

# Emotional Intelligence: A New Student Development Model

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### Abstract

Emotional intelligence is a positive and exciting topic with enormous implications for K-16+ education. Emerging interdisciplinary research and studies from education, business, psychology, and behavioral medicine are showing clear and significant contributions of emotional intelligence to human performance, personal health, and resilience. Emotional knowledge, skills, and intelligence hold a major key to improving education and helping students, teachers, faculty, and student development professionals attain higher degrees of achievement, career success, leadership, and personal well-being. The learned ability of emotional intelligence integrates well with the student development model of education and the historical values of the student personnel point of view.

There are many important issues and challenges facing education at the public school and higher education levels. While academic achievement and scholastic performance have been the primary thrust of recent reform efforts, other equally important issues have taken center stage in education. Physical safety, healthy emotional development, standards of excellence and equalitarianism, a global economy and world perspective, changing workforce demands and the nature of work, multi-cultural and diversity issues, retention through graduation, and personal/career needs of students and educators are just a few examples. These important issues require a different and more balanced perspective of accountability and quality standards -- to include emotional learning and the affective domain.

This paper brings into focus the major findings of long-term research, related doctoral studies, and other leading research efforts that confirm the importance and value of emotional intelligence and personal skills to college and career success, human development education, and leadership. A research-based education approach for student development is presented in an applied university context. This knowledge and skills-based education approach is organized around four primary principles or competency sets and thirteen essential skills of emotional intelligence.

The *Emotional Intelligence Program at Texas A&M University-Kingsville* is a university-wide program designed to improve academic and career success. This comprehensive and emerging student development model is presented, described, and illustrated. This evolving student development program is implemented in foundation classes taught in five undergraduate academic colleges. Applied institutional research is an important element of this evolving emotional intelligence program. Initial research implications and directions are shared.

## **Important Issues Facing Students and Education**

In recent years, low test scores and accountability standards have been the focus of education reform and criticism directed to public education at all levels. The broader mission of education becomes clouded when effectiveness is defined solely or even primarily on the basis of performance on standardized assessment models. Test scores reflect the narrow emphasis of schooling rather than the broader mission of education. A healthy school climate focusing on academic, career, and leadership development requires an emphasis on affective or emotional learning as much as on academic or cognitive learning.

In addition to state and national academic performance indicators, there are several other issues that are indicators for change, reform, and renewal. School violence, physical and emotional safety, abuse, drop-out and retention rates are current examples. A major challenge for education is to provide safe campuses, healthy learning climates, and rigorous academic curricula taught by qualified teachers for interested and motivated learners. Healthy and safe learning environments are necessary for students and teachers to perform at their highest levels.

Changes in the nature of work and productivity demands of a global economy necessitate additional restructuring and reform efforts. As schools and colleges prepare students for careers and productive employment, education will continue to modify its programs and instruction. As colleges prepare students for positions of responsibility and leadership, there will be an increased interest and recognition of the importance of the contributions of the emotional mind. In short, learning and applying emotional intelligence skills contribute to academic and career success.

It is easy to discover that there are very serious issues and questions facing education which need to be addressed and answered. One of these was posed in the classic book **Excellence: Can We Be Equal and Excellent Too?** (J. Gardner, 1961). This is an excellent question and one that deserves serious thought and attention, especially in a competitive and free society. The question of equality and excellence posed by Gardner remains relevant today, perhaps more so now than in 1961. Equalitarianism and excellence are based on human values and principles of fairness and competition; equality and individual difference; hard work and performance; and commitment and productivity.

## **Standards of Performance and Accountability**

Emerging trends, issues, and public demands of a global economy point to the need for new accountability and outcome research to document the effectiveness of schools, colleges, and organizations. There is growing research that connects emotional intelligence and emotional skills to achievement, productivity, career success, personal health, resilience, and leadership (H. Gardner, 1983, 1993, 1997; Goleman, 1995, 1997; Sternberg, 1985, 1990; Salovey and Mayer, 1997; Epstein, 1998; Dryden and Vos, 1994; Damasio, 1994; Weisenger, 1985, 1998; Greenspan, 1997; Astin and Associates, 1993; Townsend and Gephardt, 1997; Nelson and Low, 1976-2003). A practical, education- and research-based model of emotional intelligence may provide an important key for integrating student development with the academic mission of higher education. The *Emotional Intelligence Program at Texas A&M University-Kingsville* is

an emerging exemplary student development program.

Academic disciplines in education and psychology refer to three dimensions of human performance that are essential for academic, career, and personal development. Cognitive (academic), Behavioral (action), and Affective (emotional) domains are identified, described, and researched in the educational psychology literature. Academic standards (cognitive domain) are embraced and in effect at every level of education. High stakes testing is clearly evident in many states and nationally. The cognitive domain continues to gain prominence and strength through mandated assessment measures by legislatures, education agencies/boards, and the general public. Examples of standardized testing are everywhere. In Texas, a few examples are *TAAS/TAKS*, *TASP*, *ExCET*, *TE<sub>x</sub>ES*. These are in addition to regularly used national standardized assessments such as *SAT*, *ACT*, *GRE*, *GMAT*, *MCAT*, *LSAT*, and others.

Behavioral accountability standards (action domain) are in effect and embraced at every level of education. For example, every school, college, or university has a written set of rules, regulations, codes of conduct, codes of ethics, and standards of behavior (with examples) that describe what is acceptable and what is not acceptable. These rules are supported by sanctions and penalties as well as by laws. The behavioral dimension is very specific, and it is clearly supported by the general public. Personal responsibility for one's actions is very strong.

Emotional standards of performance (affective domain) are often vague, mysterious, misunderstood, or not well understood. The affective dimension may even be neglected or relegated to the professional fields of psychology, counseling, and mental health. With the emerging study and research on emotional intelligence and other non-traditional measures of human performance, a new opportunity is presented for student and human development. An education- and research-based model of emotional intelligence that is easily understood, practical, and organized around specific skills and competencies may provide a new structure for student development.

### **A Public School Perspective**

Academic and cognitive development is the primary and chief goal of schools, colleges, and universities. However, it may prove disastrous if the emotional and affective domain is neglected as an important and necessary role for schools and communities. A blending of academic (cognitive), behavioral (action), and affective (emotional) dimensions are needed to address the complex issues facing education. To meet the issues and challenges of public education, there is a need to develop responsible and emotionally healthy students and teachers. Emotional skill development and personal responsibility need to be embraced and in effect just as it is with the academic and behavioral dimensions.

Educators have tried to predict academic achievement of students since the early days of standardization of group achievement and scholastic ability tests. McQuary (1983) reviewed this issue and reported the findings of two early landmark studies by Segal in 1934 and Durflinger in 1943 at the high school to college level. These studies attempted to predict success in college on the basis of achievement and scholastic ability tests. Correlations between .30 and .50 were reported. From these early studies, and when combining various scholastic measures of previous

school achievement (such as rank in class) with achievement test scores and scholastic ability tests, McQuary (1983) indicated that multiple coefficients may reach .70 to .75. Even with improved scholastic achievement models, there is much that cannot be explained or accounted for using only cognitive indicators.

A widely reported national study by the American College Test organization on the topic of drop-outs in the freshman year of college revealed that academic ability (cognitive domain) was not the major factor. The primary reasons for dropping out were not academic but personal factors (emotional domain) such as loneliness, lack of purpose, and feelings of inadequacy. While academic development is the primary purpose of education, there is a wealth of information and experience that confirm the importance and impact of emotional intelligence skills and competencies.

Extensive reviews of studies at schools and organizational levels indicate that emotional intelligence skills are essential to achievement, leadership, and personal health (Goleman, 1995, 1997). Further, Goleman indicates that when high levels of leadership are required, emotional intelligence is a much greater predictor of success than traditional measures of intelligence or leadership. In studying the world's best educational practices, Dryden and Vos reported that personal and emotional development is at the very center of these programs. Their findings indicate that the emotional intelligence skills of self esteem and personal confidence are essential to all learning. They declare that education that fails to address these factors (i.e. personal/emotional domain) will fail in its other tasks as well (Dryden and Vos, 1994).

Leading educators have identified and emphasized the importance of a healthy school climate for student learning and achievement (Goodlad, 1983; McQuary, 1983). Schools are much more than settings for producing specific learning outcomes. A healthy school climate is much more than an environment conducive for teaching academic content. It is also a learning environment for teaching personal and social development, successful career strategies, and healthy emotional development. Emotional intelligence skills and competencies are key to creating and maintaining a healthy and productive school climate.

### **A Higher Education Perspective**

It is appropriate and important that academic development is the first and foremost goal of colleges and universities. However, a college education may prove to be leadership and career limiting if healthy emotional development is not viewed as an important and necessary role of the total college experience. To achieve the educational aspirations of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, there is an increasing need to develop healthy, responsible, and productive students, teachers, faculty, staff, and administrators in all academic disciplines. Accountability needs to be embraced and in effect in academic, behavior, and emotional development.

A number of leading researchers have concluded that emotional intelligence and related non-traditional measures of intelligence and human performance are as predictive (if not more so) of success as IQ tests and other standardized measures of scholastic ability and achievement (Nelson and Low, 1976-2003; H. Gardner, 1983, 1993, 1997; Sternberg, 1985, 1990; Salovey and Mayer, 1997; Goleman, 1995, 1997; Dryden and Vos, 1994; Astin and Associates, 1993;

Townsend and Gephardt, 1997; Weisenger, 1985, 1998; and Cooper and Saway, 1997). Interdisciplinary research clearly connects emotional intelligence and emotional skills to achievement, career success, personal health and well-being, and leadership. This line of research carries a crystal clear message for colleges and universities who strive to develop their students to the fullest.

Fundamental beliefs and core values of student development in higher education have included the following:

- X recognition of the preeminence of the academic mission of the university
- X respect for the integrity and well being of each student
- X commitment to actively building a healthy and safe learning environment
- X equality and fairness in serving all students
- X a celebration of diversity

These beliefs and values are consistent with the academic goals of higher education. They need to be embraced with institutional commitment and accountability. Colleges and universities are expected to document how academic and student development programs lead to and result in student achievement, retention, career enhancement, and leadership development. A balanced system of accountability and commitment is needed. Student development programs, utilizing an education- and research-based model of emotional intelligence competencies and skills, are needed to demonstrate this institutional commitment to accountability.

Historically, a first major value of student development was individuation. This value involves respect for the growing person in search of a unique identity. Gardner succinctly captured the goal of healthy individuation: “What we must reach for is a conception of perpetual self-discovery, perpetual reshaping to realize one’s best self, to be the person one could be” (J. Gardner, 1961). In an early classic book **College and Life**, Bennett discussed the importance of emotional self-control in student success and called for a student development focus on “intelligent self-direction” (Bennett, 1933). Positive emotional learning and development are central to the value of individuation.

A second major value of student development is that of community. A college or university is viewed as a place where students grow through their involvement in meaningful relationships. Students benefit from relationships that (1) make them feel valued, (2) contribute to positive self-worth, (3) create a healthy, productive learning community, and (4) form a personal sense of belonging. Healthy relationships are important to the academic, behavioral, and emotional growth and development of students.

Emotional knowledge, skills, and competencies are essential to the student development values of individuation and community. The affective or emotional learning domain is central to student development. Experiential and self-directed learning activities need to be systematic and accountable. Colleges and universities need to be able to demonstrate and show faculty, students, and the entire academic community how courses, programs, services, and resources make a difference in professional and personal development. Student development programs are

positioned to meet this type of institutional accountability.

### **A Balanced Perspective**

This paper puts forth an effort to synthesize and integrate some of the major findings of research on emotional intelligence and personal skills, as they relate to the goals of education and human development. We also are presenting an innovative model of student development that is designed at the very heart of the academic mission of our university. This model of student development is constructed using an education-based approach of emotional intelligence developed by the authors. An emotional skills development framework and emotional learning process are used to illustrate and build upon the positive contributions of the emotional mind.

The main goal of this paper is to provide a coherent and practical approach to human emotional behavior that students can learn and apply to stay healthy, increase goal achievement, and improve productivity. Highly successful students need to be able to show that they are actively involved in continuous learning and are goal oriented achievers. Highly successful schools and colleges need to be able to show that they are providing healthy learning and work environments that challenge and support students and teachers in performing to their highest levels. There must be an acceptance and commitment to develop emotionally intelligent and healthy people in all career fields, not just a recognition of the need.

Emotional intelligence skills are vital to human performance and the management of successful learning organizations. Even though the primary attention of education is academic performance, there is simply too much convincing evidence that schools and colleges should not and cannot neglect the development of emotional intelligence skills and other personal and social factors. Emerging trends necessitate new studies and applied research on the contributions of the emotional mind and the emotional domain of learning. Building healthy and productive students requires the active and intentional development of emotional intelligence skills and competencies as a normal and integral part of the process of education. To achieve this balanced perspective, the student development model of learning is reviewed and discussed. Many student development researchers and leaders have emphasized human development and affective learning as an essential component of the higher education experience.

### **Student Development Model of Learning**

We, in the Western World, have inherited a modern technological world view based upon the principles of the objective and the rational. The successful triumphs of this era of human history have led us to idolize the stoic, removed, and the rational. Individuals who exemplify these characteristics become our cultural icons and heroes as the relational and the emotive aspects of our humanity are relegated to the weak-minded and soft-hearted. Nevertheless, as Margaret Wheatley (1999) writes, new discoveries in the fields of quantum physics and the biosciences reveal a very different universal reality in which the isolated may perish and the relational survive.

These radical discoveries that have been emerging over the course of the last century bring into question many of the cultural norms that underpin our major industrial and educational

enterprises. Whereas, relationship building in institutional and organizational environments was once look upon with skepticism, cooperative and collaborative team building skills are now seen as essential for any aspiring leader. Any model of student development must, therefore, consider the importance of developing the mind, body, and emotions.

For the past several decades higher education researchers have been advocating for institutional reform that places the learner at the center of a community of learners who are all engaged in a shared processes of human enlightenment. The implications very strongly suggest that learning is a process of interconnectivity that involves not just the rational intellect but the emotive and relational as well. These research findings bring forth serious challenges to the current paradigm that rests on the theory that learning is best facilitated by isolating students from other students and teachers from students in sterile and separate disciplines where cross fertilization of thoughts and ideas are kept to a minimum. This gathering evidence seems to suggest that many of the commonly accepted higher education practices and institutional structures may very well inhibit rather than facilitate the processes of learning.

### **The Precariousness of Higher Education's Reliance Upon Rationalism**

Though there are other forms of valid and legitimate claims to knowledge and understanding, it is primarily the philosophies of Baconian rationalism that have contributed most heavily to the formation of our modern day educational systems and have also influenced the development of the organizational structures that govern most modern workplaces. The success of the scientific practices of objectivism and detachment led us to believe that workplaces could emulate these same ideals and thus they came to be characterized by high levels of detached standardization, impersonal mass production and maximization of the supposed, objective supervision of individual action. As Cross (1998) surmises, our schools have been successful at serving the needs of our nation's workplace by operating under the same assumptions and through the establishment of similar organizational structures of "high supervision, high standardization, and interchangeable students." (p. 10)

Prior to the late 1800s before the separation of students from faculty became the norm in higher education, learning was naturally more integrative. Because of the closer connections between faculty and student that existed in the smaller institutions of the time, the processes of integrating the learning experiences were a natural outcome of the system. As universities have increased in size and complexity, there no longer exists a systematic means of assisting students with the process of bringing the knowledge from the various disciplines into an integrated whole (Schroeder & Hurst, 1996).

The effects of the separate disciplines are widespread and powerful, permitting the American university to continue to operate on a feudal model (Donald, 1997). It is unfortunate that even though there is a great deal of research backing the effectiveness of interdisciplinary teaching, few university scholars are aware of the literature. In her studies of learning across disciplines, Donald found that members of the disciplines do not read the journals that address more general issues pertaining to interdisciplinary nor are such journals referenced across the disciplinary fields.

## **Suggestions for Balancing Cognitive Development with Human (Affective) Development in the Educational Processes**

Supportive of the concept of integrated and holistic learning that fosters and perpetuates personal development, the American College Personnel Association (ACPA) responded to the challenges of integrated learning by developing the Student Learning Imperative (Calhoun, 1996). The Student Learning Imperative (SLI) places student development on an equal par with student learning and defines the entire campus as a learning and developmental environment, where professionals are knowledgeable about student learning and development, intentionally using all aspects of the environment for opportunities to stimulate learning and student development.

The SLI was designed with the realization that the most critical problems facing our society are not problems arising from a lack of intellectual or scientific development but rather an apparent lack of sociocultural or affective development (Astin, 1996). From this perspective, most of the world's problems can be viewed as arising from the alienation from the affective domain that is so prominent within our individualistic and technologically advanced culture (Willimon & Willimon, 1998). As Astin declares, problems such as racial tension, crime, drug abuse, teen pregnancy, school dropouts and social disengagement are not likely to be solved only by improving the cognitive outcomes of our educational institutions.

Boyer and Hechinger (1981) are among those who believe that to maintain its relevance, higher education must serve not just the egocentric intellectual needs and wants of the individual but must also serve the higher purposes and needs of society. In this same light, Chickering and Reisser (1993) among others, challenge higher education's almost exclusive emphasis upon individualistic intellectual development at the expense of overall human growth and development and with this question the relevance of an education that lacks a balance between the two domains.

To maintain their relevance, our institutions of higher education must help students make meaning of the knowledge acquired through academic pursuits and integrate in class experience with the students' broader and more comprehensive out-of-class or sociocultural experience (Kuh, 1995; Kuh, 1996).

As Banathy states, "We have simply failed to match the advancement of our technological intelligence with an advancement in affective intelligence." (p. 315) Students do not learn the deeper meanings of life isolated in the disciplines but rather they learn and acquire these higher order forms of learning in an integrated and holistic environment (Terenzin, Pascarella, & Blimling, 1996).

Patricia Cross (1998) in her article, *Why Learning Communities? Why Now?* believes that the time is right for major changes to arise in the American institution of higher education. She believes that the current changing views of knowledge provide an alternative means for institutions to address the most prevalent criticisms of our educational systems. Those primarily being the issues of equalitarianism versus hierarchies, collaboration versus competitiveness, and active participation versus passive absorption. Cross goes on to state, "The current wave of

interest in learning communities is not, I think, just nostalgia for the human touch, or just research about the efficacy of small-group learning, but a fundamental revolution in epistemology.” (p. 7).

### **Student Development Model of Learning Summary**

For many who work with students in their out-of-classroom environments, it is not surprising that Pascarella et al. (1996) found that students’ out-of-class experiences were more important to the development of critical thinking than were their in-class learning experiences. Illich (1971), who advocated for the abandonment of educational institutions, as we know them today, believes that all learning is a casual event. He went so far as to proclaim that even intended learning was not a product of designed and programmed curriculum but rather a result of the casual circumstances in any given life.

These and other findings shed light on the importance of integrative learning approaches not just for the purpose of human development but also for the processes of cognitive development. The need exists for our educational institutions to develop many more ways and means to go about helping students make meaning of the knowledge acquired through academic pursuits by integrating in class experience with the students’ broader and more comprehensive out of class experience (Kuh, 1995; Kuh, 1996). Sanford (1967) believed that the development of the individual, as a whole being, was the primary aim of higher education. As such, he advocated for colleges and universities to utilize their resources for the development of total educational environments guided by the insights gained from the theories of personality development.

Terenzini, Pascarella, and Blimling (1996) found through their twenty-year literature review that the sum is greater than any of the parts. Each of the huge number of programs reviewed through this study showed either no significant positive effect or only slightly significant positive effect upon student learning and development. Nevertheless, when viewed as a whole there is increasingly significant positive effect on student learning and development. The lesson being, one program here and there in isolation is not likely to dramatically change our educational institutions. To make significant change requires system wide change on a sustained basis.

### **Elements of a Student Development Model**

In reviewing the student development model and blending the positive contributions of the emotional mind (affective learning), several important elements emerge. These elements need to be addressed in student development programs that strive to balance cognitive and affective learning.

1. Systemic and sustained as a normal part of the educational experience.
2. An emphasis on the understanding of meaning rather than an accumulation of knowledge facts.
3. Communal with respect to the development of individuation and community.

4. Team building and human relationship development are inherent aspects of the learning environment.
5. Cross-disciplinary, interconnected, integrated, and holistic.
6. Cognitive and affective learning given great breath, depth and width throughout the curriculum.
7. Active and collaborative learning maximized.
8. Service learning integral to the process of education and leadership development.
9. Powerful partnerships between those responsible for “in-class” and “out-of-class” learning (seamless transition from in-class to out-of-class learning environments).
10. Learning viewed as an inherent (casual) outcome of the total environment.
11. Applied institutional research used as a mechanism for improvement.

### **A Research-Based Education Model of Emotional Intelligence**

Emotional intelligence is a learned ability to identify, experience, understand, and express human emotions in healthy and productive ways. Emotional experience and expression are unique to each person. No one else in the world thinks, expresses feelings, chooses behaviors, and acts in the exact same way. An educational model for developing emotional intelligence must address this unique human condition. The educational model of emotional intelligence at Texas A&M University-Kingsville defines emotional intelligence as a confluence of developed abilities to (1) know and value self, (2) build and maintain a variety of strong, productive, and healthy relationships, (3) get along and work well with others in achieving positive results, and (4) effectively deal with the pressures and demands of daily life and work (Nelson and Low, 1998). This definition provides for a practical, easily understood, skills and competencies-based approach to emotional learning and emotional intelligence.

With a skills and competencies-based approach, emotional intelligence can be organized, integrated, and taught in a sequential, step-by-step, learner-centered process. Through long-term study, research, and experience with personal skills and emotional intelligence, the *Emotional Learning System* (a systematic emotional skills learning process) was developed. This learning process or system consists of five essential, interrelated, sequential steps (Nelson and Low, 1999, 2003).

#### **The Emotional Learning System**

Emotional and experienced-based learning is different from traditional academic content learning. The *Emotional Learning System* is based on this difference. Its five steps are systematic and sequential, yet fluid and interactive—the system is designed to ensure a learner-centered development process built on honest, positive self assessment.

- X Step 1 (***Self Assessment: Explore***). Requires the student to develop an intentional self assessment habit: inquiring, discovering, questioning;
- X Step 2 (***Self Awareness: Identify***). Involves the process of identifying an experience as either a thought or feeling and leading to reflection not reactivity;

- X Step 3 (*Self Knowledge: Understand*). Involves ‘insight’ and an understanding that allows a student to make choices about how to behave;
- X Step 4 (*Self Development: Learn*). Involves learning various ways to improve behavior; and
- X Step 5 (*Self Improvement: Apply and Model*). Requires the application and modeling of emotionally intelligent behavior to achieve academic and career goals.

The development of emotional intelligence is an intentional, active, and engaging learning process rich with personal meaning. Development is learner-centered and based on the internal frame of reference of the learner with the use of a positive assessment process. It is our belief that emotional intelligence is best understood and learned when framed around specific emotional competencies and skills. The foundation of the emotional learning process is a positive assessment of thirteen emotional skills organized around four key competencies (Nelson and Low 1999, 2003).

### **Emotional Skills Assessment Process**

<i>Key Emotional Competencies</i>	<i>Key Emotional Skills</i>
I. Interpersonal Development and Healthy Relationships	1. Assertion 2. Anger Management 3. Anxiety Management
II. Personal Leadership	4. Social Awareness (Comfort) 5. Empathy 6. Decision Making 7. Positive Influence
III. Self Management: Career & Life	8. Drive Strength 9. Time Management 10. Commitment Ethic 11. Positive Change
IV. Intrapersonal Development	12. Self Esteem 13. Stress Management

The Emotional Skills Assessment Process of *Personal Skills Mapping, Exploring and Developing Emotional Intelligence Skills*, and *The Personal Responsibility Map* (Nelson and Low, 1976-2003) has confirmed that self assessed emotional intelligence and personal skills are important to academic achievement, mental health, career effectiveness, and resilience. Healthy emotional development and productivity involve the key competencies and skills of emotional intelligence. Learning, developing, and applying these skills improve performance and sense of personal well-being. The competencies and skills of emotional intelligence enable educators to develop a learner-centered skills-based curriculum and personalize the delivery of instruction.

The *Emotional Intelligence Program* is a university-wide effort organized through the required foundations class taught in five undergraduate colleges. The program is designed to actively engage the student in both academic and self-directed experiential goal-oriented activities. An interdisciplinary team of faculty and administrators, graduate students, and student program coordinators work with instructors to provide class lessons and structured activities early in the semester. The lessons and group activities are organized from the Emotional Skills Assessment Process.

The transitions through education – from school to college to career – are challenging, exciting, and often difficult for students. These transitions are critical to the successful completion of K-16 education and career development. The *Emotional Intelligence Program* is designed to provide the positive and practical model of human emotional behavior that students can learn and apply to stay healthy, increase productivity, and improve personal, academic, and career performance.

The *Emotional Intelligence Program* addresses, to some degree, each of the critical elements of the student development model with a specific focus on applied institutional research. Institutional research is used to strengthen program development and delivery for teaching, learning, and accountability.

## **Research Implications and Directions**

The most important goal for every institution of higher education is academic development. However, in today's diversified society, students need much more to lead healthy and productive lives concerning academic, career and personal goals. Therefore, it is crucial for institutions of higher education to develop academic advising and student learning models that embodies both the academic (cognitive) and emotional (affective) development of students. Students with a strong academic and emotional foundation will model and demonstrate behaviors that are conducive to goal attainment and overall success in life. Consequently, leaders in student development must engage in applied institutional research to begin to develop and improve models for student retention and performance. This research is vital for students and higher education personnel to study and to model continuous program improvement and effective leadership.

Through the *Emotional Intelligence Program*, an extensive data base is being developed for a variety of teaching, learning, and research purposes. Utilizing such a rich source of institutional data, there are several important research directions that are being actively pursued.

Among the research directions are the following:

Research Areas:

- The relationship between emotional intelligence and academic achievement among first year college students.
- Studying the relationship between emotional intelligence and academic achievement among first year college students according to gender, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, and academic major.
- Studying the effectiveness of participation in student development programs in terms of academic performance, retention, and career success.
- Studying the relationship of emotional intelligence to other traditional measures of intelligence.
- Studying the impact of student development programs on longitudinal factors such as graduation.
- Studying the importance of emotional intelligence skills in terms of predicting student performance and success.
- Studying the importance of emotional intelligence skills and leadership development.

### **A Final Note**

We hope that we have conveyed an important and central message. Improving emotional intelligence is a key factor in physical and mental health, academic achievement, personal satisfaction, and career excellence. We have worked with thousands of students and teachers in classes, workshops, and seminars. The obvious always seems to be overlooked or ignored. Almost everyone, at every age and level of development, requires a personal and practical model for experiential or experienced-based learning that guides them toward increased emotional self-control and constructive/reflective thinking. The *Emotional Intelligence Program* is a student development model that attempts to convey this message in an applied university context.

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