How the Merit Scholars Program of Florida's Bright Futures Funding Has Affected Student Success Among African-American Students

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To my parents

Mr. and Mrs. Curtis R. McClinton, Jr.

In Loving Memory

of

Marguerite Foshee
Vernon Foshee
Vivian French
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES .......................................................................................................... x
ABSTRACT .................................................................................................................. xii

I. INTRODUCTION .................................................................................................... 1

Research Question ..................................................................................................... 4
  Purpose of the Study ................................................................................................. 5
Significance of the Research ....................................................................................... 5
Overview of Financial Aid Situation ......................................................................... 5
Federal Level ................................................................................................................ 5
  Loan Burden and Unmet Aid ................................................................................... 6
  Enrollment ................................................................................................................ 7
  Estimated decreases in enrollment .......................................................................... 7
  Societal Impact ......................................................................................................... 9
State Level ................................................................................................................ 10
Definitions .................................................................................................................. 11
Conceptual Frameworks ............................................................................................. 13
Limitations ................................................................................................................ 16
Summary and Overview ............................................................................................ 17

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE .................................................................................... 19

Student Success: Access, Persistence, and Graduation Rates ............................ 19
  Access ..................................................................................................................... 19
  Enrollment in Higher Education in America ....................................................... 19
  Historical Events Effecting Access for African Americans .............................. 20
Student Persistence and Graduation Rates ............................................................ 22
  Factors Impacting Persistence ........................................................................... 23
Financial Aid in America ......................................................................................... 24
  Federal Level ......................................................................................................... 25
  State Level ........................................................................................................... 29
    A Shift from need-based aid ............................................................................ 29
    HOPE Scholarship ......................................................................................... 34
    Florida Bright Futures Program ..................................................................... 35
    Research on Bright Futures ............................................................................ 39
    Controversy ..................................................................................................... 42
An Overview of the Primary Literature ................................................................. 44
  Summary .............................................................................................................. 47

III. METHODS ........................................................................................................... 48

Research Question ................................................................................................... 50
Study Design ............................................................................................................. 50
Procedures ............................................................................................................... 51
  Population .......................................................................................................... 51
  Four-Year Student Cohort .................................................................................. 51
LIST OF TABLES

TABLE 1.1 ELIGIBILITY FOR MERIT OR MEDALLION SCHOLARS PROGRAM

TABLE 2.1: STATE MERIT SCHOLARSHIPS

TABLE 2.2: GOALS, CHARACTERISTICS, STRENGTHS, AND WEAKNESSES OF MERIT-BASED AID

TABLE 2.3: AWARDS AND AMOUNTS

TABLE 3.1: DATA SOURCES AND ELEMENTS


TABLE 4.2: NUMBER OF STUDENTS RECEIVING AID BY SEX WITHIN THE TEN-YEAR COHORT, 1992-2002

TABLE 4.3: NUMBER OF STUDENTS RECEIVING AID BY RACE WITHIN THE TEN-YEAR COHORT, 1992-2002

TABLE 4.4: TEN-YEAR DATA RESULTS: AVERAGE AMOUNT AND NUMBERS OF MERIT BASED & NEED BASED LOANS, GRANTS, SCHOLARSHIPS

TABLE 4.5: TEN-YEAR DATA RESULTS: BRIGHT FUTURES

TABLE 4.6: RACIAL MAKE-UP OF STUDENTS WHO RECEIVE MERIT LOAN, SCHOLARSHIPS, AND TOTAL MERIT LOANS

TABLE 4.7: TOTAL MERIT AND TOTAL NEED

TABLE 4.8: NUMBER OF STUDENTS BY RACE RECEIVING NEED BASED AID AND AVERAGE AMOUNTS BEFORE AND AFTER INCEPTION OF BRIGHT FUTURES

TABLE 4.9: AVERAGE AMOUNT AND NUMBER OF STUDENTS RECEIVING TOTAL MERIT

TABLE 4.10: FOUR-YEAR HIGH SCHOOL COHORT TOTAL NUMBER AND BRIGHT FUTURE NUMBER
TABLE 4.11: FOUR-YEAR HIGH SCHOOL COHORT TOTAL NUMBER HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATES .................................................................74

TABLE 4.12: PERCENTAGES OF STUDENT SUCCESS BY RACES/ETHNICITIES (ALL STUDENTS) .................................................................................................................... 76

TABLE 4.13: ASSUMED MERIT SCHOLARS AND ACTUAL MERIT SCHOLARS .............................................................................................................................. 78

TABLE 4.14: PERCENTAGES OF STUDENT SUCCESS AMONG THE RACES/ETHNICITIES BETWEEN ACTUAL AND ASSUMED MERIT SCHOLARS ..............................................................................................................................80

TABLE 4.15: STUDENT SUCCESS AMONG AFRICAN-AMERICAN ACTUAL AND ASSUMED MERIT SCHOLARS .......................................................................................................................... 82

TABLE 4.16: STUDENT SUCCESS AMONG AFRICAN-AMERICAN ACTUAL AND ASSUMED FEMALE MERIT SCHOLARS..................................................................................................................83

TABLE 4.17: STUDENT SUCCESS AMONG AFRICAN-AMERICAN ACTUAL AND ASSUMED MALE MERIT SCHOLARS .................................................................................................................. 83

TABLE 4.18: PERCENT OF LOW-INCOME STUDENTS WHO RECEIVE LOANS ..................................................................................................................85

TABLE 4.19: RACIAL MAKE-UP OF LOW-INCOME STUDENTS WHO RECEIVED BRIGHT FUTURES, NEED & MERIT LOANS ..................................................................................................................86

TABLE 4.20: OVERALL ACT/SAT AND GPA SCORES ..........................................................................................................................89

TABLE 4.21: ACTUAL AND ASSUMED AFRICAN-AMERICAN AND WHITE MERIT SCHOLARS, ACT, GPA, SAT SCORES ..................................................................................................................89

TABLE 5.1: DIFFERENCES IN TOTAL NEED AND TOTAL MERIT IN THE TEN-YEAR DATA ..................................................................................................................102
ABSTRACT

The current study evaluated the Merit Scholars program of Bright Futures to determine its effect on student success in postsecondary education, particularly among African American students in the State of Florida by comparing high school cohorts of students who would have met the criteria needed to qualify for the Merit Scholars scholarship of Bright Futures and those students who qualified for the Merit Scholars scholarship of Bright Futures. The purpose of the study was to evaluate life before and after Bright Futures was initiated in 1997 to determine the rate of student success by evaluating two cohorts before and after Bright Futures. Student success is defined as enrollment, persistence, and graduation. The success of the Merit Scholar program was measured by those students who have enrolled, persisted, and graduated from one of the eleven state supported public institutions. This study does not determine student success by evaluating access to postsecondary education, but looks at increased overall persistence and ultimately attainment of a higher education degree for African Americans using the theoretical assumptions posited by Spady (1970, 1971), Somers & St. John (1993), St. John and Starkey (1995) and DeJardins, Ahlburg & McCall, 1999).

The study used a two-part analysis, employing data from the Florida Center for Public Policy and Leadership and the Florida Education and Training Placement Information Program. The research findings indicated that the Merit Scholars award did have an effect on student success. In all three areas that define student success (access/enrollment, persistence, and graduation) among African-American students, there was improvement. The study also found that since the inception of Bright Futures in 1997, students who did receive the Merit Scholars award remained in the state at a higher rate. The study also evaluated merit and need based data over a ten-year period and found that aid in the state of Florida has increasingly become more merit focused and has been distributed to minorities at a higher rate. However, the amount of aid still does not match the rising cost of tuition.

Final conclusions in the study provide recommendations for future studies and suggestions to increase the number of African-Americans who receive merit-based awards. Overall Florida has increased student success for its African-American students among the 11 state funded, public institutions.
CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

Financial aid increases the overall likelihood of a student enrolling and gaining access to higher education. The purpose of this study is to determine the impact merit-based aid in Florida has on minority students, specifically African-Americans. Such impacts can be quantified by the enrollment, persistence, and graduation rates, often stated as student success.

This study focuses on financial access for minority students. A student’s ability to persist and graduate is often contingent on obtaining financial aid. The varying types of financial aid provided to students enrolling in higher education affects their overall persistence, especially aid received early in a student’s higher education career (Desjardins, Ahlbung, McCall, 1995; Long, 1998). Without aid, some minority students may not have the opportunity to enroll in a higher education institution, achieve student success, or contribute to society. There are many factors that surround the issue of student success and financial aid. Financial aid on the federal and state level has been distributed through a variety of policies over time.

The purpose of this study was to determine whether merit-based student aid in the state of Florida supports student success among African-American students. For the purposes of this study, student success is defined as enrollment, persistence, and graduation from a state-funded university.

In 1997, the Florida Legislature approved a merit-based scholarship program known as Bright Futures, consolidating the state’s existing merit programs into a single program, and lowering the academic standard that needed to be met to win an award. Bright Futures has become the second largest state-run merit program exceeded only by Georgia’s HOPE scholarship program (Heller & Rasmussen, 2001). Bright Futures provides high school graduates who meet certain criteria a scholarship if they pursue higher education at postsecondary institution in Florida. The program was established for three reasons: a) to reward students for academic achievement; b) to allocate lottery dollars to improve postsecondary education in a way that is visible to the public; and c) to
The Bright Futures Program comprises three distinct scholarships known as Florida’s Academic Scholars, Florida’s Merit or Medallion Scholars, and Florida’s Gold Seal Vocational scholarship. Each of these scholarships recognizes students based on academic achievement (See Table 1.1.). The Merit Scholars award is the focus of this study because it is the newest of the three Bright Futures scholarships and the Merit Scholars comprised the largest percentage of awards in Florida’s higher education. This study addressed the issue of access, defined as enrollment, as well as persistence and graduation rates, for African-American students receiving the Merit Scholars Award as part of the Bright Futures Program.

The Bright Futures program is an example of how some states rely on merit-based financial aid policies predicated on academic achievement versus need-based financial policies that are based on a student’s ability to pay for a higher education. The shift from need-based to merit-based aid has increased inequity over the last ten years among state-funded institutions and has been an issue at the federal level (ACSFA, 2001b). Recent reports by the Advisory Committee on Student Financial Assistance (ACSFA) revealed that throughout the United States, a lack of financial aid prohibits students who require financial assistance from attending institutions of higher education. According to the Advisory Committee reports, lack of funding, in addition to other student aid policy constraints such as a shift from need-based to merit-based aid, places a tremendous burden on low-income families and minority students (2000; 2001a; 2001b; 2002a; 2002b).
Table 1.1: Florida Bright Futures Scholarship Award Amounts and Eligibility Criteria

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Academic Scholars</th>
<th>Merit Scholars</th>
<th>Gold Seal Vocational</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Award amount (public institutions)</td>
<td>100% of tuition and fees plus $600</td>
<td>75% of tuition and fees</td>
<td>75% of tuition and fees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Award amount (private institutions)</td>
<td>100% of tuition at comparable public institution</td>
<td>75% of tuition at comparable public institution</td>
<td>75% of tuition at comparable public institution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High school GPA</td>
<td>3.5 for college curriculum (15 courses)</td>
<td>3.0 for college curriculum (15 courses)</td>
<td>3.0 in college courses and 3.5 in vocational courses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minimum test score</td>
<td>1270 SAT/28 ACT</td>
<td>970 SAT/20 ACT</td>
<td>Varies, depending on the test taken</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other requirements</td>
<td>75 hours of community service in high school</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Postsecondary GPA (for renewal)</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>2.75</td>
<td>2.75</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Alternative eligibility criteria exist for home-schooled students and GED recipients. All awards can be renewed for up to seven years or until a degree is earned, or a certain number of credit hours is attained. Awards can be used only at postsecondary institutions in the state of Florida.

Source: Heller & Rasmussen (2001)

The increased emphasis on merit-based funding has caused low-income students, many of whom are minority students, to face additional financial barriers that, in turn, may impact enrollment and persistence. State merit-based awards tend to benefit middle and upper-income students at a higher rate than low-income students (Kane, 1999). Therefore, the merit-based program is strongly supported by middle-class voters who are often ineligible for need-based financial aid (Arnone, 2003).

Middle-income and upper-income families who send their children to college are generally able to pay some portion of their tuition. On the other hand, minorities, including African-Americans, Hispanics, and Native Americans, have poverty rates almost two to three times higher than Asians and Whites (Staveteig & Wigton, 2000) and are thus less likely to be able to afford higher education than their wealthier peers.

According to a 2004 report, in 2002-2003 109,868 Florida students received one of the three types of Bright Futures scholarships, i.e. the Medallion, the Academic Scholars or the Vocational Scholars award. Most of the students receiving the award attended public four-year institutions. In 2002-2003, 75% who received a Bright Futures...
award were Medallion recipients while 23% were Academic Scholars, and 2% were Vocational scholars (OPPAGA, 2004). Data from 1998 indicated that 26 percent of graduating high school students qualified for the Bright Futures scholarship. Of that 26 percent, 9 percent were African-American. White students represented 61 percent of all Florida high school graduates; yet they represent 77 percent of the scholarship recipients (Marin & Heller, 2001). Due to a decrease of need-based aid at the federal level and state level, low-income and minority students face increased disparities in college participation (Marin & Heller, 2001). This may result in low-income and minority students being unable to find the necessary financial aid to attend college and to graduate with a degree.

Research Question

What is the effect of Florida’s Merit Scholars Program of Bright Futures on student success (defined as enrollment, persistence, and graduation rate) among African-American students in Florida’s public universities?

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to determine the impact of the Merit Scholars Program of Bright Futures on enrollment, persistence, and graduation rates in postsecondary education, particularly among African-American students. In the state of Florida, there has not heretofore been an extensive evaluation of how merit-based aid has influenced student success for this population (The Higher Education Policy Institute, 1995). This study is intended to fill that gap. To do so it examined the enrollment, persistence and graduation rates of two similar cohorts, one pre-Bright Futures (aka assumed Merit Scholars) and one post-Bright Futures, actual Merit Scholars. Since data were available on the entire population, a practical significance level was set. In keeping with other research on Bright Futures (OPPAGA, 2004), five percentage points was set as the level of significance.

Significance of the Research

This study informs higher education educators, policy-makers, and citizens about the impact of merit-based aid. This issue also has policy implications for higher education governance, financial aid, retention, and higher education accessibility for low-income and minority students in the state of Florida (Cook, 1998; Rosenweig, 1998). The Bright Futures program, specifically the Florida’s Merit Scholars program, may ultimately affect
educational opportunities and student success for some student populations, which could in turn either perpetuate or help ease economic inequalities in student access to higher education in the state of Florida. Given current federal policies concerning access and the shift away from need-based aid, it is important to evaluate the impact of merit-based aid to determine if it does indeed encourage student success. The impact of federal policies also can be seen on the state level as well. Reviewing these federal issues will illuminate the issues facing students on the state level as well. The state level issues will be further addressed in Chapter Two.

Financial aid policies at the federal and state level have traditionally left minority and low-income students unable to afford a higher education, causing financial challenges for this group in obtaining a degree. This study addresses the issues surrounding financial aid and student success at the state level. The challenge of financial aid include unmet need, increasing levels of loan burden, change in enrollment trends, student persistence, and societal ramifications. Financial aid on the state level is of concern because of the increase in allocation of merit-based funding over the years. At the institutional level, federal and state financial aid policies can have an impact on student enrollment, persistence, and graduation rates. African-Americans in United States earn three-fifths the income of whites and the average wealth of African-American families is one-tenth the wealth of white families. African-Americans are more likely to be dependent on need-based financial aid according to an article entitled, *The Sharp Decline in Need-Based Financial Aid for American College Students* (1999). Thus, financial aid is particularly relevant to minority and low-income students.

Overview of Financial Aid Situation

*Federal Level*

The purpose of providing an overview of the status of financial aid at the federal level is to give a total picture of the college financial aid landscape and to provide for an understanding of how aid impacts minority and low-income families. The allocation of financial aid on the federal level has for several years been in jeopardy in regard to assisting minority and low-income students. Many higher education policy-makers believe the Higher Education Act is an opportunity for the country to ameliorate the issues facing college access and that financial aid policy negatively affects it. Some
researchers believe that one way to address to address the high levels of unmet need and loan burden would be to encourage Congress to capitalize on the opportunity to create feasible strategies. These strategies would channel federal student aid to minority and low-income families, which in turn will improve access in America (ACSFA, 2002; American Council on Education, 2003). This opportunity could also improve the retention and persistence problems impacting minority and low-income students many colleges and universities (ACSFA, 2002).

The Advisory Committee on Student Financial Assistance report highlights how the Reauthorization Act of 2004 should address issues in higher education in regard to grant aid and loans. Specific ramifications of the current federal aid policies for low-income and minority students include: student satisfaction, loan burden, unmet need beyond loan allowances, and increasing access of low-income minority students to higher education opportunities.

Loan Burden and Unmet Need

Students who have an excessive amount of loan burden (money they must to pay back) and unmet need (need that exists after all other sources of aid are tapped) represent a large part of the financial barriers prevalent among low-income and minority families and students, barriers which ultimately hinder access and persistence. In addition, college tuition has increased as much as 49 percent in the last decade, while family incomes have increased only 3 to 4 percent. Since the cost of higher education has increased substantially, students borrow money that families struggle to or cannot pay back. In addition, in order to receive loans, students must meet certain qualifications. However, many times a student’s debt is already so high that he or she does not qualify for the loans needed to pay for tuition and fees (Redd, 2001).

According to a recent report by the College Board (2002), over the last ten years, tuition at the four-year private colleges has increased about $8,000 and has doubled in the four-year public colleges. In some cases, tuition increased as much as 58 percent (College Board, 2002). In addition, the loan burden for the average family is up to 84 percent of the total cost of college tuition. Since the total Pell Grant aid is 32 percent of tuition costs, families and students are left with the remainder. Federal Pell Grants, which do not have to be repaid, are awarded to students based on need. These are only awarded to
undergraduate students who have not earned a bachelor's or professional degree. A student’s need is determined by the information provided on the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). In the United States, the average tuition and fees per year is approximately $12,000. Thus, a student who received a Pell Grant would still need to cover the remaining $8,000 with loans or funds from other sources (ACFSA, 2001a).

Unmet need is a major factor impacting accessibility and retention. A student with unmet need is not receiving enough aid to completely cover tuition costs. Low-income students have an average of $3,800 in unmet financial aid per semester. Over the course of a degree program, this translates into unmet need for low-income families of about $3,200 at a two-year public, $3,800 at a four-year public, and $6,200 at a four-year private institution (ACSFA, 2001b).

As stated earlier, federal Pell Grants cover a small portion of the tuition costs. The majority of federal financial aid is allocated through work-study and loans. The loan burden and unmet need can total over $8,000, which translates into one-third of a family’s average income per year among low-income and minority students (ACFSA, 2001a).

According to data from the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), an increasing number of low-income students will be eligible for college between the years 2001 and 2010 (1997; 2001). In addition, it is expected that an increasingly higher percentage of students will have unmet need such that 4.4 million high school graduates will be prevented from attending a four-year college (NCES, 2001). It is expected that 2 million of these minority high school graduates will not attend college at all. These data demonstrate that many students will be without the funding necessary to attend higher education institutions, if they so desire.

The College Board (2000) and U.S. Department of Education (1999 and 2000) data further affirmed the amount of unmet need for many low-income students. For instance, the data from both the College Board and the U.S. Department of Education indicated that in 1975 the maximum Pell Grant covered 84 percent of the cost of college tuition for public institutions and 38 percent of the cost for private institutions. In 2000-2001, the maximum Pell Grant covered just 39 percent of the college costs at a public
institution and 15 percent at a private one. This example shows how the maximum Pell Grants are no longer sufficient to cover today’s rising costs of college.

Enrollment

Estimated decrease in enrollment. Another ramification of insufficient aid for students is the decrease in enrollment for certain student populations. There is a large range in the incomes of the families of students entering college. The average income range of low-income to high-income families ranges from $25,000 to $75,000 a year. In past decades, a student’s family income did not make a significant difference in a student’s ability to afford college. In the 1960s, Americans gained access to a college education without worrying about their economic means. More recently, however, high-income students are four times more likely to earn a bachelor’s degree than lower economic status students. Low-income students are more likely to attend a two-year college, or drop out of school completely (American College on Education, 2003; Gladieux & Haupton, 1995; Levine & Nidiffer, 1996).

Many of these low-income students are African-American, Hispanic, or other ethnic minorities (American College on Education, 2003). Disadvantaged and minority students actually graduate from high school at a lower rate compared to their high-income White counterparts who attend college. While more minority students are pursuing postsecondary education since the integration of minorities in higher education in the 1960s, low-income, at-risk, and minority students still lag behind in college attendance and completion relative to their non-minority, wealthier counterparts (Lucas, 1994).

In addition, low-income and minority students are less likely to attend a four-year college. They have a higher likelihood of attending a public or private two-year college, trade school, or other two-year institution. High-income students, who make up 53 percent of college students, are 87 percent more likely to attend college immediately after high school than low-income students. High-income students enroll in postsecondary education at a rate of 93 percent of those that graduate, much higher than that of the low-income students, who show a 64 percent enrollment rate. These numbers may not reflect actual attendance, since a student who enrolls does not necessarily end up actually attending an institution (ACFSA, 2001a).
Of the 64 percent of low-income students who attend college, 33 percent enroll in a two-year higher education institution while the rest of the low-income students enroll in four-year institutions. This is in contrast to the majority of high-income students who go on to 4-year colleges or universities (ACFSA, 2001a). Another deterrent to student success is the lack of academic preparation and achievement (Creech and Davis, 1996). Such factors lack as academic preparedness and quality of information about college costs and financial aid highly contribute to the retention problem (Lee, 1988). Early intervention services and programs can help ensure that the goals of access are achieved beyond the educational obtainment of the students’ parents. Students who are not provided with such assistance and education about the cost of college face higher attrition rates, debt burdens, and loan default rates. All these issues ultimately impact the college enrollment and success rates of high school graduates.

Decreases in enrollment and faulty financial aid policies mean that the increased numbers of low-income and minority students who graduate from high schools across the country and who are academically prepared to go to college are confronted with the obstacle of gaining access to a postsecondary education. Many of these low-income students will not be able to access higher educational opportunities at a time when a college degree will be paramount for success. In the next twelve years, postsecondary education will witness an enrollment increase of up to 1.6 million undergraduate students. A large percentage of them will come from low-income families (American Council of Education, 2003; Selingo, 2001a). The need for scholarships and grants will develop at a higher rate than the growth of enrollment, increasing the demands on student financial aid programs to support these incoming students (Carnevale & Fry, 2001).

Based on the above discussion, it is apparent that some qualified high school graduates from low-income families will not able to enroll in higher education institutions due to the lack of funding. Part of the problem is the growth of the number of college-bound students and the growth of college costs in comparison to available grant aid (ACSFIA, 2002).

**Societal Impact**

The much lower rate of access of many low-income students to higher education has distinct economic and social ramifications. Higher education is an important
investment for the federal government for several reasons. An educated population means less unemployment, poverty, criminal activity, social problems, and Medicaid patients. Concurrently, there is an increase in civic participation and economic stability (ACSFA, 2001b). Those who attain a bachelor’s degree will earn a 70 percent higher median income over their lifetime compared with those who did not attend college. College attendance is a key predictor to a person’s economic success, attainment of personal potential, and social mobility (Kane, 1999; Paulson & St. John, 2002).

The United States has reaped the benefits of an educated work force. Our economy depends on an educated citizenry (Marks & Curathors, 1999; Mumper, 1998). Approximately 60 percent of the jobs in America require at least a bachelor’s degree. The need for skilled and educated workers places pressure on the country to educate its population. Without an educated workforce, the country cannot sustain a solid economy (ACSFA, 2001b). Hispanic and African-American students, who enroll at a lower rate than their White counterparts, do not have the opportunity to equally benefit from economic prosperity. The number of minority students entering into the workplace without going to college after high school has doubled from 1980 to 2000 (Schneider, 2003). Ultimately, the less education one has, the lower the median salary.

A review of access and financial aid issues on the national or federal level revealed that access and funding to higher education is not adequately supported for students from diverse and low socio-economic backgrounds. State level financial aid policies lead to similar concerns.

**State Level**

Evidence of loans and grants (i.e., merit or need based, aid all may have different impacts on student persistence and overall student success (Astin, 1975, Newman, 1985, OPPAGA, 2003a). The overall impact of merit-based aid has not been thoroughly evaluated (Heller & Marin, 2002; OPPAGA, 2003c). OPPAGA (2003c) found positive gains in academic achievement among minority students in Florida.

Despite the evidence in the improvement of academic achievement among students in the state of Florida, national studies indicate that financial aid programs based solely on merit have not been successful nationwide in distributing dollars to low-income and minority students who are traditionally underrepresented in higher education. These
students often fail to meet the program’s grade point average or standardized test score requirements (Marin, 2002). In 1999-2000, African-American students made up 14.4 percent of the Florida students taking national standardized tests, but received only 3 percent of the top Bright Futures scholarships; Hispanic students made up 13.7 of the Florida test takers and received 8.7 percent of the top Bright Future awards (Selingo, 2001b). Ultimately, achievement is linked to academic standards and opportunities. There are clear gaps in academic achievement among the races/ethnicities. This gap translates into gaps in the amount of aid awarded to many minority or low-income students, specifically among African-Americans.

Using data on 1998 Florida high school graduates, Heller and Rasmussen (2001) found an overall scholarship award rate of 26 percent. Scholarship award rates for racial groups ranged from less than nine percent for African-American high school graduates to a high of 43 percent for Asian/Pacific Islander graduates. White students represented 61 percent of all Florida high school graduates, yet they were 77 percent of the scholarship recipients. In addition differences were present in the type of Bright Futures award for which students qualified. While 31 percent of Whites and 38 percent of Asian Americans qualified for the highest award, the Florida Academic Scholar award, only 12 percent and 23 percent of African-Americans and Hispanics, respectively, qualified for the highest award (Heller & Rasmussen, 2001).

Though the OPPAGA (2004) report found that more high school graduates are going to college in Florida since the Bright Futures program was created, extensive research has not been conducted to address persistence and graduation rates of these students. OPPAGA (2004) found that 52 percent of the high school graduation class of 1996-1997 were enrolled in community colleges or in one of the state universities in the fall of 1997, while the high school graduation class of 2000-2001 went on to a higher education institution in the state of Florida at the rate of 61 percent. This represents a nine percent increase in enrollment since the start of Bright Futures. While this change demonstrates a positive gain in improving enrollment rates, what about student success in college? The OPPAGA (2004) report showed an increase in persistence and graduation rates among those that received the awards compared to those students that did not receive the award. Persistence, for instance, increased from one percentage point among
all Bright Future recipients from 1997 to 2000 (OPPAGA, 2004). This expands and focuses specifically on the Merit or Medallion award of Bright Futures.

Definitions

In order to conduct an evaluation on student success, a clear understanding of the definitions used in the study and the conceptual framework that inspired the study will be reviewed. In this section, the terms and concepts used in the study are represented.

Access: It is based on the ability to obtain the money or financial resources needed to attend/enroll an institution or increased enrollments, the ability to be near or close to higher learning institution geographically, and finally the ability of a student to prepare his or herself academically. To quantify access, enrollment rates are used (OPPAGA, 2003a; The Higher Education Policy Institute, 1995).

Bright Futures: A Florida merit-based financial aid program that was established: a) to reward students for academic achievement; b) to allocate lottery dollars to improve postsecondary education in a way that is visible to the public; and c) to increase access for high school students in the state of Florida. To qualify for the Bright Futures scholarship, students must meet specific criteria (Ways and Means Committee, Education Committee on Bill CS/CS/SB 858, 1997).

Enrollment: Defined as entering a postsecondary institution for study after high school graduation and, thereby gaining access to a higher education level (St. John & Somers, 1999).

Federal Work Study Aid: A federal program that provides funding for jobs for undergraduate and graduate students with financial need, allowing students to earn money to help pay education expenses. The program encourages community service work and work related to the student’s course of study. (The Student Guide from U.S. Department of Education http://www.ed.gov/prog_info/SFA/StudentGuide/2001-2/workstudy.html)

Graduation Rate: The percentage of students who graduated after five years after high school graduation (Astin, 1975; St. John, Kirshsten, & Noell, 199; Tinto, 1993)
Merit-Based Aid: A type of financial aid award that utilizes some type of eligibility criteria based on academic achievement to determine potential eligibility (Creech & Davis, 1999).

Need-Based Aid: Aid based on a criterion that measures the financial need and/or ability of a student or family to pay for college (Creech & Davis, 1999).

Persistence: A student is still enrolled in postsecondary education four to five years after he or she has initially enrolled in that institution (Astin, 1975; St. John. Kirshsten, & Noell, 1991, Terkla, 1985).

Student Success: enrollment, persistence, and graduation in one of the eleven state funded postsecondary institutions after four to five years. (The Higher Education Policy Institute, 1995) All three must increase in order for student success to be achieved.

Financial aid with “strings attached”: Aid that is available to a student based on specific performance criteria or conditions that are required, such as grades or test scores. The Bright Futures Program of Florida is a type of merit-based with “strings attached”.

Conceptual Framework

Linking financial aid policy to enrollment, persistence, and graduation rate is not a new concept (Heller, 2003). Financial aid has been shown to have a strong correlation to student success. The availability of student aid has been noted as one of the key aspects of ensuring completion of a higher education degree (Cabrera, Nora & Castaneda, 1992; Paulsen & St. John, 1997; McPherson & Schapiro, 1998; Stampen & Hansen, 1990; Somers & St. John, 1993). The relationship between financial aid and student success can illustrate the main factors that impact student success and may even provide a means to increase the chances for student success. This study used student success as an outcome to examine the effect of Bright Futures, specifically the Florida’s Merit Scholars program. Again, student success was defined by enrollment, persistence and graduation from a postsecondary institution (The Higher Education Policy Institute, 1995).

Heller and Rasmussen (2001) studied the role financial aid plays in the decision to attend college for high-income and low-income students. Financial aid in general has been effective in increasing access to higher education for low-income families. Price
theory, explains the correlation between financial aid, enrollment, persistence, and ultimately student success. According to price theory, financial aid increases access. Price-responsiveness, is when a student is more likely to attend a postsecondary institution when given sufficient aid. African-American, Hispanic, and low-income students are more price-responsive than their White, middle- or upper-income student counterparts (Heller, 2001; Marin & Heller, 2001).

Supporting the research by Heller and Rasmussen (2001), a report from the Institute for Higher Education Policy entitled, *The Next Step: Student Aid Student Success* (1995) found that an additional $1,000 in grant funds to African-American and Hispanic students lowered the likelihood of dropout by as much as seven percent and eight percent, respectively. The report suggests that over the years conflicting research has been presented on the impact of student aid, but three conclusions have been constant. The first is that aid has had a positive impact on persistence. Second, other factors such as family income, pre-college preparation, college academic performance, and social integration also influence persistence. Third, grant aid is more effective than loan aid in terms of improving persistence (Heller and Rasmussen, 2001; Institute for Higher Education Policy, 1995; Tinto, 1993). College access, choice, geographic accessibility, academic preparation and retention are highly dependent upon tuition costs and the availability of financial aid to meet these costs (Heller, 1999; Kane, 1999; Manski, 1983; McDonough, 1998; Paulsen & St. John, 2002).

In terms of microeconomics, price theory explains the correlation between financial aid, enrollment and persistence. The concept of student price response and student financial aid ties closely with human capital theory, which argues that the skills gained through education and training can alter the wages one may receive. People choose to invest in higher education in order to gain individual benefits. Becker (1964) speculated that loan programs would influence the price responsiveness and increase the demand for higher education. The logic is that the lower the net price, the higher the likelihood that the consumer will make an investment. In this case, the argument refers to an investment in higher education (Stigler, 1966). In higher education, price theory serves as the base for student price responsiveness, student price elasticity or student demand theories (Jackson & Weathersby, 1975). These theories state that financial aid lowers the
cost of higher education for students, increasing the probability that a student and his or her family will be willing to invest in higher education. The price of higher education also has an ultimate effect on student departure and persistence (Heller, 1997; Leslie & Brinkman, 1988; St. John, 1994).

Some researchers argue that the price theory and price responsiveness in relation to higher education does not always take into account the varying types of aid (Dresch, 1975; St. John, 1993; Herzlinger & Jones, 1981). As time passed, research on price-responsiveness grew. The understanding was that first-time enrollment was affected more by the amount of aid awarded than the changes in tuition (Andrieu & St. John, 1993; St. John, 1990a, 1990b; St. John, Oescher, & Andrieu, 1992).

While price responsiveness influences enrollment, the current study used the theoretical assumptions on persistence posited by Spady (1971a, 1971b), Somers and St. John (1993), St. John and Starkey (1995) and DesJardins, Ahlburg and McCall (1999). Collectively, these researchers have established that: 1) students with high academic and scholastic aptitude are more likely to graduate than those who perform lower academically (Spady, 1971a; 1971b); 2) students are more likely to persist if they receive grants or scholarships (Somers & St. John 1993; St. John & Starkey 1995); and, 3) aid with “strings attached” (aid given based on specific criteria or conditions that are required and met) tends to reduce attrition by equal or greater amounts than aid with no strings attached. Aid with strings attached serves as a contractual agreement that psychologically binds students to the institution. In the case of this study the Merit Scholars are students who receive aid with strings attached and who have obtained the award because the Scholars have achieved a certain academic standard. The issue at hand is whether these students enroll, persist, and graduate at a higher rate than those students that do not receive any aid. Thus the study compares those students before the award was available and afterwards (DesJardins, Ahlburg & McCall, 1999).

The Florida Merit Scholars program embodies these three criteria because it is a financial scholarship that binds a student to the institution. The aid requires students to have attained high academic standards. To receive and maintain a portion of the Bright Futures scholarship, students must have a specific high school GPA, attain a certain score on a standardized test, and maintain a specified college GPA and certain minimum
number of credit hours per year. Because the Florida Merit Scholars program is a merit-based financial aid program with specific requirements, the persistence and financial aid with strings attached and students performing at a high academic level would hold that students would be more likely to persist. It is noted that minorities have been more affected by student aid (Luckie, 1993; Hu & St. John, 2001). This study tested if this theory specifically applies to African-American students who receive one type of merit-based aid in the state of Florida. The study also tested whether students from varying races and ethnicities demonstrate differences in persistence and dropout rates.

Limitations of the Study

In this section, we consider some of the limitations of the present study and offer some caveats. First, since the shift toward merit-based aid is a relatively new phenomenon across the country, there are some limitations to studying the impact of merit-based aid in Florida.

This study made conclusions about the success of African-American students in one of the three Bright Futures scholarship programs, the Merit Scholars Program. Because this is the newest and least studied of the three Bright Futures merit-based programs, there was not an abundance of data or previous analysis available. In addition, there are different ways to define persistence. In some studies persistence means year-to-year enrollment while other studies have accounted for persistence by evaluating the fourth year of enrollment (Astin, 1975; Terkla, 1985). There are myriad reasons why students enroll in college and do or do not graduate. This study did not measure social aspects or college experience to determine the impact of persistence and completion of a postsecondary degree, both of which could involve mediating factors influencing student success (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991). The study did not monitor or track whether the award was renewed after the first year nor did the study track whether the students renewed their Bright Futures scholarship over subsequent years. This study was concerned with students who qualified for the Merit Scholars award at the time they enrolled in one of the eleven state university system (SUS) institutions in Florida. The logic for only tracking the first year is based on the fact that aid received early in a student’s higher education career impacts persistence at a higher rate according to Desjardins, Ahlbung, McCall (1995) and Long (1998).
In addition to the limitations, noted above there are some caveats worth noting. One caveat is that the term student success, when used in higher education, has several connotations. For the purpose of this study, student success referred to enrollment, persistence, and graduation rates, as defined by the Institute on Higher Education Policy (1995). In order to determine trends, data should be evaluated over several years. The Bright Futures program was initiated as a state-recognized program in 1997. As a result, six years of data were available, which provided information on graduation rates for up to five years. In addition, financial aid on the federal and institutional level will impact student success as well, but was not the focus of this study. This could serve as a limitation because it could be argued that there are other sources of aid that could have affected a student’s ability to enroll, persist, and graduate in one of the eleven SUS institutions.

In response to this limitation, the study makes two essential assumptions. The first is that the assumed Merit Scholars (i.e. those students that would have qualified for the award based on test scores and GPA) and actual Merit Scholars are comparable cohorts by size and qualifications. The second assumption is that prior to the Merit Scholars program initiation in 1997, there was no other statewide financial assistance that would be provided for students who make between a 3.0-3.49 or make a 20 Composite on his or her ACT and/or 970 on their SAT. In addition, there was no other financial assistance for a student who met the Merit Scholars criteria and received 75% of their tuition paid for or money for fees and books prior to 1997.

There are many different variables that may account for enrollment changes. One factor that impacts enrollment numbers is whether students decide to go out of state or not. The National Student Clearinghouse (NSC) data provided the rate of student departure. However, these data do not furnish much information about student departure prior to 1998. As a result the student departure rate out of state for students included in this study may be less accurate prior to 1998.

Summary and Overview of the Remaining Chapters

The literature supports the conclusion that merit-based funding has not necessarily benefited minority or low-income students. Yet, the conceptual framework conveys how aid and persistence are positively correlated. This study investigated the impact of the
Florida Merit Scholars program on student success of minority students. Literature on merit-based aid illuminated the need to continue to study the impact of merit-based scholarship programs in general, specifically the Florida’s Merit Scholars Program of the Bright Futures program, to determine the effects on student success.

The literature review that follows provides an overview of the college aid issues for students pursuing a postsecondary education. In addition, the importance of evaluating student persistence among African-American students as well as the timeline for the development of Bright Futures will be reviewed. This is followed with a description of the methodology used to determine student success before and after Florida’s Merit Scholars became state law in 1997. A detailed discussion of the findings and analysis of the study is presented next. The final chapter concludes with a summary of the project and possible directions for further research in this important area of study.
CHAPTER 2
REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The first segment of the literature review will discuss the historical components influencing student success. The history on access to higher education broadens understanding of the significance of African-American students being allowed to attend higher education institutions in America. This segment will also provide a description of persistence in general and in relation to African-American students. The purpose of the literature review is to provide an understanding of the relationship between student success, financial aid, and African-American students.

The second part of the chapter discusses financial aid as a major factor affecting student success, looking first at the history of federal aid in America. Next financial aid on the state level will be explored in describing the shift from need-based to merit-based aid in America. Georgia’s HOPE scholarship program serves as an example of a merit-based program on the state level. After reviewing the HOPE scholarship, the history of Bright Futures is described, including various reports describing the outcomes of the program. The final portion of the literature review discussed how the literature helped build the main principles of this study.

Student Success: Enrollment, Persistence, and Graduation Rates

Access

Enrollment in Higher Education in America

Higher education in America evolved over many generations, beginning in 1636 when Harvard, the first higher education institution in America, was founded on the British college model. Education was available to White, wealthy males who were trained to be clergy, lawyers, politicians, and businessmen (Lucas, 1996). Other elite institutions such as William and Mary in 1693 and Yale in 1701 followed Harvard.

In 1803, Thomas Jefferson founded the University of Virginia. Jefferson’s philosophy was that students should be admitted to the institution based on merit, and that students should not be prevented from attending college because they were not from an elite family. Jefferson and later President Andrew Jackson in the 1820s and 1830s advocated increased access for students seeking to be educated based on their ability to
engage the material. Meritocracy increased access for those who were academically prepared, but not necessarily wealthy (Lucas, 1994; Rudoph, 1960).

Social changes spurred the expansion of diversity in institutions, resulting in the establishment of women’s colleges and historically Black colleges, institutions that engaged non-traditional curricula, and colleges for students with disabilities. In 1833, Oberlin College became the first co-educational higher education institution in America. The two Morrill Land Grant Acts, in 1862 and 1890, provided for the opening of additional higher education institutions in each state and led to the emergence of the junior college in 1901 (Cohen & Brawer, 1996; Rudolph, 1960). Junior colleges provided educational opportunities for immigrants and those seeking remedial education and skills. The Morrill Acts increased access to higher education for the broader population and the 1890 Morrill Act specifically increased access for African-Americans. The Acts resulted in the expansion of higher education missions and curricula. It also gave birth to the Historically Black Colleges and Universities.

After World War II, the country used higher education to retrain its work force. Many men returning from war needed work and education, and higher education institutions became the mechanism used in stabilizing our economy. In 1944, the Serviceman’s Readjustment Act allocated funds that provided college access for the GIs, who were typically older, non-traditional students. The Truman Commission Report in 1947 and the National Defense and Education Act of 1958 allowed for expansion of higher education funding, advancing the fields of science and technology as a result. In addition, in 1960, the Vocational Education Act provided more funds to assist individuals who wanted to gain vocational training. During this time, there was increased concern for providing access to students whom had previously been overlooked such as African-Americans (Bowen & Bok, 1998; Lucas, 1994).

**Historical Events Affecting Enrollment for African-Americans**

Other historical events occurred in the 1950s and 1960s that impacted access to higher education. For instance, in 1954, the Supreme Court decision in *Brown v. Board of Education* mandated that segregation “had no place” in America. It overturned the 1896 *Plessy v. Furguson* ruling of “separate but equal”. Under *Brown*’s mandate, schools and many other public facilities were to dismantle segregation in public places.
Unfortunately, racism and discrimination persisted throughout the 1960s despite the efforts made through marches and protests. Even the Civil Rights Act of 1964 could not overcome state-enforced segregation.

Since the late 19\textsuperscript{th} Century, few African-American students had been granted access to higher education despite the Morrill Act of 1890. Bowen and Bok (1998) found: 

\textbf{[A]cademic requirements were too demanding to accommodate more than a tiny number of African-American students and their tuition and fees were more than most of those who were admitted could afford… Some black students were disillusioned by their experiences in white institutions, and there was considerable debate on many campuses about admissions criteria, support programs, residential arrangements, and curricular offerings (p. 5-7).}

The Civil Rights Movement in the 1960s attempted to increase access for minorities by establishing anti-discrimination laws (Bowen & Bok, 1998; Lucas, 1994). In 1978, the U.S. Supreme Court in the \textit{Regents of the University of California v. Bakke} “permitted colleges to consider race as one of a variety of factors in admissions, but forbade the use of racial quotas” (Bowen & Bok, 1998, p.1). In the \textit{Bakke} case, a student seeking admission to the University of California at Davis Medical School directly challenged the admissions policy under Title VI of the Civil Rights Act. Judge Lewis Powell stated, “as a means to secure the educational benefits of a student body of diverse backgrounds and experience, … admissions officers could ‘take race into account’ as one of several factors in evaluating minority applicants in comparison with other candidates” (Bowen & Bok, 1998, p.8).

Since the \textit{Bakke} case, states that have begun dismantling their affirmative action programs have had trouble enrolling diverse student populations. When institutions are left to their own devices regarding admissions policies, equal access for students from varying races, ethnicities and backgrounds has proven to still be unequal. Texas and Florida are examples of two states where students from the top 10 percent of their high schools are guaranteed admission to one of the state colleges or universities. Students in the state of Texas were infuriated when this policy took effect because some students who attended large, competitive high schools where they might have a high school grade point average of 3.8 and be a National Merit scholar, would not be eligible for the merit
scholarship. Evidence may show there is an increase in admittance, but not applications among minority students; however, the numbers of minorities actually enrolling are still low (Bowen & Bok, 1998).

The first part of the 21st century has also witnessed debates about the necessity for affirmative action. In the summer of 2003, in a split decision, the Supreme Court ruled on a Michigan lawsuit that threatened the existence of affirmative action. In Grutter v. Bollinger, the Supreme Court ruled 5 to 4 arguing that the University of Michigan had the right to make efforts to maintain a “critical mass” of minority students, which did not amount to using an illegal quota system. In a separate case, Gratz v. Bollinger, the court ruled 6 to 3 against Michigan's undergraduate admissions policy. This case focused on the admissions policy surrounding of the University of Michigan’s undergraduate College of Literature, Science, and the Arts. In the case of undergraduate admission policies, the Court ruled that racial preferences would be permissible, but in the Gratz v. Bollinger case the admission policy was not narrowly tailored to ensure a diverse student body (Schmit, 2003). This Supreme Court ruling will impact how higher education institutions craft their admission policies through narrowly tailored language to ensure that diversity is achieved among incoming classes.

The rulings did not destroy the role of affirmative action in America. The court decisions upheld racial and ethnic diversity as a compelling state interest. The rulings also reaffirmed the importance of giving colleges and universities some liberties in the admissions process. The general practice of using affirmative action to enroll a diverse student body will remain permissible by the federal courts. This is essential in encouraging access for diverse populations (Schmit, 2003).

Student Persistence and Graduation Rates

Student persistence refers to a student’s ability to remain in higher education, earn the necessary credits, and ultimately graduate. Determining student persistence depends on an institution monitoring the number of students who may depart that institution without completing a degree as well as those who may remain at the institution until degree completion (Tinto, 1993). According to the National Center for Education Statistics, 60 percent of traditional students aged 18-25 who enroll in postsecondary education attain a degree, meaning 40 percent of the students drop out or may attend
another institution (NCES, 2002). Persistence is influenced by negative social, fiscal and educational outcomes. While enrollment to postsecondary education has increased, historically speaking, the percentage of students successfully completing a degree has not improved (Brawer, 1996). Persistence is a concern not only for students who invest in higher education; it impacts families and communities as well (Villella & Hu, 1991).

Factors Impacting Persistence

Two models used to explain student persistence include the psychological model and the institutional integration model. These models help explain how student intentions and prior achievement highly influence student success (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975; Eccles, 1983). There is a strong correlation between student attitudes, beliefs, and intentions, which in turn influence behavior. Eccles’ model (1983) argues that student self-concept, student goals, family encouragement, perception and expectation of success, and difficulty of a task are all factors relating to how academic preparation can determine student persistence. Family income and racial background also impact educational attainment and correlate strongly with enrollment, persistence, and graduation (DesJardins et.al, 2002; Kane, 1994; Manski & Wise, 1983).

Other factors that influence persistence include academic failure, institutional size, closeness to home, and the type of student major or college affiliation (DesJardins et al., 1999; Tinto, 1975). Likewise, faculty interaction, institutional support, and peer culture all have a role in a student’s ability to stay engaged. The more students become integrated into the community and life of the institution, the more likely they will persist. Social activities that encourage students’ intellectual and academic development are crucial to persistence. (Astin, 1984; Billson & Brooks-Terry, 1987; Pascarella, 1980; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991; Spady, 1971a, 1971b; Tinto, 1995, 1975).

Persistence Impacting Primarily African-American Students

Lack of persistence and high dropout rates among students from differing races and ethnic backgrounds is problematic (Luckie, 1993; Hu & St. John, 2001). One explanation is that students of color at predominantly White institutions find that their norms, values, and ideas are incongruent with those of the institution, negatively impacting their social integration and personal affiliations with peers (Tinto, 1993). African-Americans have higher feelings of stress, discomfort, and social isolation than their non-African-
American counterparts, all of which lead to attrition (Feagin, Vera & Imani, 1996; Lang & Ford, 1992; Rivkin, 1995). Feagin, Vera, and Imani (1996) discussed how African-American students on predominantly White campuses have hostile racial experiences that are hurtful, isolating, and frustrating. These feelings, which are attributed to treatment from peers, faculty, and campus police, may cause students to not want to persist (Feagin, Vera, & Imani, 1996).

Low-income and minority students do gain access to higher education, but are often concerned about how to pay for college and are not able to enjoy the full experience of a college education. Proportionally more low-income and minority students need to maintain a job to be able to afford their degree; these students typically work up to 20 to 25 hours a week to afford their college degree, and in some cases work full-time. As a result, they may not perform as well in their classes and, in many instances, receive lower grades because they are tired and overworked. These same students tend to be less engaged in their academics, civic learning, community service, and extra-curricular activities, leading to dissatisfaction with their college experience (King & Bannon, 2002).

As discussed earlier, financial aid has a major impact on persistence. Other factors that impact persistence include lack of pre-college preparation, being a first-generation college student, family emergencies/responsibilities, low economic status, increase in loan debt, lack of information on aid, inadequate aid, financial cutbacks, and low grade point averages. These elements can deter persistence among all students. However, African-American students are especially susceptible to the negative effects of these elements (Jones, 2001; Love, 1993; McNairy, 1996; Nora & Cabrera, 1996; Sailes, 1993).

Financial Aid in America

Evaluating the effect of the Florida’s Merit Scholars program on student success requires examining issues pertaining to access and financial aid. The importance of this study has implications not just on the state level but on the federal level as well. The policies at both the federal and state level have specific effects on a student’s ability to succeed in postsecondary education.
Federal Level

In 1643, Harvard University was the first college to establish an institutional scholarship fund for students in need (Brademas, 1883 as cited in McPherson & Schapiro, 1998; Rudoph, 1960). Many colleges offered financial aid during the 18th and 19th centuries. In such institutions as Brown University and Williams College (McPherson & Schapiro, 1998; Wick, 1997), these early scholarships were awarded based on financial need and merit (Hauptman, 1990).

The Serviceman’s Readjustment Act of 1944, known as the GI Bill, provided assistance to millions of soldiers who had served in World War II (Gladieux & Hauptman, 1995; Lucas, 1994). In 1954, private colleges created a coalition to develop a formula for institutions to identify students who qualified for aid based on need. The new program was part of the College Entrance Exam and was called the College Scholarship Service (CSS). The private institutions noted that it was unfair to award scholarships based solely on merit, and as a result, most private institutions decided to shift their student scholarships to those students who demonstrated need (McPherson & Schapiro, 1998).

In response to the launch of the Sputnik satellite by the former Soviet Union and a number of reports indicating the need for the United States to improve scientific and technical education, the National Defense Education Act (NDEA) was passed in 1958. This Act created the first widely available federal aid program, providing loans to students pursuing their education in math, science, or modern languages. NDEA was significant because it established the idea that students should receive aid directly for specific areas of study (Cook, 1998; Gladieux & Hauptman, 1995).

In the late 1950s, the federal government first began to consider broader efforts to remove college price barriers by cutting back on tuition costs. By removing such costs, it was assumed that lower-income students could attend college in greater numbers, thus leading to better jobs, higher wages, and less poverty. This economic rationale was the basis for the Higher Education Act (HEA) of 1965, passed by the 89th Congress to provide large-scale aid for education. The Higher Education Act is required to be reauthorized every five years by Congress (U.S. House of Representatives, 2003).
The initial HEA provided economically disadvantaged students with resources to attend college for the purposes of increasing a skilled work force in America and was intended to assist in reducing the cost of a higher education for college-bound students (Mumper, 1996). The Higher Education Act of 1965 had a plethora of parts or titles. Title IV of the HEA specifically addressed how the federal government allocated funds to support student aid programs. The Act contained three categories of aid: opportunity grants, guaranteed student loans, and campus-based aid such as work study programs and Perkins loans. These programs were established specifically to assist students and families with meeting the costs associated with pursuing a postsecondary education (Gladieux & Hauptman, 1995).

During the 1970s, tuition rose for both public and private institutions as the inflation rate doubled. This caused a shift in affordability for diverse student populations. In the 1960s and 1970s, many more diverse student populations were able to attain a degree from a higher education institution (ACFSA, 2001a). The national trend was to promise low-income youth a college education despite financial barriers. With the reauthorization of the Higher Education Act in 1972, the federal government became involved in working to ensure equal opportunity for higher education. This 1972 reauthorization of HEA implemented the need-based Basic Educational Opportunity Grant program, later renamed the Pell Grant (Marin & Heller, 2002). The initial purpose of the Pell Grant was to defray costs to keep tuition costs low for students who established need (Marin & Heller, 2002). This Act also extended greater federal support to vocation and career education, community colleges, and trade schools, as well as to part-time students (Gladieux & Hauptman, 1995).

The long-range plan of the HEA was to narrow the gap between those who could afford higher education and those who could not (ACFSA, 2001b). Ideally the HEA would ensure equal educational opportunity, participation, persistence, and degree completion of higher education students. The belief was that without such programs America’s economic stability, growth, and productivity were at risk. From this belief grew the financial aid movement that would work to assure that low-income students could attain a college degree. Two to three decades ago, student aid was based on need. Aid agents evaluated a family’s ability to pay and subtracted the expected family
contribution. This formula provided financial aid as a viable option. The assumption was that eliminating financial barriers was a good investment for the country (ACFSA, 2001a).

Another entry to the financial aid scene came under the Carter administration in the form of the Middle Income Student Assistance Act of 1978. This legislation expanded financial eligibility to middle-income students by removing all income eligibility guidelines to qualify for a Guaranteed Student Loan. Through the Middle Income Student Assistance Act the federal government worked to further broaden the availability of aid. As a result financial aid moved away from supporting students and families with the highest need. Initially, the Pell Grants and subsidized guaranteed loans were open to students regardless of income or financial need, which the voting middle class regarded as a fair way to disperse financial aid funds (Gladieux, 1980; Radin & Hawley, 1988). Prior to the 1970s, state-supported public institutions with low- to zero-tuition guaranteed access. After these legislative changes, the federal government provided students only the opportunity to gain access (Ehrenberg, 2000).

In the 1980s, tuition increased further, especially in private institutions. In the early 1990s, tuition increased at a higher rate in public institutions. During that same time, however, family incomes did not increase. Families faced a loan burden of about $6,000 for a two-year college and up to $7,500 at a four-year college (ACFSA, 2001a; Heller, 1999; Kane, 1999; The Institute for Higher Education Policy, 1995).

Between the initial passage of the HEA of 1965 and 1980, there was tremendous growth in annual federal financial aid program awards. During the 1980s, however, the growth in federal funding of student aid programs slowed dramatically in comparison to the rates for the two preceding decades. States began increasing funding for their need-based grant programs, in part to compensate for the slowed growth in federal assistance (PEPC, 1999).

As tuition increased in the 1980s, aid packages evolved from primarily grants to relying strongly on student loans as directed by the Reagan administration. A growing number of students were accumulating large debts in pursuit of their bachelor's degrees. Today, the rate of increase in loan amounts is now more than three times the rate of inflation (Millet, 2003). In 1994, federal aid allocated 74 percent to loans, 26 percent to
grants, and the remaining 2 percent towards work-study programs (ACFSA, 1995). A shift occurred in the late 1990s, high school graduates from low-income families faced high levels of unmet need. Tuition increases have outpaced financial aid availability (Kane, 1999). Encouraging students to work through college to offset tuition increases may have been feasible, but the amount of hours needed to work in order to afford college did not leave time for students to pursue their studies. In addition, students who worked beyond a certain number of hours endangered their financial aid eligibility (ACSFA, 2001a).

Another phenomenon affecting students’ ability to afford college costs emerged in the 1990s: a shift in the actual support and funding of the Pell Grants. The maximum Pell Grant allocations in the mid-1970s funded at least 84 percent of the college costs in comparison to 40 percent in 1999, thus requiring students to fill the gap with other forms of financial assistance (ACSFA, 2001b). The Taxpayer Relief Act of 1997 is another example of how federal policy assists upper-income students and families. Tax credits are not refundable. As a result, as tax credits became available, they did not help low-income students, who needed to invest the money up front in order to benefit from a tax credit. In addition, low-income students can take advantage of the IRA withdrawals, which allow families to pay tuition, room, and board (Perna & Swail, 2002).

As aid at the federal level has shifted from need, a similar trend has been seen at the state level. In 1993, the total amount of federal need-based aid had increased by 13 percent, while state grants not based on need grew as much as 136 percent (Institute for Higher Education Policy, 1993). The crux of the need-based versus merit-based argument is that if there is a certain amount of federal funding allocated for aid, then the needy students should be the primary beneficiary while in the case of merit aid, the main beneficiaries are institutions. Because federal funds are not keeping up with tuition costs, the shift from allocating need-based aid to merit-based aid leaves little money to be directed to needy students.

The Reauthorized Higher Education Act of 1998 addressed financial aid by proposing that loans should be consolidated, interest rates lowered, and aid delivery amended. In addition, the Reauthorization Act encouraged families and students to save for college in order to ensure affordability (Department of Education in the Office of Postsecondary Education, 1998). The Advisory Committee on Student Financial
Assistance (ACSFA) (2000; 2001a; 2001b; 2002a; 2002b) published several reports recommending changes to Congress in preparation for the 2004 reauthorization. Some of the recommendations included increased availability of federal funding. Other recommendations also encouraged an increase in grant support in higher education due to the fact there is a lack of financial aid in America and policy aid constraints. The shift from need-based to merit-based has caused greater inequities among low-income families and minority students (ACSFA, 2001b).

**State Level**

_A shift from need-based aid._ Need-based aid is a state-level policy that emerged to provide financial aid to students not traditionally given the opportunity to attend college due to financial constraints. Typically the majority of aid is allocated based on a criterion that measures the financial need and/or ability by a student or family to pay for college (Creech & Davis, 1999).

To justify the current shift from need-based aid to merit-based aid, researchers and policy makers present numerous explanations (McPherson & Schapiro, 1998). The most consistent arguments to explain the reasons to support merit-based awards are based on the desire for higher education institutions to improve the quality of education for all students. The belief in states like Florida is that merit-based aid will improve the quality of students who decide to remain in state and go to state institutions. The greater number of highly qualified students in state institutions not only theoretically improves the quality of education, but also allows for more equal competition among similar institutions to exist. Because need-based aid does not necessarily attract the best and brightest per se, merit-based awards serve as a feasible state program to improve academic standards and the quality of students (McPherson & Schapiro, 1998). Merit-based funding, it is thought, prevents a statewide “brain drain.” However, this is not always the case as some students continue to receive and accept attractive offers from Ivy League or other elite, out-of-state institutions.

Another belief is that merit-based aid allows strong academic students to attend less prestigious schools or schools with less money. This ultimately benefits less academically strong students because they will be in class with stronger and more academically prepared students. Students who are in class with more academically
prepared students learn more, in theory, since students are influenced strongly by their peer group (Astin, 1993; 1998). The ultimate effect is that students at higher academic levels are redistributed across a range of institutions, thus mixing students of different abilities. The belief is that the scholarship program also improves academic standards at the high school level and improves a student’s high school GPA (Heller & Marin, 2001). The logic is that by increasing the eligibility criteria, students have an incentive to study harder and take more challenging classes in return doing better in school. In addition, merit-based aid is seen as a way to reward students for their hard work and high academic achievement.

The other purpose given for merit-based aid is to increase and promote access for students (McPherson & Schapiro, 1998). The purpose for establishing the Bright Futures merit-based aid program in the state of Florida is similar to the reasons why other states across the country have endorsed merit-based aid programs. Bright Futures was created for three specific reasons:

1) to serve as an incentive for high school students to take rigorous courses and perform better academically
2) to direct lottery dollars to improve postsecondary education in a way that was readily visible to the public
3) to improve access to postsecondary education

According to Kane (1999), the shift to merit-based funding was regarded as benefiting middle and upper income students to a greater extent than low-income students because the low-income students did not receive the same academic preparation and were therefore less qualified to compete for merit-based aid. Middle-income families already expect to send their children to college and would be able to pay some portion of the tuition. As a result of the shift to merit-based funding, higher education institutions gained by having students who could afford public higher education.

Evidence indicates that the reason private institutions may endorse merit-based aid policies is because private institutions have a greater ability to recruit top students. Private institutions work to maintain need-blind or merit-based financial aid policies by providing top students who attain exceptional scores on the National Merit Scholarship examination with preferential packaging. Washington University in St. Louis and
Cornell University are examples of institutions that use merit-based or need-blind financial aid packages. Merit-based funding has caused all institutions to compete for top students (Ehrenberg, 2000). Wealthy institutions can offer full-tuition waivers that less wealthy institutions cannot afford. Public institutions cannot afford to support an increase in low-income students. Aid needed for low-income students places a burden on many state-funded institutions. Increasing both merit-based aid and need-based financial aid on the state level is difficult as states work to balance their budgets (ACFSA, 2000).

According to data provided by the National Association of State Student Grant & Aid Programs (2002), the number of states awarding scholarships based on financial need has eroded over the past ten years. From 1991 to 2001, states increased need-based scholarships for undergraduates by just 7.7 percent annually, while spending on merit programs has increased at an 18.3 percent annual rate. In addition, from 1994 to 1999, merit-based aid increased as much as 81 percent, resulting in a $320.9 million dollar increase, while during the same time, need-based aid increased only 20 percent. But state legislators will be reluctant to shift away from merit-based funding because it is popular among middle- to upper-class voters (2000; Selingo, 2001a).

In addition to socio-economic status, academic preparation is also an important issue affecting persistence. Florida and fifteen other states award scholarships based on standardized test performance. The disparity in using test scores to determine scholarships is scrutinized by testing agencies who have argued that their tests should “never be the sole factor in a decision making process because the tests are inexact measures that assess a small portion of a student’s abilities” (Marin, 2002, p. 115). In most states test scores are not the sole factor to determine eligibility. Differences in performance among varying groups based on a student’s race, gender and class have helped to explain how the scholarships have different effects. A student’s race, gender and class may lead to significant differences in test scores at every grade level and in every subject. Representative samples of high school students from 1969 to 1996 have shown that about a third of the gap between African-American students’ scores and white students’ scores may be related socio-economic differences between the groups (Heller and Rasmussen, 2002). In addition, FairTest, a non-profit organization, and the American Educational Research Association have reported glaring disparities in test scores on the
American College Testing (ACT) assessment for different family-income levels and for white and non-white students (Janesick, 2001).

Several states—as many as 13—have implemented merit-aid based programs, although each state’s eligibility criteria are unique (see Table 2.1). Generally, recipients of the awards must maintain at least a B average at either public or private institutions to initially qualify. Scholarships are not based on the financial need of the family. In the states of Florida, Georgia, and New Mexico, state lottery funds support the merit-based programs. States that use lottery funds is worth noting because the money is not fixed each year. It is based on Lottery dollars generated from sales each year. Some of the examples of the basic attributes of merit-based funding follow, outlining the goals, characteristics, strengths, and weaknesses are listed below (see Table 2.1 & 2.2).

Table 2.1: State Merit Scholarships

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>Award Criteria</th>
<th>Award</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mississippi</td>
<td>GPA and SAT/ACT</td>
<td>$2,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Florida</td>
<td>GPA and SAT/ACT (3.0/3.5)</td>
<td>Full tuition and fees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missouri</td>
<td>GPA and SAT/ACT</td>
<td>$2,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Louisiana</td>
<td>GPA and ACT</td>
<td>Full tuition and fee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Carolina</td>
<td>GPA, SAT/ACT</td>
<td>Full tuition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Virginia</td>
<td>GPA, SAT/ACT</td>
<td>Full tuition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delaware</td>
<td>Class rank and SAT/ACT</td>
<td>$1,250</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iowa</td>
<td>Class rank and SAT/ACT</td>
<td>$410</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Hampshire</td>
<td>Class rank and SAT</td>
<td>Set by college</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Jersey</td>
<td>Class rank and SAT</td>
<td>$1,000 to $7,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New York</td>
<td>High Regents Exam Score</td>
<td>$500 or $1,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ohio</td>
<td>GPA and ACT, proficiency test</td>
<td>$500 to $2,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Analysis of several studies
Table 2.2 Goals, Characteristics, Strengths, and Weaknesses of Merit-Based Aid

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Goals</th>
<th>Characteristics</th>
<th>Strengths</th>
<th>Weaknesses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>One</td>
<td>Help reduce the effects of rising college cost</td>
<td>Respond to public’s expectation to prepare for college</td>
<td>Reward student achievement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two</td>
<td>Promote better high school standards</td>
<td>Promote important state objectives that develop an educated citizenry</td>
<td>Presumed to reduce the academic performance gap</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Three</td>
<td>Save money because better prepared students would mean less money spent on remediation</td>
<td>Well-defined application process and award structure</td>
<td>Assist middle-income families who do not always qualify for need-based funding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Four</td>
<td>Encourage talented students to attend postsecondary education in state</td>
<td></td>
<td>Promote higher performance levels in college</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Five</td>
<td>Promote academic achievement</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Arnone, 2003; Creech & Davis, 1999; Long, 2003; see also PEPC, 1999).
The most-researched merit-based program to date is the Helping Outstanding Pupils Educationally (HOPE) scholarship, started in 1993 by former Georgia governor Zell Miller. Until the late 1980s, a small portion of the total aid allocated in the state of Georgia was merit-based. Over the last ten years, attracting top academic students to Georgia’s public institutions has been a goal of the state legislature. HOPE requires students to maintain a B- average in college preparatory curricula to be eligible for merit aid. The majority of the institutions in the state of Georgia can award HOPE if a student is an in-state resident. This program, which provides tuition and fees, has made access to higher education available to thousands of Georgia students, regardless of their family incomes and the type of college they choose to attend. The program has also changed aid by circumventing general appropriation funds to use profits from the state lottery for its awards, which could lead to serious financial problems in the near future (Cornwall, Mustard, & Sridhar, 2003; Dynarski, 2002).

Proponents of merit-based funding argue that it increases the impetus for high school students to achieve academically. Henry & Rubenstein (2002) studied the effects of the HOPE scholarship on academic achievement among high school students. They found that the scholarship has a strong correlation with the improvement of grades. For instance, African-Americans who had at least a 3.0 grade point average since the emergence of the scholarship have improved their SAT scores by 20 points. They also found a 4.7 percentage point increase in students who received a B average since the initiation of the program in 1993, possibly indicating grade inflation. However, SAT scores also increased slightly. Henry and Rubenstein (2002) argue that such a merit-based program helps any student regardless of need and creates an enhanced benefit for lower-income students. The scholarship serves as an incentive for low-income students to earn higher grades by closing the academic performance gap. The scholarship benefits low-income students and society by rewarding a student who may or may not have been able to afford a college degree.

A study by Cornwall, Mustard, and Sridhar (2003) also considered the impact of HOPE in the state of Georgia. This study attempted to determine which enrollment gains are due to the scholarship’s incentive for students to remain in the state. Since the demographics outlining residence data and migration trends among high school graduates
were not available over the ten years preceding the study, the researchers attempted to account for other factors that may impact enrollment. Cornwall et al. (2003) found that 75 percent of the HOPE recipients who might have left the state to attend schools elsewhere decided to remain in-state after receiving the scholarship. Due to HOPE, enrollment increased among freshman at four-year public institutions in Georgia, but enrollment numbers were not as high among African-American students when compared to their White counterparts. This may be due to the fact that, statistically, African-Americans do not enroll in college at the same rate as white students.

In summary, HOPE has raised academic standards by encouraging the best and brightest to remain in the state (Cornwall, Mustard, and Sridhar, 2003; Henry & Rubenstein, 2002). HOPE also reduces the likelihood of students first attending two-year institutions because now they can afford a four-year institution. Students who are not academically prepared typically attend two-year institutions (Cornwall, Mustard, and Sridhar, 2003). The study by Cornwall, Mustard, and Sridhar (2003) discovered that HOPE:

1) raised the first-time freshmen enrollment rate in Georgia about 6.9 percentage points to 9 percent;
2) raised the enrollment among four-year institutions roughly 12 percent;
3) raised enrollment for Blacks 14 percent (taking into account that Georgia has several historically Black institutions);
4) raised an estimated 75 percent of the recent freshmen enrollments at four-year institutions. The HOPE’s was also an incentive for students to remain in state.

These Georgia studies will help inform the current study in the process of evaluating the effects of student success in the state of Florida.

*Florida Bright Futures Program.* Understanding the evolution of student financial aid as well as the development of the merit-based scholarships, specifically Florida’s Merit Scholars program of Bright Futures, provides insight into how one merit-based scholarship has impacted student success. When Georgia created the HOPE scholarship in 1993, it became recognized as a trailblazer in establishing a statewide merit-based program that used state lottery dollars to award its recipients. Four years after the
inception of the HOPE scholarship, Florida joined the ranks of states with a lottery-funded, merit-based scholarship program (PEPC, 1999). Section 24.121 of the Florida statute stipulates that 38% of the sale of lottery tickets and other earned revenue shall be allocated to the Education Enhancement Trust Fund to be administered by the Department of Education.

On April 23, 1997, Florida legislators established the Bright Futures Scholarship Program, administered by the Office of Student Financial Assistance. It merged two existing merit-based scholarship programs into one, single, state-funded program. The two existing programs were the Florida Academic Scholars’ Certificate Program (s232.2465)/ Florida Undergraduate Scholars’ Program (s.240.402) (now the Florida Academic Scholars award), and the Florida Gold Seal Vocational Endorsement (s.239.217)/ Vocational Gold Seal Endorsement Scholarship Program (s.240.4021) (now the Florida Gold Seal Vocational Scholars award. Each program has two different names in order to stipulate criteria on receiving the award and to stipulate that it be funded by General Revenue (personal communication Debra White, Policy Analyst for Senate Staff and employee of FETPIP, August 11, 2003; Florida Ways and Means Committee, Education Committee on Bill CS/CS/SB 858, 1997).

The Florida Legislature in 1996 created the Florida Postsecondary Tuition Program statute 240.4024, F.S., but did not provide funding for it. This scholarship became known as the “Lottery Scholarship” because the plan was to emulate Georgia’s Hope Scholarship, which used state lottery dollars for funding. The scholarship was intended to fund tuition, mandatory fees, and book allowances for eligible students who attended a public Florida postsecondary institution. The scholarship was to be dispersed based on a GPA of 3.0 and a 970 score on the Scholastic Assessment Test (SAT) or a 20 on the American College Test (ACT). A higher award would be given to those students who held a 3.5 or higher GPA. This was the placeholder program prior to Bright Futures. The Bright Futures scholarship later became known as the Merit Scholars scholarship (Personal Communication Debra White policy analyst for Senate Staff and employee of FETPIP, August 11, 2003).

Financially supporting the two existing merit-based programs became problematic. The Department of Education was not able to accurately project the annual
number of eligible scholarship recipients. The Vocational Gold Seal Scholarship in particular grew rapidly with 84.6 percent of the scholarship recipients enrolled immediately in an academic program or state university or community college instead of focusing on a technical field. Instead of funding the “Postsecondary Tuition Scholarship,” which was initially designated as the new scholarship program, Bright Futures was created to allow students to receive one application from the Department of Education. The form would allow students to apply for three different types of scholarships. The two existing scholarships plus the Florida Merit Scholars award, which was added as a provision of Section 240.40201, became Bright Futures.

Outlining the detailed evolution of Bright Futures enhances one’s understanding of how the award was initiated. On February 24, 1997, the Senate of the Florida Legislature prefiled or introduced Bill 858, an act relating to education, which established the Florida Bright Future Scholarship Program. The Bill was introduced in the Senate on March 4, 1997, and was referred to the Education and Ways and Means Committees. Republican Donald C. Sullivan, MD, from District 22, St. Petersburg, Florida, an orthopedic surgeon, was the main author of the bill. Republican Anna P. Cowin from District 11 Leesburg, Florida, an educator, Democrat John H. Dyer, Jr. District 14 Orlando, Florida, an attorney, and Democrat George Grier Kirkpatrick, Jr. District 5 Gainesville, Florida, a higher education leader and real estate investor, were all co-sponsors of the Bright Futures Bill (Phelps, 1997).

When read to the 12 members of the Senate Committee on Education on March 18, 1997, the bill received 12 yea votes. After Sullivan explained the specific components of the bill, little discussion ensued. Senator Holzendorf asked for clarification on the Vocational Scholarship diploma requirements, structure, and purpose. Senator Sullivan responded briefly, and there was no further discussion or debate. The Ways and Means Committee reviewed and voted on the bill on April 16. The bill passed with 29 yeas and 10 abstains (Florida Legislative Bill Information Regular Session, 1997 p. 86; Senate Education Committee, March 18, 1997).

On April 18, 1997 the bill was placed on the Senate calendar. After a third reading, it passed without any discussion in the Senate with 38 yeas and no nays on April 25. The House passed the bill after two readings on April 29 with 116 yeas and no nays.
By May 23, 1997, Governor John Ellis Bush signed the bill to be approved as state law under Chapter No. 97-77 (Florida Legislative Bill Information Regular Session, 1997 p. 86; Senate Hearing, April 25, 1997; House Hearing, April 29, 1997). Bright Futures was signed into law, according to the 1997 Section 240.40202 of the Florida Statute. The newest scholarship, Florida’s Merit Scholars award, was added as a provision of Section 240.40201. The two existing scholarships, plus the Florida Merit Scholars award, became what is known today as Bright Futures.

Bright Futures has three specific goals: 1) to serve as an incentive for high school students to take rigorous courses and perform better academically; 2) to direct lottery dollars to improve postsecondary education in a way readily visible to the public; and 3) to improve access to postsecondary education. The Bright Futures program notifies “students, teachers, parents, guidance counselors, and principals or other relevant school administrators” of the criteria and application procedures. In order for a student to be considered for Bright Futures, a single application is made. The scholarship is awarded on an annual basis and may be renewed for up to 45 semester credit hours or the equivalent for a total of 60 credit hours to obtain a degree. In addition, each institution is responsible for providing an annual report that includes an independent external audit, which should be submitted on March 1 of each year, according to Section 240.40201 of Florida Statute.

The Florida’s Academic Scholars’ Program stated that to be eligible to receive an award, a student must earn a 3.5 GPA and a 1270 SAT score; or earn 3.0 in college preparatory curriculum with a 1180 SAT, and perform at least 75 hours of community service; or be a home education student, and earn a 1270 on the SAT; or earn an International Baccalaureate Diploma; or be a finalist or a winner in the National Merit Scholarship program. Recipients receive an annual scholarship of $2,500. The Vocational Gold Seal entitles an eligible student to $2,000 if the student earns a 3.0 GPA overall and takes at least 3 vocational courses, earning at least a 3.5 in those courses. An SAT or ACT score is also required to receive the Vocational Gold Seal award. Florida Merit Scholars must hold a 3.0 GPA on 15 college preparatory high school credits and need a 970 SAT or 20 ACT (Florida Ways and Means Committee & Education Committee and on Bill CS/CS/SB 858, 1997) (see Table 1.1).
For a student to be initially eligible for the Bright Futures award, a student must:
1) Be a Florida resident
2) Earn a high school diploma or its equivalent
3) Enroll full-time at an eligible postsecondary education institution
4) Be enrolled and accepted in an eligible Florida public or independent postsecondary education institution
5) Enroll for at least 6 credit hours
6) Not be found guilty or plead guilty to any felony charge unless granted clemency by the Governor and Cabinet
7) Have applied to the program by April 1
8) One may be eligible for the award for up to three years following high school graduation and to accept renewal award for seven years following high school graduation, if they meet the renewal criteria

In order to receive the scholarship students must apply the last year of high school or a student’s senior year beginning as early as December 1st. Students already in college after April of 1997 were not eligible for the award. Students may receive up to 132 semester hours toward completion of an undergraduate degree and have 7 years from high school graduation to use the scholarship (Florida Department of Education, 2003b, 2003c).

Research on Bright Futures. An estimated 107,000 Florida public and private high schools students graduated in the state of Florida in 1997-1998. Twenty-nine percent of those students were eligible for Bright Futures. The following year, there were 111,000 students who graduated, again 29 percent of whom were eligible. In 1999-2000, this rose to approximately 115,000 high school graduates of whom 33 percent were eligible for a Bright Futures award. The participation in the Bright Futures program has increased each year since the program’s inception (Florida Department of Education, 2003a).

Using data from the Florida Postsecondary Education Planning Commission (PEPC), Heller & Rasmussen found that income level and socioeconomic status were strongly correlated with the likelihood of students receiving a Bright Futures scholarship (2001). The researchers divided Florida high school student into five socioeconomic groups, according to student eligibility for free or reduced-price lunch program, a proxy measure for poverty. The fifth group, those students who were most likely to qualify for
the lunch program, had the lowest overall college participation.

The Bright Futures program awarded $69.6 million to 42,519 students, an average award of $1,637 per student during its first disbursement year, 1997-1998 (see Table 2.3). In 1999, total expenditures increased to $93.3 million, awarded to 56,281 students. More than half of these dollars were used to renew scholarships for the previous year's recipients, while 43 percent went to new recipients. Over the last five years the number of recipients has more than doubled. In 2001-2002, the disbursement was $174.9 million to 98,294 scholarship recipients. Much of the increase can be attributed to the rise in Florida Merit Scholars. Conversely, the number of Gold Seal Vocation awards has decreased while the number of Florida Academic Scholars has remained stable (Heller & Rasmussen 2001). In 2002-2003, as stated before 109, 868 students received the Bright Futures scholarship while $202.2 million was spent in that year (OPPAGA, 2004).

Table 2.3: Distribution of Dollars to Bright Futures Recipients 1997 - 2002

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Academic Year</th>
<th>Expenditure</th>
<th>Number of Recipients</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1997-1998</td>
<td>$69.9 million</td>
<td>42,519</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998-1999</td>
<td>$93.3 million</td>
<td>56,281</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999-2000</td>
<td>$132.1 million</td>
<td>78,772</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000-2001</td>
<td>$164.8 million</td>
<td>87,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001-2002</td>
<td>$174.9 million</td>
<td>98,294</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Analysis of OPPAGA Program Review Report No. 03-17; (Heller and Rasmussen 2001)

According to Binder & Ganderton, (2000), the Bright Futures program has successfully held to the goals and objectives established by the 1997 Legislature. But, the program has not done as well in regards to economic efficiency and distribution equity. The total of expenditures for the Bright Futures program have increased as much as a 151 percent since its inception (OPPAGA, 2003c). Total expenditures have increased as a result of increases in the number of recipients and the amount paid out per student. In 1998-1999, according to the Florida Postsecondary Education Planning Commission (PEPC, now Council for Education Policy Research and Improvement (CEPRI)), 76 percent of all Bright Future students were White (1999). Among African-Americans in
1998-1999, none received the Top Scholar award, while 2 percent were Academic Scholars, and 8 percent received the Merit Scholar award. The majority of African-Americans who received Bright Futures scholars used the Gold Seal Vocational award to attend two-year institutions. A total of 1,893 or 7.5 percent of Bright Futures recipients were African-American.

The report by the Florida Postsecondary Education Planning Commission (1999) demonstrated gender differences as well. Sixty percent of the award recipients were female, but of the recipients of the top award only 43.8 percent were female. The lowest award given was the Gold Seal, of which 65.5 percent were female recipients. According to the report by PEPC (1999), the students who receive the Bright Futures award typically attend the four-year state university system. Up to 65 percent of the Bright Futures recipients attend four-year colleges and universities while 25 percent of recipients attend a community college. The PEPC (1999) report also outlined the socioeconomic status of Bright Future recipients. One major finding was on family-incomes, using College Board self-reported family income data from SAT exams. The report identified that 12 percent of the recipients were from families making $50-59,000; 49 percent were from the families making $30,000-$69,000 family income range; and 29 percent were from families making over $70,000. Bright Future recipients from family incomes under $10,000 made up 2.6 percent of the recipients in 1998-1999. Among all the students who received Bright Futures, 34 percent also indicated financial need, while 31 percent demonstrated that Bright Futures scholarship funding was not sufficient in supporting their financial needs in the state university system (PEPC, 1999).

At the University of Florida, 97 percent of the freshman class received Bright Futures; at Florida State University, 67 percent; and 31 percent at Florida A&M were receiving Bright Futures. More research could provide additional information on how many African-American students were included in these numbers (Martin, 1999). A historically unprecedented budget deficit in the state of Florida is causing lawmakers to allow universities to raise their tuition rates, which is still an ongoing issue (Heller & Marin, 2001).
Controversy

According to various studies, four main issues prevail as the Bright Futures policy continues its role in postsecondary education in the state of Florida: 1) increasing Bright Futures standards; 2) capping family income; 3) cutting the amount dispersed; 4) changing testing requirements; and 5) separating the award from tuition.

For instance, the Merit Scholarship or the Florida’s Merit Scholarship has been the focus of reform because it has the highest number of awards and is the most extensive, covering 75 percent of a student’s tuition and fees. Lawmakers have proposed a myriad of changes to the program. Due to funding constraints as a result of increases in tuition and the number of qualified students one proposed change by the Florida House of Representatives has would create tougher eligibility standards. The proposal advocates increasing SAT requirements for the Florida Merit Scholarship from 970 to 1050, and an ACT score increase from 20 to 22. The Office of Program Policy Analysis and Government Accountability (OPPAGA, 2004) determined that this requirement increase would result in 39 percent of the 2001-2002 Merit Scholars becoming ineligible for their Bright Futures award. The state university presidents who were asked to think of ways to cut costs for the state proposed to cut the Merit awards to $1,500 a year per student, a decrease of about 25 percent from the $2,018 amount in 2003 (Martin, 1999).

The State Board of Education offered a new formula that requested that the state would pay about 50 percent of the tuition costs rather than the 75 percent that was in place. That would save the state close to $35 million if the changes begin two years from now, and about $60 million in the 2006-2007 school year (Kumar, 2003). The legislature has also proposed to place a cap on the family income of those students who receive Bright Futures. Any student whose family income was over $75,000 would not be eligible for the scholarship. Legislators know that changes in the eligibility requirements would not be a received favorably by middle to upper class parents who have come to view Bright Futures as an entitlement. Legislators have rejected such a proposal twice since the Bright Futures program was implemented in 1997 (Kleindienst & Kennedy 2003; Martin, 1999).

Bright Futures has already changed one of its major requirements. Students eligible for both the Florida Academic Scholars and Florida Merit Scholars award and
admitted to a community college or public university institution were encouraged to take a five course-work or five-part “accelerations” exam known as the College Level Examination Program (CLEP). It is similar to a comprehensive exam. Another of the exam includes various subjects. In order to pass the subject exam students must also have completed at least five sections in English, mathematics, humanities, natural sciences, and social sciences. However, dual enrollment, International Baccalaureate examinations, or Advancement Placement examinations fulfill the requirement as well. This is all conveyed in the 2002 Statute of Florida 1009.539. Bills sb0354c1 and sb1526 allowed for changes in Bright Futures by eradicating the Scholarship Testing Program or required CLEP exam. Students must have completed all attempts to pass the CLEP examination no later than the second semester.

The reason for dismantling the CLEP testing program was due to the cost incurred. In 1998 through 2000, students passed the CLEP test requirement at a 70 percent rate but in 2002 and 2003 students were passing at a rate of 20 to 50 percent. As a result, this decline in passing rate wasted the amount of dollars spent to fund student credit hours needed to graduate. The CLEP exam was ultimately dismantled because the cost to administer the test and students not passing at an acceptable rate was costly and did not save the State of Florida money in the long run (OPPAGA, 2003b).

Florida college tuition and fees have escalated as much as $330 per credit hour since 1995. At the state colleges and universities, room and board has increased as much as 64 percent from 1995, even accounting for inflation. These increases in costs reflect the realities of higher education prices in the state of Florida. The Bright Futures scholarship does not cover all the costs of a college education such as room, board, and expenses (OPPAGA, 2003b).

A report by OPPAGA (2003a) sheds further light on the basic issues facing higher education in the state of Florida in regards to college attendance and Bright Futures. The OPPAGA (2003a) report illuminated the gains made in improving academic preparation by offering a financial incentive. The report argued the highest gains are found among minority students. For instance, a four point increase in overall test scores has been noted among African-American students in relation to taking Advancement Placement, Internal Baccalaureate, honors, or dual enrollment courses. The major impact of Bright Futures
has been the improvement of students’ academic performance standards among test takers. Despite some policy changes and gains in achievement, the coupling of Bright Futures policies and the price of college may still cause African-American students to struggle to persist and attain a college degree (OPPAGA, 2003a).

An Overview of the Primary Literature

This section discusses those studies that most influenced the present study. Recent reports by the Advisory Committee on Student Financial Assistance (ACSFA) (2000; 2001a; 2001b; 2002a; 2002b) highlight how loan burden, lack of funding and other financial aid policies influence enrollment and access for low-income and minority students. Aid constraints and changes such as the shift from need-based to merit-based aid also place a burden on low-income families and minority students. The shift from need-based student aid to merit-based aid has increased inequity over the last ten years among state-funded institutions (ACSFA, 2001b; Perna & Swail, 2002).

The concept of student success derives from several sources of literature. There has not heretofore been an extensive evaluation of the factors that influence student success as defined by the Higher Education Policy Institute (1995). Racial background is noted as an impact on educational attainment, which in turn correlates with enrollment, persistence, and graduation (DesJardins et.al, 2002; Kane, 1994; Manski & Wise, 1983). The availability of student aid has been noted as one of the key aspects of ensuring completion of a higher education degree (Cabrera, Nora & Castaneda, 1992; Cabrera, Paulsen & St. John, 1997; McPherson & Schapiro, 1998; Stampen & Hansen, 1990; Somers & St. John, 1993).

Research focusing on African-Americans and gender highlights the fact that enrollment and degree completion have not been achieved at the same level of success for students of different genders and races/ethnicities. Historical disadvantages for minorities and women are a reality in American higher education (Alexander & Eckland, 1974; Carter, 1999; Hu & St. John, 2001; Leppel, 2002; Lucas, 1994; Orfield, 1992; Tinto, 1993).

The theoretical framework used in this study is a compilation of research by St. John, 1994, Spady (1971a, 1971b), Somers and St. John (1993), St. John and Starkey (1995), and DesJardins, Ahlburg and McCall (1999). This literature indicates that: 1)
students with high academic and scholastic aptitude are more likely to graduate than those who perform lower academically (Spady, 1971a; 1971b); 2) students are more likely to persist if they receive grants or scholarships (Somers & St. John 1993; St. John & Starkey 1995); and, 3) aid with “strings attached” tends to reduce attrition by equal or greater amounts than aid with no strings attached. Aid with strings attached serves as a contractual agreement that psychologically binds students to the institution (DesJardins, Ahlburg & McCall, 1999).

The three founding assumptions posited by the theorists inspired and led to the question: can a merit aid program that requires high academic and scholastic aptitude improve overall student success or not?

In the case of the first assumption, students with high academic and scholastic aptitude are more likely to graduate than those who perform lower academically (Spady, 1971a; 1971b). Other related literature states that students often fail to meet the program’s grade point average or standardized test score requirements (Marin, 2002). In the case of SAT scores, over 26 percent of the African-Americans who take the SAT test have raised their test scores by six percent on the national level (Summary Reporting Services, 2004). High school grades can be a potential indicator of success in postsecondary education (DesJardins, Ahlburg & McCall, 2002; St. John, Hu, Simmons & Musoba, 2000). A recent report by the Lumina Foundation discussed how grant aid influenced academic preparation at the high school level (St. John, Chung, Musoba, Simmons, Wooden & Mendez, 2004). In addition, the OPPAGA (2003a) report illuminates the gains made in improving overall academic preparation by offering a financial incentive. The report argued that the highest gains are found among minority students, suggesting that that academic standards as well as the presence of merit-aid can influence student success either negatively or positively.

Assumption two states that students are more likely to persist if they receive grants or scholarships (Somers & St. John 1993; St. John & Starkey 1995). Evidence of loans, grants, and merit aid all may have different impacts on student persistence and overall student success (Astin, 1975, Cabrera, Nora & Castaneda, 1992; Long, 1998; Newman, 1985, OPPAGA 2003c). Previous research has been conducted to evaluate the

Leslie and Brinkman (1988) established that grant aid has an impact on persistence. Yet, other research highlights how an increase in loans and grants improves student responsiveness in enrollment and persistence (St. John, 1990b). State-level studies have determined that need-based aid has assisted in equalizing the persistence rates in Indiana and Washington State (St. John, 1999, St. John, Hu, & Weber, 2000, St. John, Hu, & Weber, 2001). The studies also demonstrate how federal grants and loans are not adequate in ensuring educational opportunity (St. John, 1999). Loans have been negatively associated with first to second year persistence, while loans had a positive correlation with four-year persistence (Astin, 1975; Terkla, 1985).

According to St. John, Chung, Musoba, Simmons, Wooden & Mendez (2004), for every $1,000 of need-based grant aid enrollment increased 11.5 percent, but for every $1000 of non-need aid, enrollment rose 8.9 percentage points. Both need-based and non-need grants were significant and positively associated with enrollment rates, but it has not determined if either type of grant impacts overall student success (St. John, Chung, Musoba, Simmons, Wooden & Mendez, 2004). Historically, minorities have been more sensitive to student aid, tuition, and the use of loans than their White counterparts resulting in racial and ethnic groups having a lower probability to persist if there is no aid (Hu & St. John, 2001).

In the case of assumption three, it is argued that aid with “strings attached” tends to reduce attrition by equal or greater amounts than aid with no strings attached. DesJardins, Ahlburg & McCall (2002) discussed the impact of aid with “strings attached and its impact on attrition and persistence. Yet, few studies have researched the effects of merit-based funding in general, which is considered aid with “strings attached”, i.e. aid that stipulates certain performance requirements. established and obtained. (DesJardins, Ahlburg & McCall, 2002; Lappel, 2002; Long, 1998; Marin & Heller, 2001; McPherson & Schapiro, 1998; Personal Communication, Theresa Antworth, August, 5, 2003).

In addition, the impact of merit aid on the difference in student recipients that come from varying races/ethnicities could be explored further (Marin & Heller, 2001). Few studies have documented the impact of grant aid on college enrollment. Future
research is needed to analyze student persistence and degree completion (St. John, Chung, Musoba, Simmons, Wooden & Mendez, 2004). In Florida, according the Florida Postsecondary Education Planning Commission (PEPC) (1999), Bright Futures revealed some distinct student characteristics, such as 76 percent of all the Bright Future students being White, which has remained essentially the same since the PEPC report (OPPAGA, 2003a). Race and merit-aid are worth evaluating to determine the difference in rates of student success. As a result, there is more room for evaluation.

This study also acknowledges the model used by St. John Kirshsten, & Noell (1991), which defines persistence from the third to fourth year and beyond. Using five years as the minimum number of years to measure graduation rates is borrowed from Callan’s (1998) study at the California Policy Center on Higher Education. The research by DesJardins, Ahlburg and McCall (2002) discusses how aid awarded early in a student’s career has a higher impact than later. Cornwall, Mustard, and Sridhar (2003) outlined the impact of HOPE in the state of Georgia. Their study evaluated enrollment gains as an incentive for students to remain in the state, conveying the usefulness in measuring enrollment trends in a state that uses merit-aid.

Summary

The literature review discussed each component of student success outlined as enrollment, persistence, and graduation rates. Access for African-Americans in postsecondary education in America has had a unique history. One main purpose of the literature review was to demonstrate how access has not historically been available for African-Americans and has evolved over time. The issues that relate to enrollment, persistence and graduation rates among African-Americans are challenging. The review also outlined how student success and financial aid is linked. In addition, the chapter provided background on the development of student financial aid in America on the federal and state level. The final part of the review closed by discussing the main studies inspiring the study.

The third chapter outlines a research study to investigate the impact of one specific financial aid policy on the state level. The Florida Merit Scholars award is the newest portion of the Bright Futures program in the State of Florida. Chapter three will provide a methodology to measure how the Florida Merit Scholars program may have
impacted student success among African-American students.
CHAPTER 3
METHODS

As discussed previously, research by Marin and Heller (2001) and McPherson and Schapiro (1998) evaluated the role of merit-based aid in America, but extensive evaluations of merit-based policies has not yet been conducted, especially at the state level. In 1997, the state of Florida introduced a new merit-based aid program known as Florida’s Merit Scholars Program, a component of Bright Futures. The purpose of this study was to determine if this statewide merit-based aid program had an impact on student success among African-American students in the state of Florida. Student success is defined as enrollment, persistence, and graduation rates. Evaluating one of the scholarships awarded by Bright Futures should provide insight into the impact of merit-based aid on African-American students in Florida.

This study contrasted graduation and enrollment rates among African-Americans who would have been Florida Merit Scholar recipients before and after Bright Futures was initiated in 1997. Data were obtained from the Florida Education and Training Placement Information Program (FETPIP) at the Florida Department of Education (see Table 3.1). FETPIP is a data collection system that obtains longitudinal data on Florida students in K-12 and postsecondary education. Data were also obtained from the Florida Center for Public Policy and Leadership (FCPPL) at the University of North Florida, an organization whose purpose is to conduct research and analysis and provide policy alternatives on local and state issues. FCPPL was used in order to conduct a ten-year analysis to serve as a backdrop to the main research question (see Table 3.1).
### Table 3.1: Data sources and elements

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Data Sources</th>
<th>Data Years</th>
<th>Data Elements</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Florida Education and Training Placement Information Program (FETPIP)</td>
<td>High School Cohorts 1994-1995 1995-1996 1996-1997 1997-1998</td>
<td>High School GPA SAT scores ACT scores Race/ethnicity Gender Type of financial aid Date of college admission Transfer student (Yes/No) Date of Bachelor’s degree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Florida Center for Public Policy and Leadership at the University of North Florida (FCPPL)</td>
<td>All students in Florida postsecondary public institutions from 1992-2002</td>
<td>Race/ethnicity Gender Type of financial aid Date of college admission Date of Bachelor’s degree</td>
</tr>
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### Research Question

What is the effect of the Florida’s Merit Scholars Program of Bright Futures on student success defined as enrollment, persistence and graduation rate among African-American students in Florida’s public universities?

### Study Design

This study proposed to evaluate the impact of Florida’s Merit Scholars award focusing on one of the intended outcomes of the Bright Futures program (to increase access) as well as persistence and graduation rates among Florida students. The study used two theoretical frameworks: price theory and persistence theory. Price theory argues that the availability of aid allows more students access to higher education by making higher education more affordable for those who may not otherwise be in a position to pay for college. Persistence theories argue that while aid increases access, it also increases overall student persistence when there is aid with strings attached as with Merit Scholars.
award. The purpose of this study was to examine how the availability of aid—in this case, the Florida’ Merit Scholars award—has impacted enrollment, persistence, and graduation rates among African-American students in the state of Florida.

Procedures

Population

Four-Year Student Cohort. Four high school cohorts, two drawn from the 1994-1995 and 1995-1996 school years, prior to the initiation of Bright Futures in 1997 and two cohorts drawn after Bright Futures, in 1996-1997 and 1997-1998, were examined. It should be noted that more students were in the 1997-1998 cohort than in the 1996-1997 cohort, i.e. the initial Bright Futures cohort. As a result, the differences will be clearer in the 1997-1998 cohort when comparing the pre and post Bright Futures cohorts. The population included those students who met the criteria to receive funding from Florida’s Merit Scholars Program (i.e., a GPA of 3.0 and a 970 SAT or 20 ACT score) at college entrance. This study gathered pre-Bright Futures and post-Bright Futures high school graduates’ academic and financial aid records to examine student success in college over a five-year period.

In order to determine whether financial aid makes a difference on student persistence and overall student success, the study analyzed differences between two cohorts of students: those students who received the “actual” Merit Scholars award scholarship and those who would have been recipients if the scholarship had been available based on their high school academic records. The academic criteria used were 3.0-3.5 GPA, 20-28 ACT and 970-1270 SAT for these “assumed” Merit Scholars. The comparison determined differences in students’ enrollment rates out of state, in the Florida community colleges, and in the eleven Florida public universities.

The study was concerned with whether the student qualified for the Merit Scholars award upon entry in one of the eleven state-funded institutions and whether they earned a degree after four or five years. If they did not earn a degree after four to five years the study determined if they were still persisting, defined as still enrolled in one of the eleven state funded institutions, which takes into account those that may have transferred. The study did not track whether or not students renewed their Bright Futures scholarship after the first year.
The students were tracked within the state system of colleges and universities. After 1997, Florida Gulf Coast University and The New College of Florida became a part of this system. They were included in the study as well as Florida State University, Florida A & M University, University of Florida, University of South Florida, University of North Florida, Florida Atlantic University, Florida International University, University of West Florida, and the University of Central Florida. The study followed each high school cohort for a period of 5 years, which provides adequate time for evaluating graduation rate (Callan, 1998; Tinto, 1993).

Ten-Year Data Set from the Florida Center for Public Policy and Leadership. The ten-year data set includes data on financial aid over a ten-year period in order to provide background on the aid dispersed over the years among all the state funded institutions. This data provides results on how the distribution of aid has changed in the state of Florida. The ten-year data set tracked students who received financial aid (merit, loans, need, and scholarships) in the state of Florida from 1992-2002 and completed the Free Application for Federal Student Financial Aid FAFSFA and/or received Bright Futures awards. The ten-year data provided the amount and who received merit-based and need-based scholarships and loans. It also stipulated the type of Bright Futures award given. It does not track students who received aid from private sources. Students who initially enrolled in community colleges were not included in this background data.

Data Collection

Data used in this study were gathered from two different data sources. To compare high school graduates before Bright Futures and after Bright Futures, Florida Education and Training Placement Information Program (FETPIP) data were used. FETPIP data includes information on employment, continuing postsecondary education, military service, public assistance participation, and incarceration. Because FETPIP data is considered confidential, the Director of FETPIP and its staff retrieved data reports for this research study.

To provide background information on student aid ten-year data obtained from the Florida Center for Public Policy and Leadership at the University of North Florida was used. The Center conducts research on major public policy issues, including education. An in-house analyst at the behest of the Center’s Director retrieved the Center
Data. The two databases are constructed from self-reported information from each of the public state-funded universities. The agencies all follow the same state guidelines to ensure as much accuracy as possible and confidentiality despite the inconsistencies in the data. The elements included in the both the ten-year data set and in the four-year cohorts are described below.

Data Files and Elements of the Four-Year Cohorts.

Information from FETPIP and other state-supported government agencies provides high school data on students before and after the introduction of Bright Futures. The data used for this study came from the Florida Board of Regents Information Resource Management State University System (SUS) File. The specific files used from the SUS files included the: Admissions File (AF), Student Financial Aid File (SSAF), Community College File (CCF), Retention File (RF), and Student Data Course File (SDCF). Four cohorts were abstracted from the data set. The first two cohorts were abstracted from the high school graduation classes 1994-1995 and 1995-1996, a pre-Bright Futures group. The other cohorts consisted of the 1996-1997 and 1997-1998 high school graduates, a post-Bright Futures group. The data provided information on the enrollment rates (i.e., fall enrollment after graduation from high school), persistence rates (i.e., whether they are still enrolled after four years or still enrolled as of spring of 2003) and graduation rates (i.e., awarded a degree after four to five years after high school graduation). Comparison of these cohorts revealed the effect of Florida’s Merit Scholars Program of Bright Futures on student success. In addition FETPIP used data from the National Student Clearinghouse (NSC) to determine the number of Florida high school graduates who choose to attend college out-of-state, a number which certainly impacts enrollment rates.

Admissions File. This file consists of data regarding student admission as reported by the individual institutions. FETPIP staff scrambled the personal identification number (PIN) and Social Security numbers (SSNs) in order to protect the privacy of the students. The data was then identified with the institution of enrollment (one of the state-funded institutions); the year of admission, which for this study would be the Fall term after the student graduated from high school; race; gender; a Scholastic Aptitude Test score (a four-digit composite raw score assigned to the applicant by the College Board) or an
ACT score (a two-digit composite raw score assigned to the applicant by the American College Testing Program); and the high school grade point average upon which the student's application for admission is evaluated, based on a 4.0 grading system.

Student Financial Aid File. This file consists of information about any financial aid offered to students in Florida’s public universities. It contained the type of aid a student receives (e.g. loans, Pell Grants, scholarships). Most importantly, it provided information regarding and the type of Bright Futures award given.

Community College File. Although the study focused on the university system, the community college file was needed to provide initial enrollment rates and to account for students who began their college careers in a community college then transferred to one of the eleven state-funded universities and so are included in the four to five year graduation rates. The community college system file was used to gather the specific information about students attending the community college system. The file collects information about the student’s race, gender, date of entry, institution, whether they were a transfer student, and degree completion.

Retention File. The retention file was used to track the retention and progression of students in a cohort group across tracking years. Personal Identification numbers (PIN) were scrambled to protect student confidentiality. The data elements included in this file were the gender, ethnicity, student’s date of entry, ACT/SAT scores, high school GPA, and whether or not a degree was granted.

Student Data Course File. The student data course file provides students’ gender, race, date of entry, highest degree awarded, and the term the degree was awarded. This file was useful in obtaining the graduation rates as well as enrollment information.

National Student Clearinghouse (NSC) data provided information on the number of students who attend higher education institutions out of state. The data from NCS is somewhat flawed because there is inaccurate reporting of who may or may not leave the state. In addition, in the mid-1990’s fewer data elements were reported than in the later years.
Data Collection for Ten-Year Study

To conduct a ten-year data study, the Florida Center for Public Policy and Leadership obtained data from some of the same files as were used by FETPIP. The ten-year data used information from the Admissions File (AF), Student Financial Aid File (SSAF), Community College File (CCF), and Student Data Course File (SDCF). In the case of the Admissions file, the data used for the ten-year study included the institution of enrollment (one of the state-funded institutions), the year of admission, race, and gender. The Student Financial Aid File or SSAF indicated the type of aid a student received, specifically need-based aid, merit-based aid, loans, Pell Grants, and scholarships. It also provided information regarding the type of Bright Futures award given. The Student Data Course File also gives information on a student’s race, gender, date of entry, highest degree obtained and date of degree conferral.

Data Management. To manage such a large amount of data from the all the various files, the data were merged into one large database using the FoxPro database management program. When the data were merged, issues arose when trying to match the elements. The data were cleaned and purged of inaccuracies. For instance, in the explanation of the four-year data set, there were over 350,000 cases that represented the entire four-year high school cohorts. Some data inaccuracies occurred due in part to either someone manually placed numbers in the computer incorrectly, information was misreported, or not reported at all. For example, over 100 students were reported to have an SAT score higher than 1600, which is not possible and represents inaccurate reporting of information as the highest possible score on the SAT is a 1600. Once the inaccurate information was noted, the observations with invalid data were eliminated before the analysis was performed.

Once the data was cleaned appropriately, the data were then transferred to SPSS. The software program SPSS 12 (2002) was utilized to manage and analyze the data. The PIN numbers allowed the data files to be matched and merged appropriately. From the databases the elements needed were extracted, the files were merged, and analysis was conducted.

Privacy Protections. Data from both FETPIP and the Florida Center for Public Policy and Leadership were coded to ensure confidentiality. To further ensure privacy,
the Buckley Amendment confidentiality and privacy agreement was signed by the researcher (Appendix A). In addition, the Florida State University Human Subjects Committee letter is provided (Appendix B). Again, the Director of FETPIP and other staff assisted in obtaining all the necessary information for this study. Under the Director’s instruction the elements needed for the study were compiled first by the Florida Department of Education staff and then were shared with the FETPIP Director and staff. The Director and staff of the Florida Center for Public Policy and Leadership at the University of North Florida likewise compiled and obtained the appropriate data needed from their databases for the study. Both FETPIP and the Florida Center for Public Policy and Leadership assigned a personal identification number (PIN) to the social security number in order to maintain confidentially. The files were then merged. All information will be destroyed upon completion of the research study.

**Analysis**

To determine the effects of Bright Futures on student success, a two-part analysis was conducted. The first part of the study provided an overview of aid in the state of Florida over the last ten years and the second part of the study used various elements to extrapolate enrollment rates, persistence, and graduation rates for four high school cohorts.

The first part of the two-part analysis used data collected by the Florida Center for Public Policy and Leadership. This ten-year dataset provided a background or landscape for the second part of the study. The Center’s data provided descriptive information about students from 1992-2002. These data were analyzed through basic descriptive measures to learn more about overall distribution of aid during those ten years. The data were used to determine the mean, standard deviation, minimum and maximum on students receiving need-based grants, need-based loans, merit grants, or merit loans; students receiving both need and merit grants or loans; students receiving need but not merit grants or loans; and students receiving one of the Bright Futures awards. The demographic data in the dataset also enabled an analysis of these students based on race and family income level. The data were analyzed to determine the total amount of merit aid received by each student before 1997 and after 1997, giving an indication of trends before and after the inception of Bright Futures. The amount of merit-based aid received, the amount of need-based aid
received, and family income for those receiving need-based aid was examined for each racial category.

The second part of the analysis used data collected by FETPIP to compare four high school cohorts—the high school graduation cohorts of 1995-1996, 1996-1997 (i.e. assumed Florida Merit Scholars based on test scores and GPA) and 1997-1998, 1998-1999 (i.e. actual Florida Merit Scholars). The other variables analyzed were student GPA, SAT/ACT scores, race/ethnicity, and gender. The FETPIP data contained variables that indicated whether students had left the state, received a degree as of 2003, enrolled during the fall immediately after high school graduation.

To differentiate the actual and assumed Merit Scholars cohorts, the data was manipulated and narrowed to only include: demographic information, enrollment information, persistence information and graduation rates. The demographic information contained the student’s gender, ethnicity, and year of high school graduation. The enrollment data contained information on whether a student stayed in and out of state, whether a student received the Merit Scholars award, and whether the student attended a public two-year or four-year institution. Because the population focuses on those students who enrolled in the fall, the study primarily included traditional students who graduated from high school and went on to attend a postsecondary education.

The persistence rate included only those students who qualified for the Merit Scholars award and attended one of the eleven SUS institutions. Persistence was achieved if a student was still attending a Florida postsecondary institution after the fourth and/or fifth year. The graduation rates, as with the persistence rates, only included those students who qualified for the Merit Scholars award and were attending one of the eleven SUS institutions. The graduation rate was determined if a student had received a bachelor’s degree within four to five years of initial enrollment.

Since data were available on the entire population, there was not a need to use predictive statistical methods or statistical significance. Instead practical significance was used to determine a noteworthy impact. Practical significance is determined by the context of the research. Only the researcher can determine if the effect is important or worth reporting (Light, Singer, & Willet, 1990). In similar research OPPAGA (2004) used results exceeding four percentage points difference as the standard for practical
significance. This study will use the same criteria. For instance, Merit Scholar recipients may have increased enrollment as much as 12 percentage points, which would exceed the practical significance level of five percentage points for this study and therefore be considered significant.

To account for mediating factors, the original plan was to use statistical methods to manage factors that might impact enrollment (e.g. economic environment). The Florida Postsecondary Planning Commission in *Bright Futures Scholarship Program: A Baseline Evaluation Study* (1999) used NCES residence and migration reports for the state of Florida to provide data on the demographic changes in an effort to explain possible mediating factors. However, it is not possible to account for every variable or mediating factor that could impact enrollment, persistence, and graduation rates. Since this study used the entire population, and not just a sample, taking into account all these other mediating variables was not needed to achieve a good model fit. However, by evaluating the two consecutive years prior to Bright Futures and two consecutive years after Bright Futures, the study limited the possibility of a one-year anomaly in the data.

**Summary**

This chapter discussed the research methodology for this study. In summary, the study used a two-part analysis to determine the impact the Florida Merit Scholar program had on student success, particularly among African-American students. The focus of the analysis was to contrast persistence, graduation and enrollment rates among African-Americans who met the Florida Merit Scholar standards. The next chapters will provide the results of the analysis as well as a discussion of the findings and recommendations for further studies.
The purpose of this study was to determine the impact of a statewide merit-based aid program on the college student success of African-American college students in Florida. In particular, the study considered the effect of the Merit Scholars Program of Bright Futures on student success rate among African-Americans. For the purposes of this study, student success is defined as increased enrollment, persistence, and graduation from college. Evaluating the Merit Scholarship awarded through the Bright Futures Program provides insight into how merit-based aid in Florida higher education affects African-American student participation.

The first part of this chapter presents findings from an analysis of higher education merit and need-based state aid from 1992-2002. The Florida Center for Public Policy and Leadership (FCPPL) at the University of North Florida supplied the data. Analysis of this ten-year data provided the background for a closer examination of financial assistance for African-American students before and after implementation of the Bright Futures program. The analysis showed that merit-based aid and need-based aid increased for all students over ten years, particularly African-American students. The second part of the chapter presents findings analyzing student performance--specifically high school grade point average and standardized college entrance examination scores. This data was provided by the Florida Education and Training Placement Information Program (FETPIP).

Part One: Merit and Need-Based Student Financial Aid

The FCPPL data includes information on all students who received financial aid, both merit and need-based from 1992-2002. This data allowed for a comparison of the distribution of college student aid in Florida both before and after the implementation of Bright Futures. The data included information for the entire population of students who received either loans or grants totaled 938,826, whether need-based or merit, including the three levels of Bright Futures awards (Vocational Scholars, Merit Scholars, and Academic Scholars). This section provides a demographic analysis of aid recipients, including race/ethnicity and gender over a ten-year period. Discussion of changes of aid since the initiation of Bright Futures in 1997 will be highlighted as well. The analysis is
followed by a discussion of the dollar amount of the award and the type of aid received (merit/need and loan/other type) by financial aid recipients.

**Demographic Analysis**

Analysis of the data demonstrated that more students received aid after Bright Futures than before. Students are counted each year they appear in the data as well as in each aid category. As Table 4.1 shows, of the 938,826 students who received financial aid, 368,670 (39.3%) received aid prior to Bright Futures (1992-1997) and 570,156 (60.7%) received aid since Bright Futures was initiated (1998-2002). In addition, more female students (543,083) received financial aid than males (395,686). The number of African-American students receiving aid was 168,051 or 17.9% of aid recipients. Of the White students in Florida, 588,865 (67.2% of aid recipients) were aid recipients between 1992-2002. Asian students accounted for 42,982 (4.6%) of those receiving financial assistance in Florida. Hispanic students accounted for 131,373 (14%) of aid recipients. Multiracial, unknown racial identity, and Native American together accounted for less than 1% of the recipients. Because of their small number, these categories will not be discussed, but their numbers are included in tables to provide a complete picture. However, these three groups were not included in the subsequent analyses of the ten-year data set (see Tables 4.1-4.3).

Table 4.1: Number of Students Receiving Aid, 1992-2002

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Years</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1992-1997</td>
<td>368,670</td>
<td>39.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998-2002</td>
<td>570,156</td>
<td>60.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>938,826</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 4.2: Number of Students Receiving Aid by Gender, 1992-2002

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>543,083</td>
<td>57.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>395,686</td>
<td>42.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>&lt;1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>938,826</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.3: Number of Students Receiving Aid by Race/Ethnicity, 1992-2002

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Race/Ethnicity</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>African-American</td>
<td>168,051</td>
<td>17.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>588,865</td>
<td>62.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>131,373</td>
<td>14.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>42,982</td>
<td>4.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native American</td>
<td>3,940</td>
<td>&lt;1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multiracial</td>
<td>321</td>
<td>&lt;1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>3,294</td>
<td>&lt;1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>938,826</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Analysis by Type of Aid

This section provides an analysis of the type and amount of aid received; i.e., total aid (grants, loans, and scholarships), total need-based aid (grants, loans and scholarships) and total merit (grants, loans, and scholarship). In the first part, a discussion of merit aid is provided, followed by an analysis of need-based aid. The section concludes with an analysis of both the amount and type of aid received by Bright Futures recipients.
**Merit Aid.** Merit-based financial aid can take the form of loans, grants, or scholarships. The total number of merit-based aid recipients in Florida was 467,244 at an average of $3,087 per recipient. The average and number provided were over a ten-year period. The number of students who received loans was 154,616, at an average of $3,571, while 33,051 received scholarships at an average of $1,650, and 279,577 received grants at a $2,087 average. Merit aid figures indicated that 97,245 recipients were African-American, 435,686 were White, 28,007 were Asian, and 75,822 were Hispanic. The average amount of merit aid received over the ten years among African-Americans, Whites, Asians, and Hispanics was $3,772, $3,196 $2,961, and $2,724 respectively (see Table 4.4).

Of those students receiving merit-based loans, 49,241 African-Americans received an average of $3,256; 164,762 Whites received an average loan amount of $3,829. Some 7,201 Asian students received an average of $3,429 in merit loans, and 31,337 Hispanic students received an average loan of $2,735. Of those students receiving merit-based grants 7,765 African-American students received an average of $2,300, whereas 19,187 White students received an average of $1,452. Approximately 723 Asian students received an average of $1,265 in merit-based grants, while 3,265 Hispanic students were awarded an average of $1,357. Of those students who were recipients of merit-based scholarships, 44,532 African-American students received an average of $2,367, contrasting with 190,167 White students who received an average scholarship award of $2,012. For their part, 13,556 Asian students received an average scholarship award of $2,168, while 31,190 Hispanic students were awarded an average of $2,106 in merit-based scholarships. (see Table 4.4).

**Need Aid.** As is the case with merit-based assistance, need-based financial aid can take the form of loans, grants, or scholarships. A total of 888,260 students received need-based aid at an average amount of $4,849, based on amounts received by African-Americans, Whites, Asians, and Hispanics. Among the students who received total need-based aid, 431,957 students received loans, 430,394 received grants, and 25,909 received scholarships. Data indicated that 138,139 recipients were African-American, 319,112 were White, 27,732 were Asian, and 95,463 were Hispanic. The average amount of need aid received among African-Americans was $5,277, whereas White students were
awarded an average of $4,794, and Asian students received $4,647. Hispanic students received an average amount of $4,454 (see Table 4.4).

Of those students receiving need-based loans, 101,052 African-Americans received an average of $3,867, while 253,499 White students received an average loan award of $3,889. Similarly, 16,583 Asians received an average loan of $3,762, and 59,542 Hispanic students received average loan amounts of $3,813. In the case of grant need-based aid, 113,185 African-American received grants at a $2,853 average, 217,900 Whites received grant aid at a $2,425 average, 22,422 Asians received grant aid at a $2,887 average, and 76,651 Hispanics received grants at a $2,537 average. There were 8,299 African-American students who received scholarships at an average of $1,829, 12,334 White students received scholarships at a $1,248 average, 1,334 Asian students received scholarships at a $1,329 average, and 2,658 Hispanic students received scholarships at a $1,368 average. Similar to loan aid, the remaining number of students receiving need aid were Native-American and other students represented in small number (see Table 4.4).
Table 4.4 Ten-Year Data Results: Average Amount and Numbers of Merit Based & Need Based Loans, Grants, Scholarships

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Race/Ethnicity</th>
<th>Merit-Based Aid</th>
<th></th>
<th>Need-Based Aid</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Loans</td>
<td>Grants</td>
<td>Scholarships</td>
<td>Loans</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African-American</td>
<td>$3,256</td>
<td>$2,300</td>
<td>$2,367</td>
<td>$3,867</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(n=49,241)</td>
<td>(n=7,765)</td>
<td>(n=44,532)</td>
<td>(n=101,052)</td>
<td>(n=113,185)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>$3,829</td>
<td>$1453</td>
<td>$2,012</td>
<td>$3,889</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(n=164,762)</td>
<td>(n=19,187)</td>
<td>(n=190,167)</td>
<td>(n=253,499)</td>
<td>(n=217,900)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>$3,429</td>
<td>$1,265</td>
<td>$2,168</td>
<td>$3,762</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(n=7,201)</td>
<td>(n=723)</td>
<td>(n=13,556)</td>
<td>(n=16,583)</td>
<td>(n=22,422)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>$2,735</td>
<td>$1,357</td>
<td>$2,106</td>
<td>$3,813</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(n=31,337)</td>
<td>(n=3,265)</td>
<td>(n=31,190)</td>
<td>(n=59,542)</td>
<td>(n=76,651)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>$3,571</td>
<td>$1,650</td>
<td>$2,087</td>
<td>$3,870</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(n=154,616)</td>
<td>(n=33,051)</td>
<td>(n=279,577)</td>
<td>(n=431,957)</td>
<td>(n=430,394)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Merit</td>
<td>$3,087</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>$4,849</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(n=467,244)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Need</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>$5,277</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(n=138,139)</td>
<td>(n=319,112)</td>
<td>(n=27,732)</td>
<td>(n=95,463)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Bright Futures.** According to the ten-year data, a total of 245,002 students in Florida received a Bright Futures award. The average amount of the award for this period was $1,815 per recipient. Of the recipients, 12,747 students received the Vocational Scholars award at an average of $1,392, while 96,471 students received the Academic Scholars award at an average of $2,510. A total of 134,588 students received the Merit Scholars award at an average dollar amount of $1,545 per recipient. Among the Vocational Scholars, 2,653 African-Americans received an average of $1,515 average, while 7,984 Whites received an average award of $1,343. A total of 661 Asian students received an average award of $1,458, and 1,389 Hispanic students received an average dollar amount of $1,404. Among the Academic Scholars, 3,144 African-Americans received an average of $2,563, while 78,291 Whites were awarded an average dollar amount of $2,510. For their part, 6,057 Asians received an average of $2,575, and 8,584 Hispanic students were the recipients of an average dollar amount of $2,437 (see Table 4.5).

The research question for this study pertains specifically to the Merit Scholars program. Among the Merit Scholars, 13,765 African-Americans received Merit awards at an average of $1,646; 94,628. Whites received Merit awards at a $1,519 average, 7,167 Asians received Merit awards at a $1,583 average; and 18,405 Hispanics received Merit awards at a $1,584 average. In the ten-year data the average amount of Merit Scholar award is more among African-Americans than Whites, Asians, and Hispanics (see Table 4.5).
Table 4.5 Ten-Year Data Results: Average Bright Futures Award

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Vocational Award</th>
<th>Academic Award</th>
<th>Merit Award</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Bright Futures</strong></td>
<td>$1,815</td>
<td>$2,563</td>
<td>$1,646</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(n=245,002)</td>
<td></td>
<td>(n=3,144)</td>
<td>(n=13,765)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>African-American</strong></td>
<td>$1,515</td>
<td>$2,563</td>
<td>$1,646</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(n=2,653)</td>
<td>(n=3,144)</td>
<td>(n=13,765)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>White</strong></td>
<td>$1,343</td>
<td>$2,510</td>
<td>$1,519</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(n=7,984)</td>
<td>(n=78,291)</td>
<td>(n=94,625)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Asian</strong></td>
<td>$1,458</td>
<td>$2,575</td>
<td>$1,583</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(n=661)</td>
<td>(n=6,057)</td>
<td>(n=7,167)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Hispanic</strong></td>
<td>$1,404</td>
<td>$2,437</td>
<td>$1,584</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(n=1,389)</td>
<td>(n=8,584)</td>
<td>(n=18,404)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Native-American</strong></td>
<td>$1,392</td>
<td>$2,537</td>
<td>$1,531</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(n=57)</td>
<td>(n=368)</td>
<td>(n=554)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Other</strong></td>
<td>$1,920</td>
<td>$2,645</td>
<td>$1,592</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(n=3)</td>
<td>(n=27)</td>
<td>(n=73)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>$1,392</td>
<td>$2,510</td>
<td>$1,545</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(n=12,747)</td>
<td>(n=96,471)</td>
<td>(n=134,588)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There were differences in the amount of aid allocations among the races. Twenty-three percent of Hispanic students received merit-based loan aid, while 16.8% of Asians received merit based aid. Among African-American students 29.3% received merit-based loan aid and 28% of Whites received merit-based loan aid. In the case of merit scholarships (including Bright Futures awards), 26.5% of the African-Americans received scholarships, 31.5% of the Asians received scholarships, 23.7% of the Hispanics received scholarships, and 32.3% of the Whites received scholarships. Of the total merit aid awarded, 57.9% of the African-Americans received 57.9%, 74% of the Whites received merit aid, 65.2% of the Asian students received merit aid, and 57.7% of the Hispanic students received merit aid (see Table 4.6).
Table 4.6: Racial Make-up of Students who Received Merit Loans, Merit Grants, Merit Scholarships, and Total Merit Aid from 1992-2002
An Evaluation of Aid by Amount

This section provides a comparison of amount and type of student aid both before and after Bright Futures. There was an increase in the amount and number of both need and merit aid dispersed over the ten-year period. Among the races/ethnicities however, the amount of increase varied among recipients. There was also an increase over the ten years in the amount and number of students by race. In the next section, need aid and merit aid are outlined by the amount and demographic groups of student recipients.

The analysis included the numbers and percentages of the students over a ten-year period by race and gender. Data showed more women received aid overall. The analysis also provides the type of aid (e.g., loans) was analyzed by amount and number of merit versus need aid awards received. Among all races/ethnicities, the results demonstrated that all students needed and received loan aid. In addition, among need and merit aid recipients, there was an increase in the average amount of award among all races/ethnicities (see Table 4.7).

Total Merit Aid. The data provided a ten-year overview of the amount and numbers of need-based and merit-based aid recipients. The results over the last ten years demonstrated that African-Americans’ average amount of aid received increased. African-Americans’ merit-based aid and need-based aid increased at a higher rate than that for Whites. African-American students received an average total merit award of $3,274, while White students received an average of $3,196. Asians received an average of $2,961, and Hispanics received an average $2,741 in total merit-based aid. Interestingly, African-American males over the last ten year period received more merit aid than their female counterparts. African-American males received an average of $3,407 whereas African-American females received an average of $3,200. White male and female amounts were not as different, with White males receiving an average of $3,198 and White females receiving an average of $3,194 (see Table 4.7).

Total Need Aid. Evaluating the mean differences among the races/ethnicities between need-based aid and merit-based aid over the last ten years highlights how African-Americans still receive, on average, more aid than any other racial group. Whites received an average of $4,794, African-Americans received an average of $5,277, Asians
received an average of $4,648, and Hispanics received an average of $4,454 of need aid. (see Table 4.7).

Table 4.7: Total Merit and Total Need-Based Aid

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Race/Ethnicity</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
<th>Minimum</th>
<th>Maximum</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Merit</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1992-2002</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Male</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African-American (n=34,557)</td>
<td>$3,407.01</td>
<td>$2,824.16</td>
<td>$5.00</td>
<td>$44,500.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian (n=12,944)</td>
<td>$2,945.88</td>
<td>$2,243.10</td>
<td>$10.00</td>
<td>$19,005.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic (n=32,307)</td>
<td>$2,797.61</td>
<td>$2,427.01</td>
<td>$5.00</td>
<td>$21,084.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White (n=188,923)</td>
<td>$3,198.70</td>
<td>$2,438.29</td>
<td>$4.00</td>
<td>$43,500.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Female</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African-American (n=62,688)</td>
<td>$3,200.89</td>
<td>$2,651.13</td>
<td>$6.00</td>
<td>$26,140.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian (n=15,063)</td>
<td>$2,974.19</td>
<td>$2,239.93</td>
<td>$12.00</td>
<td>$24,446.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic (n=43,515)</td>
<td>$2,699.80</td>
<td>$2,370.48</td>
<td>$15.00</td>
<td>$26,114.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White (n=246,763)</td>
<td>$3,194.90</td>
<td>$2,447.39</td>
<td>$1.00</td>
<td>$25,578.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African-American (n=97,245)</td>
<td>$3,274.14</td>
<td>$2,715.66</td>
<td>$5.00</td>
<td>$44,500.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian (n=28,007)</td>
<td>$2,961.10</td>
<td>$2,241.40</td>
<td>$10.00</td>
<td>$24,446.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic (n=75,822)</td>
<td>$2,741.48</td>
<td>$2,395.20</td>
<td>$5.00</td>
<td>$26,114.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White (n=435,686)</td>
<td>$3,196.55</td>
<td>$2,443.45</td>
<td>$1.00</td>
<td>$43,500.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The average award amount and numbers of both merit and need aid increased over the last ten years. The mean amount of need aid is higher initially than merit aid in comparison. Merit aid among African-Americans has increased $830 while aid among Hispanics increased $848. This is a positive indication that merit aid is increasing to benefit two major minority groups. However, need aid has not increased at the same levels in the ten-year data (see Tables 4.8 & 4.9).

Florida students who received need-based aid before 1997 were compared with those who received need-based aid after 1997. Data regarding students who received need-based aid before and after 1997 showed differences among racial and ethnic groups. In the case of the need-based aid, African-Americans continue to be at the forefront other racial groups in receiving aid.
Although White students received the majority of merit-based aid, the availability of merit aid has increased for minority students. For instance, African-Americans and Hispanics collectively equal about 58,000 of merit aid recipients before 1997. After 1997 however, the number increased to about 114,000. In the case of White students, before 1997 there were 142,294 students; after 1997 the number increased to 292,762. (see Table 4.9).

Analysis of award amounts showed an increase in both need and merit-based aid among all students. For instance among African-American students, the mean amount before 1997 was $2,736 and afterwards was $3,566. There was a $830 difference since the initiation of Bright Futures. The charts below indicate the mean figures before 1997 and after 1997, and the overall difference between the means (see Table 4.9).

Table 4.8: Number of Students by Race Receiving Need-Based Aid and Average Amounts Before and After Inception of Bright Futures

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total Need</th>
<th>Before 1997</th>
<th>After 1997</th>
<th>Increase</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Number</td>
<td>Amount</td>
<td>Number</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>11,894</td>
<td>$4,313</td>
<td>15,838</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African-American</td>
<td>56,475</td>
<td>$4,939</td>
<td>81,664</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>39,075</td>
<td>$4,185</td>
<td>56,388</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>153,193</td>
<td>$4,652</td>
<td>165,919</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.9: Number of Students by Race Receiving Merit-Based Aid and Average Amounts Before and After Inception of Bright Futures

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total Merit</th>
<th>Before 1997</th>
<th>After 1997</th>
<th>Increase</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Number</td>
<td>Amount</td>
<td>Number</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>8,445</td>
<td>$2,704</td>
<td>19,562</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African-American</td>
<td>34,276</td>
<td>$2,736</td>
<td>62,969</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>24,184</td>
<td>$2,149</td>
<td>51,638</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>142,924</td>
<td>$2,940</td>
<td>292,762</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Part Two: FETPIP Data

The purpose of the second part of the study is to determine how one facet of the Bright Futures program, the Merit Scholar award, impacted overall student success in the state of Florida. The data assembled by the FETPIP provides an indication of the effect the Merit Scholars Award of the Bright Futures program has had on African-American students. The research question to be answered by this data is: What is the effect of Florida’s Merit Scholars Program of Bright Futures on student success of African-American students in Florida’s public universities, defined as access, persistence, and graduation rate?

The data was gathered to provide information to support or refute the theories by St. John (1994), Spady (1971a, 1971b), Somers and St. John (1993), St. John and Starkey (1995), and DesJardins, Ahlburg and McCall (1999). These researchers argued that financial aid, especially aid with “strings attached,” given to those students demonstrating high academic aptitude, is one of the most influential indicators impacting student persistence. Student persistence in the case of this study is expanded to ultimately include student success defined as enrollment, persistence, and graduation rates.

The next section presents an analysis of the results of high school GPA and SAT/ACT test scores of high school students--specifically the high school cohort classes of 1994-1998. Student success was determined for all students in each of the four cohorts. The analysis then examined by race, specifically, those students who were assumed to qualify (prior to 1997) based on student performance and those who actually qualified for the Merit Scholars award of Bright Futures. This comparison was made based on high school GPA and SAT/ACT scores.

Demographic Analysis of the Four-Year High School Cohorts

Of the 359,853 students who attended Florida high schools from 1994-1998, 188,017 actually graduated. The racial make-up of all four years indicated that 21.4% of the students were African-American. This percentage means there are a total of 10,374 African-Americans within the population. The data indicated that over the four-year cohorts of the population 3,540 that enrolled in one of the SUS institutions, were African-American males and 6,834 were female.
The remainder of the racial make-up among the four-year high school cohort indicated that 61.5% was White, 2.7% was Asian, 14.1% Hispanic, and .2% was Native American. Females comprised 52% of the total population, and males made up 47.2% of the population (see Table 4.10). The numbers of students in each graduating high school class who went on to enroll in a postsecondary institution increased each year. The class of 1994-1995 was 43,115 (12%); the class of 1995-1996 was 44,567 (12.4%); the class of 1996-1997 was 48,490 (13.5%); and the class of 1997-1998 was the largest at 51,845, (14.4%) (see Table 4.11).

Table 4.10: Four-Year High School Cohort Total Number and Bright Future Numbers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>47.2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Race/Ethnicity</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>African-American</td>
<td>21.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>61.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>2.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>14.1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 4.11: Four-Year High School Cohort Total Number of High School Graduates

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>High School Class Size</th>
<th>1994-1995*</th>
<th>43,115</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(12%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995-1996*</td>
<td>44,567</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(12.4%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996-1997</td>
<td>48,490</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(13.5%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997-1998</td>
<td>51, 845</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(14.4%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Number</td>
<td>359,853*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1994-1998</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: This total does not indicate the number of students who actually enrolled in one of the SUS institutions. This only includes those students who graduated from High School.

Analysis of Student Success: Determine Pre and Post Bright Futures Student Success among all students in the Four-Year Cohorts

Student success was analyzed among all students in the four-year cohorts. Analyzing all students provided a frame of reference of comparing the actual and assumed Merit Scholars’ student success rates. In the case of all students, the enrollment rate for SUS, the persistence rate, and the graduation rates in the eleven SUS institutions increased. However, the gains fluctuate. The high mark occurred in 1996-1997 in several categories and began dropping off the next year in 1997-1998. This section addresses whether or not these increases were at a practical significance level worth noting. The standard for the practical significance level in this study is a change of five percentage points. For all students—African-American, White, Hispanic, and Asian—the out-of-state enrollment, the community college enrollment, and graduation rates up to the fifth year were analyzed using the practical significance standard starting from 1994.

Enrollment Rates. Enrollment rates among all students at any of the eleven SUS institutions increased by 2.3 percentage points from 15.7% in 1994-1995 to 18% in 1997-
1998, indicating that while increasing the enrollment rates overall, Bright Futures has not changed enrollment levels at a practically significant level. Enrollment rates among African-Americans in all of the eleven SUS institutions increased 1.2 percentage points from 12.8% in 1994-1995 to 14% in 1997-1998. Similarly, enrollment rates of White students in the SUS institutions increased 3.2 percentage points. Hispanic student enrollment at any SUS institution increased 1.2 percentage points from the earlier cohort to the later cohort. Although all these student groups made gains in enrollment rates, in no case did the increase reach the established level of practical significance.

At the community college level, Asian student enrollment increased over the four years by 5 percentage points, a practical significant increase. African-American enrollment decreased in the community colleges by 2.4 percentage points from 21 to 18.6, which is not practically significant. There was a 2.8 percentage point decrease among all students who attended community colleges, which is not significant. The out-of-state enrollment rate increased over the four years among all students, though not at a level that reaches practical significance. Among all students, the out-of-state enrollment rate increased around 1 percentage point over that same time period (see Table 4.12).

Persistence Rates. Persistence rates increased among all students from 17.5% in the 1994-1995 cohort to 29.3% in 1996-1997. Among African-Americans, persistence increased from 18% in 1994-1995 to 27.9% in 1997-1998 over the four-year span. Among White students, persistence rates increased from 15.9% in 1994-1994 to 28.1% in 1996-1997. The persistence rate from the 1994-1995 to the 1996-1997 cohorts increased 12.8 percentage points among Asians. In all cases, the change in persistence rates among college students reached the established level of practical significance.

Graduation Rates in SUS. The graduation rates among all the students in the four-year cohorts increased .4 percentage points from 4.5% in 1994-1995 to 4.9% in 1996-1997. Among African-Americans, the increase was .3 percentage points. White students’ graduation rates decreased 3.9 percentage points from 8.7 in 1995-1996 to 5.1 in 1997-1998. Table 4.12 indicates in more detail the rate of student success before the availability of Bright Futures funding (1994-1995 and 1995-1996 cohorts) and after (1996-1997 and 1997-1998 cohorts) for each of the four cohorts. Graduation rates did not increase at a practically significant level and, in fact, decreased for the 1997-1998 cohort.
## Table 4.12: Percentage of Student Success by Race/Ethnicity (All Students)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>High School Graduation Year</th>
<th>Enrollment</th>
<th>Persistence</th>
<th>Graduation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Out of State</td>
<td>SUS</td>
<td>CC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1994-1995*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All Students</td>
<td>3.7%</td>
<td>15.7%</td>
<td>28.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African-American</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>12.8</td>
<td>20.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>4.7</td>
<td>16.8</td>
<td>30.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>12.2</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>6.8</td>
<td>32.5</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995-1996*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All Students</td>
<td>4.7</td>
<td>16.5</td>
<td>28.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African-American</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>13.2</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>5.5</td>
<td>17.8</td>
<td>30.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>12.8</td>
<td>31.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>6.4</td>
<td>32.8</td>
<td>27.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996-1997</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All Students</td>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>17.3</td>
<td>28.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African-American</td>
<td>5.4</td>
<td>13.6</td>
<td>20.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>5.8</td>
<td>18.7</td>
<td>30.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>13.4</td>
<td>30.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>30.2</td>
<td>27.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997-1998</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All Students</td>
<td>4.6</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>25.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African-American</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>18.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Years before Bright Futures was initiated

### Analysis of the Merit Scholars Award Recipients

This section discusses student success for one specific level of the Bright Futures program, the Merit Scholars award. In order to evaluate the students who would have received the Merit Bright Futures award against those who did receive the award, an assumed Merit Scholars of Bright Futures cohort was created based on standardized college entrance exam scores and high school GPA. This assumed Merit Scholars cohort was compared to those students who actually received the Merit Scholars award.
Enrollment, persistence, and graduation rates for the two cohorts were compared. The next section provides analysis of the race, gender, and overall count of those students who qualified and those who we assume would have qualified for the award. The overall student success among the actual and assumed cohorts will be further explicated for African-American students.

**Analysis of Actual and Assumed Merit Scholars**

Of those students who graduated from high school in 1994-1996, 15,720 (9.3%) would have qualified as Merit Bright Futures recipients. African-Americans compromised 1,105 (7%) in the assumed Merit Scholar cohorts. Of the African-American assumed Merit Scholars, 70.5% were female, and 29.5% were male. Whites made up 12,747 (81.1%) of the total assumed Merit Scholars; 58.2% were female and 51.8% were male. Asians compromised 601 (3.8%) of the assumed Merit Scholars; 51.1% were female and 48.9% were male. Hispanics make up 1,236 (7.9%) of the assumed Merit Scholars; 59.4% were female and 41% were male.

Based on the eligibility criteria in the 1996-1998 graduation years, about 9.4% of the students from 1996-1998 received the award. The 9.4% constitutes 17,894 of the population among all students for these two academic years. Of this population of Merit Scholars, 1,549 (8.7%) were African-American; 73.7% were female and 26.3% were African-American males. Whites comprised 13,928 (77.8%) of the two-year population; of these, 63.7% were female and 36.3% were male. These findings reflect the Postsecondary Education Planning Commission (PEPC) 1999 report that found that African-Americans students accounted for 8% of the Merit Scholar award in Florida in 1998-1999. Among the actual total of 766 (4.3%) Asian Merit Scholars in this study, female Asians comprised 59.7% and 40.3% were male. Hispanics made up of a total of 1,584 (8.9%) of the actual Merit Scholars. Of the actual Hispanic recipients, 62.4% were female and 37.6% were male. (see Table 4.13).
Using the stated level of practical significance (i.e., five percentage points), the Merit Scholars award has made an impact on student success. Practical significance was achieved in enrollment, persistence, and graduation rates in the SUS for each of the racial/ethnic groups except for Hispanics. For Hispanics, graduation rates did not increase to a practical significance level during the fourth or fifth year, nor in community college enrollment. (see Table 4.14)

**Enrollment Rates.** Enrollment rates reached a level of practical significance among most of the races/ethnicities. In SUS institutions in the post Bright Futures era, the enrollment rates of White students increased at a significant rate of 7.6 percentage points from 46.1% in 1994-1995 to 53.7% in 1997-1998. The community college enrollment for White scholars increased 9.1 percentage points. In 1994-1995, community college enrollment was 24.5% and increased in 1997-1998 to 33.6%. The out-of state rates
decreased 9.1 percentage points. In all cases, these changes for White students in enrollment rates meet the practical significance level criteria (see Table 4.14).

Asians in the SUS enrolled at a rate surpassing the practical significance level. In 1995-1996, Asians enrolled at a rate of 53.9%, and by 1997-1998 enrolled at a rate of 69.4%. The enrollment rate among Asians increased 15.5 percentage points. The community college percentage points increased by 3.4, which did not reach the significant level. In 1994-1995 the enrollment was 15.8% and in 1997-1998 the enrollment was 19.2%. The out-of-state rate decreased at a practical significance level of 7.4 percentage points. Asians left the state at a rate of 7.6% in 1994-1995, while in 1997-1998 the figure dropped to .2% (see Table 4.14).

Hispanic enrollment at the SUS institutions in 1994-1995 was 49.9% and by 1997-1998, increased to 61.7% demonstrating a 11.8 percentage point difference. The 11.8 percentage point difference surpasses the practical significance level established for this study. Practical significance for Hispanic students was not attained in the community college enrollment, only increasing from a low of 16.4 percentage points in 1995-1996 to 19.6 percentage points in 1996-1997. As for the out-of-state rate, Hispanics decreased a practically significant 7.3 percentage points from 7.6% in 1994-1995 to .3% in 1997-1998 (see Table 4.14).

Persistence Rates. Among Whites, Asians, and Hispanics the persistence rates between the two cohorts (i.e. pre and post Bright Futures) increased, surpassing the practical significance level. There was an 11.7 percentage point difference among Whites. Asians increased 13.6 percentage points, while Hispanics increased 15.5 percentage points. Whites increased from 10.9% to 22.6%, Asians increased from 13% to 26.6%, and Hispanics increased from 12.6 % to 29.1% (see Table 4.14).

Graduation Rates. In the fourth year, the graduation rates of White students increased by 5.1 percentage points. This rate increased 9.9 percentage points for Asian students and 4.1 percentage points for Hispanic students. In the fourth year, graduation rates began at 27.1% for Whites at 23.7% for Asians, and for 24.6% for Hispanics. Graduation rates did not reach the practical significance level among Hispanic students in the fourth year, but did for both Whites and Asians. Practical significance was not reached in the fifth year for any of the racial/ethnic groups. (see Table 4.14).
Table 4.14: Percentages of Student Success Among the Races/Ethnicities between Actual and Assumed Merit Scholars

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>High School Graduation Year</th>
<th>Actual and Assumed Merit Scholars By Race/Ethnicity</th>
<th>Enrollment</th>
<th>Persistence</th>
<th>Graduation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Out of State</td>
<td>SUS</td>
<td>CC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1994-1995*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African-American</td>
<td>7.3%</td>
<td>60.9%</td>
<td>8.9%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>White</td>
<td>9.4</td>
<td>46.1</td>
<td>24.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>7.6</td>
<td>49.9</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>7.6</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>15.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995-1996*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African-American</td>
<td>10.1</td>
<td>59.6</td>
<td>10.5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>White</td>
<td>10.4</td>
<td>45.3</td>
<td>26.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>6.4</td>
<td>47.4</td>
<td>16.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>8.9</td>
<td>53.9</td>
<td>16.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996-1997</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African-American</td>
<td>.5</td>
<td>74.2</td>
<td>12.7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>White</td>
<td>.4</td>
<td>53.4</td>
<td>33.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>.9</td>
<td>60.7</td>
<td>19.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>74.2</td>
<td>18.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997-1998</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African-American</td>
<td>.2</td>
<td>80.3</td>
<td>9.4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>White</td>
<td>.3</td>
<td>53.7</td>
<td>33.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>.3</td>
<td>61.7</td>
<td>19.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>.2</td>
<td>69.4</td>
<td>19.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Assumed Merit Scholars of Bright Futures

Summary. Using the practical significance criteria, one can state that the Florida Merit Scholar program had a significant effect on student success for White, Asian, and Hispanic students in the SUS as it relates to enrollment/access and persistence. Regarding graduation significance was only reached for White and Asian students when analyzing graduation in four years. Enrollment and persistence for students in the SUS increased over the four years. However, the enrollment rates among most racial/ethnic groups in the
community colleges did not reach the level of practical significance. The next section will discuss these issues for the African-American students.

**Student Success among African-American Merit Scholars**

The central research question of the study is: *What is the effect of Florida’s Merit Scholars Program of Bright Futures on student success defined as enrollment, persistence, and graduation rate among African-American students in Florida’s public universities?* In this section, a discussion of student success among a specific subgroup of students--African-American merit scholars--will be provided.

**Enrollment Rates.** More students in the state of Florida, particularly African-American students, are remaining in state to attend a postsecondary institution than before the initiation of Bright Futures. In the eleven SUS institutions, enrollment rates of African-American Florida high school graduates increased 20.7 percentage points over the four-year period, surpassing the practical significance level. In 1995-1996, 59.6% of the assumed African-American Merit Scholars enrolled in the SUS, while in 1997-1998, 80.3% enrolled in one of the SUS institutions. Community college enrollment also increased, though at a slower rate -- 3.8 percentage points; from 8.9% in 1994-1995 to 12.7% in 1996-1997. The out-of-state enrollment rates decreased 7.1 percentage points from 7.3% in 1995-1996 to .2% in 1997-1998, again reaching the level of practical significance. A decrease in the out-of-state rates is considered important because a decrease in out-of-state rates was one of the main goals of the Merit Scholar or Bright Futures award *(see Table 4.16)*.

**Persistence Rates.** Persistence rates among “merit eligible” African-Americans increased with the initiation of the Bright Futures program in 1997, increasing from 12.4% in 1994-1995 to 29.7% in 1997-1998. This figure is beyond the practical significance level *(see Table 4.15)*.

**Graduation Rates.** Graduation rates for assumed and actual African-American merit scholar students attending one of the eleven SUS institutions in the fourth year increased by 8.3 percentage points, while in the fifth year the rate decreased .9 percentage points. In 1994-1995, 26.9% of entering African-American first year students graduated in four years. This number rose to 35.2% in 1997-1998. In the fifth year, the graduation rates actually decreased, from 13.8% in 1994-1995 to 7.4% in 1997-1998. Thus,
practical significance was achieved for African-American students in all three areas: enrollment, persistence, and graduation rates (see Table 4.15).

Table 4.15 Student Success among African-American Actual and Assumed Merit Scholars

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Graduation Year</th>
<th>Enrollment</th>
<th>Persistence</th>
<th>Graduation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Out of State</td>
<td>SUS</td>
<td>CC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1994-1995*</td>
<td>7.3%</td>
<td>60.9%</td>
<td>8.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995-1996*</td>
<td>10.1%</td>
<td>59.6%</td>
<td>10.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996-1997</td>
<td>.5%</td>
<td>74.2%</td>
<td>12.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997-1998</td>
<td>.2%</td>
<td>80.3%</td>
<td>9.4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Assumed Merit Scholars of Bright Futures

Gender Comparison among African-Americans. An analysis of the gender breakdown of those African-American students who would have qualified for the Merit Scholars award and those who actually qualified demonstrated that both females and males achieved a significant increase in student success (i.e. increase in enrollment, persistence, and graduation rates) after the initiation of Bright Futures. In the case of enrollment females increased fifteen percentage points; males fourteen percentage points. Female persistence rate increased twenty-nine percentage points, while males increased eighteen percentage points. Fourth year graduation rates for the females increased twenty-one percentage points; for the males thirty percentage points. Fifth year graduation rates for females increased six percentage points and ten percentage points among the males. Concurrently, the rate of female out-of-state enrollment decreased at a higher rate than males and increased more than males in community college enrollment. Females also achieved persistence and fourth year graduation rates at a slightly higher rate than the male African-American Merit Scholars. Males achieved higher fifth year graduation rates than females. The data also reveals that in 1996-1997 African-American female enrollment and persistence percentages were lower than the two previous years and the year afterwards. These results demonstrated that 1996-1997 could be anomaly
(see Tables 4.16 & 4.17).

Table 4.16: Percentages of Student Success among Actual and Assumed African-American Female Merit Scholars

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Graduation Year</th>
<th>Enrollment</th>
<th>Persistence</th>
<th>Graduation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Out of State</td>
<td>SUS</td>
<td>CC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1994-1995*</td>
<td>6.1%</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995-1996*</td>
<td>8.8%</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996-1997</td>
<td>.5%</td>
<td>36.4%</td>
<td>40.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997-1998</td>
<td>.1%</td>
<td>63.3%</td>
<td>59.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Assumed Merit Scholars of Bright Futures

Table 4.17: Percentages of Student Success among Actual and Assumed African-American Male Merit Scholars

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Graduation Year</th>
<th>Enrollment</th>
<th>Persistence</th>
<th>Graduation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Out of State</td>
<td>SUS</td>
<td>CC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1994-1995*</td>
<td>7.1%</td>
<td>53.3%</td>
<td>52.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995-1996*</td>
<td>7.1%</td>
<td>46.7%</td>
<td>47.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996-1997</td>
<td>.7%</td>
<td>32.1%</td>
<td>54.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997-1998</td>
<td>1.7%</td>
<td>67.9%</td>
<td>45.2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Assumed Merit Scholars of Bright Futures

Summary. Overall, the analysis showed that student success, defined as increased college enrollment, persistence, and graduation rates in the fourth year among Asian, and White students attending one of the eleven SUS institutions, was reached at a practical significance level of five percentage points. Specific to the research question, student
success was achieved for African-American students in the state of Florida. While not the central focus of this study, analysis also showed the number of merit eligible students who have left the state to attend postsecondary education decreased. This is important, because one of the initial goals of the Bright Futures award was to encourage high performing students to remain in Florida by choosing one of Florida’s postsecondary institutions. In addition, the data showed that African-American students who receive the Merit Scholars award tend to enroll at one of the SUS institutions rather than community colleges. Thus, the majority of African-American Bright Futures recipients attend one of the SUS institutions instead of one of the community colleges.

Analysis of Other Interesting Findings

**Racial Make-up of Low-Income Students who Receive Loans.** The ten-year study included the family income of only those students who received need-based aid. Evaluating low-income students in relation to those students who received the Bright Futures awards provides some indication of the socio-economic status of some of the recipients. Low-income students are defined as those students whose family income was $20,000 or less and who also receive some sort of need-based aid. The median family income among the African-American, Asian, Hispanic, and White students in the ten-year data was $30,371.

An analysis of the racial difference of those low-income students who received loans (both need-based and merit-based) in the State of Florida from 1992-2002, demonstrated that low-income White and African-American students received similar amounts of total aid. Among all low-income African-Americans, 49.4% received loan aid. For White low-income students 50% received loan aid. Among Asian low-income students, 42.7% obtained loan aid. In the case of Hispanics, 46.3% of the low-income students received loan aid (see Table 4.18).
Table 4.18: Percent of Low-Income Students who Receive Loans

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Asian</th>
<th>African-American</th>
<th>Hispanic</th>
<th>White</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Percent</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>52%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The data indicated that students of all races/ethnicities received loans. However, of those students who received Bright Futures, the racial make-up of those low-income students receiving both need and merit loans indicates some differences. Of African-Americans 8.2% received the Merit Scholar award, while 16.1% of the White students received the Merit Scholar award. Among other racial and ethnic groups 14% of Hispanics and 16.7% of Asians received the Merit Scholar award. The Vocational Scholar recipients 1.6% were African-American, 1.4% were Whites, 1.1% were Hispanics, and 1.5% made up the Asians students. Of those students who received the Academic Scholars award, 1.9% consisted of African-American students, 13.3% of the students were White, and 6.5% were Hispanic, while 14.1% consisted of Asians (see Table 4.19).
Table 4.19: Racial Make-up of Low-Income Students who Received Bright Futures, Need & Merit Loans

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Racial Group</th>
<th>Vocational</th>
<th>Academic</th>
<th>Merit</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>African-American</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

High School Academic Achievement. The study also analyzed high school GPA and SAT/ACT scores. In order to determine practical significance of GPAs and SAT/ACT scores, three different standards, each based on previous research and accepted usage, were used. In the case of GPAs, practical significance is not achieved unless the student grade changed using the criteria used by high schools in Florida and across the country. For instance, if a student’s GPA is 3.2 and only increases to 3.3, then the student is still in the B range. However, a GPA that increases from a 3.0 to a 3.5 means the GPA has reached a practical significance level because the shift from 3.0 to a 3.5 changes the letter grade. It shifted from a B to a B+.

SAT scores will reach a practical significance level if the change surpasses 30 to 40 points. This is based on the Summary Reporting Service (SRS) from the College Board (2004). The ACT score is a composite score. A change in ACT scores is considered of practical significance if there is a difference of one point. The ACT reports that 64% percent of the high school students who take the ACT score a 22 or below (ACT, 2004).
Academic Achievement: GPA and ACT/SAT Analysis

Four-Year Cohorts. Though the main question of the study focused on student success, the analysis also evaluated the impact of Bright Futures on academic achievement. Because the study required that the GPA and test scores be provided for all students, an analysis comparing race, GPA, and test scores of the students in the four cohorts was also conducted. This was done among all students in the four cohorts, as well as among the assumed and actual Merit Scholars. Since the purpose of the study was to focus primarily on African-Americans and the Merit Scholars program, the racial breakdown will outline the results only among African-Americans and White students.

Over the four-year span, SAT/ACT and GPA scores improved. ACT scores for African-Americans increased an average of one point, which reached the practical significance level criterion of one. The composite ACT scores changed from 16 to 17. Among Whites, there was no change: the composite score remained 21. SAT scores did improve for both Whites and African-Americans by at least five points, but this does not meet the practical significant level. African-Americans initially obtained a mean SAT score of 847, and four years later reached a mean score of 852. White students improved 15 points, but did not meet the significance level of 30-40 points. From 1994-1998, White students had a mean SAT score of 1,026 which increased to 1,041.

The GPA increases were not significant. Whites increased their high school GPA by .1 point from 2.5 in 1994-1995 to 2.6 in 1997-1998. The African-Americans’ average GPA in 1995-1995 was 2.1 only increasing to 2.2 before 1998. In neither case was the change considered significant since the letter grades did not change (see Table 4.20). The ACT scores of African-Americans were the only test scores that reached the established level of practical significance.
### Table 4.20: Overall ACT/SAT and GPA Scores

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Graduation Year</th>
<th>Mean GPA and SAT Scores/ Composite ACT Scores</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>African-American Students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>GPA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1994-1995*</td>
<td>2.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995-1996*</td>
<td>2.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996-1997</td>
<td>2.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997-1998</td>
<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: GPA based on all students graduating ACT and SAT tests were not taken by all students.

**White and African-American Academic Achievement: GPA and ACT/SAT Analysis**

*Assumed and Actual Merit Scholars.* The study compared the SAT/ACT and GPA scores to evaluate if there was a difference between those students who would have received the Merit Scholar award, and those who actually did receive the award. Since the inception of Bright Futures, GPAs have improved slightly, but mean test scores have not improved among either Whites or African-Americans. For both African-American and White students, GPAs went up .1 percentage point from 3.2 to 3.3, but not enough to be considered significant. Average SAT scores decreased among both Whites (58 points) and African-Americans (52 points), in both cases reaching the level of practical significance. In the case of the ACT scores, there was no change in composite score between the assumed African-American Merit Scholars and the actual African-American Merit Scholars. Among White students in the two merit groups, the composite score of 23 decreased to 22, a practically significant decrease. *(see Tables 4.21).*
Table 4.21 Actual and Assumed African-American and White Merit Scholars, ACT, GPA, SAT Scores

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mean GPA and SAT Scores/ Composite ACT Scores</th>
<th>African-American</th>
<th>White</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>GPA</td>
<td>ACT</td>
<td>SAT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assumed Merit</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Actual Merit</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: GPA based on all students graduating ACT and SAT tests were not taken by all students.

It appears that the Bright Futures award has not a positive effect on standardized test performance among Merit Scholars. This finding confirms the results found by OPPAGA (2004). The effect on GPA has been minimal.

Summary

This chapter provided the key findings of the two-part study to determine the effect of Bright Futures on African-American students. The analyses indicated that student success was achieved using the practical significance level of 5 percentage points. In the first part of the analyses, the study found that more students received aid after Bright Futures than before.

Four different high school cohorts were analyzed comparing the two cohorts before the initiation of Bright Futures with two cohorts after. For African-American students enrollment in the SUS, persistence, and graduation increased beyond the practical significance level. Based on the practical significance criteria and the researcher’s definition, student success was achieved among all races/ethnicities except Hispanics, who did not demonstrate a significant increase in graduation rates. All the racial groups improved in the out-of-state rate, i.e. the number of students going out-of-state decreased. The community college enrollment was the only area that did not exhibit an increase. Persistence improved among all students after the initiation of the Bright...
Futures Program. Graduation rates, however, did not show improvement among any of the racial groups when evaluated in the fifth year.

In the case of the Merit Scholars, the number of out-of-state students decreased and the number of students who enrolled in the SUS institutions increased. Persistence rates have increased as well. Graduation rates also increased when evaluating the rates during the fourth year.

Overall, the results of this study indicate that since the inception of Florida’s Bright Futures program there has been a demonstrated increase in college student success as measured by access/enrollment, persistence, and graduation for African-American students who graduate from Florida high schools, including African-American students who are the focus of this study’s research question. The following chapter provides a discussion of the findings and conclusions as they pertain to the research question, as well as a discussion of the implications drawn from the findings. This is followed with a discussion of the four-year cohort study and the implications of the results, as well as other interesting findings. Finally, observations and suggestions on how certain areas pertaining to the overall study could be improved are provided, as well as suggestions for future research that could be conducted in this area.
CHAPTER 5
CONCLUSION

This study was completed to determine the impact of the Merit Scholars Program of Bright Futures on enrollment, persistence, and graduation rates in postsecondary education, particularly among African-American students. Data collected by the Florida Education and Training Placement Information Program (FETPIP) addressed the core research question: What impact has a statewide merit-based aid program had on the college student success of African-American students in Florida? Data from the Florida Center for Public Policy and Leadership (FCPPL) at the University of North Florida was used to provide further understanding of students who received both need and merit based aid in the state of Florida. These data were used to examine higher education merit and need-based state aid in Florida from 1992-2002. The study evaluated whether the Merit Scholars Program of Bright Futures influenced the number of African-American college students who have enrolled, persisted, and graduated or, in other words, achieved student success in college.

The study used available and germane records from FETPIP to garner information on the high school graduation classes from 1994-1998. Evaluating student data from two years prior to 1997 when Bright Futures began and two years following the award’s inception made the two cohorts comparable. As a result, there were two groups, pre and post Bright Futures, to be compared. Only students in the state university system were tracked. The study assumed that no other statewide financial aid assistance of this kind was available prior to 1997. Because research indicated aid awarded early in a student’s career has a higher impact than assistance provided later (DesJardins, Ahlburg and McCall, 2002), the study included only those students who received the award the first year after high school graduation and did not study whether students received the award in subsequent years. To provide a backdrop for the main study, an analysis on students who received aid since 1992 was also conducted. This analysis of data was important because it revealed any financial aid trends before and after the 1997 institution of Bright Futures as well as the shift in the amount of aid received. For instance total merit aid increased for African-Americans $830 and for Hispanics as much as $848.
This chapter will discuss the findings pertaining to the primary research question, as well as outline implications related to the theoretical framework. Other interesting, but secondary findings are discussed, such as the overall academic achievement of students in the four high school cohorts, not just the Merit Scholars. The chapter will also provide observations and suggestions for policy makers, educators, and students. In conclusion, suggestions for future studies are outlined and the overall study is summarized.

Theoretical Framework, Main Research Question, and Implications

*Price Theory Related to Higher Education.* The theoretical framework that inspired this study was drawn from price and persistence theories. The logic of the price theory is that the less a student has to pay for a postsecondary education, the greater the likelihood the student will attend one institution in comparison to another institution that is more expensive. Price theory explains the relationship between financial aid and enrollment.

The findings of this study demonstrated that African-American students who were given a large state wide financial aid package, in this case the Merit Scholars award, attended four-year state funded institutions at a higher rate than when the award was not available. In the 1994-1995 cohort of Florida high school graduates, 60.9% of the African-Americans attended SUS institutions and 8.9% attended Florida community colleges. In the 1997-1998 post Bright Futures cohort, 80.3% of the African-Americans attended SUS institutions, while 9.4% attended community colleges.

*Persistence Theory Related to Financial Aid.* Persistence theory argues that the more financial aid a student receives, the greater the likelihood that student will persist. One of the most influential ways to increase student persistence, and ultimately student success rates is to provide financial aid “with strings attached,” i.e. aid with performance requirements, to students who demonstrate high academic aptitude (DesJardins, Ahlburg & McCall, 1999; Somers & St. John, 1993; Spady, 1971a, 1971b; St. John, 1994; St. John & Starkey, 1995). Despite the fact students may or may not be receiving additional aid on the federal or state level, the study uses the logic that the Merit Scholars award and other Bright Futures awards provide some of the largest sources of aid available to students attending postsecondary institutions in the state of Florida.
The Merit Scholars award is an award that: 1) requires students to have a certain high school scholastic aptitude (i.e., 3.0 GPA, 950 on the SAT, and/or a 20 on the ACT); 2) provides student recipients 75% of tuition and fees and 3) has strings attached that require students to maintain a certain college GPA to be eligible for renewal. Prior to 1997, there was no statewide financial aid policy that provided funding to students who met the Merit Scholars criteria. While some students received some grants, scholarships, or loans prior to 1997, the Bright Futures program was the first time the state of Florida provided aid for tuition, mandatory fees, and book allowances through a statewide program. The persistence rates among African-Americans showed a practically significant increase after the initiation of the Bright Futures program in 1997, increasing from 12.4% in 1994-1995 to 29.7% in 1997-1998. Such findings indicate that African American students who receive financial awards from programs like the Florida Merit Scholar program are more likely to persist in college.

\textit{Student Success in relation to the African-American Actual and Assumed Merit Scholars}

This study showed that the Merit Scholars award had a positive effect on student success defined as enrollment, persistence, and graduation rates. This assessment was based on a five-percentage point practical significance level. Since data were available on the entire population neither predictive statistical methods nor statistical significance was needed. Instead practical significance was used to determine a noteworthy impact using a level like that used by OPPAGA (2004) in a similar study. Among Merit Scholars, fewer African-American students left the state and more attended one of the eleven state funded public institutions. In 1994-1995, 7.3% of African-Americans left the state to attend college and by 1997-1998 this dropped to .2%. More African-American students persisted to the fourth year of college, and the number of students who graduated during their fourth year also increased. The majority of the African-American students who graduated within the eleven state funded public institutions did so during the fourth year.

\textit{Enrollment.} Between the actual and assumed African-American Merit Scholars of Bright Futures, enrollment improved almost 20 percentage points in SUS enrollment. In 1994-1995, there were 60.9% enrolled; in 1997-1998, 80.3% enrolled (see Table 4.16)
Persistence. Persistence of African-American students in the SUS improved well beyond the five-percentage point level of practical significance. The results indicated in 1994-1995, 12.4% of the African-Americans persisted while three years later 29.7% persisted (see Table 4.16).

Graduation. In the fourth year, the graduation percentage rate increased. The percentage of African-Americans who graduated in four years and who met Merit Scholar award criteria in the class of 1994-1995 (prior to Bright Futures) was 26.9%; Merit Scholars who graduated in the class of 1997-1998 (after Bright Futures) was 35%. The graduation rate after four years increased 8.3 percentage points, again above the five-percentage point level of practical significance. In the fifth year, the graduation rate increased only .9 percentage point; its highest pre and post Bright Futures levels; from 13.8% pre Bright Futures to 14.7% in the 1996-1997 post Bright Futures cohort.

The results of the study are supported by the literature as well. Bright Futures recipients graduated earlier and were more likely to remain in college three years after high school graduation, according to the Office of Program Policy Analysis and Government Accountability (OPPAGA), an office of the Florida Legislature (2004). In the current study, the results indicate an increase in graduation rates for Merit Scholars. Similar to OPPAGA’s study, this study confirms that at least three years after a student’s high school graduation, students who received the Merit Scholars award portion of Bright Futures will achieve higher rates of student success. In all areas of this study, enrollment increased, persistence rose, and graduation percentage increased among African-American students. As a result, student success also increased. Student success was achieved at different rates for African-American males and females among the assumed (pre-Bright Futures) and actual (post-Bright Futures) Merit Scholar recipients, yet student success was improved overall.

Implications.

This study supports the notion that historically, minorities have been more sensitive to student aid than their White counterparts resulting in racial and ethnic groups having a lower probability to persist without financial aid (Hu & St. John, 2001). Racial background is noted as having an impact on overall educational attainment (DesJardins et al., 2002; Kane, 1994; Manski & Wise, 1983). This research provides a foundation to
argue that the Merit Scholars financial aid program, which has strings attached, selects students with high academic aptitude, and as a type of grant aid, is not only a strong incentive for increased persistence, but is also an incentive for increased enrollment and graduation. The attainment of the Merit Scholars award is a strong predictor of student success. The results demonstrate the availability of guaranteed funding through a Merit-Based program increased enrollment, persistence, and graduation rates among African-American students across the eleven SUS institutions.

African-Americans student success increased after the initiation of the Merit Scholars award at a higher rate than White students. Enrollment increased approximately 20 percentage points, persistence rates increased approximately 17 percentage points and in the fourth year, graduation rates increased 9 percentage points for African-Americans, in comparison to Whites, whose enrollment percentage points increased 7.6, persistence increased 11.5 and graduation rates increased 5.1. Thus, practical significance for student success, set at 5 percentage points, was achieved in both cases. However, African-Americans were more sensitive to the presence of the award than their White counterparts.

Comparing White students to African-American students is one way to convey the difference of aid sensitivity among the races. The results demonstrate that availability to aid among African-Americans promotes higher rates of student success. The main implication of this result is that more African-Americans should be encouraged to obtain the award because it will be a key element in ensuring that they enroll, persist, and graduate.

The results indicated that if more African-Americans obtained the Merit Scholars award, African-American student success in college could be improved as well as academic preparation for college. The study indicates that with the Merit Scholars award more African-Americans students were successful, which in turn suggests that more African-American students should try to obtain the Merit Scholars award. Additionally, efforts should be made by the state of Florida to increase the number of African-American students in the Florida schools who actually receive the Merit Scholars award.

The numbers demonstrate there were 2,654 assumed (pre-Bright Futures) and actual (post-Bright Futures) Merit Scholar Award recipients out of the roughly 35,000
African-Americans in the total four-year cohort, representing 21.4% of the four-year cohort. Of the assumed (i.e. pre-Bright Futures) Merit Scholars, 1,105 (7%) were African-American, while in the actual (i.e. post-Bright Futures) Merit Scholars 982 (8.7%) were African-American. This was a 1.7 percentage point increase, which still indicated an underrepresentation of African-Americans among students receiving the Merit Scholar award. The increase is based on the number of African-Americans that received the award in comparison to the number of students among the assumed and actual Merit Scholars population. The figures show that no practical significance increase in the number of African-American Merit Award recipients was achieved over the four years.

When analyzing the award recipients by gender, of the total African-American population who enroll in college, the proportion of females to males who receive the award is equal. However, far fewer African-American males are entering college than females. State policy should work to ensure that not only are more African-Americans obtaining the award, but that more African-American males aspire to attend college. This is not a new or radical suggestion. The point is that the award is improving student success, but African-Americans are still missing out on the opportunity. More high school and pre-college preparation could be instrumental in ensuring that more African-Americans are able to go to college or gain access and as a result, gain access to the Merit Scholars award.

To demonstrate how the numbers are equal, yet disproportionate, among the four-year cohort, a total of 10,374 African-American students comprised the high school cohorts. Of those 10,374 African-American high school students 6,834 were female and 3,540 were male. Among the African-American assumed (pre-Bright Futures) and actual (post-Bright Futures) Merit Scholars, 1,751 (66%) females received or would have received the Merit Scholars award. In the case of males, 912 (34%) received or would have received the award. African-American females therefore continue to outpace their male counterparts. Emphasis should be placed on ensuring that more African-American males have an opportunity for higher education.

The data from this study indicated that the Merit Scholars award significantly increased the number of students who enrolled, persisted, and graduated. In the cohort prior to Bright Futures, the African-American students obtained success at a lesser rate
than those students after the initiation of Bright Futures. Implication: If the goal of the state of Florida was to increase enrollment or access rates, persistence rates, or graduations among the African-American population over the next 20-25 years, this study shows evidence that this goal can be aided by increasing the number of students who receive the Merit Scholars award.

Recommendations and Observations

The state of Florida should be commended implementing a merit-based policy that is achieving some of its goals to improve access to higher education. The state still needs to think creatively about improving access and enrollment rates for more minority students, particularly among males. Seventy percent of the African-American recipients are female. In the four years under study only 3,540 males graduated from high school. The results indicated that at least a five percentage increase occurred in the enrollment, persistence, and graduation rates of those African-American males that received the Merit Scholars award. If more minorities, specifically African-American males, were graduated from high school, there is some indication that greater student success in college would be achieved. Some specific suggestions that would assist in ensuring that more African-Americans receive the award follow.

The Office of Financial Aid in the State of Florida, Department of Education, and school districts across the state could continue to do the following to augment the numbers of students who obtain the Merit Scholars award. For instance, various agencies or organizations should continue to: a) provide training to guidance counselors in high schools across the state. The training would assist guidance counselors regarding aid availability, teaching students how to complete the Federal Financial Aid Application, and how to complete the Bright Futures form; b) provide grants to provide training, brochures, consultants, and support to low-income and minority middle schools and high schools; c) provide academic and inspirational speakers to visit high schools to explain merit-based funding to students, teachers, and parents; d) encourage students to attend TRIO programs that support low-income and first generation students and the UPWARD BOUND program which works to increase the rates at which participants enroll in and graduate from institutions of postsecondary education; and e) provide forums for students.
and parents to address questions and concerns early in the Fall semester before the Bright Futures deadline of the first of December.

Boosting academic preparation is another key to ensuring that more students obtain the Merit Scholars award. Students should be provided with the resources, training, support and encouragement to enroll in Advanced Placement (AP) courses. As a result, students who take AP courses may test out of college courses, accelerating the possibility of students completing their postsecondary degree. The College Board should continue to provide support to ensure majority and minority students have comparable academic opportunities, well thought out curricula and access to AP courses and exams. This could be accomplished by the state continuing to be aggressive in ensuring academic preparation for students in varying economic counties and districts. The key is continuous K-12 collaboration, high schools course development, and monitoring of whether high schools inflate student grades.

In addition to the agencies and organizations being cognizant of increasing the number of African-Americans who attain the Merit Scholars award, educators and policy makers can continue to monitor of how policies impact minority students. There should be thoughtful recognition of the financial burdens and obstacles facing minority college-bound students. Federal aid issues, loans, and a shift from need-based to merit-aid are impacting students contemplating obtaining a postsecondary degree. The ten-year data from the Florida Center for Public Policy and Leadership in this study showed that merit-based aid has increased over ten years at a rate faster than the rate of need-based aid, and at the same time, college tuition has been increasing as well. As inflation increases costs within the state and country, state funds primarily allocated to higher education aid are decreasing (OPPAGA, 2004). If the state of Florida is to continue with merit-based funding then reducing funding for the merit-based programs could be problematic for minorities, especially African-Americans.

As tuition continues to rise, and the costs associated with the state subsidizing the Merit Scholars program or any of the Bright Futures programs, an option that has been explored is the state increasing academic standards (OPPAGA, 2004). If academic achievement standards are changed, racial and ethnic groups could be impacted. This study outlined the differences in academic achievement among the races/ethnicities. As a
result, changing academic standards to weed out participants may harm not only African-
Americans but all students. For instance, African-Americans’ ACT scores increased at a
significant level, but GPA or SAT scores did not. For Whites, GPA, SAT/ACT scores did
not increase at a practical significance level. The state has already been creative and
responsive to other methods of cutting costs. Raising the standardized tests score
eligibility requirements is not a viable option if access is a continuing goal of the program
because the results of this study indicate test scores are not improving among Merit
Scholars of any racial or ethnic group analyzed in this study.

Assistance in increasing the number of qualified African-American students could
be another solution by collaborating with other states and increased communication
within K-12 system. More specifically, Florida might consider collaboration between
neighboring states that also have merit awards. For instance, Georgia and Florida could
have tuition reciprocity policies for students who want to experience going out of state,
but want to return home after their college careers. Students who receive the HOPE
scholarship could be allowed to attend Florida institutions for their postsecondary
education and students who receive the Bright Futures award could attend institutions in
Georgia. Such reciprocity would increase the diversity of the student body, particularly
among states with fewer minorities. This new policy could assist states/institutions in
recruiting high achieving students in a neighboring state, ensure students give back to
their home state, and provide an opportunity for students to go away from home for some
or all of their college career. This would also add revenue to a state when parents and
families visit children who attend a college or university in that state (i.e. hotel, food, and
transportation fees).

Another idea is to create a consortium of states that promote merit-based funding.
By using one application process, students could apply to all the schools within that
consortium. The consortium would require that students attend an institution in one of the
merit-based consortium states. In addition, the student would be required to move back to
their home state after graduation for at least 3-5 years to alleviate a “brain-drain”. Instead,
it could create a brain-infusion. If students leave the state and are exposed to different
experiences and people in other states, it could foster a higher level of independence and
competence. Increasing a student’s independence and competence is a part of the role
colleges and universities have to encourage a student’s overall development (Chickering, 1993). In addition, states such as Iowa that do not have as many minority students could recruit students from states that have larger minority populations.

*Overall Student Cohort: Discussion of Student Success among the African-Americans in the Four-Year High School Cohorts*

In the current study, the findings indicated that enrollment rates in the state-funded universities increased by 2.3 percentage points over the four years evaluated, which is not practically significant, using a practical significance level of five percentage points. Referring back to the high school class sizes, the number of students who were in the 1994-1995-cohort class equaled 43,115, while the 1997-1998-cohort class equaled 51,845. In the case of persistence rates, students who remain from the fourth to fifth year in college increased from 17.5% in 1994-1995 to 18% in 1996-1997, which was also not practically significant. Graduation results just from the eleven state funded institutions after four years indicated that overall the rates decreased by two percentage points, a change not reaching the established level of practical significance.

Among the African-American students, enrollment increased by 2.8 percentage points, which is below practical significance. Persistence rates increased nine percentage points, which was practically significant. Graduation rates decreased among African-American students by 3 percentage points.

*Implications.* When comparing the entire population to the pre-Bright Futures and post-Bright Futures cohorts, it is evident that those students who are academically prepared and who achieve have a higher likelihood to enroll, persist, and graduate. The policy implication for this finding is simple. Student academic achievement is key to ensuring their success. The better a student’s GPA and test scores, the higher the probability they will succeed on average. In addition, the guarantee of funding is a key element in ensuring overall student success. The scholarships predicated on academic achievement assist in ensuring enrollment, persistence, and graduation occurs at a higher level than those students with lower academic achievement, at least in Florida.
Discussion of Other Findings

Discussion of Ten-Year Data. Overall, the ten-year data from the Florida Center for Public Policy and Leadership (FCPPL) determined that low-income students who receive loans, including need-based or merit-based loans, are comparable since 1997 regardless of race. Socio-economic status is an equalizer among those students who received merit loans. Among White students, 43% received merit loan aid, while among African-Americans students, 50% received merit loan aid. However, Whites still received the majority of the total merit-aid, but availability of total merit-aid has increased for minority students.

The total merit and need aid over the last ten years showed increases. The average amount of need aid was higher initially than merit aid prior to Bright Futures. Total merit aid among African-Americans has increased as much as $830 and $848 among Hispanics. In the case of the mean total of need-based aid, African-Americans continue to be at the forefront of receiving more aid in general, particularly loans, than other racial group (see Table 5.1).

Table 5.1: Differences in Total Need and Total Merit in the Ten-Year Data

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total Need</th>
<th>Total Merit</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Amount</td>
<td>Amount</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asians</td>
<td>$586</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blacks</td>
<td>$571</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanics</td>
<td>$454</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whites</td>
<td>$272</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Implications. The results from the FCPPL ten-year data conveyed that overall, African-Americans are getting the greatest amount of financial aid of all racial groups analyzed. African-Americans take out more loans yet, receive less merit aid, especially when compared to their White counterparts. The data show that low-income African-American Merit Scholar recipients had the least amount of loans. This indicates that receipt of the Merit Scholars award could lessen the need for low-income African-American students to take out loans. Without merit-based aid, it could be implied that students are taking out loans and receiving need-based aid, a type of aid that is ultimately
decreasing within the state. The better option for low-income African-American students is merit-based aid.

Discussion of Academic Achievement among the African-Americans in the Four High School Cohorts. The SAT trends in Florida reflect similar patterns across the nation. For instance, over 26% of African-Americans who take the SAT test raised their scores by 6% on the national level (College Board, 2004). In the state of Florida, SAT scores increased for both Whites and African-Americans over the four-year period, according to the results of this study, but neither increase was practically significant. The ACT scores among African-American students increased from a composite score 16 to 17. This is a practically significant increase using the standards stipulated by the ACT (2004). White students’ average ACT scores remained at a composite score of 21 all four years. Also the GPA for Whites increased from 2.5 to 2.6 while among African-Americans decreased from 2.1 to 2.0. Neither of these changes is practically significant.

Implications. Two years may not be enough time to determine any major changes in academic achievement. An improvement among African-Americans with regard to tests scores in a two-year time period is significant and worth noting and continued tracking. Ideally, the composite scores will increase to reach at least a composite of 20 for more African-Americans to be eligible for the Merit Scholars award. Since there was some increase among the mean scores of the SAT, it could also be implied that changes in the average could be accomplished over time. The questions to be asked are: 1) Will the increase be practically significant? 2) Will the increase meet the 970 Merit Scholars awards requirement? 3) Will these changes influence college success for African-Americans? Ideally, the overall student four-year cohort should have a mean GPA of at least 3.0, mean SAT score of 970, and Composite ACT of 20 among African-American and White students.

Discussion of Academic Achievement in relation to the African-American Pre and Post Bright Futures Merit Scholar Cohorts. Even though the primary focus of the study was to evaluate student success, academic achievement was evaluated as well. Academic achievement based on GPA and tests scores was not part of the main focus of this study. Based on practically significant standards established by high school GPA, the College Board and the ACT, scores of the pre and post Bright Futures Merit Scholar cohorts,
particularly among African-Americans, increased at a practically significant level. SAT score among assumed (i.e. pre-Bright Futures) African-American Merit Scholars was an average 1,060. SAT scores of African-Americans declined to an average 1,008 among the actual Merit Scholars, i.e. post Bright Futures. ACT composite score average for African American was 21 before and after Bright Futures. The mean GPA of the assumed (pre-Bright Futures) African-American Merit Scholars was 3.2 and rose only to 3.3 for the actual Merit Scholars. White students averaged the same as African-Americans students. According to this study, comparing the actual and assumed African-American Merit Scholars to their White counterparts, the GPA is the essentially the same. Similar results are found when comparing the overall achievement of the four-year high school cohorts as well.

Academic achievement was one of many interesting findings discovered in this research. The purpose of mentioning the findings is to compare and contrast the findings by others. Current research is not congruent with the OPPAGA (2003a) report, which emphasized there are gains made in improving academic preparation by offering a financial incentive. The report argued that the highest gains are found among minority students. The report by OPPAGA (2004) also took race into account. The report appropriately indicates that, as a whole, students are performing better academically. Yet, African-Americans would be negatively impacted if certain standards were raised to support the award. For instance, if the GPA requirement for Bright Futures increased from 3.0 to a 3.2, at least 24% of the African-American Merit Scholars would be ineligible. The report also found that students who received the scholarship out-performed those students who did not receive the scholarship. Students who received the Merit Scholars award of Bright Futures have slightly higher GPAs.

Implications. The OPPAGA (2004) report should not be incongruent with this current study because OPPAGA report evaluated years one year later than this study did. As a result, the OPPAGA report revealed that the academic standards of the Merit Scholars award actually improves the academic preparation in later years. This current study confirms that the test scores did not improve for African-Americans after the inception of Bright Futures. This finding resembles the research by Janesick (2001) that there are glaring disparities in test scores among African-American and White students.
This study found that for both Whites and African-Americans’ scores did not decrease, but African-American Merit Scholars score about 48 points lower than Whites, which is practically significant. Even among those students who meet the Merit Scholars criteria by SAT scores, the disparity is significant using the 30-40 point difference as the standard.

Data Collection Observations

Increasing the number of students who obtain the Merit Scholars award and being sensitive to various policy issues is important, but another major concern is management of data. For instance, the National Student Clearinghouse (NSC) data provides information on the number of students who attend out of state colleges. The data from NCS is somewhat flawed because there was inaccurate reporting of who may or may not leave the state; especially during the mid-1990s less data was reported than in the later years. Requiring the National Student Clearinghouse (NSC) data to be reported by all institutions in order to garner accurate out-of-state and in-state data by all institutions in the country is the solution.

All data reported by high schools and postsecondary institutions should be required to have a trained professional who is certified to enter data. In some instances, data is not always reported accurately. Overall the data is accurate, but more accountability measures to ensure accurate reporting are paramount as data is being used to assess and evaluate policy in the state. This suggestion is not meant to imply that measures are not in place to ensure accuracy, but more could be done. In addition, many students are not reported because many do not fill out the Federal Financial Aid Application, which helps to monitor aid allocations. Only those students who fill out the form will be tracked in the state databases.

Future Research Suggestions

1. Future research should be done using a structural equation model to determine which type of aid (i.e. loans, merit-funding, need-based aid) has the strongest relationship to achieving student success among the assumed and actual Merit Scholars or between all Bright Futures scholarships, which include the Vocational or the Academic Scholars. The purpose of using a structural equation model is to determine the multiple relationships among various
variables. By using structural equation modeling versus multiple regression, a researcher can better determine causal models or paths. Structural equation modeling would demonstrate which type of aid best correlates or relates to the three parts of student success: enrollment, persistence, or graduation rates. Another reason this would be a strong study is that it would further test the price and persistence theories.

2. Evaluate family socioeconomic status and race/ethnicity of the students receiving Bright Futures in comparison to the socioeconomic status of those students who did not receive Bright Futures and exhibited financial need. The purpose of this study would be to determine if those students who received the Bright Futures award are students whose families meet the middle or upper income brackets. It has not yet been determined in Florida using any data analysis whether the Bright Future awards does or does not benefit the middle and upper income families more than the lower-income families.

3. Conduct a cross state analysis of the effect of merit-based and need-based aid on student success and academic achievement. It would be helpful to know how Florida compares to other states that have merit-based funding versus other states that use primarily need-based funding. By doing a cross state analysis states could learn what other states may face, e.g., funding and access issues. The analysis would determine which type of aid best assists in ensuring access and academic achievement.

Conclusion

Overall, merit-aid is making a difference in improving student success. The results indicate that research by DesJardins, Ahlburg and McCall (2002) and St. John, Hu, Simmons and Musoba (2000) is accurate in its account that high academic achievement in high school is a potential indicator of success in postsecondary education as well as the presence of guaranteed financial aid. The availability of merit-aid such as the Merit Scholars program offers a key financial incentive, particularly among minority students. Receipt of the Merit Scholar award was shown in this study to have a positive impact on minority student success, i.e. enrollment, persistence, and graduation.
If the availability of aid is such a strong incentive, as the “strings attached” merit aid in this study seemed to be, then perhaps need-based aid with “strings attached” could foster the same levels of student success. Regardless of the type of aid provided by the state, state policy should focus on steps needed to increase student success throughout the K-20 system, ensuring adequate academic preparation for students of varying races and socio-economic backgrounds. It is still unclear if Bright Futures, especially the Merit Scholars program, benefits those that need the aid the most. But this research indicates that students who can qualify to receive the Merit Scholar award increase their chances of success in college.

This study is only the beginning of determining the true impact of Florida’s Bright Futures award. The state of Florida can be proud of some of the improvements it has made in raising academic standards and the use of merit aid. However, the state now must make strides in continuing to improve access and student success for all students, specifically African-American students. Continuous, holistic evaluation of educational policy decisions that impact all students should be conducted on a regular basis to monitor the impact of merit-based aid in Florida.
ACKNOWLEDGMENT REGARDING

CONFIDENTIALITY AND SECURITY

The undersigned individual, on behalf of Marguerite McClinton, Florida State University (name of organization) has been granted access to confidential files maintained for purposes attendant to the Florida Education and Training Placement Information Program (FETPIP). The purpose of this acknowledgement is to ensure that all individuals with access to FETPIP data, which are individually identifiable, understand the confidential nature of the data and the strict prohibitions regarding public disclosure of the data.

By his or her signature, the undersigned individual acknowledges and agrees to the following:

1. Individually identifiable data stored on facilities maintained by the Florida Education Data Center by FETPIP result from electronic record linkages among several state and federal agencies. Provisions of state and federal law that were enacted to protect the privacy and confidentiality of the original records govern each match that occurred in the linkage process. These original and linked records are governed by laws which include:

   a. Public Law 93-380: A federal law governing and specifying the Privacy Rights of Parents and Students also known as the “Buckley Amendments”. Similar provisions are outlined in Section 288.093 Florida Statues.

   b. Section 443.171, Florida Statues: A state law governing access to data used to manage state and federal unemployment compensation programs. It stipulates penalties associated with violating restrictions put on the
The following federal regulations also apply: 7 CFR 272.8(a), 42 CFR 431.300F, 45 CFR 205.5, and 45 CFR 303.21.

c. **Public Law 100-503:** This law is referred to as the ‘Computer Matching and Privacy Protection Act of 1988’. It governs data related to the U.S. Postal Service, the Federal Office of Personnel Management, and the U.S. Department of Defense.

d. **Sections 943.053, 943.056, 943.057, 943.058, Florida Statutes:** These statutes address the privacy and security of conviction and arrest information of current and former correctional system inmates.

2. To further ensure the security of data managed by FETPIP, the Florida Department of Education has entered into several agreements with state and federal agencies. These are available for review by the undersigned upon request.

3. The undersigned acknowledges the need to ensure that data stored and managed on FETPIP’s behalf are protected from public disclosure. The undersigned agrees to adhere to the following guidelines when accessing individually identifiable files maintained by FETPIP.

   a. If the conditions that warrant access to FETPIP’s files do not require the undersigned to print, display~ or otherwise personally view the contents of the tape, the undersigned shall refrain from doing so.

   b. If the conditions that warrant access do require the undersigned to print, display, or otherwise personally view the contents of the fields from being viewed by persons other than those needed to carry out the electronic data processing.

   c. If the conditions that warranted access are not immediately rectified, the undersigned shall ensure that any disk, tape, or printed copies of files containing individually identifiable information are stored in a secure location such as a locked desk or file cabinet, except when they are in use for the purposes for which they were prepared.

   d. When the conditions that warranted access are rectified, the undersigned shall erase or destroy all information which is personally identifiable as to pupil, student, inmate, employee, or employer that was printed or displayed as a part of rectifying conditions. This information shall not be retained in any form.
Title: Florida State University-Doctoral Candidate
Agency: Department of Educational Leadership and Policy Studies
Address: 2626 E Park Ave #4108 Tallahassee, FL 32301
Phone: 850-942-5428 Fax: 850-644-1258 E-mail: mmm1630@fsu.edu
Witness: Royce Garrison, February 16, 2004
Witness: John Mabley, February 16, 2004
APPENDIX B

HUMAN SUBJECTS LETTER
August 10, 2004

Marguerite McClinton
2626 F Park Ave #4108
Tallahassee FL 32301

Re: (04. 519) How the Merit Scholars Programs Of Florida’s Bright Futures Funding Has Affected Student Success Among African-American Students

Dear Ms. McClinton:

I am writing to inform you that the above referenced project was reviewed by the FSU Human Subjects Committee on August 4, 2004. It was determined that you initiated and completed human subject research without review and approval of the FSU Institutional Review Board (Human Subjects Committee). The federal regulations governing the protection of human subjects in research and the University’s letter of assurance with the Office of Human Research Protection (OHRP) require that research involving human subjects receive review and approval by the Human Subjects Committee prior to initiation of the research. (See 45 CFR 46.103).

Therefore, the Committee voted to “NOT APPROVE” your research project. However, it was determined by the Committee that you shall be permitted to otherwise utilize the data you collected during the research project. Pursuant to 45 CFR 46.109(d), you have the opportunity to respond in writing or in person to this letter of notification at or by the next Committee meeting scheduled for September 8, 2004. The Committee would ask that you successfully complete the NIH training course on human subjects protection located at http://69.5.4.33/cOI/. Then mail a copy of your completion certificate to the committee to place in your file.

Please feel free to contact me should you have any questions regarding this letter.

M. Tomkowiak, M.D.
Chair, FSU Human Subjects Committee

Cc: Beverly Bower (EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP)
Completion Certificate

This is to certify that

Marguerite McClinton

has completed the Human Participants Protection Education for Research Teams

online course, sponsored by the National Institutes of Health (NIH), on 09/13/2004. This course included the following:

- key historical events and current issues that impact guidelines and legislation on human participant protection in research.
- ethical principles and guidelines that should assist in resolving the ethical issues inherent in the conduct of research with human participants.
- the use of key ethical principles and federal regulations to protect human participants at various stages in the research process.
- a description of guidelines for the protection of special populations in research.
- a definition of informed consent and components necessary for a valid consent.
- a description of the role of the IRB in the research process.
- the roles, responsibilities, and interactions of federal agencies, institutions, and researchers in conducting research with human participants.

National Institutes of Health
http://ww.nih.gov
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Florida Ways and Means Committee & Education Committee Senator Sullivan on Bill (CS/CS/SB 858, March 18, 1997). The Florida State Archives (Series 18 Carton 2078).


House Hearing. (April 29, 1997). Bill 858 Bright Futures. (Cassette Recording Series 38 Box 88). The Florida State Archives.


Education, Division of Policy Analysis and Research.


Senate Education Committee. (March 18, 1997). Bill 858 Bright Futures (Cassette Recording Series 625 Box 970). The Florida State Archives.

Senate Hearing. (April 25, 1997). Bill 868 Bright Futures (Cassette Recording Series 1238 Box 166). The Florida State Archives.


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*Grutter v. Bollinger* (02-241) 288 F.3d 732

Marguerite Mary McClinton

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Lexington, VA 24450
540-463-6295

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Kansas City, MO 64114
816-942-9117

email: mmcclinton@wlu.edu

EDUCATION
Florida State University, Tallahassee, FL
Ed.D College of Education
Major: Higher Education Administration
Minor: Public Policy

Harvard University, Cambridge, MA
Ed. M Graduate School of Education
Concentration: Administration Planning and Social Policy/
Higher Education

Emory University, Atlanta, GA
B.A. Emory College
Major: Educational Studies Minor: Sociology

ADMINISTRATIVE AND PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Director of the Elrod University Commons and Campus Activities

August 2004-Present

Oversee the daily operation of the John W. Elrod University Commons

Budget
Marketing
Programming

Supervise the Director’s of Greek Life, Campus Recreation, Student Activities, Leadership Programs and
Campus Ministry

Assist with Judicial System, Executive Committee of Student Government, and Traveller (student run
transportation system)

Associate Director

January 2003-August 2004

Hardee Center for Women in Higher Education
Florida State University, Tallahassee, FL

Supervise Director’s Assistant
Coordinate executive committee and board meetings
Assist with Fundraising

Oversee operations of the Center: Recruitment and Retention of Graduate Students
Report to the Director of the Center and Chair of Board of Governors
Coordinated the 25th Anniversary Celebration for the Center

Research Assistant

August 2001-December 2002

Center for the Study of Student Development and Student Values
Florida State University, Tallahassee, FL

Edit Publications

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH
Research/Write for Publications and College Values On-Line Journal
Assist in Administrative Duties, Values Institute & Hardee Center for Women
Technical Support Coordinator for the 2001 Values Institute
Chair of the Resource Library Committee for the 2002 Values Institute
M.M. McClinton
Page Two

**Residential College Director** 1999-2001
Department of Residential Life
Washington University, St. Louis, MO

- **Supervisory Skills**
  Managed five residential halls with a total programming budget of $30,000
  Supervised eighteen Resident Advisors
  Assisted in Supervising ACUHO intern for Summer Housing
  Served as Judicial Coordinator for the five residential halls

- **Student Advising**
  Co-Chaired Staff Recognition and Support Committee (Residential Life)
  Advisor South Forty Programming Board, Congress of South Forty
  Advisor to Black Images Dance Troupe

- **University Service**
  University Judicial Board
  University Professional Development Committee
  University Health and Wellness Committee
  University Sports and Recreation Advisory Committee
  Athletic Department Spirit Committee

- **Administrative Support**
  Co-Chair University Fire Safety Week
  Assisted Judicial Administrator
  Co-authored training manual for Residential College Directors
  Initiated Sophomore Series: A faculty/student forum to address sophomore student issues

- **Diversity Work**
  Co-Programming Chair for the University MLK Commemoration Ceremony
  Discovery Minority Recruitment Weekend Committee (Admissions)
  Advised Campus Week of Dialogue Committee sponsored by Student Government
  Initiated diversity trainings for Residential Life and Safe Zones Programs
  Chair of Paul Robeson Leadership Award Committee
  Volunteer, Women of Color Conference
  Assisted Association of Black Students in Strategic Planning
  Trained Safe Zones Facilitator

- **Awards**
  Inducted into the Justin X. Carroll National Residence Hall Honorary (NRHH)
  Staff Awards from the Recognition and Support Committee
  NRHH Of-the-Month Awards:
  Sophomore Series, Advisor of the Month, and Fire Safety Week

**Graduate Intern for the Coordinator of Minority Recruitment** 1998-1999
Arts and Sciences Admissions Office
Harvard University Graduate School, Cambridge, MA

**Resident Director** 1998
**TEACHING EXPERIENCE**

**Invited Lecturer**
Florida State University Department of Educational Leadership and Policy Studies
   Delivered Class Lectures for EDA 5227 Women Administrator
   Spring 2004

**Co-Instructor for Undergraduate Career Development Course**
Florida State University Department of Career Services
   Delivered Class Lectures
   Advised Students in a Small Groups
   Spring & Fall 2002

**Instructor and Co-Instructor for First Year Experience Class**
Florida State University Dean of Students Office
   Summer 2002 & 2003

**Summer Teaching Fellow, American History**
Northfield Mount Herman School, Northfield, MA
   Summer 1997

**CONSULTING**
Student Focus Group Facilitator for Residence Life and Athletics at Florida A & M University
   MGT of America, Inc., Education Consulting Firm in Tallahassee, FL
   Fall 2003

   Collegiate Proactive Solutions, Inc, Sports Management Consulting
   Firm in Ft. Lauderdale, FL
   Spring 2004

**PUBLICATIONS**


**PRESENTATIONS**


**GRANTS**


**HONORS**

Florida State University, Tallahassee, FL
- Travel Award from the Council on Research in Education (CORE) 2004
- *Hardee Scholar* 2001-2004
- *Leslie Wilson Fellowship Recipient* 2001-2003
- *Martin Luther King Book Award* 2002

Emory University, Atlanta, GA
- *Student Marshal, Commencement Exercises* 1998
- *Hall of Fame-Emory College Council* 1998
- *Excellence Award for Leadership-Office of Multicultural Programs* 1997
- *Athlete of the Week- Athletic Department* 1997
- *Arthur Ashe Award- Academic & Athletic Achievement in Tennis* 1997-1998

Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc.- South Atlantic Region
- *Outstanding Undergraduate Chapter President* 1998
- *Delores H. Oliver Service to Mankind Award* 1996

**PROFESSIONAL AFFILIATIONS**

- National Association of Student Personnel Administrators
- American Educational Research Association
- Past Northwest Regional Chair, Florida Association for Women in Education
Sisters of the Academy
Member of Delta Kappa Omega Chapter of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc.

M.M. McClinton
Page Five

ACTIVITIES

Florida State University, Tallahassee, FL

_Doctoral Representative_ for the Hardee Center for Women Board of Governors

_Member, Fundraising Committee of the Hardee Center_ 2001-2002

_Coordinator, STAR Minority Recruitment Weekend_ for the College of Education 2001-2003

_Doctoral Representative_ for Student Advisory Committee for Department of Educational Leadership & Policy Studies 2002

_Panelist, Black Graduate Association Professional Development Symposium_ April 2002

_Volunteer, Beyond Border International Community Service Exchange Program_ 2002

_Member, Planning Committee for Beyond Border International Exchange Program_ 2002-2003

University of the West Indies: Kingston, Jamaica

_Volunteer, The Graduate School of Arts Sciences Recruitment Summit_ 2002

Trained Facilitator for ROPES Course, Florida State Reservation 2002-present

_Volunteer, Formal Hearing Officer in the Office of Rights and Responsibilities_ 2002-present

Emory University, Atlanta, GA

Senior Gift Committee 1997-1998

Student Conduct Justice 1995-1998

Search Committee for New Director of Judicial Affairs 1998

Student Government Association

_Sophomore Representative_ 1995-1996

_Assistant to Vice-President_ 1994-1995

Student Orientation Leader 1995

The Department of Athletics,

_Emory Tennis Camp-Tennis Coach_ 1998

_Nike Tennis Camp- Tennis Coach_ 1996

Women’s Varsity Tennis 1994-1998

NCAA-Division III National Team Champions: Tennis 1996

UAA Championship Team: Tennis 1995-1998

The Department of Residence Life,

_Aide to Assistant Director_ 1997-1998

_Resident Assistant_ 1996-1997

COMMUNITY SERVICE

_Volunteer_ for Mentor St. Louis 2000-2001

_Planning Committee for the Association for Diabetes Walk of St. Louis, MO_ 2001

_Vice-President, Urban League Young Professionals in St. Louis, MO_ 2000-2001

_Counselor, Anytown Summer Program for National Conference for Community and Justice_ June 2000

_Confirmation Teacher_ at St. Michael and St. George Episcopal Church in St. Louis, MO 2000-2001

_Sunday School Teacher and Small Group Counselor_ at St. John’s Episcopal Church, Tallahassee, FL 2001-2004

_Volunteer, Relay for Life in Tallahassee, FL_ 2002-2003