad understanding of the history, policies, and practices surrounding the context of college access is necessary. Previous research about college access policy and college access programming will be reviewed for theoretical influences, best practices, and effectiveness of programs as a whole.

**The Necessity and Benefits of a College Degree**

Research has demonstrated the importance of attaining a college degree and the benefits that it can offer. The number of high school graduates enrolling in college have shown steady
increases since 1972 (Clinedinst, Hurley, & Hawkins, 2011). The increase in high school graduates enrolling in college developed as the demand for highly skilled labor increased. As more highly skilled workers entered the workforce, new technology was developed and a new era of communication and technology dawned. This new era “solidified the importance of education in the education and welfare of our nation,” thus placing a greater emphasis on education (Swail, 2001, p. ix).

**Technology.** Technology has become ubiquitous and still remains a key part of our economy. This makes the need for a highly skilled and highly educated workforce even greater. According to the Projection of Jobs and Education Requirements through 2018, completed by the Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce, the fastest-growing industries in our economy, such as computer and data processing services, require workers with disproportionately higher education levels, and in general, occupations as a whole are steadily requiring more education (Carnevale et. al., 2010). As our economy evolves and new jobs are created, receiving some form of a college degree will become increasingly necessary. In fact, of the projected 46.8 million job openings created by 2018, nearly two-thirds of them (nearly 63%) will require workers with at least some college education; about 33% will require a bachelor’s degree or better (Carnevale et. al., 2010). In addition to meeting the demands of our job market, a college degree can also have a profound effect on many other aspects of a person’s life including: their earnings, their job stability, their health, their participation in civic involvement (Baum, Ma, & Payea, 2013).

**Economic benefits.** Although the economic recession led to a decline in wages for those with a college degree, people who have received a college education are still more prosperous than their counterparts with a high school diploma. In fact, according to College Board’s 2013
Education Pays Report, the median earnings of bachelor’s degree recipients without an advanced degree are 65 percent higher than the median earnings of high school graduates (Baum et. al., 2013). Also, Georgetown University’s Projection of Jobs and Education Requirements Report states that the average value of a college degree compared to a high school diploma is about $1 million dollars in additional earnings over one’s lifetime (Carnevale et. al., 2010). Another economic benefit of having a college degree is the rate of unemployment is much lower for those with a four-year degree over those who with a high school diploma. In 2012, the unemployment rate for 25-34 year-olds with four-year college degrees was 4.1 percent, while 11.2 percent of high school graduates in this age range were unemployed (Baum et. al., 2013).

**Health and social benefits.** Along with the economic benefits, college graduates also experience health and social benefits. Health correlates for college graduates include: lower smoking rates, higher rates of exercise, and lower rates of obesity (Baum et. al., 2013). Also, those who have received a college education are more involved in society. College Board’s research study found that adults with at least a bachelor’s degree have higher voting rates in presidential elections and spend more time volunteering (Baum et. al., 2013). In addition to higher rates of civic participation, those who have received some form of a college degree are less likely to participate in public assistance programs such as Medicaid, School Lunch, and the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) formerly known as Food Stamps (Baum et. al, 2013).

Given the ever-increasing need for a college degree in our job market as well as the benefits that a college degree can offer, there has been a drive to get students to college. This drive has spurred a movement towards making college accessible for all. The current college access movement is deeply rooted in historical college access policy and programming.
Historical Contexts for College Access

The idea of college access is certainly not new. In order to fully comprehend the current college access movement, it is important to first explore the historical foundations of college access policy and college access programming.

College access policy. Policy surrounding college access started out being fairly discriminatory, focusing solely on getting certain groups of people, particularly white, war veterans, to college (Reed, 2001). However towards the mid 1960s and early 1970s, this trend began to shift as new policies were put in place. These profound changes in policy began to embrace the idea of college for all, and as time progressed, policy surrounding college access was not only focused on helping students find the money to pay for college, but also, it began to enact federal programs aimed at empowering students to strive for a college education.

Starting in the mid 20th century, college access policy was ushered in with the passing of the GI Bill in 1944. Although the GI Bill solely affected servicemen returning from World War II, this bill allowed veterans widespread access to higher education by providing them with full tuition support in addition to yearly stipends to attend post-secondary educational institutions (Reed, 2001). Despite the significant national cost of federal government spending on veteran higher education (e.g. approximately seven billion dollars by 1952), passing a policy such as this had a profound impact on society and changed the dynamics of higher education (Reed, 2001). College became accessible for many who did not think higher education was in their future. In fact, a 1988 report by a congressional subcommittee estimated that 40 percent of those who attended college under the GI Bill would not have gone to college without the assistance provided by the GI Bill (Reed, 2001).
Despite the gains that the GI Bill made, servicemen and their families were the only ones to reap the benefits. Therefore, at that time, access to financial aid for those who were not servicemen was generally not available. The success of promoting further education for veterans helped propel the Higher Education Act of 1965, which was signed by President Lyndon B. Johnson. The passage of this act served as a major turning point for increasing access to higher education, because “it extended need based financial assistance to the general population for the first time” (Brock, 2010, p. 111). In fact, this act was responsible for authorizing insured student loans, which is the main form of financial assistance still in use today (Snyder & Dillow, 2013).

In addition to implementing policies that were aimed at providing financial assistance to help increase college access, other federal legislation passed further increased universal access by challenging racial and gender barriers. The Civil Rights Act of 1964 outlawed discrimination based on race in schools, which reversed the exclusion of people of color from certain universities and colleges (Brock, 2010). Also, Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 stated that “no person in the United States shall, on the basis of sex, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any education program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance” which includes public institutions of undergraduate higher education (US Department of Labor, 1972, section 1681-a). This legislation opened up the doors for women to attend colleges, and pushed against the barriers that had once prevented women from this opportunity. In fact, according to the US Department of Education, by 1994, 63 percent of female high school graduates aged 16-24 were enrolled in college, an increase in 20 percentage points from 43 percent in 1973 (Wiley & Cantu, 1997). Both pieces of legislation lowered the barriers of discrimination that had once prevented
minorities and women from pursuing a college education, thus furthering the measures taken by
the federal government in order to make a college education more universally accessible.

**The development of college access programming.** College access programming has
been in existence since the passing of the Economic Opportunity Act in 1964 amidst the War on
Poverty Era (McElroy & Armesto, 1998). During this time period, the federal government
created the Federal TRIO programs (TRIO), which were originally established to help provide
supplementary academic support to low-income students and students historically
underrepresented in higher education, such as students of color and low-income students (Swail,
2001). In the beginning, the major program under TRIO was Upward Bound. Upward Bound
targeted youth between the ages of 13 and 19 who had experienced low academic success and
who had parents who did not receive a bachelor’s degree. This program sought to increase the
rates at which these students attended and graduated from college by offering support such as
help with the college admission process, assistance in preparing for college entrance exams, and
tutoring services (McElroy & Armesto, 1998).

As time progressed, many other sub-programs of TRIO were created. These groups
included Talent Search in 1965, Student Support Services Program in 1968, Educational
Opportunity Centers in 1972, the Ronald E. McNair Post-Baccalaureate Achievement Program
addition to TRIO programs, the federal government also created GEAR UP (Gaining Early
Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs) in 1998, which also aims to give low-
income students the tools they need in order to enter and succeed in the world of post-secondary
education.
It is important to recognize that the federal government has not been the only source of college access program development. Individual state governments as well as community and non-profit organizations have also created programs aimed at increasing college access. Two major programs that were developed throughout the 1980s that are still in existence today are the “I Have a Dream Foundation” and AVID (Advancement via Individual Determination). The “I Have a Dream Foundation” began in 1981 after the program founder visited a low-income school and promised to pay their college tuition, if they graduated high school (I Have a Dream Foundation, 2008). That one promise made to those students launched an outreach program that provides mentorship to help marginalized students get to college and it also provides financial assistance to help these students pay for college. AVID on the other hand was created in 1980 to provide support services to students and to engage them in a college preparatory curriculum (AVID.org). Many of these college access programs are still around today in addition to many other smaller scale state and local programs that exist nationwide.

These original programs laid the groundwork for college access programming as a whole and have shaped the world of contemporary college access programs that exist today. They have done so by instituting core program components that are still in use by college access programs today, such as providing academic support services, disseminating information about college and the college application process, and providing mentorship to students.

Contemporary Field of College Access

The contemporary field of college access continues to empower students who are underrepresented within the current college environment, such as low-income students and students of color. Therefore, the current college access policy and programming in place has been designed to meet the needs of those groups of students in order to help them succeed.
**Current college context.** Unlike historical notions of higher education, a culture centered on postsecondary education for all is emerging. Therefore, current statistics and data concerning post-secondary education tend to reflect this trend. The number of students enrolling in college overall has been increasing. According to the 2012 Digest of Education Statistics, between 2001 and 2011 the number of students overall enrolling in postsecondary degree granting institutions has increased by 32 percent from 15.9 million to 21 million students (Snyder & Dillow, 2013). This overall increase was also seen in enrollment data for students between the ages of 18 to 25. In fact, between 2001 and 2011 the number of students enrolling in college between the ages of 18 and 25 rose by 35 percent (Snyder & Dillow, 2013). Of the 21 million students enrolled in 2011, 72 percent of these students were enrolled in public institutions and about 63 percent were enrolled in four-year institutions (Clinedinst, Hurley, & Hawkins, 2012).

In order to develop a deeper understanding of the current college environment, it is important to look at the current demographics that characterize and define this environment. Currently, more women are enrolled in college than men. In fact, of the number of students enrolled in degree-granting institutions in the fall of 2011, 57 percent were female while 38 percent were male, with the other 5 percent not specified (Snyder & Dillow, 2013). Also, projections made by the Department of Education predict that this gender gap will continue to widen until at least 2020 (Clinedinst et. al., 2012).

In addition to the gender gap that is present in the college environment, there are also some significant gaps in college enrollment and attendance based on race and income. In 2010, of those students between the ages of 18 and 25 enrolled in college, 58.9 percent were white, 14.8 percent were black, 20.1 percent were Hispanic, 5.3 percent were Asian or Pacific Islander,
and lastly 0.9 percent were American Indian or Alaskan natives (Clinedinst et. al., 2012). This data affirms that there is a very substantial gap between the percentage of white students attending college and the percentage of minority students attending college.

Not only is there a racial gap existing in the current college environment, but also there is a gap in college enrollment numbers between high-, middle-, and low-income students. In 2011, of the recent high school completers enrolled in two or four year colleges, 52 percent of low income students were enrolled compared to 67 percent of middle income students, and 82 percent of high income students (Snyder & Dillow, 2013).

Given the substantial gaps in college enrollment numbers between white and minority students and high and low income students, the inequity in college access for minority and low income students needs intervention. Therefore, the most visible form of intervention to date has been national policy and programming that is targeted at increasing access for these particularly vulnerable groups.

**Current national policy.** Current national policy surrounding higher education has primarily been focused on increasing college access for these particularly vulnerable groups of students by providing financial assistance directly to students from the federal government in the form of grants, loans, and work-study programs. In the fiscal year of 2014, the federal government will spend $99.7 billion on federal subsidized loans, $23.6 billion on grants, $36.5 billion on tax benefits, and $0.98 billion on work-study programs (Federal Education Budget Project, 2014).

The major piece of legislation currently enacted that supports college access is the Higher Education Opportunity Act of 2008. This is simply a reauthorization of the Higher Education Act of 1965. This act oversees many areas of higher education including: Free Application for
Federal Student Aid (FASFA), Federal Pell Grants, Direct Loan Programs, Trio Programs, GEAR-UP Program and some specific scholarship programs.

The GEAR UP program was designed to increase the number of low-income students who are prepared to enter and succeed in post-secondary education by providing 6-year grants to states and district partnerships, which then provide services at high-poverty middle and high schools (Bausmith & France, 2012). GEAR UP programs are expected to provide many resources to participating students and their families. These resources include: providing information to students and parents such as information on college preparatory courses, cost of college attendance, and financial assistance, offering individualized academic and social support to students, promoting parental involvement in education, encouraging educational excellence, assisting in school reform, and endorsing student participation in rigorous courses (Bausmith & France, 2012).

Currently the 2014 fiscal budget has shown an increase in educational spending that includes: Pell Grant increases, implementing a First in the World grant program, making changes to the FASFA, and increased funding in federal college access programs. The federal government plans on increasing the Pell Grant from $5,645 to $5,730 per student for the 2014-2015 school year (National College Access Network, 2014). Also, the First World Grant program that is being implemented will provide grants to institutions of higher education to deliver methods of increasing affordability and improving outcomes for low-income students (National College Access Network, 2014). This investment will help the federal government find successful ways to increase college access by making higher education more affordable. Finally, the 2014 budget increased federal funding for TRIO, GEAR UP, federal work-study, and minority serving institutions (National College Access Network, 2014). Overall it appears that
the current national policy surrounding college access has been primarily focused on providing financial assistance, both to students as well to programs that are aiming to help students get to college.

In addition to providing financial assistance to students enrolling in college and funding programs that promote college access such as GEAR UP, the federal government has also incentivized the use of Common Core Standards throughout the nation as a means of ensuring that “all students graduate from high school with the skills and knowledge necessary to succeed in college, career, and life” beginning in kindergarten and extending through 12th grade (“About the standards,” 2014). In order to do so, 48 state governors and state commissioners of education developed a set of English and Mathematics standards for each grade level K through 12 that each child should master throughout their respective school year. States are able to choose whether or not to adopt these standards, however states are encouraged to implement the Common Core through special incentives given by the federal government to those states who choose to adopt the standards. Despite the controversy surrounding the legitimacy and effectiveness of these standards, 43 states and four territories have adopted them (“Standards in your state,” 2014). On a statewide level, North Carolina has developed its own set of NC Essential Standards as another accountability measure for student’s knowledge. The creation of these standards on a federal as well as a statewide level aims to boost college readiness and success by emphasizing the skills and knowledge one most learn in elementary, middle, and high school in order to succeed in college.

**Contemporary Programming**
Contemporary programming is supported by relevant theories and research. These theories and research then play an integral role in defining the key aspects of programming and in designing new programs.

Theory base. Like the college access programs developed earlier in history, today’s college access programs are primarily focused on getting underrepresented populations of students, such as minorities and low-income students, into the realm of higher education. Many of these programs appear to correspond to particular developmental or career theories whether or not they are explicit in their approach.

Social capital theory. The predominant theory base for college access programming is the social capital theory. Social capital in an educational context is “the set of resources that inhere in family relations and community social organization and that are useful for cognitive or social development of a child or a young person” (Vorhaus, 2014, p.187). This theory suggests that minority and low-income students “lack access to “dominant” resources of social capital, which then serves as a barrier to higher education” (Bloom, 2008, p.1). All students have access to some forms of social capital. However, this lack of dominant forms of social capital leads to concerns with college costs and financial aid, academic preparedness for college, aspirations towards college, general knowledge of the college landscape and the college admissions process (Bloom, 2008). Therefore, college access programs are put in place in order to offer resources to help address these concerns and to break down this barrier, thus making college a possibility for all.

As the level of competition of college admission increases, middle-class white families are able to “employ a full range of resources, knowledge, and associations at their disposal to enhance their children’s chances of capturing the available spots” (Oakes, Rogers, Lipton, &
Morrell, 2002, p. 106). This process makes it difficult for the students who do not have the same access to this dominant social capital, which is where college access programming becomes crucial. College access programs therefore aim to serve as a hub of resources, knowledge, and associations for students who are not from well off families of the dominant group.

**Social cognitive theory.** Another theoretical framework that shapes the basis of college access programming is the social cognitive theory. The social cognitive theory is a psychological model developed by Albert Bandura that emphasizes that “learning occurs in a social context and that much of what is learned is gained through observation” (Denler, Wolters, & Benzon, 2014). A primary assumption that is made within this theory is that “a person’s on-going functioning is a product of a continuous interaction between cognitive, behavioral, and contextual factors” (Denler et. al, 2014). Another key assumption made in the social cognitive theory is that “people through forethought, self-reflection, and self-regulatory processes, exert substantial influence over their own outcomes and the environment more broadly” (Denler et. al, 2014). Therefore, college access programming aims to engage these cognitive and contextual factors by giving marginalized groups of students the opportunity to learn about college through first-hand observation, by offering mentoring opportunities with people who have gone to college, and by providing these students with useful information about college. By engaging a student’s cognitive and contextual factors directly, college access programming indirectly seeks to shape the students’ behavior in order to help them reach their desired educational outcomes.

**Aspects of Successful Pre-College Programming Promoting College Access**

In order for these specifically targeted groups to gain the capital they need and to meet the essential conditions to be admitted into college and to succeed in college, college access programs must have certain components that have been supported through research.
Conditions for college admission. College access programs seek to help minority and low-income students meet conditions for college admission. According to research by UCLA’s outreach leadership, there are six essential conditions that need to be met in order to gain admission into college and to succeed in the college environment once a student gets there. These conditions include: creating a “college-going culture”, taking a rigorous academic curriculum, having high-quality teachers, receiving intensive academic and college going support, a multicultural, college-going identity, having parental/ community involvement and connections (Oakes et. al., 2002). When this research promotes the idea of a “college-going culture,” it is referring to an environment “in which students find encouragement and help from multiple sources to prepare them with knowledge needed for college success” (McKillip, Godfrey, & Rawls, 2013, p. 530).

UCLA’s Outreach Team helps high school students in the area achieve these goals through two distinct types of programming activities. The first type of programming is “student centered,” while the second type of programming is “school centered” (Oakes et. al, 2002). Student centered programming seeks to help individual students get to college through the use of undergraduate mentors and academic support and advisement (Oakes et. al, 2002). School centered programming seeks to help all students by improving the quality of college preparation in every K through 12 school that has partnered with the university (Oakes et. al, 2002).

Laura Perna lays out eleven major components of effective pre-college outreach programs, five of which have been deemed by Perna as the most critical components. These attributes include: the goal of college attendance, goal of college awareness or exposure, college tours, visits or fairs, goal of promoting academic skills, goal of promoting rigorous course-taking, parental involvement component, parental college awareness, parental assistance with
financial aid forms, SAT and ACT training, tuition reimbursement or scholarship, and beginning by eighth grade (Perna, 2002). Of these eleven, the five that have been deemed most critical are: the goal of college attendance, college tours visits or fairs, goal of promoting rigorous course-taking, parental involvement component, and beginning by eighth grade (Perna, 2002). Perna also emphasizes the role that colleges and universities can play in helping low-income, first generation, and minority students improve their educational attainment. In fact, urban colleges and universities “have extensive financial, human, intellectual, and organizational resources that may be directed productively” towards helping these underrepresented students (Perna, Harkavy, & Bowman, 2012, p. 63). Therefore, colleges and universities can play an integral role in college access programming.

Although Perna lays out a fairly comprehensive list that highlights the important aspects of effective pre-college outreach programs, Corwin, Colyar, and Tierney (2005) also contribute to this knowledge by sharing nine propositions that reflect curricular and extracurricular components that have become integral to college preparation programs that aim to assist low-income, minority youth who might not otherwise attend college. These programs provide academic, social and emotional support, family involvement initiatives, leadership development, and service learning opportunities (Corwin, Colyar, & Tierney, 2005). The nine propositions that enable students to get to college are as follows: it is helpful to emphasize the culture of the student, family engagement is critical, peer groups are helpful, programs need to begin no later than ninth grade, having knowledgeable counselors at the core of the program is critical, access to a college preparation curriculum is the most critical variable, cocurricular activities are irrelevant, mentoring is helpful, and lastly there is a positive relationship between the cost of the program delivery and achieving college readiness (Corwin et. al., 2005).
By compiling a list of the components that overlapped or were unique within the three major research frameworks presented above, a comprehensive framework with four main themes was derived for the effective components of college access programming. This comprehensive framework suggests that the components of successful college access programming fall within these categories: creating a college-going culture or identity, promoting academic rigor, having a parental involvement component, and mastering specific program components, such as beginning by a certain grade, involving a research university, program costs related to the benefits, and others.

Table 2.1 Effective Components of College Access Programming Found in Research

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<td>-scholarships or tuition reimbursement</td>
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<td>-beginning by 8th grade</td>
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<td>-involves an urban college or university</td>
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*Bolded terms were deemed as the five most critical components*
College awareness programming. The term college awareness appears to be one of the major components that falls under the umbrella of college access. College awareness “is a systemic understanding of the post-secondary educational system combined with specific knowledge of the norms, values, and conventions of interactions in the college context” (Conley, 2007, p. 17). Awareness of what college is and the different aspects of college is key to determining whether one wants to attend college in the future or not. Before having to select college preparatory classes, take standardized tests, and determine how to pay for college, a student has to decide whether or not they even want to attend college. Given that college awareness falls under the category of college access, college awareness programs should strive to meet similar program components as college access programs, but they should start engaging students at an earlier age. Research has indicated that pre-college awareness and outreach should actually start earlier than high school, which has led to the development of college awareness programs for middle school students (Perna, 2002).

College awareness in middle school. Middle school serves as a crucial time when students begin to formulate ideas about their future educational and occupational aspirations. It is at this stage in life when students can begin to align these aspirations with goals to attain them by setting themselves on the college bound track. Making educational goals a reality generally involves taking college preparatory courses, maintaining good grades, participating in extracurricular activities, and learning about ways to finance postsecondary education (Noeth & Wimberly, 2005). Starting the planning early “gives students the opportunity to take necessary middle and high school courses to prepare them for post-secondary education,” and it also allows for parents to begin planning and finding resources to support their child throughout the process.
This early planning begins when “students consider post-secondary education and set educational and career goals” (Noeth & Wimberly, 2005, p. 3).

As far as course planning is concerned, students who begin taking a challenging curriculum in middle school tend to perform better in high school and are better prepared for college (Noeth & Wimberly, 2005). Beginning to take difficult classes starting in middle school can help students develop the proper study habits that will help them succeed throughout high school and beyond. Also, students who are in higher-level classes are likely to obtain information about post-secondary opportunities (Noeth & Wimberly, 2005). In fact, research has indicated that minority and first-generation college students who take higher-level math courses are more likely to attend college (Noeth & Wimberly, 2005).

In addition to course planning, middle school is a time when students begin to explore their postsecondary options. Research completed by ACT of middle and early high school students indicated that at least 78 percent of these students have begun to think about and explore the types of education, training, and work they might pursue after high school (Noeth & Wimberly, 2005). This research has also shown that 56 percent of middle and early high school students believe that pre-college programming has been very helpful or a little help in exploring education, training, and work after high school (Noeth & Wimberly, 2005). This data indicates that early educational planning is key to achieving educational aspirations; therefore college awareness programming should be focused on the middle school age group in order to kick-start this college planning as early as possible.

Program effectiveness. It is often times difficult to evaluate the effectiveness of these programs based on the number of students in these programs who eventually enroll in college, because these programs historically have a difficult time being able to track students after
program completion (Perna, 2002). Therefore, evaluation of college access programs may be
determined in other ways, such as assessing a program by its ability to encompass all of the
components that have been deemed effective by research. Compiling a list of all of the effective
program components found in research and then investigating a program in its entirety to
determine which elements the program contains and which elements the program is lacking
could complete this type of evaluation. This form of evaluation can also be considered an audit
of the program. In addition, it may be useful to look at more proximal impacts of programs on
students immediately after completing the program.

Originally when Perna completed research in 2002, which examined 1,100 college
outreach programs based on the 1999-2000 National Survey on Outreach Programs, she was
looking to assess how many of these programs contained the effective components of pre-college
outreach. Her results found that 25 percent of programs targeting low income students,
minorities and potential first-generation college students and 30 percent of programs targeting
low achieving students have the five critical components of effective pre-college outreach, and
only 6 percent of all programs can be characterized as “ideal programs” which contain all eleven
of the most important components of effective pre-college outreach (Perna, 2002). This research
also found that of the 204 programs that target low-income students and have the five critical
components, the programs are less likely to be federal TRIO programs and more likely to be
GEAR-UP programs (Perna, 2002).

Also important findings from the most recent National Survey of Pre-college Outreach
Programs completed in 2012 reflects the extent to which these current programs are attempting
to encompass the effective program components laid out by research. This survey examined 374
programs nationwide. Large proportions of the programs were federal TRIO programs, and over
17 percent of the programs were university funded. Over 90 percent of these programs had goals that included: increasing the likelihood of attending college, increasing college awareness, and providing exposure to college (Swail et. al., 2012). As far as academic services were concerned, 62 percent of these programs offered study-skills training and 56 percent of these programs offered test-taking skills (Swail et. al., 2012). When focusing on non-academic related supports, 87 percent of the programs focused on college awareness and about 75 percent took students on campus visits and tours (Swail et. al., 2012). Effective outreach is not merely focused on the students themselves, but also developing a parental and family support system. According to the National Outreach survey, 67 percent of the programs surveyed had a parental component, although only 20 percent of them are mandatory (Swail et. al., 2012). Examining this data paints a broader picture of what the current pre-college outreach landscape looks like.

Also, prior research completed by Watt, Huerta, and Lozano in 2007 studied students in AVID and GEAR UP programs and found that, although statistically insignificant, knowledge about college was higher for participants in college access programs as opposed to the control group (Dyce, Albold, & Long, 2013). More research of GEAR UP schools completed in 2012 by Bausmith and France indicated that there were statistically significant increases in deviation from their baseline sophomore PSAT scores and AP participation in GEAR UP schools (Bausmith & France, 2012). These findings are of significance given that PSAT scores and AP participation are key indicators of college readiness (Bausmith & France, 2012). Research conducted on the effectiveness of college access programming has been limited, however, the research that has been collected does indicate that many programs in existence today contain similar program components and programs such as GEAR UP have been promoting college readiness.
Summary

College access programming aims at bridging the educational attainment gaps that currently exist in higher education, by providing financial assistance, resources, and planning to both students as well as their parents who need it, particularly low income, minority, and first generation students and families. Implementing early college awareness programming for middle school students would start the college access process earlier, which ultimately could have a profound impact on the future of postsecondary education.

Methodology

This research was composed of two major parts: a program audit using key First Look programming documents and a secondary data analysis of questionnaires utilized by First Look. The program audit examined documents such as grant proposals, program overviews, program wish lists, campus tour documents, and program PowerPoint presentations. The secondary data analysis focused on previously completed questionnaires by the middle school aged participants.

Program Audit

The first aspect of this study was a program audit of First Look. A program audit examines a program’s major components in comparison to standards for best practice as a means of evaluating the program. This process aims to discover whether or not a program meets with substantial quality the certain standards or criteria that have been established in the literature as important elements to include in a college awareness program for middle school aged children. Program audits are beneficial because they can highlight the strengths of a program, while also exposing elements that might be missing or need enhancement. The elements of the program that were audited include: the program participants; the four main categories that were identified in the literature review, such as creating a college-going culture or identity, promoting academic
rigor, having a parental involvement component, and program specific components; and the program effectiveness measures.

**Participating program.** The First Look Program at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (UNC-CH) was audited in this research in order to examine its effectiveness as a college access program. The First Look Program more specifically is a college access initiative for 5th through 8th grade students.

**Statement of need.** The First Look program was developed in response to research stating that college planning should begin as early as sixth grade (Noeth & Wimberly, 2005). Since its beginnings in 2008, this program aims to kick-start the college planning process by giving upper elementary school students and middle school students from all over North Carolina a “first look” at a college campus.

**Expectations.** According to a First Look grant proposal, this program is a one-day enrichment experience that aims to “show kids what it is like to be a college student and to inspire and motivate them to set their goals on a college degree” (pg. 2). The immediate goal of the program is to show the program participants what it college looks like, to show what participants need to do in school in order to get into college, and give information about the resources that they can use. The long-term goal of the program is to inspire students to attend college and to receive a college degree.

**Activities.** According to the First Look Overview, the program is divided into two main parts. First, there is an hour-long classroom information session, followed by a campus tour. The classroom session seeks to show these middle school students different aspects of college life including: academics, the arts, athletics, campus living, student life, and global learning. In addition to presenting information about college life, there is a brief discussion on how to pay for
college, how to get to college, and some website resources. Lastly, there is a question and answer session, in which the middle school students get the opportunity to ask the current college students any questions that they may have about college. A full agenda for this portion of the program can be found in Appendix B. After the classroom portion, the middle school students and their chaperones receive a walking tour of UNC-CH’s campus by UNC-CH undergraduate students. According to the Middle School tour document (Appendix C), the tour highlights specific buildings and landmarks that are crucial aspects of a college student’s life including: a classroom, the library, and the dining hall. The tour seeks to help the middle school students imagine themselves as college students with the hope that it will become a reality for these students in the future. Although the program and the tour is held at UNC-CH, it is solely focused on getting middle school students excited about attending a college in general, not just UNC-CH or any other North Carolina school (Perotta, 2013).

**Resources.** Although the director of the program as well as other members of the UNC-CH Visitor’s Center direct and oversee the program, a team of volunteer undergraduate students at UNC-CH carries out the actual program to its entirety. The classroom and campus tour portion of the program is a total of two hours long. The cost of the program is relatively low. According to the First Look wish list, major costs include questionnaire printing fees, classroom rental fees, and First Look wristbands for the program participants.

**Logic model.** A logic model of the current program was created in order to illustrate how the program aims to operate and can be examined on the next page in Figure 3.1. This model aids in the visualization of the main program elements, and can assist in targeting areas where improvement is possible.
Documents audited. In order to audit the program, this research focused on examining pre-existing documents and data that have already been developed and collected by the First Look Program. Key pieces of information that were reviewed include: a research report on the program, grant proposals, the program wish list, the program description and itinerary, the program application, the program evaluation measures, the website, previously collected chaperone and teacher evaluations, the program calendar, the power point presentation which is...
shown to the middle school students, and the information concerning the types of schools attending the program throughout the 2011-2012 school year.

**Audit analysis.** A thorough audit of this data was completed in order to evaluate whether this program executes many of the critical components of college access programming that have been deemed effective by prior scholarly research including: creating a college-going culture or identity, promoting academic rigor, having a parental component, and mastering specific program components described in the literature review (See Table 2.1). The descriptive program specific information, such as the program power point, the grant proposals, the program calendar, and other information, was examined in order to determine whether it provided its participants with the key content and information conducive to promoting college access. The program application and the program evaluation measures, specifically the teacher/ chaperone evaluations, were reviewed in order to determine whether they were effective means for selecting schools and for receiving useful feedback on the program. Finally, information about the schools attending the program was attained from the National Center for Education Statistics school lookup database in order to determine whether or not the program has been serving the populations of students that effective college access programming aims to reach.

In order to keep track of whether or not the First Look program met the various effective components found in research, a table was created that contained five main columns. The first column contains the effective program component; the second column states whether or not the First Look program met the component; the third column shows which program components were met; the fourth column shows which components were not met; and the fifth column cites which program documents illustrate that the program has met that component.
This audit sought to identify potential areas in need of improvement and suggests modifications for the program in order to help enhance the First Look Program experience and further promote college awareness and access for its middle school participants. This evaluation method and recommendations for the program itself will then derive an effective model of what a one-day college access initiative program should look like for this particular age group.

**Secondary Data Analysis**

A secondary data analysis involves looking at data that has already been collected. It is important to distinguish that the researcher completing the secondary data analysis was not involved in the original data collection. The goal of completing a secondary data analysis is to re-examine or expand upon previous findings or to address new research questions. Secondary data analyses are advantageous to use because they do not require as much time or resources as original data collection which allows the researcher to devote more time to other steps in the research process (Greenhoot & Dowsett, 2012). The secondary data analysis for this study examined questionnaires completed by middle school participants collected by the First Look Program during the 2013-2014 school year. Pre-existing data involved in this research was either publicly available or was provided with permission by the program director Missy Julian-Fox. A description of the available data is described next.

**Participants.** One hundred and seventy-three eighth grade students from four different middle schools who participated in the First Look program completed pre and post questionnaires. The four middle school groups represented included: one alternative school group, one AVID school group, one traditional public school group from Virginia, and one traditional public school group from North Carolina. Although the data collected by First Look did not include demographic data, 3 out of the 4 schools had larger percentages of black students
than white students when examining the school’s overall student population on the National Center for Education Statistics’ website.

To better understand the program participants, information from each school’s profile on the National Center for Education Statistic’s website was utilized (US Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 2011-2012). The alternative school is located in a large city. The racial makeup for the alternative school is 61% black, 15% white, 20% Hispanic, and 4% with two or more races. The school in which the AVID group was from is located in a town inside an urban cluster. The school’s overall racial makeup is 29% black, 42% white, 22% Hispanic, 5% with two or more races, 1% Asian, and less than 1% other. The school that was located in Virginia is in a large city. The racial makeup of this school in Virginia is 60% black, 22% white, 9% Hispanic, 6% with two or more races, and 3% Asian. Lastly, the traditional public school in North Carolina is located in a rural area not far from an urbanized area. It’s racial makeup is 38% black, 35% white 21% Hispanic, 5% with two or more races, 1% Asian, and 1% other.

**Questionnaire.** The questionnaire presented to the students was completed as a pre- and post-test (See Appendix E). The questionnaire consisted of six questions with each question having five likert scale answer choices. The only difference from the pre and post-test was a question in the pre-test about family experiences in college. The questions sought to learn about whether the student wanted to attend college, how much they knew about college, whether they thought their family could afford for them to college, if they knew of anyone in their family who went to college, whether or not they thought college would be helpful for their future, and how likely were they to attend college. Although not explicit on the questionnaire, it appears that the questions try to assess several categories. Two questions assessed the students’ current
knowledge and disposition about college (question 1 and 2); whereas others assessed the students’ future expectations of college (questions 4 and 5). The question concerning affordability does not fall under either category (question 3). The students were not asked to put their names on either questionnaire. The use of the pre-post test design was aimed at assessing the impact of the program.

There were a total of 173 pre-tests and 140 post-tests available for secondary analysis. Group A, the alternative school, had 5 pre- and 5 post-tests to examine. Group B, the AVID group, had 54 pre-tests and 44 post-tests. Group C, the school from Virginia, had 25 pre-tests and 24 post-tests. Lastly, group D, the traditional public school group, had 89 pre-tests and 67 post-tests. The mean values for each answer were calculated, but tests for significance, such as t-tests, cannot be completed due to limitations in data collection. There are no identifiers available for the pre- and post-tests; therefore the pre- and post-tests cannot be grouped together for each individual student. Having no identifiers for the data makes it impossible to determine how each individual student’s answers may have changed individually from before the program to after the program. Therefore, only full group means on pre-post tests can be compared.

**Reliability and validity.** The information procured from the questionnaire may not be entirely reliable or valid for two main reasons. First, for every single question on both the pre- and the post-test, one of the answer options is “I don’t know.” Although in certain circumstances this may be a necessary response, the presence of “I don’t know” as one of the answers can often lead to students circling “I don’t know” for every question if they do not feel like filling out the questionnaires. This practice reduces the overall reliability of the data collected. Lastly, although observing differences in mean values between the pre- and the post-test groups can suggest impact, without completing a significance test, one is unable to legitimately claim that there are
significant changes due to the program. Thus, without the significance test, the changes between the mean values are not entirely reliable.

**Data collection process.** The questionnaires were distributed to the participants two times throughout the First Look Program. The pre-test part was distributed to the students at the very beginning of the program. They were given a marker and asked to complete it right when they walked into the classroom where the first portion of the program was being held. Then, the post-test portion was completed immediately after the undergraduate tour leader finished giving the middle school students their tour of UNC-CH, which is the last activity of the program. Both the pre- and post-tests were collected by the undergraduate tour leaders and returned to the program director.

**Data analysis.** The information that was accrued by the First Look program through their questionnaire has been analyzed in order to examine certain variables. First, the answers for each of the four schools were examined individually, and then the answers were examined for overarching trends across all of the school groups. Given that only the means of the answers were provided, the emphasis was placed on examining the changes in means between the pre-test and the post-test. Although participant demographics were not collected, school profiles provided a proxy to allow some examination of race as a factor in the findings. Further, the unique pre-test question provided data around first generation students for further exploration.

**Results and Analysis**

Given the nature of this research, this section consists of two main parts. The first part discusses the results from the program audit and the second part describes the findings from the secondary data analysis of the pre-and post-questionnaires.
Results from the Program Audit

The completion of the program audit assisted in gaining a better understanding of the First Look program as a whole to determine the key components of the program found in the literature that comprise a successful college access program. By delving into the program documents, it identified successful aspects of the program in addition to highlighting areas in need of improvement. The results of the audit are broken down into three main sections: program effectiveness measures, program participants, and effective program components found in research.

Program effectiveness measures. After looking at how the program evaluates its effectiveness, one of the major findings was that, like many other college access programs, it does not have in place a longitudinal study or long-term evaluation of what the students learned or whether or not they attended college or take additional steps that may allow for college access.

As mentioned and referenced before, the program does use pre- and post-questionnaires as a means to monitor changes in dispositions, knowledge, and future expectations from before the program to after the students have participated in First Look. This proximal data is important as it provides an indication of disposition, knowledge, or skill changes right after an intervention. Although this idea is good in theory, the questionnaires are limited in several ways. First, they do not accommodate for diverse student groups, because the questionnaires are only available in one language. Second, the wording of the answers choices is confusing. For example, the pre-test asks students if they know of anyone who has attended college, there are two answer choices saying yes, a parent or yes, a family member. This could be confusing for students to grasp, because their parents are considered family members. Not having clear answer choices prevents the program from being able to accurately gather information about the program participants.
Lastly, the data that has been accrued through this questionnaire is not coded in any way, therefore making it impossible to track individual student progress after participating in the program. It is clear that unlike the current questionnaire used in the program, reliable and valid surveys (e.g., including factor analysis) that code and track relevant demographic or school factors is needed.

In addition to student pre- and post-questionnaires, the program at one point used to collect teacher and chaperone evaluations by sending them paper evaluations through the mail after the school group had participated in First Look (see Appendix F). These types of longitudinal data are useful, however, there were not any evaluations collected for the 2013-2014 school year. When looking at the evaluations from past years, they indicated that the free-response portion yielded the most thorough and helpful suggestions, instead of the Likert scale questions, because often times when people would circle low numbers for certain questions they would not give any comments, suggestions, or feedback on how to improve these low numbers.

**Program participants.** Of the 34 groups to attend the First Look program last school year, 28 were found on the NCES website. Out of the 28 schools attending, 57.1% of the school groups attending came from schools with over 50% white students, thus leaving the other 42.9% of the school groups attending having less than 50% white students. Although the overall racial distribution of the school might not fully represent the racial makeup of the attending school groups themselves, it gives a general idea of the composition of the group.

**Effective research-based components.** Of the 23 effective components found in research and cited in the literature review (Table 2.1), First Look appears to include 13 components, does not include 5 components, and needs improvement on 5 of the components. Based on the four major themes of successful components of college access programming, which
were discussed in the literature review, the 23 components have been grouped into those four major themes: 1) creating a college-going culture or identity, 2) promoting academic rigor, 3) having parental involvement component, and 4) mastering specific program components. Within each of the following categories, a description and evidence will be given of how the First Look program did or did not meet a component found in research.

**Creating a college-going culture or identity.** As cited in the literature review a college-going culture can be defined “as one in which students find encouragement and help from multiple sources to prepare them with knowledge needed for college success” (McKillip et. al., 2013, p. 530). When examining the First Look program, it met four out of the six research components involving creating a college-going culture or identity.

The components that the First Look program successfully met in this category were: 1) receiving college-going support, 2) the goal of college attendance, 3) a college visit, and 4) college awareness or exposure. The program provides students with college-going support by using multiple different sources of knowledge to help provide them with the information about college that they need for success. These sources, which are discussed in the First Look overview, include: a 6.5 minute video using video clips and pictures to illustrate aspects of attending college, a PowerPoint presentation that uses resources from KnowHow2Go and CFNC to illustrate how to apply and prepare for college and how to pay for college, special “classes” taught by the student tour guides that focus on different aspects of college such as: athletics, academics, campus living, careers, student life, global learning, history, and the arts, a question and answer session, and lastly, a campus tour. These resources in combination work to make students feel as if college is a possibility for their future by providing the students with the
information, resources, and experiences on a college campus in order to make them feel like the program supports their desire to attend college.

There is also some evidence to suggest that the program meets the goal of college attendance. The main goal of the program, which was found in multiple sources including: the First Look Overview (2013) and the First Look Grant Proposal (2012), states that the program “is designed to inspire and motivate kids to set their goals on a college degree.” Therefore, the program seeks to meet this goal by introducing students to the concept of college through an informational session about college life in a college classroom and through a tour of a college campus. By participating in the information session and the tour, the program hopes to show the diversity of interests and experiences on a college campus as a way of emphasizing “that college is a possibility for all students” (Perotta, 2013).

Since the program takes place at UNC-CH, the program in itself is a campus visit; however the campus tour further enriches this campus visit. According to the Middle School Tour document, the tour is a 35-minute walking route that shows the students a college lecture hall, a library, the Old Well (a landmark on the UNC-CH Campus), the student union, the football stadium, and many other historical buildings and statues that can be found on campus.

The program also extensively promotes college-awareness and exposure in three main ways. First, the walking tour of campus allows for the students to see a college firsthand by giving them the opportunity to “experience the culture of college by what they see, hear, and feel (First Look Overview). Secondly, the classroom portion of the session uses the mini-classes and the interactions with the UNC-CH students to introduce the key tools, vocabulary, and specifics that are related to college. Lastly, by being able to eat in the dining hall alongside college
students, these middle school students are able to experience the environment, the food choices, and college social dynamics of the dining hall firsthand (First Look Grant Proposal).

Despite the inclusion of certain elements, the program fails to ensure that the teachers bringing their students to the program have college access knowledge, and the program also fails to emphasize individual students’ cultures. The program does not have any method in place to test teacher knowledge of college access of those teachers who are bringing their students to the program. In addition, there are not any screening or informational questions asked about teachers in the application process. Lastly, there is not any form of follow-up with the teachers after the program to make sure that they are also promoting college access for all of their students once they return to their classrooms.

The program also does very little to emphasize student’s individual cultures. Although undergraduate program leaders might try to present and describe many different aspects of college and college activities, such as various clubs, intramural sports, musical and singing groups, in order to make the middle school students feel like there is something at college for them, the middle school students’ interests, beliefs, and hobbies are not really discussed or brought up throughout the program.

Promoting academic rigor. After examining the program documents and program content at large, there was no major emphasis placed on promoting academic rigor to the middle school students. There is no time built into the program schedule for receiving academic support or promoting specific skills essential to academic success. Also, the First Look program does not have a website that contains any links or resources for further academic assistance. There is only one point in the program where taking a rigorous academic curriculum is stressed. It is briefly mentioned once in the First Look PowerPoint presentation during the “how to get to college”
portion of the presentation. During this portion of the presentation, there is one slide that is titled “Push yourself” (Appendix I). It encourages students to figure out what the college entrance requirements are, while also encouraging students to “study hard, turn in all assignments on time, and get good grades”. Besides that PowerPoint slide, academic rigor is not specifically mentioned at any other point within the program. There is no evidence that the program offers any information on the need for SAT or ACT scores or information related to how to study or training for these tests or any scholarships to its program participants. These findings suggest an overall lack of emphasis in regards to the program participant’s academic affairs.

*Parental involvement component.* The First Look program does not have a specific parental involvement component for just parents. The only way in which parents are actively involved with the program is by serving as chaperones for the middle school students. It is also important to highlight that no follow-up information is given to the student’s parents after their child has participated in the First Look program. Also, like previously mentioned, the lack of website for the First Look program prevents the program from being able to provide these parents with key resources that could further college access and college awareness.

Given the fact that a small number of parents are actively involved in the program in addition to the fact that no follow-up information is given to the parents after their students participate in the First Look program, the program lacks overall parental college awareness and parental assistance with college forms.

*Program specific components.* The program specific components are additional pieces of the college access-programming puzzle that are related explicitly to the program and the general program operations. Thus, these components tend to focus less on program content and more on the execution of the program.
One of the major components of this category is whether or not the program begins by 8th grade. Given that this program is targeted solely at the middle school population, the First Look program does meet this goal. By examining the First Look program schedule for the 2013-2014 school year, the number of groups within each grade level was delineated. During the 2013-2014 school year, there were seven 5th grade groups, one 6th grade group, three 7th grade groups, fourteen 8th grade groups, and nine 6th through 8th grade groups. These findings further illustrate First Look’s commitment to this age group.

Another program specific component emphasizes the program’s involvement with an urban college or university. The First Look program’s involvement with the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (UNC-CH) is crucial to the program’s success. Not only because the program is operated by the UNC-CH Visitor’s center, but also because the program utilizes UNC-CH’s campus and UNC-CH students in order to serve as a model of what college looks like for these middle school students.

According to the First Look Overview document, the First Look program ensures knowledgeable counselors by providing training and schooling to the guides by the UNC-CH Visitors’ Center specifically for First Look. The guides are trained “by the director of UNC-CH Visitors’ Center using specially created guide materials that promote the opportunities for them to learn about their own campus, become life-long advocates for education and directly and positively impact a future generation for North Carolina” (First Look Wish List). There are at least two 2-hour mandatory training sessions for all new guides participating in the First Look program. During these training sessions, the guides first run through the program objectives, the agenda, and the classroom portion of the program. They are also assigned one of the aspects of college, such as academics, arts, campus living, student life, and athletics, for which they must
prepare a 10-minute mini-lesson to teach a small group of middle school students. Then, one of the experienced guides takes the tour guide trainees on a campus tour that highlights all of the key parts of the tour including: a classroom, a library, the student union, the Old Well, the historical landmarks on McKorkle place, and the football stadium. During the second training session, the new guides must share how they plan to make their lesson “engaging and interactive” in addition to having their “tour script committed to memory and ready to deliver” a tour to an experienced guide (M. Julian-Fox, personal communication, January 19, 2014). Lastly, First Look program guides are either UNC-CH Visitor’s Center staff, Carolina Covenant scholars, and North Carolina Teaching Fellows from the UNC-CH school of education, or other undergraduate students. However, other undergraduate students, who are not within one of those organizations, must complete the First Look Guide Application and be selected by the program director, Julian-Fox, before they can participate (Appendix J). Selecting guides from specific, reputable on-campus organizations or through an application process enhances the chances of having well prepared guides.

In addition to having knowledgeable guides, the First Look program expects their undergraduate program leaders to serve as mentors. Although the extent to which mentorship can be achieved within two-hours is somewhat limited. As the First Look Overview states “the personal student-to-student connection is fundamental.” Therefore, the undergraduate tour guides are encouraged to share their honest advice and experiences about college, while also answering questions during the interactive question and answer session.

The First Look program also meets the need to involve co-curricular activities. Co-curricular activities contribute to the academic learning experiences through active participation. The First Look program takes the academic learning experience of what is college life and what
AN EVALUATION OF FIRST LOOK

does it entail, which is addressed in the classroom portion of the program, and brings it alive by allowing middle school students to tour a college campus and even eat in the dining hall alongside other college students. The First Look Overview asserts this form of active participation when stating that “students spend their time on campus with college students, talking, learning, and eating with them. They experience the culture of college by what they see, hear, and feel.” (pg.1).

The First Look program also emphasizes the importance of peer groups by dividing the middle school students into groups of their peers and spreading them out among the tour guides. It is within these groups that students hear about a certain aspect of college and they also tour UNC-CH’s campus together. Throughout the program, the middle school students are encouraged to ask as many questions about college life as they would like to know. Therefore, students within each tour group are able to feed off of and learn from their other peer’s questions and comments.

Lastly, the program alone is free for school groups to attend; however lunch in the dining hall is $8.33 per student. Despite the fee for lunch, the relative costs of the program appear to be positively related to the benefits. The cost of the program is tied into the Visitor Center’s funding, and according to the First Look Wish List the estimated cost of operations each year was around $23,560. The cost of operations covers a program administrative assistant, the campus classroom rental, the pre- and post-questionnaire printing costs, and participant wristbands. It is very hard to compare the actual cost of the program to the program’s benefits. However, this program is significant in that it has the potential to benefit many middle school students by exposing them to the aspects of college life in order to inspire them to align themselves with the goal of attaining a college degree. It also benefits undergraduate tour guides
by teaching them leadership skills, confidence to speak in front of groups of middle school students, and offers them the opportunity to learn more about their school.

**Summary.** Based on these findings, the First Look Program meets the majority of the creating a college-going culture or identity components described in the literature, and the program fully meets the program specific components described in the literature. This is impressive considering that the program is incredibly short term when compared to many college access programs. However, the program does not meet the promoting academic rigor components or the parental involvement components. An overall breakdown of these results can be found below in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1 Research components analysis for First Look

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Does First Look meet it?</th>
<th>Items met</th>
<th>Items not met</th>
<th>If so, cite program resources</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Creating a college-going culture or identity</td>
<td>Meets Majority</td>
<td>4-receiving college-going support -pointing out the goal of college attendance -participating in a college visit -highlighting college awareness</td>
<td>2-having teachers who are knowledgeable about college access -emphasizing different student cultures</td>
<td>-First Look Overview -First Look Grant Proposal -College Access Research -First Look Tour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promoting Academic rigor</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>1-taking a rigorous academic curriculum</td>
<td>4-receiving academic support -promoting academic skills -SAT/ ACT training -scholarships</td>
<td>-First Look PowerPoint</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parental Involvement Component</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------------</td>
<td>----</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program Specific Components</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>0</th>
<th>-First Look Overview</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-College Access Research Report</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-First Look Tour Guide Application</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-First Look Wish List</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

|                                |     |   |   | -First Look Tour Guide Application |
|                                |     |   |   | -First Look Wish List |

**Results from Secondary Data Analysis**

After examining the questionnaires that the First Look Program collected, it appears that the most profound change between the two questionnaires was the perceived knowledge about college. However, the First Look program only calculated the means of the pre- and post-test answers, they did not calculate the statistical significances of the means. Therefore, although the data appears to suggest promise, the significance of this trend cannot be validated. Thus, further investigation would be required in order to assert the real significance of the change.

**Trends overall.** The overall increase in mean between the pre (3.7) and the post (4.73) test question concerning the knowledge about college was 1.03. It may also be of significance that on the pre-test, the question concerning knowledge about college yielded the lowest mean score for every school group out of all six questions on the pre-test. The second largest change in
mean was the students’ perception of their families’ ability to pay for college, which had increased by 0.17 (pre= 4.14, post= 4.31). The means for the remaining questions concerning whether or not the students wanted to attend college, how much they thought college will help their futures, and how likely they are to attend college all increased as well. However, the increases were minimal: 0.12, 0.02, and 0.04 respectively. A complete summary and breakdown of the changes in means between the pre- and the post-test questions can be found below in Table 4.2. While the data available does not allow for significance testing, the change in means provides some optimism for further investigation.

Table 4.2 Overall changes in mean between the pre- and post-test answers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Pre-test mean</th>
<th>Post-test mean</th>
<th>Change in mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Do you want to attend college?</td>
<td>4.79</td>
<td>4.91</td>
<td>+ 0.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How much do you know about college life?</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>4.73</td>
<td>+ 1.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you think your family can afford for you to go to college?</td>
<td>4.14</td>
<td>4.31</td>
<td>+ 0.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How much do you think college will help your future?</td>
<td>4.84</td>
<td>4.86</td>
<td>+ 0.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How likely are you to attend college?</td>
<td>4.74</td>
<td>4.78</td>
<td>+ 0.04</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Another important result to emphasize was the total number of first generation college students attending the program. Out of the 173 pre-tests, only 11 students reported that they knew no one in their family who had gone to college. This result indicates that only 6.4% of the participants from these schools were first generation college students. Given that college access
programming is supposed to be aimed at targeting this population, this may have limited the impact of the program.

**Trends by school.** The most significant trend found when disaggregating data by school was the school group with the largest number of first generation college students, group D, and the school group coming from the school with the largest percentage of minority students, group A, had the largest changes in mean for their answers between the pre- and the post-test.

Group D had 7 out of the total 11 first generation college students in their group. This group was tied for the largest change in mean for knowledge about college at 0.8, and they also had some of the largest changes in means for the questions concerning future expectations: how much do you think college will affect your future (0.09) and how likely are you to attend (0.06).

A summary of the changes in mean for each question is displayed in Table 4.3

**Table 4.3 Changes in mean between pre- and post-test answers for school group D**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Pre-test mean</th>
<th>Post-test mean</th>
<th>Change in mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Do you want to attend college?</td>
<td>4.80</td>
<td>4.92</td>
<td>0.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How much do you know about college life?</td>
<td>3.62</td>
<td>4.42</td>
<td>0.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you think that your family can afford for you to go to college?</td>
<td>4.12</td>
<td>4.25</td>
<td>0.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How much do you think college will help your future?</td>
<td>4.83</td>
<td>4.92</td>
<td>0.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How likely are you to attend college</td>
<td>4.74</td>
<td>4.8</td>
<td>0.06</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The alternative school in which group A was from had the largest percentage of minority students when compared to the other three groups. According to the National Center for
Education Statistics, the racial makeup of the school is 61% Black, 15% White, 20% Hispanic, and 4% two or more races. This school group had the lowest pre-test means out of all four school groups for every single pre-test question. With that being said, group A had the largest changes in mean when concerning current knowledge and dispositions: do you want to attend college (0.8) and how much do you know about college life (0.8). However, this group had some of the lowest changes in mean for the questions discussing future expectations; potentially suggesting that more emphasis of the program needs to be placed on future planning and expectations. Table 4.4 presents the changes in means for each answer for this school group.

Table 4.4 Changes in mean between pre- and post-test answers for school group A
Pre-test n=5, post-test n=5

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Pre-test mean</th>
<th>Post-test mean</th>
<th>Change in mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Do you want to attend college?</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How much do you know about college life?</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you think that your family can afford for you to go to college?</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How much do you think college will help your future?</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How likely are you to attend college</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Group B, the AVID group, was also of interest because it was the only school group that contained negative changes in mean for some answers. When examining their changes in mean for each answer, which are summarized in table 4.5, the answers that yielded negative means were the questions asking about future expectations: how much do you think college will affect your future, and how likely are you to attend college. Although the changes in mean were very
small, -0.09 and -0.01, it was still worth calling attention to the fact that the questions prompting future expectations yielded negative changes in mean. Further investigation would be necessary in order to examine whether or not these negative changes are of significance.

Table 4.5 Changes in mean between pre- and post-test answers for school group B
Pre-test n=54, post-test n=44

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Pre-test mean</th>
<th>Post-test mean</th>
<th>Change in mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Do you want to attend college?</td>
<td>4.85</td>
<td>4.95</td>
<td>0.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How much do you know about college life?</td>
<td>3.76</td>
<td>4.30</td>
<td>0.54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you think that your family can afford for you to go to college?</td>
<td>4.18</td>
<td>4.30</td>
<td>0.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How much do you think college will help your future?</td>
<td>4.91</td>
<td>4.82</td>
<td>-0.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How likely are you to attend college</td>
<td>4.74</td>
<td>4.73</td>
<td>-0.01</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Group C, the school group from Virginia, did not appear to have any changes in mean that were worth calling attention to; besides the fact that all of their means did increase from the pre-test to the post-test. A complete summary of their changes in mean between the pre- and post-test answers can be found below in Table 4.6

Table 4.6 Changes in mean between pre- and post-test answers for school group C
Pre-test n=25, post-test n=24

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Pre-test mean</th>
<th>Post-test mean</th>
<th>Change in mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Do you want to attend college?</td>
<td>4.96</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How much do you know about college life?</td>
<td>3.96</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>0.54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you think that your family can afford for you to go</td>
<td>4.16</td>
<td>4.58</td>
<td>0.42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to college?</td>
<td>4.92</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------</td>
<td>----</td>
<td>------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How much do you think college will help your future?</td>
<td>4.92</td>
<td>4.96</td>
<td>0.04</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Discussion**

Based on the results from the program audit and the secondary data analysis, it appears that the First Look program provides a useful contribution to the development of knowledge about college and the exposure to the college environment. The emphasis on those areas was indicated by the specific content of the program found within the program documents such as the First Look program overview and the First Look grant proposal, in addition to positive changes in mean for the knowledge about college life in the secondary data analysis. As research by both Oakes et. al (2002) and Perna (2002) on successful outreach programs asserted, establishing college awareness through exposure to a college environment is essential for making college accessible for students.

**Recommendations**

Recommendations based on the findings will assist the First Look program in maintaining critical key aspects of a successful college awareness program. In addition, recommendations will include critical additions the program can incorporate to enhance the success of the program. Recommendations are outlined under the four primary areas identified by prior research that include: 1) creating a college-going culture or identity, 2) promoting academic rigor, 3) having a parental involvement component, and 4) containing program specific components. In addition creation of a website and suggestions for better pre- and post-data collection are outlined.
Creating a college-going culture or identity. As cited in the literature review a college-going culture can be defined “as one in which students find encouragement and help from multiple sources to prepare them with knowledge needed for college success” (McKillip et. al., 2013 p. 530). As discussed in the Results Chapter, the First Look program met four out of the six research components involving creating a college-going culture or identity. First Look program should continue its focus on: 1) receiving college-going support, 2) the goal of college attendance, 3) a college visit, and 4) college awareness or exposure.

Despite this success, the program also has areas that are in need of improvement in this category, which include having teachers who are knowledgeable about college access and emphasizing different student cultures.

Providing teachers with more resources. As research by Oakes et. al (2002) highlighted, the success of college outreach programs depends not only on the students, but also on having high quality teachers in general. The First Look Program currently does not have any measures in place to ensure that teachers become knowledgeable about college access in order to help reinforce and sustain the experience that their students gained by participating in First Look.

In order to assist teachers in becoming better advocates of college access and serving as resources for their middle school students concerning college access, the First Look Program should provide resources for teachers to use. One way to do this would be to provide the head teacher, who arranged the visit, with a packet of resources, lesson plans, and other college access curriculum tools to take with them back to their school. By providing teachers with their own copy of materials concerning college access, they will have easily accessible resources to consult and use in their classrooms in order to continue the efforts of First Look.
Another more long-term improvement would involve the First Look Program developing a Continuing Education Credit concerning college access for middle school students and how middle school teachers can promote college access with their students. This would engage teachers directly with the topic as opposed to merely having a list of resources on a website for them to navigate through on their own. Having high-quality teachers who are informed on college access is key in continuing the efforts of the First Look Program. Although the First Look program might provide the initial introduction to the college environment, after the students leave UNC-CH; it becomes the responsibility of the teachers, who see these students every day, to continue the efforts of promoting college for these middle school students and even their families.

Emphasizing different student cultures. As a means to better emphasize different student cultures, the First Look program should select school groups to participate, who embody the ideal population of college access programming. Findings indicated that the target population might not be attending the First Look program currently. Research cited in the literature review asserted that college access programming is targeted at minority, low-income, or first generation students. After using the National Center for Education Statistics’ website (NCES) to examine the racial distribution of the schools participating in the program for the 2013-2014 school year, it appears that over 50 percent of the schools attending (57.1%) came from schools with over 50% white students, which suggests that the target population is not being exposed to the First Look program (NCES School Search 2011-2012). By allowing a larger number of school groups with a majority of white students to attend, the program is depriving vital information from the school groups who need it the most. It is important to recognize that rural schools with a majority of white students might also be in need of the services offered by college access programming.
Out of the 28 schools found on the NCES website, nine were identified as being located in a rural area, and of this nine, six schools had over 50% of white students. However, a larger emphasis still needs to be placed on school groups with mostly minority students, both within the First Look program and within the realm of college access programming in general. In addition to focusing on targeting more minority students, the program also needs to focus on reaching more first generation college students.

When completing the secondary data analysis of the four school groups, only 11 out of 173 students identified as first generation college students (6.4% of participants). These questionnaire answers indicated that the target population for college access programming, specifically first generation college students, is not attending this program. The need to target both minority students and first generation students was also illustrated in the secondary data analysis. It was illustrated by the fact that school group A and school group D, the groups with the largest number of first generation college students and minority students, had the largest changes in means for each question between the pre- and post-test. Although further investigation is necessary to further legitimize these changes in mean, these results indicate that this program has the potential to be most beneficial for groups with larger numbers of first generation college students and minority students, thus supporting what prior research has asserted in regards to the target population for college access programming (Swail et. al, 2012).

In order to properly reach the target population identified in college access research, the First Look program should begin advertising and promoting the program more towards schools that have larger populations of minority, low-income, and first-generation college students. There also should be some screening questions added to the application that asks teachers about the specific racial and socioeconomic makeup of their student population at their middle school.
For example, one question on the application could ask teachers to check the box if their student population or even their team of students is primarily made up of minority students. By increasing the standards for selectivity, the First Look Program could begin focusing their efforts on the right targets for college access programming in middle school. As the 2012 report of the National Survey of Pre-College Outreach Programs indicated, 85 percent of the 374 pre-college outreach programs surveyed had identified low-income students, first-generation college students, and historically underrepresented minorities as their targeted population (Swail et. al, 2012). In order to truly be considered a successful college access program, the First Look Program needs to begin focusing it’s energy and resources on the right population of students, specifically those students who come to rely on this program as the means to receive this exposure to the college environment.

**Promoting academic rigor.** After examining the program documents and program content at large it was discovered that First Look had no major emphasis placed on promoting academic rigor to the middle school students. There is no time built into the program schedule for receiving academic support or promoting specific skills essential to academic success. Placing more of an emphasis on academics therefore is a key recommendation. When examining the prior research of effective components of college outreach programming, all three of the research studies examined in the literature (Corwin et. al, 2005; Oakes et al., 2002; Perna, 2002), emphasized the need to focus on academics and academic rigor within the program. The key components of promoting academics through programming, found in the aforementioned research studies, include: having access to a college preparatory curriculum, encouraging students to take a rigorous academic curriculum, receiving academic support, promoting academic skills, providing SAT/ ACT training, and having scholarships or tuition
reimbursement. Despite the emphasis placed on academics in research, the program audit of First Look revealed that the program only mentions academics specifically one time throughout the program.

Given this result, the First Look program needs to make academics and academic rigor more of a focus in the program. One key way to do so would be to incorporate a distinct academics section into the classroom portion of the program. A key time to do this would be to integrate into the presentation on how to get into college. Given that academic performance beginning in middle school and continuing into high school is key for college acceptance, this part of the presentation could serve as guide for what middle school students can begin to think about now in order to set them on the right track towards college (Noeth & Wimberly, 2005). It is recommended that additional information be added to the PowerPoint that is shown to the students the day they visit campus outlining the classes needed to attend college and noting that college exams such as the SAT and ACT need to be taken during high school. This academic section would give examples of where students could find academic support both now and in the future, mention key study skills that are necessary to master in order to achieve academic success, and encourage students to challenge themselves in school (Oakes et al, 2002; Perna, 2002).

**Parental involvement component.** Involving parents in the college access environment is a key element missing in the First Look program. The program audit of First Look found that the program did not have any specific parental involvement components. Currently, the only way parents are involved is if they chaperone the field trip, and given that there are only around 5 to 8 parent chaperones per school group participating in the program, many parents are being left out
of this crucial experience. In addition, no follow-up information was given to the student’s parents after their child participated in the First Look program.

All three sources of research cited in the literature review (Colyar et. al, 2005; Oakes et. al, 2002; and Perna, 2002) claimed the need for parental involvement in an effective college outreach program. Therefore the First Look program needs to find a way to include this population, either directly by having parents participate in the First Look program or indirectly by providing them with information about the program and resources for college access, in the college access conversation.

Two ways to in which the First Look program could involve parents would be to host a few parent open houses throughout the school year and to send home a pamphlet or bulletin home with each student to let the parents know about the program and where they could find more information.

The parent open houses could be held on various Saturdays throughout the school year and should invite middle school parents to come to UNC-CH. These open houses should be similar in style to the regular First Look program for kids, with a classroom portion and a campus tour portion, but the classroom portion could be modified in order to focus on how parents can help their students reach college. In order to target the right population of parents, invitations could be emailed out to various counselors or teachers of schools that the regular First Look program would target.

The classroom portion should focus on: how to support their middle school students now in order to help their student get accepted into college in the future, where to find resources for financial aid and the college application process, and how can a college education benefit their son or daughter. Then, the undergraduate student tour guides should take the parents on a tour of
campus. Some of these parents may have never seen a college campus or learned about college firsthand on a college campus, therefore, exposing parents to college through open house days could give them the information they need to encourage their student to set their goals on being accepted into college.

However, not every parent will be able to attend an open house day for various reasons, such as lack of child care or lack of finances or transportation necessary to travel to UNC-CH for the program, therefore, the next suggestion provides parents with information concerning college access without them having to travel to UNC-CH for the program. Besides a parent open house, another way to reach the parents would be to create a pamphlet or a bulletin to give to the teachers to send home with the kids after they return from the First Look program. These pamphlets could be printed in both English and Spanish in order to make the information more accessible for Hispanic students and their families. The program would offer a Spanish version of the pamphlet, because Hispanic students are a major minority group targeted by college access programming (Swail et. al, 2012). The information on the pamphlet would explain where their child went and why they went, the benefits of receiving a college education, tips for how parents can help their middle school students now to help them get into college, and a list of resources, where the parents could go to get more information. The pamphlet would spark their interest in what their child did at a college and what they could do to help get their child into a college in the future.

Program specific components. The program specific components are additional pieces of the college access-programming puzzle that are related explicitly to the program and the general program operations. Thus, these components tend to focus less on program content and more on the execution of the program. Evaluation of the program noted that First Look was
addressing all key elements. For example, one of the major components of this category is whether or not the program begins by 8th grade. Given that First Look is targeted solely at the middle school population, the First Look program does meet this goal. Other key elements include: placing students in peer groups for tours, involving a university in the programming, having knowledgeable counselors as guides, highlighting co-curricular activities, utilizing guides as mentors, and highlighting the cost related to the benefits. It is recommended that the First Look program keep all of these key elements in place as the program moves forward.

**Additional Recommendation to Support a First Look Website**

Currently, the First Look program lacks its own website. This presents a challenge for teachers, middle school students, chaperones, and parents at some point before or after the program. The creation of a website could continue to foster college access and awareness long after a school group has attended the program because it could provide additional resources for not only the middle school students, but also their parents and teachers. The resource portion of the website could build upon other college access initiative websites such as: CFNC.org, KnowHow2GO.org, educationplanner.org and collegeboard.org. Also, the website could have discussion boards and forums in which students, parents, and even teachers can ask their questions about college and college access and get answers. This resource would be a means to provide continued mentorship to middle school students after they have left UNC-CH, which Corwin et. al. (2005) highlights is part of their essential nine elements of college outreach. The implementation of this website for the First Look program could have a tremendous impact by further supporting the recommendations made above. In addition, the website could strengthen the collection process of First Look evaluation measures, and the website could link site users to additional college access efforts on UNC-CH’s campus.
Creating a college-going culture or identity. Developing a website would benefit not only students by giving them additional college-going support and resources, but also it could provide additional support to high-quality teachers.

If the First Look program had its own website, it could have a resource tab specifically for teachers. Having a hub of college access resources all in one place for teachers would make it easily accessible for teachers to find and to use. Also, having an individualized website would make it easier for teachers to find more information specifically about the program itself and how to apply to the program.

In addition to providing more resources and information for teachers, having a website would enable the program to reach a wider audience by providing more publicity for the program. This increased publicity could prompt new school groups, who could greatly benefit from this knowledge about college, to learn about the program and apply. Thus, this could assist in reaching the target population of college access programming and emphasizing different student cultures.

Promoting academic rigor. The website could further the efforts to promote academic rigor by creating a “For Students” tab that could contain resources and information on how to develop good study skills, where they could find academic support, where they could go to receive SAT or ACT training, where they could find scholarships to pay for college, and what a rigorous academic curriculum consists of in high school. The student section of the website could also have a discussion board where students could post questions and get answers from First Look Guides. Creating this section of the website could create a network for both recent program participants and past participants, who have now moved onto high school. This network
would allow for all past participants to receive ongoing support and information about college
and academic success from the program that gave them their first look at college.

**Parental involvement component.** The creation of this website could also increase the
efforts to immerse parents in the college access environment. The website could feature a tab
specifically “For Parents.” This tab would contain information about college, the benefits of
having a child go to college, and resources on what they can do as parents to help their child get
into college, how to help your student apply to college, how to get financial assistance, and even
a discussion board for parents to ask questions about college and get answers from members of
the First Look team. By creating a tab on the website for parents, they would be able to access
the information at any time or any place, even years after their student had participated in First
Look.

**Improving evaluation collection measures.** Currently without a website, it is a
challenge to collect questionnaires and evaluations from students and chaperones, because the
program is forced to rely on the collection and completion of paper questionnaires either at the
end of the program or through the mail.

Thus, having a website would also make it easier to collect program evaluation measures
on a more consistent basis, because the teachers and chaperones as well as the students could
access them at any time after they have completed the program. This is important because it
would potentially eliminate the risk of not collecting any evaluations for a year or not having all
of the middle school students complete a post-test. Also, collecting these forms of evaluation
electronically would make it easier and quicker for the First Look program to organize and
synthesize the answers yielded from these evaluations. Having the answers organized and
synthesized by the computer would require less manual work for the program staff and would provide efficient evaluations and feedback on the program.

**Linking users to other college access efforts.** The First Look program is not the only college access initiative in general or on UNC-CH’s campus. Therefore, having a First Look website with links to the websites of other college access efforts, such as the UNC-CH’s First Generation College Committee or UNC-CH’s Project Uplift, would enable students, parents, and teachers to easily find other programs with the same focus as First Look. These links to other websites could be beneficial in introducing other programs that can serve as the next step in college access programming after these middle school students have participated in First Look.

**Implications for the field**

This study was aimed at examining current research of effective components of college access programming and comparing it with the components of the First Look program in order to highlight successful practices in addition to finding areas in need of improvement. Based on the areas in need of improvement, changes and additions to the program were suggested in order to not only enhance the First Look program itself, but also to suggest an effective model of a one-day college access program for middle school students. Therefore, by explaining how the successful components of the program were executed in addition to offering suggestions in order to modify the shortcomings of the program, this evaluation of First Look seeks to provide guidance on how to develop more programs like First Look in order to support the development of more college access programming initiatives strictly for middle school students.

Although this research focused on the First Look program specifically, the methods used in this research in addition to the best practices presented based on prior research and the recommendations made have broader implications for college access efforts overall.
As previously mentioned in the literature review, it is often times difficult to evaluate the effectiveness of these programs based on the number of students in these programs who eventually enroll in college, because these programs historically have a difficult time being able to track students after program completion (Perna, 2002). Thus, this research presents the completion of a program audit as a proposed means for solving this problem of determining program effectiveness that Perna presented, and as a means of evaluating the effectiveness of other college access programs in the future.

Also, prior research indicated that one-day programs, such as First Look, are currently not very common. In fact, according the 2012 Survey of Pre-college outreach programs, of the 374 programs surveyed, not a single one was merely a day long program, let alone a two hour program, instead the majority of the programs were either more than one full academic year or one full academic year total (Swail et. al, 2012). Therefore, this research seeks to show how one-day programs can serve as noble efforts in impacting college access programming. By recommending a means to structure these programs in accordance with the effective components of college access programming, this type of college access programming has the potential to provide a substantial contribution to the realm of college access.

Limitations

The major factor limiting this study is time. Having less than one year to complete this research has kept me from being able to collect additional questionnaire data that could be pertinent to the secondary data analysis portion of this research. Therefore, I had to focus on evaluating a limited number of pre- and post-student questionnaires from the spring semester of 2014. Also, I have had to forgo obtaining interviews from the program director, undergraduate student leaders, middle school participants, and chaperones, which could have been used to get
more specific information about the program, and it could have provided various perspectives on the program. Also, if more time were available, I would attempt to create a longitudinal study of middle school students participating in the First Look program to determine how many First Look participants eventually applied to college.

Also mainly due to time constraints, this research only examines the effectiveness of one specific early college access program for middle school students. This limits the spectrum of successful practical applications of program components that have been deemed effective by prior scholarly research. In order to develop a more comprehensive model of what early college awareness programs should look like, more programs targeting middle school students would need to be evaluated.

Another limitation to this research is incomplete and uncorrelated data. When given previously collected data from the First Look Program, the chaperone or teacher evaluation forms were inconsistent. They were all from various years and schools and there were not any teacher or chaperone evaluations collected for the 2013-2014 school year. Also, there were different numbers of student pre-tests and post-tests for various schools, thus meaning that some may have been lost or unequal numbers of students completed the pre-tests and post-tests for various schools. For example, in school group D, students completed 89 pre-tests, but there were only 67 post-tests to further examine. These factors hindered the ability to effectively evaluate all of the data for the secondary analysis. Another factor that limited the ability to evaluate the data effectively is the lack of significance testing completed by the First Look program between the changes in pre-test and post-test means. Without the presence of these statistical tests, truly significant changes in means are unable to be identified.
Determining whether something is effective is a very subjective concept. This audit chose to examine an early college awareness program to see how closely it contained specific components that research has highlighted as critical components to have in place for the most success. This is one method for deeming programming effectiveness. Other methods, such as longitudinal studies of program participants or participant interviews, look for different aspects of program effectiveness that were beyond the scope of the study.

The final limiting factor of this research is my personal involvement with the program. I have worked as an undergraduate leader of the First Look program throughout the 2013-2014 school year. Given that I have worked on the program from the inside, I have a fairly extensive knowledge of the program’s goals and operations. Although this can be considered an asset to my research, it also can be considered a limitation because I am used to experiencing the program through one point of view, that of an undergraduate student leader. Also, given that I was previously involved with the program, it may have introduced biases about the program into this research. The potential presence of these biases would not have occurred if an outsider had completed this research.

**Avenues for further research**

Although this research presents an example of a model for a one-day college access program for middle school students, more research on other one-day programs similar to First Look should be examined in order to determine and confirm the best practices for this type of programming. By examining and comparing the practices of other programs, one could find better ways to achieve key components of effective programming for not only the First Look program, but also the realm of college access programming in general. In addition to examining other one-day programs to assert the program’s effectiveness, a longitudinal study of First
Look’s program participants should be completed as a means to determine how many program participants eventually applied and enrolled in a college. The completion of this longitudinal study would depict how effective the program was at “igniting a child’s dream of a college education” (Julian-Fox, 2012, p.1).

Also, it would be of significance to re-examine or re-audit the First Look program in a few years, hopefully after the program makes modifications and collects more pre- and post-questionnaire data from the middle school participants. This research would seek to examine how changes to the program affected the program itself as well as the future participants, their families, and their teachers. The re-audit would allow for researchers to enter in all of the data collected from multiple years of pre- and post-tests in a manner that would allow for them to run statistical significance testing in order to examine whether the changes of mean between the pre- and post-tests actually indicate a significant trend.

Conclusion

Through this program evaluation, a model for what an effective early college awareness program for middle school students looks like has been presented. Having a model that highlights successful components of an early college awareness program makes it easier to develop effective programs that can engage middle school students as much as possible in college preparation. Engaging students in conversations about college throughout their early adolescent years can help set them on the path towards enrolling in college and ultimately receiving a college degree. Not only does First Look get them thinking about whether or not they would like to attend college in the future, but also having effective programs that outline the college planning process gives them an idea of what they need to do throughout middle school and high school as students in order to be accepted into college. Being accepted into college and
receiving a college degree has become an increasingly prevalent topic as it has become almost a requirement to go to college in order to scratch the surface of the job market (Carnevale et. al, 2010). Therefore, now more than ever, it is important to examine ways in which college access programming efforts can be evaluated and reproduced elsewhere in order to help as many students get accepted into college as possible.

Table 5.1 Research components analysis for First Look after the improvements have been made

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Does First Look meet it currently?</th>
<th>Items Met</th>
<th>Items Not Met</th>
<th>Improvements made to meet items NOT met currently</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Creating a college-going culture or identity | Meets Majority                    | 4         | 2             | - giving teachers a resource packet the day of the program  
- website tab for teachers  
- eventually developing CEU credit courses on how to promote college access amongst their students  
- bringing in more school groups that embody the target population for college access programming: minority, low-income, and first generation students |
| Promoting Academic rigor               | No                                | 1         | 4             | - adding an academics focused portion to the classroom segment of the program that would provide information and resources about: where to find academic support, how to develop key study skills, where to find SAT or ACT training and where to find scholarships  
- adding more on a student section of the First Look website |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Does First Look meet it currently?</th>
<th>Items Met</th>
<th>Items Not Met</th>
<th>Improvements made to meet items NOT met currently</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Parental Involvement Component</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>-hosting parent open house days</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-involving parents</td>
<td>-creating a parent’s section of resources and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-providing parental college awareness</td>
<td>information on the First Look website—including</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-assisting families and students with college applications and financial aid</td>
<td>information about where to get help with college</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>forms</td>
<td>applications and financial aid forms and other</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>support services</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>-sending home a pamphlet explaining what their</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>student did at First Look and how they as parents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>can build upon this experience</td>
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<td>Program Specific Components</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>-starting by 8th grade</td>
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<td>-placing students in peer groups for tours</td>
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<td>-involving a college</td>
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<td>-having knowledgeable counselors as guides</td>
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<td>-highlighting co-curricular activities</td>
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<td></td>
<td>-utilizing guides as mentors</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-highlighting cost related to benefits</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Figure 5.2 UNC First Look Logic Model after implementing improvements
*All program improvements are bolded and starred*

**Problem:** Research states that college readiness begins in middle school and there are not many college access programs for this age group in NC (Noeth & Wimberly, 2005).

**Objective:** To create program that introduces the concept of college to middle school students (*and their parents*) in order to motivate these adolescents to set their goals on a college degree.

- **Inputs**
  - Undergraduate Student Leaders
  - UNC-CH Classroom
  - Essential Materials: PowerPoint presentation, markers, pre- and post-questionnaires, college video
  - UNC-CH Visitor’s Center
  - *First Look Website
  - *UNC-CH professors and admissions staff (for parent open houses)*

- **Outputs/Resources**
  - Activities:
    - Classroom information portion: college video, mini informational classes, lesson on how to get to college and how to pay for it, Question & Answer session and *an academics presentation
    - Campus Tour
    - Who we reach: *5th - 8th grade minority, low-income, or first generation college students
    - Teachers and chaperones
    - *Parents or guardians of the middle school students*

- **Outcomes/Impact**
  - **Short Term**
    - Get students excited about college and talking to their friends and family about it
  - **Intermediate**
    - Provide all program participants, their parents, and teachers resources to use about college on the First Look website
  - **Long Term**
    - Have program participants go to college
References


Education Amendments of 1972 Title IX, 20 USC §§ 1681-1688


Swail, W., Quinn, K., Landis, K., & Fung, M. Educational Policy Institute, (2012). 2012 handbook of pre-college outreach programs. Washington, DC.


THE CHALLENGE
The primary goal of First Look is to ignite a child’s dreams of a college education. We believe this is an important and much needed contribution to our State’s strategy to strengthen and provide educational opportunity for young people throughout North Carolina. As stated in a recent article in Triangle Business Journal (April 30, 2010), North Carolina trails the nation in young college graduates. Further, David Gergen, Professor of Public Service at Harvard reminds us, “We have to remember what made us the most dynamic nation in the world and can do so again: education and innovation.”

Current research shows that college readiness begins in middle school, especially for those who are first in their families to attend college. Research further reveals that visiting a campus increases applications to college. The ACT Policy Report states, “College readiness should be an expectation and a goal for all students – regardless of their educational and career aspirations. To be successful in the service, information, and technology-based U.S. economy, workers need the skills and credentials that postsecondary education provides. Given the long-term course taking and postsecondary planning that college and workplace readiness requires, students must begin the college readiness process as early as middle school.”

UNC Visitors’ Center plays an important role in creating awareness about college opportunities to elementary and middle school children. Since Fall 2008 the UNC Visitors’ Center has introduced over 3500 upper elementary and middle school children to the concept of college – academics, arts, athletics, student life and history – with First Look, a program designed to inspire and motivate kids to set their goals on a college degree. This program is designed to appeal to the age group who most need to hear and learn about the college experience.

UNC Visitors’ Center can also exercise an even stronger role. Currently, we are unable to accommodate nearly 46% of the requests we receive. First Look is offered twice a week and reservations fill very quickly. During the 2009-10 school year, there were 34 additional requests for the program that, regretfully, had to be turned down. In other words, 2184 students and their teachers, parents, and chaperones missed out on the program last year, from 18 different counties in North Carolina and from 4 different states. This fall, reservations filled up completely for the entire semester by October 1.
AN OPPORTUNITY TO SERVE MORE STUDENTS
UNC has the opportunity to serve a far greater population of middle school children if we are able to increase the availability of First Look offerings. This proposal seeks to accomplish the following:

• Describe the current program and
• Outline specific actions that would allow us to increase First Look by one additional day a week. This addition would make First Look available to an additional 1,500 students per school year and create for these children, a strong first connection to the college experience and specifically to UNC.

THE CURRENT PROGRAM
From start to finish, First Look is designed to show kids what it is like to be a college student and to inspire and motivate them to set their goals on a college degree. First Look is more than a tour of Carolina’s campus. It is a specialized tour targeted to young people who are just beginning to think about their futures. First Look includes an experience of college life-- the realities, the roadblocks, the motivations and personal stories of college students. With First Look, students spend their time on campus with college students, walking, talking, learning, and eating with them. They experience the culture of college by what they see, hear and feel.

The typical First Look itinerary involves four important elements:

• Motivating kids to go to college
• Learning about the college student experience
• Discussing financial resources
• Touring the campus

UNC Visitors’ Center has partnered with other UNC programs and groups to ensure each of these elements is addressed. Here’s how First Look delivers the half day experience.

Motivating Kids to Go to College
UNC Visitors’ Center and the North Carolina Health Careers Access Program (NC-HCAP) share the goal of motivating kids to go to college. The conversation between the school group and the Pre-College Outreach Coordinator about the value of college is dynamic, age-appropriate and inspiring and reinforces the idea that college is a path to a career.

Science LIVE is an example of what science “looks like” at college. Morehead Planetarium and Science Center provides Science LIVE to student groups - live experiments that explore every day science and bring it to life. These experiments are performed by UNC student staff and, not only dazzle and amaze, but also, for this program, give a glimpse into the world of science at college and the career opportunities that a college education provides.

School groups are introduced to a general overview of college through a 6.5-minute lively video made exclusively for the program by a Carolina student titled, “This is College Life.”
Learning about the college student experience
A panel of college students provides honest discussion about college life. This interactive question and answer session between current Carolina student/tour guides and middle school students helps shape first impressions of the college experience. Kids ask their questions and get candid answers. What is the most difficult part of college for you? Did you come to college knowing what you wanted to be? What is a typical day for a college student? What advice would you give to someone in middle school who plans to go to college? What tools and techniques do you use to be successful in college?

Discussing Financial Resources
Many students in our tour groups want to go to college but believe they are not able to afford it. They cannot imagine how they will pay for college. The director, students, and Carolina Covenant Scholars offer their individual stories to address these issues and furnish information and resources so that students learn that college can be in their future. The goal is to “change the script” for these middle school students by providing a consistent message of hope and opportunity along with concrete ways to fulfill their dreams of attending college.

The financial discussion establishes a common vocabulary of terms – scholarship, grants, work-study - with examples of how these work. “Carolina meets the full demonstrated need of any admitted student who applies for aid on time” is a powerful message to the middle school students and to the parents, teachers and chaperones in the group.

One of our Carolina Covenant Scholars explains the program – the promise on this campus to eligible low-income students who are admitted to Carolina that they can enroll without worrying about how they will pay for it. And, if they work 10-12 hours per week in a Federal Work-Study job, they can graduate debt-free. The Carolina Covenant includes academic and personal support services to help Covenant Scholars make the most of their college experience and succeed in completing their undergraduate degree program. The Carolina Covenant Scholarship was the first of its kind for a public, state-supported university and, now, similar programs exist in more than 80 colleges across the United States.

The personal student-to-student connection is fundamental to First Look. The power of the Scholar’s story thwarts the “old script,” offers the authentic reality of possibility and hope, and combats financial barriers to attending college.

Touring the campus
The goal of the First Look program is to spark a child to declare, “I’m going to college!” To that effort, we use all available means to ignite an interest - the arts, the sciences, sports, student life. Young student visitors get to visit lecture halls, classrooms, libraries, landmarks, and other points of interest. Carolina student guides are UNC Visitors’ Center staff and North Carolina Teaching Fellows from UNC-Chapel Hill School of Education. We take kids to Kenan Stadium. We encourage groups to visit the Carolina Basketball Museum. We collaborate with Ackland Art Museum or suggest the Department of Dramatic Arts for an acting class. Carolina student guides for First Look are trained to make unique and interesting connections for their group while on tour, such as a personal introduction
to a favorite professor, a campus leader, a National Championship athlete, or a friendly roommate. Some groups have been invited in to explore the newsroom at the School of Journalism and Mass Communication. Others have had an opportunity to meet and talk with author and professor Paul Cuadros – in Spanish! Over and over, UNC-Chapel Hill is used only as an example of a university since colleges come in “all shapes and sizes.”

**Eating in the Dining Hall**
Lunchtime is an opportunity to add to the college visit experience. Sometimes, groups bring bag lunches and eat outside UNC Visitors’ Center. There is no indoor space available for lunch in the Morehead Building, so, in cold or inclement weather, students return to eat inside the school bus. Another choice is Franklin Street and, at the teacher’s request, UNC Visitors’ Center emails a list of “fast food” options with addresses, contacts and prices.

The preferred option is to coordinate lunch on campus in Rams Head Dining Hall. Carolina Dining Services has been helpful by offering school groups a reduced rate of $8.50 per student but the cost still puts this aspect of the program out of reach for most groups. Teachers are forced to make other arrangements for lunch.

Those who are able to take advantage of eating lunch in Rams Head Dining Hall report that it provides something unique to the program. Experiencing the environment, the food choices, the campus population “up close” reveal different aspects of college. School kids interact and observe college students in a social setting and, while still in the midst of the experience, have time to comment, discuss, question and process the day informally with their teachers and peers, leading to further understanding and insight.

*Note: A typical tour itinerary is included in Appendix A.*

**SPECIFIC ACTIONS**
UNC Visitors’ Center requests support for two important actions to ensure the continuity and growth of **First Look**

**Action 1**
**First Look** has created interest and excitement throughout North Carolina elementary and middle schools. Teachers, parents and kids recognize the value of the specially focused tour. We want to ensure that UNC Visitors’ Center has the funding and capacity to ensure the reach and service of **First Look** for the next five years.

We are asking for dedicated resources to serve this very critical student population. UNC Visitors’ Center requests funding to support, expand, and build upon the **First Look** program at UNC-Chapel Hill.

**Action 2**
In addition, we believe that **First Look** is a replicable model that can be duplicated throughout the UNC system. With additional support, we propose to offer **First Look** to other state college visitor programs. It is an important program and a useable template for colleges and universities in North Carolina to provide middle schoolers with this comprehensive experience.
FUNDING INVESTMENT

Action 1: Dedicated Resources to Assure Continuity and Growth

We request the following room, materials and staff be scheduled in Morehead Planetarium and Science Center for First Look for three days per week at the time slot of 10:30 – 11:30.

- Science Stage, by far, is the best venue for First Look with its seating capacity, “stadium seating,” large audio-visual screens, and digital and scientific equipment in place. (Actually, the building itself is impressive and children are awed from the moment of entrance.) The partnership between UNC Visitors’ Center and Morehead Planetarium and Science Center is vital to the success of the First Look program on the UNC-Chapel Hill campus. The Planetarium is set up to host school groups. Therefore, school group drop off and pick up, bus and chaperone parking, ease of transition into the building, bathrooms, the actual location on campus, and into UNC Visitors’ Center is key to running the program smoothly. Additionally, we request that UNC student staff of Morehead Planetarium and Science Center are scheduled to provide a segment of Science LIVE to school groups.

Additional Funding for affordable lunches in campus dining facilities, travel, presentation materials, and coordination.

- Rams Head Dining Hall, made available so students can continue with the Carolina experience. Carolina Dining Services has been helpful by offering school groups a reduced rate of $8.50 per student but the cost still puts this aspect of the program out of reach for most groups.

- Travel scholarship: Three schools had to cancel their reservations last year because the school had cut field trips for students. Travel expenses eliminate a barrier to visiting. The cost of round trip bus trip plus driver on average is $150. We propose to have available funding for five fully paid trips per year. However, funding will be provided on a shared cost basis. In other words, schools in need of support funding must apply and will be asked to provide a portion of the trip funds. UNC Visitors’ Center will provide the difference.

- Presentation Materials: Specially designed and focused materials will be created as handouts for each student along with a teaching and reinforcement template for teachers. A bookmark, a map, or an information piece will focus and solidify the actual experience of visiting campus. Further support materials, pre- and post-visit lesson plans, important contacts, and field trip guide will be made available to teachers as supplement.

- Administrative support: Communication with schools and other campuses; logistics of UNC System-wide Symposium; logistics of creating model program template; outreach to teachers, principals, schools; student guide training, development of partnerships, and expanding experiences in academics, arts, athletics, and student life; database management.
EVALUATION
A survey will be sent to teachers via email after their visit. Each segment of the itinerary and experience will be offered for evaluation on a rating scale of importance to the total experience. Teachers will be asked to make recommendations and suggestions to the program.

Action 2: Building the program
UNC System-wide Symposium: The goal is to address the need for a college-educated population, state wide. Successful programs exist to prepare students for college in public, private, and charter schools. And visiting college campuses are often included in these programs. Middle school students do tour college campuses. But the missing element is the actual “vision” and exposure to the experience of college, breaking down the barriers to attending and maximizing the desire to attend. A campus tour is incomplete without addressing the realities, finances, and power of a college education.

UNC abundantly contributes to education state wide with research, resources, and expertise. It is time now for us to develop a combined, cohesive strategy to “show college” to the middle school students in our state. We propose to gather two campus representatives from each of the 16 UNC system universities to discuss current methods, delineate best practices, and formulate a working plan and partnership of middle school group visits throughout the UNC System. To be held in Faculty Lounge at Morehead Planetarium and Science Center.

DRAFT / Designing a UNC strategy to “show college” & inspire middle schoolers in NC

9:30 a.m. Meet n’ Greet
9:45 a.m. Introductions & Keynote Speakers
Suzanne Gulledge, Professor of Education, UNC-Chapel Hill
Howard Lee, Executive Director of the NC Education Cabinet, composed of leaders of public schools, community colleges and public and private universities
10:45 a.m. Round Table Discussion: What strategies does your campus/visitors’ center utilize to partner with middle schools to “show college?”
11:15 a.m. First Look, one model
Presentation – Science LIVE, NC-HCAP, video, about the Carolina Covenant, Q & A
12:15 p.m. Lunch break – box lunches
12:45 p.m. Campus school tour with NC Teaching Fellows & UNC Visitors’ Center staff
1:45 p.m. Possibilities & New Ideas - Small group break-out session
Motivating students to go to college
Experiencing college
Touring the campus
Financial resources
2:15 p.m. Group summaries & discussion
2:45 p.m. Next steps & responsibilities
3:00 p.m. Adjourn
FUNDING INVESTMENT

$8.75 provides First Look for one student
For LESS than the price of a movie ticket,
a child can be placed on the path to a college degree.

$3.00 insures space, equipment, Science LIVE staff and materials for a child
$5.00 eating lunch on campus in Rams Head Dining Hall to “feel like a college student” by
reducing the price of lunch to $3.50 per student
$0.25 supports administrative assistance to coordinate campus visits
$0.25 funds bus travel for low income schools
$0.25 provides support materials for teachers, parents, and students such as pre-and
post-lesson plans, resources, contacts, take-home materials

FUNDING INVESTMENT

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<td>Venue &amp; Science LIVE</td>
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<td>Lunch</td>
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APPENDIX A

SCHEDULE
The typical program itinerary follows:
9:30 a.m.  Arrival at UNC Visitors’ Center.
Welcome and introduction to First Look
6.5-minute video “This is College Life”
Attributes of a great college student
How to pay for college by a Carolina Covenant Scholar
Introduce Carolina student-guides
Q & A with Carolina students
10:30 a.m.  Campus tour – academics, the arts, student life, athletics, history
11:45-12:30  Lunch
12:45-1:45  Basketball Museum/Football Center/Ackland Art Museum/UNC Drama Dept./Other
PROGRAM FEEDBACK

Thanks to you and your staff for giving my students a visit they will remember forever.
- Connie Whaley, Pikeville, NC

It was an eye-opening experience for (our middle school students) and I believe I saw some future Tar Heels in the group. We look forward to visiting again!
- Megan Shaner, GEAR UP, Johnston County Schools, Smithfield, NC

The itinerary was great and the tour was great....I know the day made a huge impression on the kids.
- Craig, Tom Sykes Recreation Center, Charlotte, NC

So many of our students are now excited about going to college! We overheard several students and parents saying, “This is the best field trip I have been on.” Your student tour guides were outstanding – so well-spoken and kid friendly. Person County is “singing your praises.” We look forward to bringing a new group next year.
- Annette Taylor and Beth Gillis, 5th grade, Person County, NC

I just want to tell you that this was one of the best trips we have ever been on (and we go on a lot of trips!). I am so proud to be a Carolina parent!!! You (and the students) really knew your audience. You did an absolutely fantastic job and every kid had a GREAT time. They did not stop talking about the experience on the way back to school. The tour made such an impression--even the Duke fans were (slightly) swayed! Thank you so much for everything. It was perfect. They feel inspired and really "got" the college experience. Please let the students who led the tours know how wonderful they were.
- Amy Burke, 8th grade, Durham Schools, NC

As you may know, our students are First Generation College bound, many coming from low-income families. For many of our students this was their initial exposure to North Carolina colleges and universities, and you have truly left a lasting impression on their future collegiate endeavors and selection.
- Elan E.S. Moore, Upward Bound, Maryland Multicultural Youth Center

About the Program Director

Missy Julian Fox, Director of UNC Visitors’ Center
Boston University, Masters in Education, Reading 1975
UNC-Chapel Hill, Bachelor of Arts, English 1973

A Chapel Hill native, Missy Julian Fox literally grew up on Franklin Street inside the family’s clothing store, Julian’s College Shop. Graduating from UNC-Chapel Hill in 1973, she packed up her B.A. in English and moved to Boston, Massachusetts to work as a medical editor for the Lahey Clinic.

Called to teach, she received her M.Ed. in Reading from Boston University. Missy’s teaching career started in Massachusetts and brought her back to Chapel Hill and the local school system. She was granted tenure at Seawell Elementary School.
Missy’s devotion to children and learning has been a life-long passion. She became a leader in a Triangle-wide movement to start a children’s museum in mid-1980. This effort birthed Blue Marble, A Children’s Center for Design and Invention. She served as Chair of the Board of Directors during its 10 year reign to provide programs to stimulate and energize children to learn to “think like designers” and utilize creative problem-solving techniques along with their imaginations. Blue Marble collaborated with public and private schools, The Museum of Art in Raleigh, NC, the Morehead Planetarium, UNC Hospitals, the Ronald McDonald Houses of North Carolina, and a host of others.

For over 15 years, Missy personally led the family business, Julian’s. This included strategic business and marketing planning, managing daily operations; staff training and administration; product development; rebuilding and enhancing the image of the family’s landmark clothing business. This required hands on involvement in every aspect of the business. Missy extended the business to include both in store and on line retail as well as a home furnishings store. She doubled the customer base, expanded customer diversity, and more than doubled sales.

In 2008, Missy and her daughter launched Foxglow, Inc., a line of luxury candles they conceived, designed, and developed to offer “scents of place.” Currently, the candles are available in nine stores in North Carolina as well as online.

Missy joined the University as Director of UNC Visitors’ Center in October, 2008.

*First Look* grows a community of advocates of higher education and is a natural “training ground” to develop Carolina College Advising Corps leadership. On another front, *First Look* creates a population “ready” for the service and support in high school with the Advising Corps, Upward Bound and other support programs. Research shows that it is critical to connect a path from classroom to college and place a real picture of the how and why of graduation and further studies in middle school students.

Our hope is that every middle school child in North Carolina sees college as a possible option. *First Look* is a missing link to increasing North Carolina’s high school graduation rate and that of post-secondary education.

Did you see the news article and short video of *First Look* in action featured on the UNC homepage at [http://www.unc.edu/spotlight/cultivating-college-2/](http://www.unc.edu/spotlight/cultivating-college-2/)?

To date, from Fall 2008 – Spring 2013, UNC Visitors’ Center’s *First Look* program has served 14,000 upper elementary and middle school children from 49 counties in North Carolina – an average of 1,400 students each semester.
Appendix B. First Look Overview (2013)

**UNC Visitors’ Center “First Look” Program**

for Upper Elementary and Middle School Students

*First Look* introduces middle school children to the concept of college – academics, arts, athletics, student life, global education and campus living – through a program designed to inspire and motivate kids to set their goals on a college degree.

*First Look* is more than a tour of Carolina’s campus. It is a specialized program targeted to young people who are just beginning to think about their futures. With *First Look*, students spend their time on campus with college students, talking, learning, and eating with them. They experience the culture of college by what they see, hear and feel.

The typical *First Look* itinerary involves four important elements:

- Motivating kids to go to college
- Learning about the college student experience
- Discussing financial resources
- Touring the campus

The program is available through UNC Visitors’ Center during the regular semester and includes a student-made video made exclusively for the program entitled, “This is College Life.” School groups are divided into small classes for an eleven-minute mini-class on a particular aspect of college – student life, the arts, academics, campus living, and athletics - engaged with a Carolina student as “professor.” A question and answer session with current Carolina students follows with a personalized tour of campus to visit lecture halls, classrooms, libraries, landmarks, and other points of interest. Guides are UNC Visitors’ Center student staff, Carolina Covenant Scholars, Order of the Bell Tower Ambassadors and North Carolina Teaching Fellows from UNC-CH School of Education, all trained and schooled by UNC Visitors’ Center specifically for *First Look*.

Although a walking tour of a campus provides a glance of a college, it is not enough to give context and meaning by itself. Therefore, *First Look* uses a host of tools to explore the logistics, vocabulary and specifics of college. The mini-class creates potential “experts” on a particular topic. Together again back on the bus or at school, they then can share their “expert” knowledge with each other.

The interactive question and answer session helps shape first impressions of the college experience. Kids ask their questions and get candid answers. What is the most difficult part of college for you? Did you come to college knowing what you wanted to be? What is a typical day for a college student? What advice would you give to someone in middle school who plans to go to college? What tools and techniques do you use to be successful in college?

Many students want to go to college but believe they are not able to afford it. They cannot imagine how they will pay for college. A Carolina Covenant Scholar offers their individual story to address these issues and furnishes information and resources so that students learn that college can be in their future.
In many cases, **First Look** will actually “change the script” for middle school students. The personal student-to-student connection is fundamental. **First Look** creates an authentic picture of college life, of possibility and hope, and combats the barriers to attending college.

An itinerary typically looks like this:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9:40 am</td>
<td>Arrival at UNC Visitors’ Center and to classroom.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10-11 am</td>
<td>Welcome and introduction.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6.5 minute video “This is College Life”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>How to pay for college: A Carolina Covenant Scholars’ story &amp; presentation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Go to “class” – mini-classes taught by Carolina students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Class Review</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Introduce Carolina student-guides</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Q &amp; A with Carolina students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-12</td>
<td>Campus tour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 – 12:45</td>
<td>Lunch</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There are three options for lunch for school groups:

1. UNC Visitors’ Center can arrange for lunch in one of the campus dining facilities, Rams Head Dining Hall, to further supplement the college experience. The cost for the school year of 2012-2013 is $8.10 per person (including tax).
2. If you prefer to eat lunch on Franklin Street, we can email you a list of restaurants available for groups.
3. And, our beautiful campus is a perfect picnic ground if you wish to bring bag lunches and eat on the lawn. Please note that there is no indoor facility on campus to accommodate bag lunches for school groups in case of cold or inclement weather. The only option is to board the bus for lunch.

Additional programs on campus can also be arranged, such as those at the Morehead Planetarium and Science Center, Ackland Art Museum, Wilson Library, the Carolina Basketball Museum, and more.

**GOALS**

**Satisfies Core Competencies for 5th – 8th grades in speaking and writing, among others.**

To build a foundation for college and career readiness, students must have ample opportunities to take part in a variety of rich, structured conversations – as part of a whole class, in small groups, and with a partner. Beign productive members of these conversations requires that students contribute accurate, relevant information; respond to and develop what others have said; make comparisons and contrasts; and analyze and synthesize a multitude of ideas in various domains.

**Enhances and expands the Independent College Access Network (ICAN):**

**First Look** is in perfect alignment with the annual performance report from North Carolina General Administration (NCGA) and the goal to Increase the number of students from underserved populations who receive information about college access.

- Increase the number and enhance the quality of ICAN initiatives to improve the retention, persistence, and graduation of at-risk students.
- Increase the participation of students from underserved populations in ICAN programs.
- Assist at-risk students, improving their retention, persistence, and graduation.

For further questions or to reserve a group for **First Look**, please contact

**UNC Visitors’ Center**

919-962-1630 or email mjfox@unc.edu
Appendix C. Middle School Tour (2010)

September 20, 2010

MIDDLE SCHOOL TOUR
*MUST INCLUDE on tour

McCorkle Place
Unsung Founders Memorial
Davie Poplar*
Person Hall (point out Memorial Hall)*
Old Well and Old East*

Explore Polk Place
South Building – James K. Polk's room
Campus Y – commitment to public service on campus
Hanes Hall – almost a whole building for career services
CLAS Room*
Carroll Hall, lecture hall, classrooms down left side (newsroom)
Wilson Library – up middle to peek inside reading room*
The Pit*
Lenoir
Student Union*
Bell Tower
Kenan Stadium*

Good-byes. Guides may show the way to Rams Head dining hall and not accompany group – according to time limitations of guide.
Appendix D. First Look Wish List (2013)

First Look, A Program of UNC Visitors’ Center

First Look introduces middle school children to the concept of college – academics, the arts, athletics, student life, campus living, global education, as a pathway to a career. First Look is an initiative to address college awareness and access to higher educational options, and, in the process, lower the high school dropout rate in North Carolina.

First Look goals for middle school participants:

- To see college as a possibility
- To understand that college creates possibilities, opportunities and career paths
- There are ways to pay for college. Don’t let the cost of college stop you from going.

The program is designed to create a lasting, meaningful experience of college and to inspire kids to set their goals on a college degree. First Look is not about a specific, particular university or school. Instead, the campus is used to teach kids about college. First Look is essential to create an authentic picture of college life, of possibility and hope, and to combat the barriers to attending college.

www.unc.edu/spotlight/cultivating-college-2/

WHY MIDDLE SCHOOL?

- Research shows that college readiness should begin in the middle school, given the long-term course taking and postsecondary planning that college and workplace readiness requires. (ACT Policy Report)
- 65% of US jobs (almost 2/3) will require some form of postsecondary education by 2020. (Lumina Foundation)
- Even as early as age 11, thinking about college as affordable with need-based financial aid enhances school-focused goals. (Psychological Science, 20(4), 414-418, Destin, M., & Oyserman, D., 2009)

WHY IS FIRST LOOK IMPORTANT TO UNC?

- First Look has the potential to reach into every county of North Carolina through our most valued institutions - our schools, churches and grassroots non-profits.
- In addition to the experience students have, First Look provides families, teachers and administrators from each county valuable positive firsthand knowledge and experience with UNC.
- In a period where the university has had many challenges, First Look offers UNC a positive way to connect with the people of this state in a very tangible fashion.
- First Look focuses on the UNC system and brings it to everyone whether they go to college or not.

HOW DOES FIRST LOOK OPERATE NOW?

- First Look served 14,250 kids in 51 NC counties since fall of 2008.
- 50% of schools accommodated this year were “returning” and 50% were new schools to First Look.
- Our goal is to accommodate as many schools as we can every year. However, we turned away more than 5,100 kids in 62 schools in the 2013-14 school year alone. (15 of the 62
had previously experienced First Look.

- Carolina student volunteers deliver program (near-peers)
- Middle school students complete pre- and post-tests about their college knowledge and take away information about UNC
- Program organized and Carolina guides trained and schooled specifically for First Look by director of UNC Visitors’ Center using specially created guide materials that promote the opportunities for them to learn about their own campus, become life-long advocates for education and directly and positively impact a future generation for North Carolina.

**First Look Wish List**

**OPERATIONS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Cost</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1/2 Administrative Assistant</td>
<td>$16,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Materials for Participants</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wristbands</td>
<td>$1,330</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;College ID&quot; Printing</td>
<td>$300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Printing/Pre/Post-Test/Other</td>
<td>$1,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Materials Total</td>
<td>$1,930</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Campus Classroom Rental [$50 each time]</td>
<td>$2,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Operations Cost</strong></td>
<td><strong>$23,560</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**PROGRAM ADVANCEMENTS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Cost</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>First Look Summer Fellows (5)</td>
<td>$15,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;One-Time&quot; Expenses</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New &quot;This is College&quot; Film</td>
<td>$9,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Symposium - Expand UNC System</td>
<td>$2,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre/Post-Lessons / Online Course</td>
<td>$2,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>&quot;One-Time&quot; Expenses Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>$14,000</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Program Advancements Cost</strong></td>
<td><strong>$29,000</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Additional Funding for affordable lunches in campus dining facilities, travel, presentation materials, and coordination.

- Rams Head Dining Hall, made available so students can continue with the Carolina experience. Carolina Dining Services has been helpful by offering school groups a reduced rate of $8.33 per student but the cost still puts this aspect of the program out of reach for some groups.

- Travel scholarship: Three schools had to cancel their reservations last year because the school had cut field trips for students. Travel expenses eliminate a barrier to visiting. The cost of round trip bus trip plus driver on average is $150. We propose to have available funding for five fully paid trips per year. However, funding will be
provided on a shared cost basis. In other words, schools in need of support funding must apply and will be asked to provide a portion of the trip funds. UNC Visitors' Center will provide the difference.

- Presentation Materials: Specially designed and focused materials will be created as handouts for each student along with a teaching and reinforcement template for teachers. Further support materials, pre- and post-visit lesson plans, important contacts, and field trip guide will be made available to teachers as supplement.

- Administrative support: Communication with schools and other campuses; logistics of UNC System-wide Symposium; logistics of creating model program template; outreach to teachers, principals, schools; student guide training, development of partnerships, and expanding experiences in academics, arts, athletics, and student life; database management.

Appendix E. Sample Student Questionnaire (2013)

(The post-test is exactly the same except question #5 is omitted)

Please read the following questions and circle your response.

Do you **want** to attend college?

1. No 2. I don't think so 3. I don't know 4. Possibly 5. Yes!

How much do you know about college life?


Do you think that your family can afford for you to go to college?


How much do you think college will help your future?

1. Not at all 2. Very little 3. I don't know 4. May help some 5. Yes, a lot!

Has anyone in your family gone to college?

No one 1. I don't know 2. Yes, a parent 3. Yes, a family member

How likely are you to attend college?

Appendix F. Teacher/Chaperone Evaluation (2008)

Thank you for visiting Carolina! We hope you all enjoyed being on campus with us for First Look. Please do let us know if you have suggestions, recommendations, or comments to share about your visit. We are committed to our goal of providing a meaningful vision of "college" for your students. We hope to see you back at Carolina!

*Rate the following 1 out of 5 with 5 being the most beneficial/enjoyable*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pre-visit communications</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Was experience well organized?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Welcome and introduction to the day at Carolina</td>
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<tr>
<td>Video</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Carolina Covenant speaker &amp; how to pay for college</td>
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<tr>
<td>“Class” sessions</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q &amp; A</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Campus tour</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Tour guides</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Tour Information</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Lunch</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basketball Museum/Other activity</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Your students’ response to program</td>
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<tr>
<td>How helpful did you find the program</td>
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<tr>
<td>The overall experience</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How likely are you to recommend this program to someone else?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

What were the highlights of your First Look experience? Do you have suggestions to improve the program? Comments?
Purpose/Stated Objectives:
First Look is a college access initiative in which middle school students of North Carolina are exposed to the concept of college by experiencing an interactive tour of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Middle school students arrive on campus and are led by current college students to experience facets of college life including academics, athletics, student life, campus living, the arts, global education, and college as a pathway to a career. The program is not specifically focused on UNC-Chapel Hill or any North Carolina school in particular. Rather, the university is utilized as an outlet for kids to create an interactive illustration of what the general college experience feels and looks like.

The main goal of the First Look program is to promote access to higher education with the goal of preventing North Carolina’s counties and school district drop-out rates from increasing. The First Look program’s established goals are for students to see college as a possibility, to understand that college creates opportunities, and that there are feasible ways to pay for college. It is the goal for students who attend the First Look experience to have increased interest in college, increased knowledge about college preparation, and to also break down barriers to explore college. It is also a goal for students to begin to consider college as an option, put more effort into their academic performance, and for students to engage in more activities to learn and gain knowledge about themselves (Fox, n.d).

While there are several goals set for the First Look program, there has not been a systematic way of collecting data on the students to verify the effectiveness of the program.
However, the program has been highly successful in cultivating interest and participation in attending. Since being created and implemented by director Missy Fox in 2008, 14,000 students from 49 counties in North Carolina have attended the First Look experience. For this past academic year, 3,000 students have enrolled to attend First Look and 3,100 students had to be turned away due to the high demand of wanting to participate in the program.

**Theory Base:**

There is no defined theory base that the First Look program is based upon. However, it appears the program uses some aspects of Cognitive Behavioral Theory. The main goal of the program is that by getting middle school students on a college campus will allow them to begin to imagine themselves on a college campus in the future. This aligns with the idea of guided imagery. The college-aged tour guides create an atmosphere for students that allows them to experience every aspect of the typical college campus including trips inside classrooms, walks around the campus, a lunch inside the dining hall, and they end the trip with visits to the basketball and football stadiums. The students are also asked to role-play as college students in the classroom when they are quizzed about what they learned on the interactive tour.

**Delivery/Mechanism:**

The First Look program occurs over the course of one school day for middle school students. Students arrive on campus at 9:45 and will initially learn about the college experience. They are introduced to the college guides and a video is shown to give an overview of the college experience. Students are then broken up into small groups and go to separate classrooms to be presented to various aspects of the college life. Tour guides also address the financial barriers of attending college and offer information on how to make college affordable and an opportunity for all students.
Students are then taken on a walking tour of the whole campus in which they are exposed to typical college classrooms, the library, and landmarks of the campus. Students meet and wrap up the walking tour in the Kenan football stadium and are then taken to Rams Head dining hall to experience a typical meal in a college dining hall. Students finish up lunch, review their day and what they learned, and head back to their schools around noon. The tour is highly interactive for the purpose of creating an illustration for students to imagine themselves on a college campus.

**Evaluation Data:**

For the past five years, the only data utilized to evaluate the First Look program has been a teacher evaluation form given to teachers after their visit to campus. The evaluation asked teachers to scale their experience, from 1 being not satisfied to 5 being highly satisfied, with the various aspects of the program. The teachers are also asked to comment on their experience as a whole at the conclusion of the survey. This data has been saved for the past five years, however, it has not yet been analyzed to examine teacher perception of program efficiency. Volunteers of the First Look program have now begun planning how they will analyze the data and make changes to the program as a result.

In addition, student data has not yet been collected or analyzed to assess if program goals have been reached. However, the program creator and director has recently begun creating a pre-test and post-test survey for students that will help assess the efficiency of the program and if program goals have been accomplished. It is predicted that 2000 students will take the newly created pre and post-test surveys this spring and more decisions will be made to utilize date to evaluate the program.

**Availability/Cost:**
The First Look program is offered around two to three times per week and usually occurs on Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Fridays. The program is completely free for schools to attend and the only cost students have to pay is $6.95 for lunch. While the program is offered rather frequently, the program fills up very quickly and becomes unavailable for schools that do not sign up fast.

All tour guides of the program are student volunteers that either work for free or are compensated through work study. The First Look program only spends money on takeaway gifts for students including wristbands with the program’s name on it and certificates of completion. The program also has to pay a cost to rent out classrooms and for paper and supplies for tour maps.

The program has a high time cost for Missy Fox and students that volunteer for the program. First Look is looking into opportunities for funding to help fund for more paid positions. Specifically, First Look is looking for an employee or graduate assistant to help collect and evaluate data to make the program more empirically supported with the goal of spreading the program to other college campuses.

**Applicability to School Counseling:**

While the First Look program is still working on empirical support of its efficiency of accomplishing its set goals, there is significant interest in the program. Schools repeatedly attend the First Look program and several more schools have been trying to attend. School counselors should highly consider enrolling students in the First Look program or programs like First Look. Allowing for students to interactively experience college life and a university campus allows for students to start envisioning themselves attending college and realizing that it may be an option for them.
It is of special importance for middle school students to experience a college campus at their developmental stage. By allowing for students to visualize themselves attending college at that age, they will be more likely to set goals and be better prepared to be academically successful. While the First Look program only lasts for one day, it has the potential to set a large impact on students in imagining themselves as future college students.

Appendix H. First Look PowerPoint (2013)
Appendix I. Academics PowerPoint Slide (2013)

Push yourself. Find out what classes you need to take in high school to meet college entrance requirements. Colleges look for students who've taken classes that have challenged them. In addition:

- Study hard, turn in all assignments on time and do your best to earn good grades.
- Read, read, read!
- Participate in civic or other extracurricular activities to acquire a well-rounded education.
Appendix J. First Look Guide Application (2014)

UNC VISITORS’ CENTER APPLICATION for FIRST LOOK

Today’s date:

Name:
Phone:
E-mail
Campus address:

Home address:

Year at Carolina: Expected graduation date:

Current major or interested career path:

Do you have previous work experience with children? If you do, please list and explain here:

Check those areas in which you have applicable knowledge and experience:

❑ Leadership
❑ Public Relations
❑ Childhood development
❑ Recreation
❑ Storytelling
❑ Classroom instruction
❑ Computer knowledge
❑ CPR/first aid
❑ Public speaking
❑ Computer knowledge

What activities are you involved in on campus?

Please provide contact information for two professional references who know you well. These may be people who know you from school, church, jobs, sports or community activities. Do NOT list any family members as references:

**Name of first reference:
   How does this person know you?
   E-mail: Phone:

**Name of second reference:
   How does this person know you?
   E-mail: Phone:

All volunteers are expected to participate in 8-10 hours of training before leading a tour for the First Look program. First Look is held from 10 am – 12 pm. Please list days you are available during this time for the Fall semester:

Why did you decide to go to college?

Additional comments, questions, concerns, ideas, things we should know?? Please email your completed application to dedinkin@email.unc.edu
Appendix K. First Look Brochure (2014)

FIRST LOOK: A PROGRAM OF COLLEGE ACCESS FOR NORTH CAROLINA’S MIDDLE SCHOOL CHILDREN

First Look is an initiative to address college awareness and access to higher educational options, and, in the process, lower the high school dropout rate in North Carolina. First Look introduces middle school children to the concept of college – academics, the arts, athletics, student life, campus living, global education, as a pathway to a career. The program is designed to create a lasting, meaningful experience of college and to inspire kids to set their goals on a college degree. First Look is not about a specific, particular university or school. Instead, the campus is used as an illustration and backdrop to teach kids about college. First Look is essential to create an authentic picture of college life, of possibility and hope, and to combat the barriers to attending college.

First Look goals for middle school participants:
✓ To see college as a possibility
✓ To understand that college creates possibilities, opportunities and career paths
✓ There are ways to pay for college. Don’t let the cost of college stop you from going.

Further, we hope the First Look experience...
• Increases interest in college
• Increases knowledge about college preparation
• Breaks down barriers to exploring college

And...
• More consider college and put more effort towards school
• Students take more and harder classes
• Students engage in more diversified activities to learn and develop knowledge about themselves

The typical First Look itinerary involves four important elements:
• Motivating kids to go to college
• Learning about the college student experience
• Discussing financial resources
• Touring the campus

First Look is more than a tour of Carolina’s campus. It is a specialized program targeted to young people who are just beginning to think about their futures. With First Look, students spend their time on campus with college students, walking, talking, learning, and eating with them. They experience the culture of college by what they see, hear and feel.
The program begins in a college classroom with a student-made video overview of the college experience. Middle schoolers are divided into small groups for an eleven to fifteen minute mini-class on a particular aspect of college. Next, a Carolina Covenant Scholar offers scholarship information and resources to pay for college, often the number one barrier to considering college as a possibility. First Look Guides gather for an interactive question and answer session to help shape first impressions of college before the walking tour of campus to visit lecture halls, classrooms, libraries and landmarks. The personalized tour supports the classroom experience, illustrating the vocabulary, logistics and different aspects of college life. Carolina students volunteer as First Look Guides and are trained and schooled specifically for the program.

Read more about First Look and see a short video on the program at www.unc.edu/spotlight/cultivating-college-2/

For reservations, please sign up online at www.unc.edu/visitors.
For questions regarding First Look, please call UNC Visitors’ Center at 919-962-1630.

FIRST LOOK ITINERARY
(TIMES ARE APPROXIMATE)

LEARNING ABOUT COLLEGE
10:00 a.m.
  • Welcome and introduction of Carolina student guides
  • Video overview of the college experience (7 minutes)
  • Carolina students will present different aspects of college in small groups
    o student life
    o the arts
    o academics
    o campus living
    o athletics
    o global learning
    o careers
  • Class Review

DISCUSSING FINANCIAL RESOURCES / ADDRESSING BARRIERS TO GOING TO COLLEGE

  • How to pay for college: A Carolina Covenant Scholars’ story & explanation of options
  • Introduction to resources @ college and in schools
  • Q & A with First Look guides

TOURING THE CAMPUS
11:15 a.m.
  • Campus tour to visit classrooms, student union, library, landmarks, etc.
  • Wrap-up in Kenan Stadium
    o Final questions
    o Concluding remarks
    o Roadmap

EXPERIENCING COLLEGE
12:00 p.m.
  • Lunch @ Rams Head Dining Hall