**INTRODUCTION**

As one of four primary community colleges in Atlantic Canada and the sole community college on Prince Edward Island, Holland College has supported the learning goals of local, regional, national, and international students since 1969 (MacKinnon, 2008). Similar to other jurisdictions, students’ learning goals change as they align their post-secondary training with the demands of the workforce. In Atlantic Canada, college programs are also responding to changes impacting workforce demographics where it has been predicted that the 18 to 24 year old population in the region would decrease by 14% between the years of 2008 and 2018 (Maritime Provinces Higher Education Commission, 2007). Such a decrease in enrolment would result in an inevitable reduction in college applications from regional high school graduates. The changing employment market combined with a decrease in student population was a catalyst to launch a new academic model at Holland College in 2011.

The intent of the model was to address this drop in student enrolment and better meet the learning needs of career changers, partial degree earners, international students, and those seeking individual course credits (Association of Canadian Community Colleges, 2010). The new academic model provided students with the opportunity for increased academic choice as they registered for individual courses or an entire college program (Howard, 2011). This approach was envisioned to address the decline in regional, secondary school graduates by marketing individual courses alongside full programs thus making registration more streamlined and attractive to a broader applicant population. To remain abreast of shifts in students’ career choices, enrolment patterns, and overall satisfaction of the college experience, Holland College has systematically and strategically monitored changes in student enrolment patterns. Unfortunately, the traditional, college-initiated status forms and satisfaction surveys did not capture relevant data regarding changes in student enrolment. For example, the traditional documentation failed to identify reasons why a student requested changing their full-time enrolment status to part-time status or decided to discontinue their studies. Was the change due to dissatisfaction with the program, a career opportunity, financial struggles, or perhaps a personal family reason? Given the inadequacy to capture reasons why students changed their program status it is not possible to make informed modifications to current programs or create new programs. Furthermore, the dependence on faculty and administrators to interpret or infer reasons or explanations to changes in program status for a student was not reliable given that

**ABSTRACT**

Instruments designed to track student changes in higher education are essential for monitoring program development in competitive higher education markets. As part of a developmental evaluation, a student questionnaire was developed and piloted to examine attrition rates in college programs. The purpose of the questionnaire was to explore factors influencing students’ decisions to leave college programs prior to completing their studies. Three factors believed to influence students’ decisions to withdraw from programs were related to wellness, finances, and the overall college experience. A survey consisting of 20 items was piloted with 30 individuals who imagined they made the decision to leave a college program. This pilot study provided an overview of the changing Canadian post-secondary enrolment landscape, instrument enhancement, and procedures for analysis followed by ideas for implementing the questionnaire.
The development of the instrument that would ultimately be influencing student changes in enrolment. This study was a post-secondary environment. The key evaluation question that was to create an instrument that would capture student attitudes and behaviours that were correlated with student attrition resulted in unreliable data that led to the development of a new tool. The goal was to explore whether the reliability of the information that was collected was based on the perspective of the faculty member rather than the student that gave the faculty member the information. Consequently, the reliability of the information collected was questionable because it was second-hand and for the limited time that was collected, it was too small to make any generalizations.

The implications of this method of determining student attrition resulted in unreliable data that led to unproductive speculation (often negative) by college faculty, administrators, and senior executives regarding student attrition. For example, a decline in student enrolment for a particular course or program was due to poor quality instruction, which was highly speculative and damaging to faculty morale. On many fronts, a well-designed survey which could be completed by the student would serve the accountability needs of the institution and thereby guide future development of college programs in a manner better suited to the learning needs of students.

The sustainability of college programs in the competitive 21st century education market is dependent on knowing the learning needs of students. Without monitoring student enrolment changes within various college programs and then piloting the instrument with a focused group of participants to evaluate its effectiveness and applicability in a post-secondary environment, the key evaluation question posed for this study focused on determining factors influencing student changes in enrolment. This study was launched acknowledging these factors would guide the development of the instrument that would ultimately be used to survey students whenever they made a course or program change.

Developmental Evaluation Framework

Given the need to create an instrument to monitor reasons influencing student attrition, a developmental evaluation framework was selected to guide the process of instrument development (Patton, 2008). The developmental nature of this evaluation is based on learning rather than accountability given the proactive initiative to create an instrument to guide the growth and prosperity of Holland College. DE is effective approaches within organizations, such as community colleges, which are observed as constantly evolving, adapting, and growing during times of change (Gamble, 2008), as was the case at the time of this evaluation. This evaluation model is also noted for its strong social innovation platform (Gribble, Kuehler, Long, & Vieser, 2012), which aligns with the mandate of Holland College. Lastly, the DE framework allowed the author to assume an integrated, consultative role within the evaluation that, in turn, challenged the author to manage personal and professional biases regarding student attrition (Rey, Tremblay, & Brouselle, 2013).

Such a participatory lens would also promote buy-in from stakeholders (e.g., college faculty, administrators, and senior executives) that would create a transformational learning opportunity within the organization. This occurrence would aid in helping stakeholders understand what is needed to meet their goals (Preskill & Torres, 2001); and subsequently promote utilization of the final instrument (Cosins & Earl, 1995).

Contextual Literature

In 2012, administrators and faculty at Holland College, one of four primary community colleges in Atlantic Canada, revised its institutional mission statement. This activity was undertaken because the previous mission statement was approximately 15 years old and no longer represented the direction of the institution. Presented as “Learning for Life in a Dynamic World,” the new mission statement described the belief that learning was a life-skill applicable throughout society (Holland College, 2010). In doing so, Holland College reaffirmed its position as an institution embedded into the social fabric of every student.

By assuming a position of lifelong learning, Holland College accepted responsibility to support students who experienced challenges within traditional program pathways. This commitment to lifelong learning also reflected the learning needs of 21st century students who will undoubtedly pursue more than one career in their lifetime.

Such mobility will be realized through training beyond an initial post-secondary program as a result of the changing job environment; a condition of today’s globalized and interconnected economy (Schleicher, 2010). The new vision for Holland College would adopt a student-centered academic model responsive to learning needs characterized by uncertainty in the workforce.

A culture of change (Fullan, 1999), regarding faculty and student attitudes towards attrition was identified as key to this investigation. This orientation was employed to open new lines of communication between faculty, part-time students, career changers, and international learners. This participation contributed to a deeper awareness of learners who presented new motivations as to why they were in college (Willcoxson & Wynder, 2010). By considering the varying contexts in which adult learners in community colleges function, that was reported to reflect institutional learning to real-life situations (Mackracher, 1996), expanded awareness of the relationships between faculty and students remained an important aspect of ensuring quality within the teaching and learning dynamic and managing student attrition. By accepting the notion that increased levels of teacher-student engagement resulted in decreased levels of student attrition (Cooling, Heagney, & Thomas, 2009), the concept of learner engagement became integral to stakeholder’s understanding of the importance of teacher-student engagement. Thus, learner engagement served as the main focus of the instrument development to capture both student and college influenced reasons regarding enrolment changes. This rationale was supported by theories of institutional learning which are described as a function between teachers, students, and content (Corso, Bundick, Haywood, & Quaglia, 2013).

Although the significance of teacher-student engagement has been linked to quality learning experiences, up to 60% of American high school students remained chronically disengaged (Stern, 2004). For reasons such as this, the importance of investigating student attrition was connected to helping faculty refine their own teaching and learning practices with a new generation of students.

With new student populations accessing community colleges, teaching could not continue as it had in the past (Canadian Education Association, 2013), because of increasing expectations on skills, work competencies, and technological advancements in industry have each contributed to a new graduate profile calling on the student to demonstrate skills beyond the scope of simple knowledge transfer. As a result, increased opportunities for learning engagement was needed to create graduates competent to compete in the new workplace (Gallup, 2013).

By examining a student engagement core model (Bundick, Corso, Quaglia, & Haywood, in press) that focused on curricular relevance, expertise, and relationships between students, teachers, and content, an opportunity was presented to make deeper connections as to why students left their program of choice. In addition, engagement in the forms of thinking, feeling, and action were presented as a result of the student believing their teachers were available, concerned, impartial, and respectful (Wentzel, 1998). This study focused on the concept of institutional learning to real-life situations (Mackracher, 1996), expanded awareness of the relationships between faculty and students, and content (Corso, Bundick, Haywood, & Quaglia, 2013).

The instrument was designed to identify areas of concern, thereby guiding the development of college programs and then piloting the instrument with a focused group of participants to evaluate its effectiveness and applicability in a post-secondary environment. The key evaluation question posed for this study focused on determining factors influencing student changes in enrolment. This study was launched acknowledging these factors would guide the development of the instrument that would ultimately be used to survey students whenever they made a course or program change.
For the Likert type items was calculated and rounded to two decimal points in order to ensure precision when applying future statistical techniques (Frankfort-Nachmias, 2006). To examine whether the scale was measuring the same underlying construct, known as the reliability of the scale, Cronbach’s alpha was calculated. To further test the applicability of the dataset, differences between the three business programs (grouping variables) and the construct as represented by three dimensions: wellness, finance, and college experience, were analyzed using a one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA).

**FINDINGS**

Although it was not expected or feasible to believe that the pseudo sample could respond entirely in the mind of a real student going through a change in their college program, we analyzed the data as if our data was representative of a real sample of students. This process would document the procedure for analysis and obtain statistical measures that would serve as indicators of how a real sample would respond and add to the instrument development.

Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Group</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Q1</td>
<td>I feel mentally overwhelmed in this program</td>
<td>MSS</td>
<td>3 (33.3)</td>
<td>4 (44.4)</td>
<td>2 (22.2)</td>
<td>1.93</td>
<td>0.98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>BA</td>
<td>4 (33.3)</td>
<td>5 (41.7)</td>
<td>2 (16.7)</td>
<td>1 (8.3)</td>
<td>2.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>TTM</td>
<td>5 (55.6)</td>
<td>2 (22.2)</td>
<td>4 (33.3)</td>
<td>2 (22.2)</td>
<td>1.89</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>12 (40.0)</td>
<td>11 (36.7)</td>
<td>3 (10.0)</td>
<td>3.10</td>
<td>0.93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q2</td>
<td>A personal medical reason requires my attention.</td>
<td>MSS</td>
<td>4 (44.4)</td>
<td>3 (33.3)</td>
<td>2 (22.2)</td>
<td>1.87</td>
<td>1.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>BA</td>
<td>7 (58.3)</td>
<td>2 (16.7)</td>
<td>2 (16.7)</td>
<td>1 (8.3)</td>
<td>1.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>TTM</td>
<td>5 (55.6)</td>
<td>1 (11.1)</td>
<td>4 (13.3)</td>
<td>3 (33.3)</td>
<td>2.11</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
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<td>16 (53.3)</td>
<td>6 (20.0)</td>
<td>4 (13.3)</td>
<td>4 (13.3)</td>
<td>1.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q3</td>
<td>Physically and mentally I feel good.</td>
<td>MSS</td>
<td>1 (11.1)</td>
<td>1 (11.1)</td>
<td>4 (44.4)</td>
<td>3 (33.3)</td>
<td>2.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>BA</td>
<td>1 (8.3)</td>
<td>4 (33.3)</td>
<td>4 (33.3)</td>
<td>3 (25.8)</td>
<td>2.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>TTM</td>
<td>2 (22.2)</td>
<td>5 (16.7)</td>
<td>4 (44.5)</td>
<td>3 (33.3)</td>
<td>2.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>4 (13.3)</td>
<td>12 (40.0)</td>
<td>9 (30.0)</td>
<td>3.87</td>
<td>1.01</td>
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<tr>
<td>Q4</td>
<td>A family medical reason requires my attention.</td>
<td>MSS</td>
<td>2 (22.2)</td>
<td>1 (11.1)</td>
<td>4 (44.4)</td>
<td>2 (22.2)</td>
<td>1.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>BA</td>
<td>10 (83.3)</td>
<td>2 (16.7)</td>
<td>1 (11.1)</td>
<td>6 (6.7)</td>
<td>1.75</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>TTM</td>
<td>7 (77.8)</td>
<td>1 (11.1)</td>
<td>5 (16.7)</td>
<td></td>
<td>1.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>19 (65.3)</td>
<td>6 (20.0)</td>
<td>5 (16.7)</td>
<td></td>
<td>1.89</td>
</tr>
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</table>

**Financial Considerations**

Q5 I cannot afford tuition for this program.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Group</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MSS</td>
<td>1 (11.1)</td>
<td>4 (44.4)</td>
<td>3 (33.3)</td>
<td>1 (11.1)</td>
<td>2.40</td>
<td>0.86</td>
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<tr>
<td>BA</td>
<td>1 (8.3)</td>
<td>3 (25.8)</td>
<td>7 (58.3)</td>
<td>1 (8.3)</td>
<td>2.67</td>
<td>0.78</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TTM</td>
<td>2 (22.2)</td>
<td>6 (66.7)</td>
<td>1 (11.1)</td>
<td>2 (16.7)</td>
<td>2.25</td>
<td>1.14</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>4 (13.3)</td>
<td>13 (43.3)</td>
<td>10 (33.3)</td>
<td>3 (10.0)</td>
<td>2.40</td>
<td>0.86</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Q6 Additional program fees, in addition to tuition, made this program unaffordable.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Group</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MSS</td>
<td>2 (22.2)</td>
<td>5 (55.6)</td>
<td>1 (11.1)</td>
<td>1 (11.1)</td>
<td>2.18</td>
<td>0.95</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BA</td>
<td>4 (33.3)</td>
<td>3 (25.8)</td>
<td>3 (25.8)</td>
<td>2 (16.7)</td>
<td>2.25</td>
<td>1.14</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TTM</td>
<td>2 (22.2)</td>
<td>4 (44.5)</td>
<td>3 (33.3)</td>
<td>3 (10.0)</td>
<td>2.11</td>
<td>0.78</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>8 (26.7)</td>
<td>12 (40.0)</td>
<td>7 (23.3)</td>
<td>5 (16.7)</td>
<td>2.17</td>
<td>0.95</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Q7 An employment opportunity outweighs the benefits of school at this time.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Group</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MSS</td>
<td>4 (44.4)</td>
<td>3 (33.3)</td>
<td>1 (11.1)</td>
<td>1 (11.1)</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>1.14</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BA</td>
<td>4 (33.3)</td>
<td>5 (41.7)</td>
<td>1 (8.3)</td>
<td>2 (16.7)</td>
<td>2.08</td>
<td>1.08</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TTM</td>
<td>5 (55.6)</td>
<td>1 (11.1)</td>
<td>1 (11.1)</td>
<td>2 (22.2)</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>1.32</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>13 (45.3)</td>
<td>9 (30.0)</td>
<td>3 (10.0)</td>
<td>5 (16.7)</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>1.11</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Table 1: Change of Enrollment Survey Items, Frequencies, Percentages, Mean, and Standard Deviation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>This is not me at all</th>
<th>This definitely applies to me</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Q8 Money has not been a problem for me.</td>
<td>MSS 3 (33.3)</td>
<td>BA 2 (16.7) 6 (50.0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>TTM 3 (33.3) 6 (66.7)</td>
<td>9 (30.0) 1.67 ± 0.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total 8 (26.7) 13 (43.3)</td>
<td>2.03 ± 0.77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q9 My commute to College takes too much time.</td>
<td>MSS 2 (22.2) 3 (33.3)</td>
<td>4 (44.4) 1.90 ± 0.96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>BA 6 (50.0) 4 (33.3) 2 (22.2)</td>
<td>2 (16.7) 1.83 ± 1.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>TTM 5 (55.6)</td>
<td>2 (22.2) 6 (20.0) 2 (6.7) 1.67 ± 0.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total 13 (43.3) 9 (30.0)</td>
<td>1.90 ± 0.96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q10 The program does not match my career aspirations.</td>
<td>MSS 4 (44.4) 3 (33.3)</td>
<td>2 (22.2) 1.73 ± 0.98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>BA 8 (66.7) 3 (25.0) 2 (22.2)</td>
<td>1 (8.3) 1.50 ± 0.91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>TTM 4 (44.5)</td>
<td>3 (33.3) 2 (6.7) 3 (10.0) 1.78 ± 0.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total 16 (53.3) 9 (30.0)</td>
<td>1.73 ± 0.98</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### College Experience Considerations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>This is not me at all</th>
<th>This definitely applies to me</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Q11 I thought I would make more friends while at College.</td>
<td>MSS 4 (44.4)</td>
<td>BA 3 (33.3) 4 (33.3) 2 (22.2) 2 (16.7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>TTM 2 (22.2)</td>
<td>4 (44.4) 1 (11.1) 2 (22.2) 2.33 ± 1.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total 10 (33.3) 10 (33.3)</td>
<td>5 (16.7) 5 (16.7) 2.17 ± 1.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q12 The quality of instruction is not what I thought it would be.</td>
<td>MSS 2 (22.2) 5 (55.6)</td>
<td>3 (33.3) 2.10 ± 0.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>BA 3 (25.0) 5 (41.7) 3 (25.0)</td>
<td>1 (8.3) 2.17 ± 0.94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>TTM 2 (22.2) 4 (44.4) 2 (22.2)</td>
<td>1 (3.3) 1.89 ± 0.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total 7 (23.3) 14 (46.7)</td>
<td>8 (26.7) 2.12 ± 0.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q13 I have lost interest in the subject matter.</td>
<td>MSS 2 (22.2) 5 (55.6)</td>
<td>1 (11.1) 2.03 ± 0.82</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>BA 2 (16.7) 7 (58.3) 2 (16.7)</td>
<td>1 (8.3) 2.17 ± 0.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>TTM 3 (33.3) 4 (44.4) 1 (11.1) 2 (6.7) 1.75 ± 0.71</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total 7 (23.3) 16 (53.3)</td>
<td>4 (13.3) 2.03 ± 0.82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q14 The subject matter in this program is not challenging enough for me.</td>
<td>MSS 2 (22.2) 5 (55.6)</td>
<td>2 (22.2) 2.20 ± 0.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>BA 2 (16.7) 5 (41.7) 4 (33.3)</td>
<td>1 (8.3) 2.33 ± 0.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>TTM 2 (22.2)</td>
<td>3 (33.3) 4 (44.5) 1 (3.3) 2.22 ± 0.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total 6 (20.0) 13 (43.3)</td>
<td>10 (33.3) 2.20 ± 0.81</td>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>This is not me at all</th>
<th>This definitely applies to me</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Q15 I am considering transferring to another program at Holland College.</td>
<td>MSS 6 (66.7)</td>
<td>BA 6 (50.0) 3 (25.0) 3 (25.0) 1 (8.3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>TTM 5 (55.6)</td>
<td>1 (11.1) 1 (11.1) 1 (11.1) 1.77 ± 0.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total 17 (56.7) 5 (16.7)</td>
<td>6 (20.0) 2 (6.7) 1.77 ± 1.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q16 I am considering transferring to a different post-secondary institution.</td>
<td>MSS 6 (66.7)</td>
<td>BA 8 (66.7) 3 (25.0) 1 (8.3) 1 (11.1) 1.67 ± 0.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>TTM 5 (55.6)</td>
<td>4 (13.3) 3 (33.3) 2 (6.7) 2.08 ± 1.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total 19 (63.3) 5 (16.7)</td>
<td>5 (16.7) 1.67 ± 0.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q17 I wish I could remain in my program.</td>
<td>MSS 2 (22.2) 4 (44.4)</td>
<td>1 (11.1) 2 (22.2) 5 (16.7) 2.53 ± 1.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>BA 1 (8.3) 6 (50.0) 3 (25.0)</td>
<td>1 (8.3) 2.50 ± 0.91</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>TTM 1 (11.1) 4 (44.4)</td>
<td>4 (13.3) 4 (44.4) 2.78 ± 1.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total 4 (13.3) 14 (46.7)</td>
<td>8 (26.7) 2.53 ± 1.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q18 Courses were not offered at a time suitable for me.</td>
<td>MSS 4 (44.4) 4 (44.4)</td>
<td>4 (11.2) 2.03 ± 0.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>BA 2 (16.7) 8 (66.7)</td>
<td>2 (16.7) 1 (3.3) 2.00 ± 0.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>TTM 3 (33.3) 12 (40.0)</td>
<td>6 (66.7) 2.33 ± 1.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total 9 (30.0) 8 (26.7)</td>
<td>8 (26.7) 2.03 ± 0.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q19 I do not feel academically prepared for this program.</td>
<td>MSS 1 (11.1) 6 (66.7)</td>
<td>2 (22.2) 2.17 ± 0.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>BA 2 (16.7) 9 (75.0)</td>
<td>2 (6.7) 1 (8.3) 2.00 ± 0.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>TTM 2 (22.2) 4 (44.5)</td>
<td>3 (33.3) 2.44 ± 1.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total 5 (16.7) 19 (63.3)</td>
<td>4 (13.3) 2.17 ± 0.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q20 I am not making meaningful connections with my teachers.</td>
<td>MSS 3 (33.3) 3 (33.3)</td>
<td>2 (22.2) 1.13 ± 1.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>BA 7 (58.3) 3 (25.0) 2 (16.7)</td>
<td>2 (22.2) 1.58 ± 0.79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>TTM 5 (55.6)</td>
<td>2 (22.2) 4 (13.3) 3 (10.0) 1.59 ± 1.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total 15 (50.0) 8 (26.7)</td>
<td>8 (26.7) 1.83 ± 1.02</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Note:** MSS: Medical Support Services students
BA: Business Administration students
TTM: Tourism and Travel Management students
Total: Total of all three student groups
Response categories are represented in raw scores with percent in brackets
M (Mean), SD (Standard Deviation)
SD has been rounded to 2 decimal places.
likely influenced by the pseudo sample combined with a small sample size.

Inferential Statistical Analysis
To explore differences in response patterns between stu-
dents enrolled in the Business Studies department in each of
the three programs (Business Administration, Medical
Support Services, and Tourism and Travel Management)
and the construct, a one-way analysis of variance (ANO-
VA) was performed. Given the multi-dimensional nature
of the construct, a subsequent ANOVA was performed using
the three sub-constructs, (i.e., wellness, finance, and college
experience) in order to explore whether one or more of
these sub-constructs was more influential in
identifying reasons (i.e., due to finance, wellness, or col-
lege experience) students changed programs. There were
no significant differences (see Table 2 and Table 3, below)
reported between Business Studies and the construct or
the sub-constructs.

DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS
Although only a small sample of pseudo-students and
programs were included in the pilot for this developmen-
tal evaluation, it was a useful analysis in the development of
the questionnaire as well as the utility of examining
differences between college programs. With respect to
questionnaire development, the fairly wide variance in re-
sponses in the pilot study suggested that the items were
functioning well and there was no need to re-word or cre-
ate new items. In terms of demographic variables, in hind-
side, we remain curious as to whether males changed
programs more frequently than females. Hence, a case can
be made to examine differences in program changes based
on gender. Although our pilot sample did not vary based
on the current academic year, it is possible that there may
be more changes in one year over another. Hence, includ-
ing the academic year remains an important independent
variable. As an aside, we were cautious of including a wash
basin full of demographic characteristics if we could not
thoroughly rationale a case for including the independent
variable.

This study has proven beneficial to advancing the question-
naire in this area. This developmental evaluation served to
create a realistic survey aimed at exploring why students
decide to leave a post-secondary program. Acknowledging
teachers and administrators have been aware of numerous
reasons why students decided to leave a program for many
years, a changing student demographic may influence the
decision to leave a program in different ways than in the
past. Therefore, responsive governance of post-secondary
institutions should strategically align with methodologies
aimed at gathering information in new ways. To further
build innovation as to how colleges may respond to new
student populations, this pilot study documented the cre-
ation and testing of an alternative strategy for gathering
data. We have made a case for post-secondary institutions
to be responsive and competitive in the 21st century edu-
cation market as it moves from a commodity-based, fee-
for-service orientation (i.e., courses for tuition) to more of
a personalized experience for the student within the con-
text of their own life world.

CONCLUSION
With the reality of a shrinking secondary student popula-
tion on Prince Edward Island and other maritime prov-
ces (Maritime Provinces Higher Education Commis-
sion, 2008), an institution such as Holland College must
accept the reality of a changing student demographic and
commit to new processes in addressing student attrition. As
post-secondary institutions redefine their mandates (Northern Alberta Institute of Technology, 2011) and
welcome new applicants in order to offset shrinking tradi-
tional enrollments, they will undoubtedly face new forms
of student attrition over the next decade. Confirmed through
the literature, student attrition can be connected to
meaningful relationships made between teachers who are
available and approachable (Crosling, Heagney, &
Thomas, 2009). By celebrating the fact that knowledge
construction leads to lifelong learning for students, this
developmental evaluation may inform institutional re-
sponses to a new wave of student attrition through the
voice of the student as opposed to the faculty member.
In doing so, post-secondary institutions would take an
innovative approach in leading their own investigations
into the management of student attrition. This study
presented a new way to investigate attrition from student
perspectives of personal wellness, finances, and what an
institution has, or has not, undertaken to support their in-
dividualized learning journey. Employing a developmen-
tal evaluation approach we demonstrated that data could
be gathered and used to inform administrative strategies
aimed at supporting the needs of the student and the fac-
ulty member. This study demonstrated the significant
level of support students required as their life experiences
blended into their time at college.

This study has contributed to the volume of research re-
garding post-secondary student attrition in three ways.
Firstly, one Atlantic Canadian community college has
been provided an opportunity to analyze student attri-
tion in a manner which did not exist prior to the launch
of the study. Secondly, other post-secondary institutions
may wish to create similar instruments to track and re-
spose to student attrition. In doing so, an opportunity
exists for institutions to create research partnerships and
learn from each other therefore expanding the academic
body of knowledge concerning post-secondary student
attrition. Lastly, this developmental evaluation presents an
opportunity for further research to be completed be-
tween traditional college students and new institutional
populations such as career changers, degree completers,
and those seeking specific courses for personal reasons.
Acknowledging an absence of information in the lit-
erature and the need to validate this instrument; further
research into this emergent attrition dynamic should be
pressed in preparation for the next decade of post-
secondary learning.

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**Appendix A**

**Change of Enrollment Survey**

Thank you for taking a few minutes to complete this Change of Enrollment Survey. The information you provide is completely anonymous and in no way can be used to identify you. This survey is a tool used by the Program Manager’s Office to inform and plan departmental activities aimed at ensuring the best possible learning and teaching environment for students and staff in the Business, Tourism, and Sport & Leisure Department at Holland College.

My Program _________________________  I am a full-time student ___  Current Academic Year _____  I am a part-time student ___

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Please indicate the extent to which each statement applies to you.</th>
<th>This is not at all</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>This definitely applies to me</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**Section 1: Wellness Considerations**

- I feel mentally overwhelmed as a student in this program.
- A personal medical reason requires my attention.
- Physically and mentally I feel good.
- A family medical reason requires my attention.

**Section 2: Financial Considerations**

- I cannot afford the tuition for this program.
- Additional program fees, in addition to tuition, made this program unaffordable.
- An employment opportunity outweighs the benefits of school at this time.
- Money has not been a problem for me.
- My commute to College takes too much time.
- This program does not match my career aspirations.

**Section 3: College Experience Considerations**

- I thought I would make more friends while at College.
- The quality of instruction is not what I thought it would be.
- I have lost interest in the subject matter.
- The subject matter in this program is not challenging enough for me.
- I am considering transferring to another program at Holland College.
- I am considering transferring to a different post-secondary institution.
- I wish I could remain in my program.
- Courses were not offered at a time suitable for me.
- I do not feel academically prepared for this program.
- I am not making meaningful learning connections with my teachers.

Please use the reverse of this page to provide additional information you feel is important to share in regards to your decision to change your enrollment status at Holland College.

We are truly sorry that you are leaving your program. If there is anything we can do to help, please do not hesitate to contact Tim McRoberts at tmcroberts@hollandcollege.com or (902) 566-9612. Thank You.