

GRADUATE COLLEGE

DEFENSE NOTICE

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The following dissertation presentation is scheduled and open
to those in the University Community

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Kathleen Manning, Ph.D., Advisor

Doctor of Education

Educational Leadership & Policy Studies

March 17, 2007

1:00 – 3:00 p.m.

Phi Beta Kappa Room 527
Waterman

Title:

ABSTRACT

There is increasing acknowledgement of and concern over the growing social stratification in our society. A college degree is an especially critical asset in helping to break multi-generational cycles of poverty. Unfortunately, low-income and first-generation college students face daunting obstacles on their paths to college graduation. First-generation status and low-income status are each negative predictors of college success.

This is a study focused on the success, as defined by persistence to graduation, of first-generation students from low-income backgrounds. It introduces faculty, college administrators, and policy makers to students at a rural New England public college who were well on their way to completing their college degrees.

Through qualitative interviewing I learned from these students, through the telling of their stories in their voices, to what they attributed their success. The resulting recommendations focus on areas where the data indicated that institutional interventions could increase the likelihood of college persistence and success for this student demographic. The hope is that the resulting knowledge gained will inform future practice as well as assist higher education faculty and staff to work toward the success of this student population.