

The Increasing Need for Quality Alternative Education—A School Counselor's
Perspective

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Abstract

This study focuses on the secondary counselor perspective for students using alternative credit programs, e.g., independent study, evening classes, and summer school, to complement the high school educational experience. Three hundred high school counselors throughout the United States participated in this research that examined *which* types of students most benefited from these “other” curriculum sources and some of the reasons *why*. This study also profiled the characteristics of successful alternative education programs. These findings promise to better inform counselors, school administrators, curricular specialists, providers, and students’ themselves about the role alternative education is increasingly having within the secondary schools.

The Increasing Need for Quality Alternative Education—A School Counselor's Perspective

In every high school, in every counselor's office, and on almost every day of the school year, a student (or parent) and counselor visit about the need for an alternative credit option. One student who recently moved into the area from out of state is short a science class and plans to graduate early; another student would rather take a band class than a class required for graduation during the school day; one student failed math and needs to recover the lost credit; and yet another student has health problems and cannot maintain a full course load. This research sets out to determine *who* these students are and *why* they are increasingly turning to alternative credit, particularly some form of distance education. Finally, the authors examine what school counselors look for most in an alternative credit program for secondary students, like the one at the authors' own university, before recommending the same to students and parents.

Brigham Young University (BYU) is one of the nation's largest postsecondary providers of independent study high school and distance education courses. The Department of Independent Study was established in 1921 but did not begin to offer secondary courses until forty years later in 1961. Recently, BYU's Division of Continuing Education sponsored this study of guidance counselors throughout the United States to better understand the alternative credit phenomenon. This article shares both the results of this study and a brief review of the limited literature while calling for additional research.

Literature Review

The educational needs of today's secondary student population places a responsibility on both secondary and postsecondary institutions to provide alternative means, i.e. distance education, by which students can complete high school with the knowledge, skills, and dispositions necessary to pursue postsecondary degrees and/or to function productively in the work force. While there is a significant literature base on the role of postsecondary institutions in providing dual enrollment, concurrent enrollment, and advanced placement options, less is written about other distance education options that allow for make up credit (credit recovery) and early graduation.

In recent years alternative credit options and enrollments have increased rapidly at postsecondary institutions for postsecondary students (Lewis, Snow, Farris, & Levin, 1999). But it was Setzer & Lewis (2005) who conducted the first "nationally representative" survey to study the presence of distance education in secondary schools. Their recent findings and benchmarking data reveal that thirty-eight percent of the nation's high schools have students enrolled in distance education courses and forty-eight percent of those students are enrolled in distance education courses provided by postsecondary schools. Unfortunately, baseline numbers do not exist for the growth rate of distance education at secondary schools but its rapid growth is probably similar to that occurring in postsecondary institutions.

The growth of alternative options like distance education also comes at a time in America's history when secondary schools serve a more diverse generation of learners than they have previously and project serving the largest high school class in its history by 2009 (Callahan, 2003). Thirty-five percent of America's children are members of

minority groups, and one in five children comes from a household headed by an emigrant. Nearly one fifth of American children live in poverty (Olson, 2000). Consequently, providing an appropriate education for such diverse learners (e.g., because of race, ethnicity, linguistic background, culture, and socioeconomics) is becoming progressively difficult for a single system of secondary education.

Today's high school students require alternative education options that enable them to move through their last years of school at different rates, with more flexibility, and in ways that best meet their learning needs. Increasingly, secondary school systems and postsecondary institutions are collaborating to provide high quality alternative education options for high school students that will enable them to graduate from high school better prepared to succeed in college and/or to function productively in the work place. In addition to offering such options as dual enrollment, concurrent enrollment, and advanced placement courses, secondary and postsecondary institutions provide alternatives through distance education by which students can graduate from high school early, earn high school credits to recover credit for failed courses, and even solve scheduling problems.

Setzer & Lewis (2005) analyzed why the 328,000 secondary student enrollments involved in the study had enrolled in distance education courses. The reasons most frequently given (respondents could check all that apply) for districts making distance education courses available to their students was to offer courses not otherwise available at the school (80 percent), followed by meeting the needs of specific groups of students (59 percent), and offering Advanced Placement or college-level courses (50 percent). Other reasons such as reducing scheduling conflicts for students and

providing options for students to recover credits for failed classes were also given as reasons by districts for providing distance learning opportunities.

Early Graduation

Wright (1996) defines early graduation “as the completion of high school graduation requirements and departure from the secondary school prior to the completion of the senior year” (p. 10). From the early 1920s early graduation has grown from an alternative offered occasionally to gifted students who desired to enter college early to a program that serves the full range of learners today using such options as distance education. In his report for the National Institute of Education thirty years ago, Gray (1975), found that 11% of secondary students pursued early graduation to start college early. The majority of early gradulators did so for nonacademic reasons, including, dislike of school (30%), desire to earn money or work (21%), simply have the credits (14%), school not challenging (10%), felt too grown up for high school (9%), and friends were graduating early (2.5%). More recently and from another perspective a study of early high school graduates in Utah (n=90) classified 45% of early graduates as average, 32% high, and 23% low achieving (Wright, 1996). Thus, early graduation from high school using alternative credit option, including distance education, serves a broad range of learners motivated by a variety of reasons.

The option of early graduation from high school provides a solution to many concerns that educational policy makers have wrestled with for decades. In 1975, the New York State Education Department had concerns with the senior year and assigned the Commissioner’s Student Advisory Committee to study solutions for *senioritis*, “a condition characterized by restlessness, anxiety over [the] future, inability to

concentrate, apathy, and lack of motivation (NYSE Department, 1975, p. 7). This committee proposed that secondary and postsecondary institutions cooperate to provide additional education opportunities and challenges for seniors that included early graduation from high school. In Utah the Office of Legislative Research and General Counsel published a study that focused on early graduation and other programs that could be used to enhance the educational delivery system for the twelfth grade year (Counsel, 1988). This then led to legislation that required Utah's State Board of Education to provide a curriculum program and delivery system that allowed students to graduate from high school as early as the end of the eleventh grade (Utah Code, 53A-15-1-1-1a, b, 1995). Vorheis (1979) observed that by the time students were seniors they had completed most of their high school requirements and faced an intellectual slack time. Many educators believe that early graduation from high school is a means by which students can avoid the redundancy that exists between secondary and higher education courses (Boughton, 1987; Education, 1973; Goodlad, 1988; Greenberg, 1988, 1992).

Credit recovery

Another population that requires alternative options like distance education for high school completion is students who are at-risk for not graduating from high school due to course failure. One out of every 20 high school students enrolled in high school in October 1999 left school by October 2000 without successfully completing a high school program (NCES, 2001). This problem is becoming increasingly more serious because in the past students could find viable ways to earn a living even if they did not graduate from high school. Today, things have changed. Demands for a more skilled

labor force consider a high school diploma a minimum for entrance into the workforce and a postsecondary degree as necessary for the higher paying careers (Kaufman, Alt, & Chapman, 2001). Students who do not graduate from college experience low-paying jobs, unstable employment, unemployment, low job earnings, poor health, etc., more often than students who graduated (Lanni & Orr, 1996; Kaufman et al., 2001).

One of the challenges facing both secondary and postsecondary institutions is how best to help at-risk students complete high school and better prepare themselves to succeed in college and/or function productively in the workforce. Secondary and postsecondary institutions are endeavoring to provide alternatives to the less productive approaches of grade-retention and social promotions for students who are at risk for not completing high school. These educational alternatives are meant to provide quality learning experiences while also giving them academic support and assistance (Christian, 2003; Darling-Hammond, 1998; Lords, 2000). These efforts range from providing alternative programs at high schools, including distance education, to privately-funded schools located close to colleges. These private schools provide the specialized structures and adult support needed to assist underrepresented and at-risk students to graduate from high school and to make the transition into college successfully (Hoffman, 2003). This study also looked at how the distance education option is serving at-risk students who need to recover credit from classes they have failed or not completed.

The Texas K-12 school system offers a program in which ninth-grade students who failed classes were supported through concentrated instruction to recover credits for failed classes, thus enabling them to advance to the tenth grade the following year.

In studying the impact of these credit recovery programs, researchers in two separate studies found academic advantages in favor of those who participated compared to those who did not (Christian, 2003; Ellis, 2002). While not well documented, postsecondary institutions, such as Brigham Young University and many others, also collaborate with secondary institutions to offer education alternatives by which high school students can earn high school credits to recover credits for classes they have failed or not yet completed. This option provides another high-quality option that may enable at-risk students to complete high school with their peers.

Method

The researchers first interviewed the university administrators (stakeholders) at Brigham Young University to better understand what they wanted to know about school counselors' perceptions of alternative credit programs, school counselors' use of alternative credit programs, and, more specifically, school counselors' use of the BYU Independent Study program. Then they created a draft survey that was reviewed and vetted by four guidance counselors at the local high school and a professional editor who helped refine both the survey content and presentation into a final survey version (see Appendix A).

It was determined that the target population for this survey would be the 3,843 school counselor offices that had secondary students enrolled in the BYU Independent Study High School Program as of May 3, 2004. Every month, these schools receive a Student Progress Status Report for each student enrolled, with an administrator note that precedes the progress report. The May report and administrator note featured this survey (see Appendix B) and invited counselors to complete it. At about the same time,

an electronic e-mail invitation (see Appendix C) was also sent to 3,673 school counselors/administrators and others who had requested that their e-mail address be added to a BYU Independent Study High School electronic newsletter distribution list. Finally, a hyperlink was placed on Independent Study's Web site at elearn.byu.edu entitled "Survey for Counselors Only," should any counselors happen upon this Web site. All responses would be anonymous though each counselor was asked to identify the state in which he or she worked.

This survey was Web-enabled on a university server by BYU's Office of Institutional Assessment and Analysis using a new sophisticated survey tool, SPSS mrlInterview v. 1.2. This survey tool has the unique ability to dynamically customize follow-up questions based on the response to earlier questions, a feature that helped build subsequent survey questions that were context dependent. The Web-only survey was administered to guidance counselors from May 14, 2004, to June 22, 2004.

Results

Researchers surveyed 300 guidance counselors in their effort to learn more about *who* these students are who increasingly need alternative credit, *why* they are taking these courses and *what* guidance counselors are looking for in an alternative credit program.

Participants

Exactly 300 individuals from 44 states responded to the survey during the time it was administered—however, not all 300 responded to each question. The counselors who responded had worked in the schools on average for about 9 years (8.8) at 3 (2.7) different institutions. Most of the counselors (65%) indicated that they have seen the

need for alternative credit options for their students *increase* over the past few years (27% said “no change” and 9% said “decreased”), a trend that is further supported by the dramatic enrollment increases in the BYU Independent Study program, which experienced the following enrollment growth from decade to decade since its inception and then for the past four years: 119 (1960–61); 547 (1970–71); 3,596 (1980–81); 10,233 (1990–91); 40,329 (2000–2001); and 85,000 projected (2004–5).

Who are these students?

When counselors were asked which student gender was being *most* serviced by alternative credit options at their school, 15% said male; 70%, male and female equally; and 15%, female. When asked which grade level(s) were being *most* serviced at their school, they responded (total percentages do not add up to 100% since they could check more than one grade level if desired) as follows: 88% indicated that twelfth graders most benefited; 67%, eleventh graders; 31%, tenth graders; 12%, ninth graders; 3%, eighth graders; and 2%, seventh graders. This finding for twelfth-grade students is further substantiated by BYU Independent Study calculating the mean age of a sample of high school students (n=71,448) in its database; the mean age was 16.9 years of age. Finally, the counselors indicated the following types or categories of students at their schools who were most benefiting from alternative credit options (again, the counselors could mark more than one choice if they desired): typical or average students (67%); remedial students (56%); and gifted or talented students (37%).

Why are these students turning to alternative credit options?

Table 1 reports the results of these two survey questions that focus on the *why* or the situational factors responsible for the increasing student use of alternative credit options. The first situational factor question included nine defined and one undefined (“other”) situational factors that counselors could select; on average counselors selected three (3.03) of the 10 situational factors to represent their students’ situations. The researcher then asked each counselor in a follow-up question customized to the selections in the first question to isolate the *one* factor from their list most prevalent for their students. The column labeled “Check all that apply” reflects the situations that counselors determined as most prevalent at their school and; in the last column, “Check only the most important” the one situational factor that counselors selected as “most important.”

Which students at your school are benefiting most from the use of alternative credit programs like BYU Independent Study?			
N=247	No.	Percent of Respondents	
		Check all that apply	Check only the most important
Students who are making up credit because they have failed one or more classes?	193	78.1%	62.4%
Students who want to graduate early?	110	44.5%	6.2%
Resolve scheduling conflicts, e.g., work release, band, varsity sports, seminary, etc.?	109	44.1%	16.4%
Transfer students who moved into your school jurisdiction and are making up credit because of different graduation requirements at your school or district?	96	38.9%	4.4%
Homebound students because of health or other reasons?	56	22.7%	1.8%
Personal enrichment?	50	20.2%	4.9%
Students with school disciplinary action, e.g., probation, suspension, etc.?	39	15.8%	0.4%
Female students who are pregnant or have a child?	38	15.4%	1.3%
Part-time home school students?	34	13.8%	2.2%
Other?	24	9.7%	0.0%

Table 1. Results of counselor responses about which alternative credit situational factors were most common at their school.

The differences in situational factor rank from the last two columns in Table 1 are intriguing. Clearly, the most common reason for students turning to alternative credit options is “make up credit on failed classes,” or credit recovery; but the number two reason overall for using alternative credit, “to graduate early,” becomes a distant third when counselors were asked to select just one most important situational factor. Rounding out the top third on both tables is the situational factor, “resolving scheduling conflicts.”

The researchers were surprised that 24 counselors identified situational factors not represented by the defined list. An analysis of these “other” factors revealed that five

counselors reported that their students desired courses not available to them in their school: the variety factor. This would especially be the case in smaller high schools with fewer curricular choices. Four counselors reported interest in alternative credit by home school students within their school boundaries. Finally, counselors identified four other noteworthy situational factors for alternative credit programs not listed per se in the survey: (1) concurrent enrollment in high school and college; (2) unwillingness to take physical education courses in public; (3) student athletes who are training for NCAA-level competition and who are required to complete NCAA-approved alternative credit courses; and (4) an “economical way to deliver summer school” under school/district supervision.

What are guidance counselors looking for in an alternative credit program?

The increasing need for alternative credit enrollments for secondary students is not without a number of provider options (school itself, district, colleges/universities, and commercial programs). 5% of the counselors said they had one provider option available; 16% had two options; 29% had three options; and the remaining 50% had four or more options with 3% saying they had 15 or more options available to help their students with alternative credit options.

The BYU Independent Study High School Program has six administrators who contact over 5,000 high school counselors each year to answer questions, explain the Independent Study High School Program, make presentations to district and state personnel, provide evening/summer school options using their curriculum, etc. After the authors culled a list of desirable program characteristics from these administrators who had worked closely with guidance counselors over the years, they then asked local high

school counselors to validate the list. The result of this exercise was a survey question that identified 20 program characteristics. Table 2 reports the 20 program characteristics and the levels of importance: “very,” “somewhat,” or “not” in descending order of importance (sorted by the “most important” column only). The three “most important” program characteristics identified by guidance counselors in their selection of an alternative credit provider were “accreditation of provider,” “affordability of courses,” and “quality of curriculum.”

Overall, how important are the following characteristics and program features to you as a counselor or administrator in deciding which alternative credit programs you recommend to your students and their parents?							
N=213	Very Important		Somewhat Important		Not Important		MOST Important
Accreditation of provider	90.6%	193	7.0%	15	1.4%	3	60.1%
Affordability of courses	82.2%	175	14.1%	30	2.3%	5	48.8%
Quality of curriculum	72.8%	155	23.0%	49	1.4%	3	24.6%
Likelihood of student completion	72.3%	154	23.0%	49	2.8%	6	22.2%
Recognition and approval of programs by head counselor, school, and/or district	69.5%	148	20.7%	44	7.0%	15	19.2%
Flexibility of program	67.1%	143	27.2%	58	2.8%	6	16.3%
Course availability on paper or online	63.8%	136	30.0%	64	3.8%	8	14.3%
Access to program staff and information by phone, e-mail, Web, etc.	74.6%	159	20.2%	43	2.3%	5	13.3%
Your personal familiarity with program	55.9%	119	37.1%	79	5.2%	11	10.8%
Variety (Breadth) of courses available	61.0%	130	34.7%	74	2.3%	5	10.3%
Level of student motivation	62.0%	132	30.5%	65	4.7%	10	8.4%
Rigor of curriculum	44.6%	95	46.9%	100	6.1%	13	6.9%
Name recognition of the provider	37.6%	80	47.9%	102	13.6%	29	6.4%
Counselor/school service	59.2%	126	31.9%	68	5.6%	12	5.9%
Quality instructor feedback	53.1%	113	39.4%	84	5.6%	12	3.4%
Level of student learning ability	57.3%	122	35.7%	76	4.2%	9	3.0%
Student/Parent service	47.4%	101	43.2%	92	6.6%	14	2.5%
Marketing materials (course catalog, brochure, Web site, etc.)	44.6%	95	45.5%	97	7.5%	16	2.5%
Scholarships available to needy students	32.9%	70	41.3%	88	23.5%	50	0.5%
Occasional site visits by program staff	14.1%	30	39.9%	85	43.2%	92	0.0%

Table 2. Alternative credit program characteristics identified by importance.

Discussion

Counselor responses from the survey and enrollment patterns for the institution that sponsored this research indicate the increasing need for alternative credit options. While this study did not plumb the political, economic, policy, and cultural causal agents for this trend, it did identify student situational factors and program provider characteristics from a counselor perspective.

The research revealed that twelfth-grade students who are 16.9 years old and are as likely to be male or female benefit equally from alternative credit options; and while it is the typical or average student who benefits most, the remedial and gifted and talented students are not far behind. One counselor said it this way: “My district pays little attention to providing high-quality opportunities to gifted students. . . . Rather, most of the resources are expended on attempts to develop poor performers. . . .” Another counselor provided another perspective: “Presently we are using Virtual High School, which is proving too rigorous for about half of the students we enroll.”

The finding that it is not the remedial student who most benefits from alternative credit, rather the typical or average student—and gifted and talented are not far behind both categories—may suggest far-reaching implications for schools, counselors, and providers. This age-old question and challenge of customizing instruction to the level, style, and background of the learner is now being considered at a time when technology can help make possible more individualized instruction than ever before. It appears that many guidance counselors are already trying to individualize instruction for their students and unique circumstances by recommending one course with its features from one provider to one student, and yet another course with its features from another

provider to another student. One guidance counselor told one of the authors that the first thing she did to determine which alternative credit provider to recommend to a student was to ascertain the financial situation of the student and family. A respondent to the survey expressed frustration about not always being able to find the right option for the right circumstances: “We are searching for remedial classes that will really teach basic skills and keep students’ attention focused.”

Situational Factors

Even though counselors identified three “stand-out” situational factors¹ as being “most important,” i.e., make up credit or “credit recover,” scheduling conflicts, and early graduation, we cannot overemphasize that every one of the nine defined situational factors was identified as the “most important” to at least one counselor respondent. Student circumstances may be so singular that any generalization of situational factors should be done with caution. This caveat is further supported by the number of counselors who suggested situational factors under the “other” category. Each student’s need for alternative credits is as important as the other and hopefully more providers with more options will be able to reach an increasing number of student needs.

Program Characteristics

It is evident in Table 2—each counselor associating “very important” for nearly 12 (11.62) of the 20 program characteristics—that guidance counselors are very discriminating and have high expectations for the providers that they recommend to students who need alternative credit. In the last column labeled “most important,”

¹ Researcher Ted Lannan from the company Class.com reported identical findings in March 2004 from a survey of its students (n = 2310), wherein 24% said they were taking the course to “make up credits”; 19% to resolve a “scheduling conflict”; and 19% to “accelerate graduation.” Taken from presentation notes on June 28, 2004, by Kirk deFord at the CITES conference, Portland, Oregon and further verified by phone conversation with researcher, Ted Lannan.

counselors were asked to select from the previous list of “very important” (again, counselors on average determined 12 program characteristics to be very important) no more than three as “most important.” The top two program features and characteristics, accreditation and affordability, were the same across the “very important” and “most important” columns. However, the third-highest program feature or characteristic under the “very important” column, “counselor access to provider staff,” dropped to eighth in the “most important” column and was replaced by “quality of curriculum.”

“Accreditation of provider” was the clear stand-out program characteristic from counselor respondents. This top selection by the counselors came as a surprise to the researcher, since he had nine administrators for BYU Independent Study High School complete this same counselor survey to see how provider perceptions aligned with those of the counselors they served, and “accreditation” did not rank as the most important program characteristic chosen. The accreditation choice can only emphasize anew counselors’ need for reliable and trustworthy alternative credit providers for students and their parents. The role of professional accrediting bodies, e.g., Northwest Association of Accredited Schools (NAAS), Commission on International and Transregional Accreditation (CITA), Distance Education Training Council (DETC), etc., in carefully auditing alternative credit programs and curriculum to ensure compliance with content and delivery standards is more important than ever at a time when diploma mills and spurious alternative credit programs exist.

The third “most important” characteristic, “quality of curriculum,” further validates the importance of accredited alternative credit programs. If courses and programs do not meet quality content and delivery standards, they are not worthy of accreditation.

Furthermore, since many alternative credit programs are more student-centered and independent than traditional high school courses, the need for quality instructional design of the curriculum becomes even more important than it may be in the traditional classroom.

Finally, the other “most important” program characteristic, “affordability,” is not surprising. Many high school students—and their parents—and in some instances schools and districts must shop for the most affordable alternative credit option. If an accredited, alternative credit program offers quality curriculum at affordable prices, a guidance counselor will be interested in recommending those courses to a student in need of alternative credit. One counselor who responded to the survey may have summarized this important program characteristic of affordability best in referring to his choice of the program that sponsored this research: “I have only just learned about your services and have recommend[ed] 2 students to take courses. Your prices seem to be most affordable compared to those of other programs, which is a big plus for our students.”

Conclusions

Guidance counselors in secondary schools are recommending, more than ever, alternative credit to all types of students in a variety of situations. Typical, remedial, and gifted students from diverse populations, many of them in their last year of high school, are using alternative credits for a number of reasons, including make up credit, help in resolving scheduling conflicts, and a jump on early graduation. From 20 provider program characteristics identified in the study, counselors reported nearly 12 of these characteristics as “very important” and the following three as “most important”:

accreditation, affordability, and quality of curriculum. The role of the counselor in helping students and parents navigate the sea of alternative credit programs has never been more important, especially as both the need for alternative credit programs and number of programs increase. It is clear from this research that, while counselors see a need for more quality alternative education options for their secondary students, additional research is needed to understand the reasons and implications for this striking need.

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Biographical Statements

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Dr. Dwight Laws is director of Brigham Young University's Department of Independent Study and adjunct faculty in the graduate Department of Instructional Psychology and Technology. He has served as a school board president and served as a reading consultant to the Department of Defense high schools in Asia, Panama, and Europe. Dr. Laws has consulted over 1000 counselors in 450 different high schools nationwide. In addition to twenty years in distance education, Dr. Laws' background includes five years with a major radio and television station and seven years in marketing and sales with two different international airlines.

Russell Bryant is the assistant director of marketing for the Department of Independent Study. Mr. Bryant is responsible for marketing independent study high school courses to over 6,000 high schools; his staff visits and consults with some 5,000 counselors each school year. Mr. Bryant's previous marketing experience was in the telecommunications industry for 19 years while providing high speed digital communication solutions to educational, medical, financial and other industries.

Ellen J. Williams, Ed.D., is Associate Professor in the Department of Educational Leadership and Foundations at Brigham Young University. She brings to that role experience as a teacher, principal, central office administrator, and educational consultant. Currently she co-directs the BYU Principals Academy for practicing principals and the BYU Leadership Preparation Program for aspiring principals. She received her bachelors and masters degree at Utah State University and her doctorate degree at Brigham Young University.

Appendix A

Survey (Microsoft Word Document use to create the Web version)

Alternative Credit Survey

Congratulations on another successful school year and hopefully a break is just days away!

We need 8 to 10 minutes of your time to respond to this anonymous survey about the use of alternative credit programs, including BYU Independent Study, at your high school. The results of this study will be used by the Department of Independent Study at Brigham Young University for research, publication, and program development.

- 1. How many years have you been a guidance counselor?**
- 2. What is the size of your high school student population?**
 - 1-500
 - 500-1000
 - 1000-1500
 - 1500-2000
 - 2000-2500
 - 2500-3000
 - 3000+
- 3. In which state do you and your high school reside?**
- 4. How many schools have you worked at as a counselor or school administrator?**
- 5. Which gender of students at your school are benefiting most from the use of alternative credit programs like BYU Independent Study?**

6. Which students at your school are benefiting most from the use of alternative credit programs like BYU Independent Study?

GRADE LEVEL (Check all that apply.):

- 12th graders
- 11th graders
- 10th graders
- 9th graders
- 8th graders
- 7th graders

7. Which students at your school are benefiting most from the use of alternative credit programs like BYU Independent Study?

PERFORMANCE STATUS :

- Remedial students
- Typical or average students
- Gifted and talented students

8. Which students at your school are benefiting most from the use of alternative credit programs like BYU Independent Study?

SITUATIONAL FACTORS (Check all that apply.)

- Resolve scheduling conflicts, e.g. work release, band, varsity sports, seminary, etc.?
- Transfer students who moved into your school jurisdiction and are making up credit because of different graduation requirements at your school or district?
- Students who are making up credit because they have failed one or more classes?
- Students who want to graduate early?
- Students with school disciplinary action, e.g., probation, suspension, etc.?
- Female students who are pregnant or have had a child?
- Homebound students because of health or other reasons?
- Part-time home school students?
- Personal enrichment?
- Other:

9. **Which of those students in the situation(s) that you checked above do you most refer to alternate credit options like Independent Study?**
- Resolve scheduling conflicts, e.g. work release, band, varsity sports, seminary, etc.?
 - Transfer students who moved into your school jurisdiction and are making up credit because of different graduation requirements at your school or district?
 - Students who are making up credit because they have failed one or more classes?
 - Students who want to graduate early?
 - Students with school disciplinary action, e.g., probation, suspension, etc.?
 - Female students who are pregnant or have had a child?
 - Homebound students because of health or other reasons?
 - Part-time home school students?
 - Personal enrichment?
 - Other:
10. **How many independent study or alternate credit options, including BYU Independent Study, does your counseling office have available to your students?**
- 1-5
 - 6-10
 - 11-15
 - More than 15
11. **Have you as a counselor or administrator turned more, the same, or less to alternate forms of credit for your students during the past few years?**
- More
 - Same
 - Less
12. **In your opinion, has the number of options for alternative credit increased, stayed the same or decreased during the past few years?**
- Increased
 - Stayed the same
 - Decreased

13. Overall, how important are the following characteristics and program features to you as a counselor or administrator in deciding which alternative credit programs you recommend to your students and their parents?

Characteristics and Program Features	IMPORTANCE		
	Very	Somewhat	Not
NAME RECOGNITION OF THE PROVIDER			
ACCREDITATION OF PROVIDER			
RECOGNITION and APPROVAL OF PROGRAMS BY HEAD COUNSELOR, SCHOOL, AND/OR DISTRICT			
YOUR PERSONAL FAMILIARITY WITH PROGRAM			
FLEXIBILITY OF PROGRAM			
AFFORDABILITY OF COURSES			
LEVEL OF STUDENT MOTIVATION			
LEVEL OF STUDENT LEARNING ABILITY			
LIKELIHOOD OF STUDENT COMPLETION			
QUALITY INSTRUCTOR FEEDBACK			
QUALITY OF CURRICULUM			
VARIETY (BREADTH) OF COURSES AVAILABLE			
RIGOR OF CURRICULUM			
STUDENT/PARENT SERVICE			
COUNSELOR/SCHOOL SERVICE			
COURSE AVAILABILITY ON PAPER OR ONLINE			
OCCASIONAL SITE VISITS BY PROGRAM STAFF			
SCHOLARSHIPS AVAILABLE TO NEEDY STUDENTS			
MARKETING MATERIALS (COURSE CATALOG, BROCHURE, WEBSITE, ETC.)			
ACCESS TO PROGRAM STAFF & INFORMATION BY PHONE, E-MAIL, WEB,			

14. From the characteristics you identified as being "Very Important" on the previous question, please identify the MOST IMPORTANT (up to 3) characteristics.

Characteristics and Program Features	Three most important
NAME RECOGNITION OF THE PROVIDER	
ACCREDITATION OF PROVIDER	
RECOGNITION and APPROVAL OF PROGRAMS BY HEAD COUNSELOR, SCHOOL, AND/OR DISTRICT	
YOUR PERSONAL FAMILIARITY WITH PROGRAM	
FLEXIBILITY OF PROGRAM	
AFFORDABILITY OF COURSES	
LEVEL OF STUDENT MOTIVATION	
LEVEL OF STUDENT LEARNING ABILITY	
LIKELIHOOD OF STUDENT COMPLETION	
QUALITY INSTRUCTOR FEEDBACK	
QUALITY OF CURRICULUM	
VARIETY (BREADTH) OF COURSES AVAILABLE	
RIGOR OF CURRICULUM	
STUDENT/PARENT SERVICE	
COUNSELOR/SCHOOL SERVICE	
COURSE AVAILABILITY ON PAPER OR ONLINE	
OCCASIONAL SITE VISITS BY PROGRAM STAFF	
SCHOLARSHIPS AVAILABLE TO NEEDY STUDENTS	
MARKETING MATERIALS (COURSE CATALOG, BROCHURE, WEBSITE, ETC.)	
ACCESS TO PROGRAM STAFF & INFORMATION BY PHONE, E-MAIL, WEB, ETC.	

Any other comments you would like to make?

Appendix B

Administrator Note on May 2004, Student Progress Report

**BRIGHAM YOUNG UNIVERSITY**

Department of Independent Study
 206 Harman Building
 P.O. Box 21514
 Provo, Utah 84602-1514
 (801) 378-2868

ATTN COUNSELORS:
 COLLEGE PREP PROGRAM
 ATTN: ROY SCHMIDT, 221 HCEB
 CAMPUS MAIL UT 84602

Dear Counselors:

We need your help in completing a brief survey (no more than 10 minutes) about guidance counselors using alternative credit programs such as BYU Independent Study, where the results will be submitted to one of the guidance counselor journals/magazines, e.g., Professional School Counseling, or ASCA School Counselor. You can access this survey by going to our Web site at www.elearn.byu.edu and clicking on the "counselor survey" which will take you to the online survey. Thank you for your help and participation. We wish you a wonderful summer season.

Sincerely,
 BYU Independent Study

For your convenience we are providing the following progress report of your high school students who are currently enrolled in Independent Study with Brigham Young University.

STUDENT PROGRESS

Student No.	Name	Course	Bar Code	Date Enrolled	Lessons		Exams		Status	Last Activity or Grade on Date
					Req'd	Rec'd	Req'd	Rec'd		
	ALG 057	8512923	02/10/04	7	7	1	1	C	B- on 05/28/04	
	CHEM 047	8512931	02/10/04	7	7	1	1	C	C+ on 05/13/04	
	SPAN 051	8621617	03/12/04	6	3	1	0		07/09/04	
	LIT 061	8621633	03/12/04	6	6	1	0		07/07/04	
	HIST 041	8817637	05/14/04	8	1	1	0		06/09/04	
	ALG 051	8817645	05/14/04	6	6	1	1	C	B on 06/09/04	
	TRIG 041	8047573	08/25/03	8	8	1	1	C	A on 04/27/04	
	BMRKT 041	8621591	03/12/04	7	7	1	1	C	A on 05/06/04	
	GARD 041	8621609	03/12/04	6	6	1	1	C	A on 04/28/04	
	CALC 041	8748972	04/23/04	7	5	1	0		07/08/04	
	ECON 047*	8355711	12/23/03	9	8	1	0		03/02/04	
	ENGL 043*	8510422	02/09/04	7	7	1	0		06/07/04	
	FREN 043	8510430	02/09/04	10	10	1	1	C	A- on 06/23/04	
	HIST 063*	8510455	02/09/04	8	8	1	1	C	A on 05/20/04	
	GEOM 043*	8510463	02/09/04	7	7	1	1	C	B+ on 05/20/04	
	WRIT 045	8235194	10/23/03	9	6	1	0		02/07/04	
	ALG 051	8236499	10/23/03	6	6	1	0		06/08/04	
	ENGL 041	8288284	11/17/03	7	7	1	1	C	A on 06/01/04	
	SPAN 041	8387862	01/07/04	7	1	1	0		02/24/04	
	HIST 063	8578726	03/01/04	8	8	1	1	C	A- on 05/24/04	
	ENGL 043	8678716	03/31/04	7	0	1	0			
	HIST 065	8678724	03/31/04	9	9	1	0		06/08/04	
	ECON 041	7734734	06/01/03	13	5	1	0	E	09/14/03	
	GEOM 043*	7734742	06/01/03	7	4	1	0	E	08/24/03	

Appendix C

Email Invitation to Participate in Survey

-----Original Message-----

From: David Williams

To: Jenni Detton

Subject: Newsletter stuff

Dear Counselors and School Administrators,

We need your help in responding to a brief survey (8-10 minutes) about your use of alternative credit programs, like BYU Independent Study, for an upcoming publication and presentation for high school counselors. We know you are busy closing up the school year but we hope this is one time that you can find a way to fit in this important survey. Please click on this

<http://spssmrwebint.byu.edu/scripts/mrwebpl.dll?project=altcredit> to be taken directly to the brief survey.

If you have any questions don't hesitate to contact us.

Best Regards,

Scott Howell and Russ Bryant

Scott L. Howell, Ph.D.

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