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Doctor of Education in Organizational Leadership

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School of Educational Leadership

Exploratory Case Study of Freshman Student Experiences in Developmental Education Courses That Encourage Persistence at One College in West Texas

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction

of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Education in Organizational Leadership

by

Brandon A. Hernandez

February 2021

Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated in loving memory to both my maternal grandparents, Mr. Billy J. Baines and Mrs. Joyce Lee Hilliard-Baines. Thank you for raising me to believe in the power of education and teaching me the importance and value of a Christian home. Thank you for being patient with me as a child and loving me despite my inadequacies. Thank you for the unwavering love and compassion that was shown during our time together. Thank you for setting a wonderful example of faith, service to others, and love for one's family and community. Your spirit and memory will live on, and I love each of you dearly.

This dissertation is also dedicated to my dear wife and children. Krystle Hernandez, I give you honor for always remaining committed to this process. You encouraged me when I had doubts about my own abilities. You witnessed moments of triumph and challenge. Your kindness, love, warmth, and prayers ensured that I would see this journey until the end. You are the greatest blessing I could ask for and my love for you is eternal. Thank you for always extending grace, compassion, and always being my person. Thank you for being a true blessing to my life as well as my best friend. Gabrielle E. Hernandez, as my eldest child, I am delighted to watch you grow and blossom into the incredible young lady that you are. Daddy will always believe in your dreams no matter the outcome. Remember, you can do anything you put your unique mind to. I love you and will always support you. Braxton B. Hernandez, as my youngest, child, you are a true gift to this world and make your daddy happy each time I witness your smile. Life will challenge you in unimaginable ways, but always remember that your God will be with you no matter your circumstance. I love you and believe in you.

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to explore freshman student experiences in developmental education courses that encourage their persistence at one college in the West Texas region. More specifically, this study focused on the programs and services that benefit freshman community college students enrolled in developmental education courses. This study followed case study methodology to examine the student experience. The data were collected by way of personal interviews with students and employees that lasted on average of 45 minutes via the software Webex. The interviews were all conducted online from one community college in the West Texas region. Participants were invited to be involved with the study by way of a recorded two-minute video sent to two instructors at the identified campus location. The researcher interviewed all of the participants online, transcribed the data, member checked, and then analyzed for common themes. Four students and three employees elected to participate in this study. Students were identified as either a traditional, nontraditional, or transfer student. The employees who elected to participate were all part of the instructional division of the community college. Both male and female participants in each identified group were interviewed by way of a created guided protocol. The data were analyzed by two coding methods. The first cycle of coding was done by an open coding process. The second cycle of coding was completed by way of pattern coding to analyze interrelated themes. The findings in this study yielded nine total themes. The findings indicate that a variety of programs and services, when utilized well within the campus community, engage students, and create an atmosphere of success. Moreover, the continual engagement with faculty members as well as the programs and services that are offered do support students toward persistence.

Keywords: developmental education, remedial learning, community college programs and services, student social support experiences, student personal attributes, persistence

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Chapter 1: Introduction

According to the American Association of Community Colleges (2019), community colleges serve as a vital educational opportunity that allow about 41% of all U.S. undergraduate students the opportunity to attend college. According to the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB; 2019), about 40% of students entering Texas institutions do not meet either one or more state readiness standards. This chapter contains the background of the study, the statement of the problem, research purpose and questions, and the significance of the study.

Scott-Clayton and Rodriguez (2012) contended that entry level students who ascend into the hallways of many community colleges in Texas are typically not prepared for entering freshman level courses. Although dated, data from the THECB's 2012 report indicated that 41% of higher education learners were in need of developmental education courses. More recently, a report from the THECB's (2016) 60 x 30 initiative, indicated that 48% of students that enter community colleges do not meet college readiness standards and are often referred to developmental education courses. Thus, according to Booth et al. (2014), those students not academically prepared are placed into the developmental education curriculum that offer no academic credit, further causing a delay in the academic progression toward graduation. Therefore, Booth et al. (2014) emphasized that students who are academically underprepared must find a solution to counteract under preparedness to transition to credit bearing courses for positive academic progression. The developmental education curriculum in Texas is offered in incremental courses with the intended design to raise the academic preparedness of the student to that of an incoming freshman.

Booth et al. (2014) has demonstrated the state of Texas has a long-standing history of offering developmental education courses to students across the entire state. In 2009, the THECB initiated a "statewide plan with identifiable goals using research best practices to improve the success of students with developmental needs" (Booth et al., 2014, p. 3). Since the inception of the state-wide plan, the Texas Legislature has continued to introduce bills, provide financial support, and even instituted various measures in support of academic preparation. As examples, House Bill 1244, rider 34, and rider 52 all were aimed to stimulate projects towards improving the welfare of students enrolling in developmental education courses.

Booth et al. (2014) confirmed that the problem of academic under preparedness is not unique to certain demographic populations within the state of Texas. Coincidentally, the same issue affects most students within a middle-class suburban area within the West Texas region of the state. According to the THECB 2019 Almanac Public Higher Education, Texas currently ranks number 37 among all states in terms of educational attainment for the demographic population of 25 to 34 years of age for associate degree of higher education learners (p. 5). More specifically, according to the state 60 x 30 report, in 2017, "56.5% of the Texas population for the age demographic of 25 to 34 years of age were without a degree or certificate" (p. 7). As such, these statistics indicate that much of the population still needs to be educated, and thus, a good percentage of those learners may fall into the developmental education curriculum within the state. For example, although dated, The THECB reported in the Higher Education Performance Review Legislative Budget Board (2007) that "approximately 50% of community college freshman enroll in at least one developmental education course" (p. 1). Thus, during the "2006-2007 biennium, the Texas Legislature appropriated approximately 206 million in the general revenue funds for the instructional cost of developmental education in all public higher

education institutions" (p. 1). From a budget perspective, the state has been exploring alternative measures and various funding support mechanisms to combat such a high cost to educate this particular demographic of developmental education students.

Therefore, reading within the developmental education curriculum is important for three specific reasons. First, according to Lavonier (2016), courses that involve skill building, are important due to reading skills being transferable to other credit bearing courses. Secondly, Gokcora and Depaulo (2018) emphasized that students in community college often face additional challenges such as not maintaining regular reading habits. Lastly, learning independently, reviewing multiple textbooks, or applying active reading skills are vital for a student to succeed in a community college environment (Culver, 2016). Saxon (2017) commented that recent data suggests evidence that if students are underprepared for entry level courses, it is imperative that a solution must be found to stimulate the learning environments of continuing students.

Statement of the Problem

Booth et al. (2014) reported incoming first year developmental education students experience a much different acclimation process with their first-year classes than academically prepared community college students. Paulson (2014) referred to Adelman's (2004) study about reading deficiencies among incoming developmental students and indicated these deficiencies are the most significant related to developmental curricular concerns. The focus of Adelman's study was academic readiness and the experiences of incoming students to overcome academic deficiencies upon entry to college. Hughes and Scott Clayton (2011) emphasized that under preparedness not only impacts students in the classroom, but often may stimulate faculty discontentment when students are not academically prepared in relation to incoming readiness

standards. Additionally, Bailey et al. (2010) asserted that about half of community college students need some form of remediation. Despite the relevant statistics and identified concerns that overwhelm faculty with regards to academic preparation, opportunities are abundant for a suggestive solution to curb incoming academic inadequacies. According to Nadelson et al. (2013), one of the primary purposes that students attend college is to not only acquire knowledge for career preparation, but also for personal self-actualization. Admittedly, as reported by the National Assessment of Education Progress (2011), many students do not have the skills or meet reading requirements for college level courses. Thus, due to the lack of academic preparedness, consistent outside of the classroom connectivity with faculty members, or ongoing changes to the curriculum mandated by the state of Texas, it is imperative to examine the experiences of first-year developmental education students in community colleges more in-depth.

According to Transforming (2014), the state of Texas expects an increase in more student participation within the higher education sector. More specifically, one of the most pressing challenges may be addressing the needs of the incoming student population towards meeting the state of Texas and its closing the Gaps Initiative. Thus, all Texas community colleges have succumbed to recent legislative changes to their developmental education programs which have caused faculty and staff to adapt in a swift manner. For example, "Coordinating board rules require institutions with Developmental Education (DE) programs to integrate reading and writing for all exit level courses, offer a non-course competency-based option in each content area, and mainstream co-enrollment in DE and college credit courses" (p. 34).

Therefore, if students arrive to the Texas community colleges underprepared, this is an exponential cost to remediate each student in order to a successful passage to traditional level courses. For example, Paulson (2014) asserted, "a recent analyses of ACT college entrance test

scores indicated that fewer than half of incoming college students nation-wide were prepared for the reading requirements of a typical first year college course" (p. 2). On the other hand, Boylan (1999) emphasized this point many years ago and emphatically pronounced that there would always be groups of students that would be unprepared for a certain curriculum. As such, the state will continue to fund ongoing initiatives that have supportive metrics by which to educate this particular population of students.

Finally, according to Booth et al. (2014), the availability of faculty in relation to student connectivity outside of the classroom is paramount to a student's success, yet this interaction can be overlooked in terms of reasons for which students are not successful within the developmental education curriculum. According to Datray et al. (2014), since retention and graduation rates are critical measures of institutional success, excessive use of adjuncts within the curriculum may limit the institutions effectiveness related to course pass rates and ongoing connections with their faculty on a consistent basis. Over 28 years ago, Richardson (1992) noted that adjunct faculty are usually considered temporary employees and are generally less committed to the institution. Moreover, Eney and Davidson (2012) referred to Boylen et al.'s (1994) study which confirmed that at least 72% of adjunct faculty teach on a part-time basis. Therefore, if adjuncts are being utilized to carry a significant load of the teaching assignments within developmental courses, perhaps there may be a correlation related to successful student outcomes and success rates in particular developmental education courses.

Booth et al. (2014) commented that the student voice is vital to the classroom and the relationship with their instructor outside of the course interactions. Allowing a student to be present and heard can have a significant impact on their self-esteem and ongoing communication with their faculty member. Doran (2019) conveyed the notation that if a student is conversing on

a daily basis, it is assumed that they are comfortable in their environment, actively engaged with their instructor for feedback, and exhibit a willingness to communicate. Even Wambach (1993) supported this assertion in that "contact between faculty and students contribute to student's decisions to persist or leave" (p. 8). Therefore, active dialogue on the part of students with their faculty member, outside of the classroom, appears to be a necessity and often underutilized or unaccessible occurrence.

Research Purpose and Questions

The purpose of this study was to explore freshman student experiences in developmental education courses that encourage their persistence at one college in the West Texas region. More specifically, this study focused on the programs and services that benefit freshman community college students enrolled in developmental education courses. The following research questions guided this study:

RQ1: What are the academic support programs and services that encouraged persistence during their first academic term?

RQ2: What are the social support experiences that encouraged persistence while enrolled in developmental education?

RQ3: What are the personal attributes of these students that allow them to persist during the first term?

RQ4: What are the challenges, if any, that these students experience during the first academic term?

Significance

This study maintains significance for a variety of reasons in the context of adequately preparing students for college level courses. The first area of significance for this study is found

within the ongoing cost to educate students in the state of Texas, and the programs and services that benefit the developmental education population. Secondly, this study can add to the body of literature on the continual debate of the validity of developmental education as a curriculum offering. Moreover, the college readiness debate is a continual conversation topic across the state of Texas, especially in the current context of its offering within a co-requisite model. Similarly, the annual Texas community college teachers association hosts a statewide convention to discuss ongoing challenges that current educators are facing. Generally, there are three sessions devoted to the Texas developmental education population related to best practice standards. Lastly, Williams et al. (2018) suggested that the high school teacher's perspectives related to the dilemma of developmental education students is often unaccounted for. Therefore, with little to no input of the high school teacher perspectives found in current research literature, the assumption is that the problem with college readiness will continue to go unresolved. Therefore, this study can be potentially significant as the research purpose explicitly states exploring programs and services, in a meaningful context, related to the student experience while enrolled in the state of Texas. Moreover, if key programs and services are identified within the study, these suggestive practices could result in highly coveted best practice standards within Texas community colleges.

According to the THECB (2016), community colleges in Texas maintain very specific goals as to how they serve the students and their surrounding communities. More specifically, community colleges generally convey four primary student achievement goals in their curriculum for: improving course level completion rates, increasing college level course success rates, improving retention rates, or increasing overall graduation rates toward a degree or a certificate. Therefore, outlining priority student achievement goals into measurable objectives is

a key priority in terms of developmental education and overall student success. Furthermore, according to Barclay et al. (2018), retention is a top priority for all higher education institutions in terms of both financial stability and the enduring support of the community. To that end, various accreditation agencies as well as the Federal Government analyze both graduation rates and retention rates as a measure of institutional strength. In contrast, students unable to attain a college degree have limited prospects to earn a decent wage, make significant professional contacts in their field, or live a prosperous life and maintain healthy living standards (Torkzadeh et al., 2016).

As the field of case study research continues to expand, more examples of informed practice will be needed for the higher education community to meaningfully consider. More importantly, strategies by which higher education environments can continually implement validated practices are currently needed within the developmental curriculum in Texas. The overall importance of this study is to take an approach towards learning about how and why students struggle at the entry point of college, and how their experiences are perceived by the faculty. College readiness continues to be a viable topic to explore within particular contexts and regarding individual students' experiences.

Definition of Terms

Key terms utilized throughout this study are generally defined as follows:

Adjunct faculty. Boylen et al. (1994) defined adjunct faculty as individuals that teach on a part-time basis.

Adult student. Markle (2015) defined an adult student as generally having surpassed the age of 25 years of age.

Developmental education course. Allen et al. (2017) defined a developmental education course as a sequence of courses that a student enrolls in as a prerequisite for enrollment prior to the traditional credit bearing course.

Developmental education programs. Booth et al. (2014) defined developmental education programs as structured courses with a goal to bring a student from an underprepared level, to that of an incoming college ready student.

Institution of higher education, or institution. THECB (2016) defined any public technical institute, public junior college, public senior college or university, medical or dental unit, or other agency of higher education as defined in Texas Education Code, Section 61.003(8).

Integrated reading and writing (IRW). THECB (2014) defined an integrated reading and writing course as a curriculum offering within developmental education that combines curricular content with structured content with areas on improving both reading and writing levels combined in one course.

Minimum passing standards. THECB (2016) defined as the minimum scores that must be attained by a student in reading, writing, and mathematics to indicate the student's readiness to enroll in freshman level academic coursework.

Nontraditional student. Hickson and Butler (2010) defined the nontraditional student as those that may exhibit characteristics such as part time enrollment, varying degrees of parental obligations or particular employment statuses overtime.

Public two-year colleges. THECB (2016) defined as any public junior college, public community college, public technical institute, or public state college, as defined in TECH, section 61.003.

Summary

Chapter 1 has provided an introduction to the study, listed the research purpose and study questions to explore, and delineated the overall significance. Chapter 2 contains a review of the literature, an overview of community colleges in Texas, a review of college readiness in community colleges, an overview of student first year and characteristics and challenges, program and services, non-governmental agencies that offer support, perspectives on adult learners, and a concluding summary.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The purpose of this study was to explore freshman student experiences in developmental education courses that encourage their persistence at one college in the West Texas region. More specifically, this study focused on the programs and services that benefit freshman community college students enrolled in developmental education courses. Based on the plethora of data made available, as noted in Allen et al. (2017), some studies indicate that students who demonstrate difficulty with college level literacy, may often struggle with higher level material as they advance to higher levels of learning. Within the state of Texas, as conveyed in Transforming (2014), the ongoing challenge for incoming freshmen has been the adjustment to the college curriculum, as well as being underprepared. Being placed into developmental education is one recourse to develop effective course skills in order to successfully matriculate into the general education curriculum. According to the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB; 2018), "more than forty percent of students entering Texas public institutions do not meet college readiness standards" (p. 1). The majority of these students elect to begin their college education at either a community college or a technical college.

The review of literature relating to the purposes of this study has resulted in identification of the following themes*:* (a) Community College Systems in Texas; (b) College Readiness within Context of Community Colleges in U.S. Higher Education; (c) Community College First-Year Students: Characteristics and Challenges; (d) Programs and Services offered to Developmental Education Students; and (e) Theoretical Perspectives on Adult Learners.

Community College Systems in Texas

As suggested by Saxon (2017), within a 10-year span, developmental education spending observed an increase of 5.5% across the state. Yet, as noted by Bragg et al. (2006), community

colleges are often a reliable and appropriate linkage for students that place into developmental education. Across the nation and including Texas, as emphasized by Boylan (1999), almost every community college provides a variety of developmental education courses in mostly core subject areas. According to the THECB (2014), more recently, the state of Texas has revised the curriculum to include an integrated version of reading and writing within the context of developmental education. Thus, the statewide goal is to work on both tangible skills, within these areas simultaneously. The full implementation of the statewide curriculum was slated for a fall 2015 start. Recent reports indicated that over 88% of statewide institutions reported a plan for implementation. To that end, the THECB created a newly formed Texas success initiative centered on aspects of professional development. This initiative was recently created to serve the state-wide interest to support reform efforts and provide professional development and online peer collaboration.

According to the THECB (2018),

> Recent changes to the Texas Success Initiative (TSI) statute House Bill 2223, 85th Legislature, Regular Session, require that certain students enrolled in developmental education courses or interventions at Texas public institutions of higher education be reported as enrolled in co-requisite models. (p. 2)

Thus, colleges must adapt to the suggestive curriculum requirements as well as the enrolled student which may unknowingly cause a further delay toward completion. Additionally, “these models allow an underprepared student to co-enroll in the entry-level college course and developmental support of the same subject matter in the same semester” (THECB, 2018, p. 2). The outcome of the noted changes will require that by 2020, “seventy-five percent of an institutions developmental education enrollments must be reported in this manner” (p. 2). Unless

an incoming student qualifies for an exemption, all students enrolling in a Texas community college will be assessed for their particular readiness levels. Hagedorn and Kuznetsova (2016) clarified that the incoming students' placement test will score into three basic levels: developmental education, adult basic education, or college ready. Hagedorn and Kuznetsova (2016) explained that Texas currently operates in a performance-based funding model as the state rewards those colleges that produce significant outcomes for student success rates.

Gokcora and Depaulo (2018) mentioned community colleges in Texas offer a variety of accommodating programs and services that meet the demand of both traditional and nontraditional students. Yet, Hadden (2010) emphasized the dilemma that these institutions of higher education face, open access for all with an ongoing charge for extremely high success rates amongst learners (as cited in Allen et al., 2017). Moreover, Smart and Saxon (2016) exclaimed that as online programs have begun to have an increase for demand, some students are less likely to enroll in the traditional classroom courses. Thus, the goal for developmental education courses focuses strictly on grammar, paragraph development, and the appropriate structure of sentences.

The state of Texas involves a variety of educational partners to support the fabric of educational learning and development of its students. According to the THECB (2016), a few of the state-wide partners include Texas Guaranteed, the Texas Success Center, the Texas Education Agency and the Texas Workforce Commission. Through this identified partnership, several forms of key information can be shared related to best practices as well as financial support in terms of grants to local community college campuses. As an example, an annual survey related to developmental education is disseminated throughout the state annually. The THECB noted that respondents have the opportunity to report items such as qualifications of

instructors as well as any professional development that has recently been acknowledged within their campus. In 2015, the state of Texas awarded one particular university to provide ongoing training to developmental educational professionals. This is a notable achievement for the state due to several instances of previously no statewide efforts or on a limited basis. “To date, thirty-three activities addressing topics such as co-requisite models and acceleration strategies for under-prepared learners have been delivered to more than 1,200 faculty members, support staff and administrators across the state” (p. 7). This level of professional development across the state demonstrates that Texas is committed to preparing educators to serve the needs of students for years to come. Moreover, educators are also committed to ensuring that best practice standards are regularly discussed with multiple state entities.

College Readiness Within Context of Community Colleges in U.S. Higher Education

The THECB (2016) plays a pivotal role in shaping the various policies and practices that shape the developmental education curriculum in Texas. The mission of the THECB is to “provide leadership and coordination for the Texas higher education system and to promote access, affordability, quality, success, and cost efficiency through 60 x 30, resulting in a globally competitive workforce that positions Texas as an international leader” (p. 3).

According to the THECB (2018), college readiness and degree attainment are measures of success as students navigate the college environment. Being successful in college, related to degree attainment, spills over to success in professional endeavors, thus having adequate skills to perform in a given profession. Adequate preparation begins with encompassing the knowledge, skill set and the ability to put into practice skills learned.

Escobedo (2007) mentioned community colleges in Texas and across the nation are often charged with improving retention and persistence rates related to developmental education. Nist

and Holschuh (2005) suggested one of the identified challenges related to college readiness is the ongoing promotion of strategies that stimulate higher level thinking. Although dated, Perin (2006) emphasized that no national standard for college readiness actually exist, as methods by which to place students within courses varies from state to state. As recent as 2018, Williams et al. corroborated these same findings. Moreover, according to Jaggars and Stacy (2014), 68% of community college students elect to enroll in at least one developmental course. In relation to these statistics, according to Transforming (2014), the question often remains as to what are the exact testing mechanisms that allow students to be placed into such a course. One suggested mechanism that has been offered is the "Texas Success Initiative Assessment (TISA)" (p. 33).

Prior to the fall 2013 semester, the THECB (2014) explained community colleges in Texas could utilize any of the four testing mechanisms by way of assessing student readiness. These tests included the Texas Higher Education Assessment, the Compass test, the Asset test, and the Accuplacer test. Texas has recently launched a new initiative entitled the Texas Success Initiative aimed as a statewide effort to test for college readiness among students not meeting certain academic standards. Thus, students not meeting particular standards set by the state, are referred to take developmental education courses.

According to the THECB (2018), within the ongoing changes to the community college curriculum, and the enactments within the 85th legislature, one important change can be found within the required integrated reading and writing courses interventions models. The reading and writing intervention models "combine two, separate semester-long developmental education courses into one… accelerating the timeframe of developmental education completion while providing integrated instruction that focuses on the connections between the skills taught in both classes and reflective of required in college-level coursework" (p. 2). This integration, from a

curricular model perspective, is required “at the exit-level of developmental education, including co-requisite models” (p. 2). Similarly, according to the THECB (2016), one reported community college within the state promotes an active model of offering a “four week accelerated course model with an integration of reading and writing followed by a twelve-week college English course with the same instructor” (p. 5).

Moreover, Allen et al. (2017) suggested that a sequence of completed developmental education courses supports positive college student success. However, Scott-Clayton and Rodriguez (2012) asserted that “seventy percent of community college student’s complete remedial coursework” otherwise referred to as developmental education courses (as cited in Lavonier, 2016, p. 524). However, Cox et al. (2003) emphasized that passage of one developmental reading course indicates a likelihood of success in future college level courses (as cited in Lavonier, 2016). Therefore, the THECB (2018) suggested based on the various notations related to the current state, and the history of developmental education, a more in-depth exploration is needed based on the identified research questions to further evaluate ongoing considerations that promote successful completion and academic readiness standards.

Hawley and Chiang (2017) commented that students in community college have a lower probability of actually completing a bachelor’s degree as opposed to their counterparts that begin at the traditional universities. Lavonier (2016) emphasized that students in the community college setting bring with them a variety of skills and abilities in relation to their academic preparation. Thus, commented that this creates a rather perplexing teaching challenge for classroom instructors. Williams et al. (2018) exclaimed that working to align public education and higher education expectations, one setting to the next, in relation to placement exams, has been problematic.

Hagedorn and Kuznetsova (2016) commented that the curricular structure found within a community college may vary from campus to campus. Yet, when students arrive underprepared, or have yet to complete a readiness assessment, the community college must find a meaningful way to combat the lack of skills that are presently exhibited. Two programs that have taken root within most community colleges, in identifying early gaps in preparedness, are bridge programs and boot camps.

Williams et al. (2018) confirmed there is an ongoing need for institutions to consider newly developed approaches towards helping students prepare for the rigor of college level course work. As an example, Goldwasser et al. (2017) found that one community college is allowing students to complete their developmental course work with the assistance of computer-based programs. This model, according to the THECB (2016), has shown to increase retention and allows the student to work at their own pace. Thus, this system is generally referred to as an emporium approach, by allowing students the autonomy to work at their own pace, completing various computer-based modules with a goal to achieve college readiness. THECB indicated the emporium approach is also supported by the use of lab tutors and instructor support.

Goldwasser et al. (2017) noted that more than 21 states now have active collaborations between community college faculty and high school teachers to prepare students to meet the rigor of college courses. Thus, this active collaboration assists to curb enrollment within developmental education courses. Additionally, assistance in these programs is offered within computer lab settings between both high school faculty and community college faculty. In some cases, budgetary concerns may impede upon the colleges ability to provide adequate learning resources to students. Therefore, Goldwasser et al. found that colleges often rely on external funding such as Title III, Title IV, and Title V funding from the US Department of Education.

Hawley and Chiang (2017) commented that despite the access that community colleges have provided over the years, completion rates are at a record low. Booth et al. (2014), argued that the imperative to improve academic preparedness is one of the most significant challenge facing higher education today in Texas and across the U.S.

Community College First-Year Students: Characteristics and Challenges

The challenges and experiences that community college freshman may experience vary from each community college campus. Due to the nature of higher education, students arrive to the community college setting described as either traditional or nontraditional students that exhibit a variety of unique freshman characteristics. Gokcora and Depaulo (2018) supported Monaghan and Attewell's (2015) summary which emphasized those students that start at a community college often are unable to transfer a significant amount of credits to their next campus destination for their bachelor degree, as much as over 50% in some studies.

Ritschel (1995) referenced Hoyt's (1999) findings which emphasized that the classroom experience impacts student retention efforts. Nist and Holschuh (2005) exclaimed that students often struggle with several distinct challenges that may impact them personally, financially, emotionally, or within their studies while enrolled. With regard to enrollment within their courses, students often neglect to take advantage of the need to form study groups, utilize copies of previous exams, or attend well-advertised study review sessions offered by select-groups on campus. Moreover, freshman students often have a difficult time connecting with their faculty as a good majority of those that are hired to teach are part-time. As such, Boylan et al. (1994) noted, about 72% of faculty members teach on a part-time basis within developmental education. Furthermore, Taniguchi and Kaufman (2005) confirmed that many nontraditional students

struggle with the following issues, part-time enrollment, period of absences, infrequent interactions with instructors, or inadequate support systems.

Barclay et al. (2018) has suggested among the many characteristics that students often grapple with, generally, these include maturity, conscientiousness, and a particular mindset as considerations towards academic success. Barclay et al. also suggested the way a student views himself has an impact on their readiness as well. Therefore, the way a student views their abilities may coincide with their effort to achieve in the classroom. A second challenge that is often evident within the community college setting is the connectivity level of students with their faculty. Students in high school tend to form long-lasting and meaningful relationships that are a result of a history due to the duration of the high-school curriculum. Generally, that close nit relationship is not readily present in the community college setting because of an ever-changing schedule or a new instructor each semester. Barclay et al. further commented that high school teachers receive many hours related to professional development in relation to education methods, while there is a lack among college and universities in this area. Therefore, connecting with students, for many instructors, may often be an ongoing challenge.

However, Spann et al. (1998) commented that any action taken to increase the engagement between faculty and students may positively impact retention efforts. To that end, Wambach (1993) suggested that a curriculum that maintains a focus on building opportunities for early success will aide all students to rise above their current low capacity. In contrast, Rotter (1966) argued that students often struggle with a locus of control, which leads to unhelpful actions, and thus a neglect in their studying. Shields (1993) conveyed the notion that as students often mature at varying stages within their development, their motivations for attending a community college does as well. Therefore, a variety of recommendations are offered to help

freshmen students curb their adjustment difficulties as well as their unique nature to give up. Thus, Stahl et al. (1992) suggested that instructors should train students to transfer learning strategies towards educational assignments. Moreover, instructors should also assist students to learn to be adaptive as autonomous learners. Lastly, Park et al. (2018) commented that one of the identified challenges that distress students and their enrollment decisions is found when student's disregard advisor's suggestions. Additionally, Park et al. explained how students typically elect certain courses for a myriad of reasons including: work schedules, program requirements, course of study outlines, career goals, or particular academic insufficiencies. Baier et al. (2019) suggested that when teaching a vast array of students from multicultural backgrounds, a move away from transactional teaching methods toward relational pedagogy may improve association and engagement.

Programs and Services Offered to Developmental Education Students

Wambach et al. (2000) commented on the concept of educational environments and experiences while being challenging and quick to respond within a demanding environment. One strategy that has often worked well within the community college setting is an intrusive advising strategy (Escobedo, 2007). This strategy calls for the advisor to make repeated contacts with the student over a period of time, within the semester, seeking to remedy certain academic issues. Escobedo (2007) also referenced another service often associated with the developmental education population, which is the student retention specialist. These professionals specifically work with students in relation to unique orientation sessions, counseling sessions, or selective workshops design to encourage the student to remain on track within their educational goals.

Boylan (1999) emphasized how developmental education programs strive to not only remain student centered, but also to maintain an all-encompassing approach. As such, many

developmental educators serve in nontraditional roles such as academic counseling and advising, tutoring programs, learning labs specialist, and personalized instructional sessions. To that end, Booth et al. (2014) confirmed that some developmental education programs offer early alert programs that signal to both the staff advisor and the instructor to collaborate in the best interest of the student. The early alert program can take on a variety of iterations towards true campus wide implementation. Yet, the goal of an early alert program is to create an effective student monitoring system that alerts faculty and staff when a student begins to struggle in a variety of courses or offer a suggestive early intervention plan.

Booth et al. (2014) exclaimed that two additional programs showing promise in the ongoing effort to assist students have been found within online tutoring offerings and placing students within learning. Booth et al. also mentioned that online tutoring can be beneficial due to the student's ability to connect from home, offering extended hours for tutoring while off campus, or maintain an instant online connection with campus personnel. Finally, summer bridge programs have been used on specific campuses; however, room and board concerns along with placement testing issues limit many campuses from achieving success toward a full summer experience. Despite the many efforts on behalf of a college, the THECB (2006) contended funding continues to remain an issue and thus innovation to support students in a meaningful way persist.

The studies by Boylan et al. (1994), Calcagno and Long (2008), and Kozeracki and Brooks (2006) have well established theories on the importance and necessity for developmental education to continue as a curricular practice and the institutional support mechanisms that are required. Most of the findings, from these particular authors, encompass the theme of program effectiveness. However, a short-fall framework has resided within the state for many years now

and presents an image of failure and over resourced support, which affects messages sent to the legislature for continued funding of these programs.

According to Smith (2011), additional research is required in an effort to challenge the shortfall framework and refocuses the narrative to a positive perception of accountability and continuous improvement. The state of Texas continues to report in the THECB (2016) that despite various educator's best efforts to educate our students, deficiencies remain related to performance outcomes. Thus, community colleges remain a vital option to educate students within the developmental education curriculum. With the appropriate programs and services in place, coupled with understanding the challenges and experiences of students, this research topic aims to address the outlined research questions as well as offer suggestive practices for consideration. When approaching the topic of developmental education, there is not one single solution that will work for every distinct campus. Moreover, due to numerous funding models at various community colleges, only certain programs and support services can be offered within the framework of institutional priorities. However, exploring the insights given by the research participants may offer clues toward sustainable changes and curricular implementations that offer students the best practices for course success.

Through the enactment of House Bill 5, within the 83rd legislature session in Texas, according to the THECB (2016) college prep courses are a required collaboration between school districts and higher education institutions in an effort to promote increased readiness of high school graduates. The THECB reported the benefit to a student, from the identified collaboration, is a successful completion of the course and thus receiving both high school credit and a Texas success initiative exemption in terms of entrance standards. One goal between both entities is to offer this type of course while providing options for students to become college

ready in high school settings, prior to enrollment in college. Additionally, in accordance with the Texas Administrative Code (TAC) 4.55, institutions are able to expand the assessment of students to also include additional considerations of course patterns, high school GPA, and various workplace experiences.

Recent findings from Goldwasser et al. (2017) suggested a total of seven elements related to best practices when offering programs and services which include: a centralized mission, a coordinated program, collaboration among faculty and support staff, alignment between courses, ongoing program evaluation, the integration of adjunct faculty, ongoing professional development offerings to faculty, and comprehensive support services. Goldwasser et al. (2017) mentioned programs that integrate a variety of the above identified criterion, each generally move forward to seek certification from the National Association of Developmental Education as a certified program of recognition.

Goldwasser et al. (2017) conveyed a new approach to offering programs and services has recently gained traction within various campuses. For example, offering accelerated courses to students reduces the time towards completion of the sequence of courses. Additionally, offering multiple developmental classes, compressed into one semester, puts forth a goal to complete the highest-level sequence of courses rapidly. Finally, the many inconsistent delimitations of how to actually define college readiness can impact many student's assignment policies on community college campuses (Safran & Visher, 2010). Safran and Visher also contended that students are not readily aware of the magnitude that placement exams actually impact their enrollment status. Recent studies suggest that many community colleges have moved toward providing students with early preparation services that include YouTube videos for exam preparation or preexam workbooks with numerous examples.

Overall, based on the observed work of a variety of noted professional in the field, this proposed study can potentially contribute to the current state of developmental education for new suggestive practices as well as the programs and services that best serve the student population. Although the state of Texas has studied the topic of developmental education for some time now, and devoted significant resources, this study is needed to offer a new perspective on the current state, within the field, and also to suggest new information for the ever evolving discussion on the state of developmental education in Texas.

Non-Governmental Agencies That Offer Support

Hagedorn and Kuznetsova (2016) reported several non-governmental agencies have also supported the ongoing effort to provide funding mechanisms that support the developmental education population. These organizations create grant opportunities that provide new resources to combat the challenge of educating the masses. For example, Sturgis (2014) reported that the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation has contributed about half a billion dollars related to the cause of community colleges. The challenge with colleges that accept this type of funding is the required reporting within certain time parameters within the academic year. Thus, the ongoing goal to demonstrate relative success is related to students and their positive progression.

Hagedorn and Kuznetsova (2016) also emphasized how the Achieving the Dream initiative is also credited with supportive efforts to combat the crises that developmental education students encounter as each enrolls in a community college. However, the Achieving the Dream initiative (2015) has a particular emphasis on students of color and low-income students. The Achieving the Dream initiative has demonstrated a commendable effort by supporting about 200 community colleges within 34 states over the course of the past 10 years.

Theoretical Perspectives on Adult Learners

Lavonier (2016) commented that community college students often are characterized in multiple facets in relation to their learning and abilities. Moreover, as adult learners, students are often challenged in more than one specific learning dimension such as applying prior knowledge, comprehension, or recall of previous information. In many respects, students within the community college are defined in varying terms such as traditional, nontraditional, or reentry students. Markle (2015) defined an adult student as generally having surpassed the age of 25 years of age. The nontraditional student may exhibit characteristics such as part time enrollment, varying degrees of parental obligations, or particular employment statuses overtime (Hickson & Butler, 2010). Therefore, with students arriving on campus with varying levels of abilities, certain theories in relation to learning must be considered.

Adult Learning Theory

Research indicates a variety of ways by which to educate adult learners within a college or university setting. However, Bash (2001) suggested providing a system that will allow the student to ultimately succeed. This notion may include consideration of the anticipated tools and skills for the incoming student. Secondly, Bash emphasized that engagement with the learner is needed while also considering "college-level tasks" (p. 83). Thirdly, Bash highlighted the delicate nature of incoming students and institutions should account for various levels of anxiety, distress or trepidation when entering the classroom. To combat the uneasiness of the student, particularly within the developmental education population, Boylan (2002) suggested several best practice instructional measures that may impact the learning experience of the student and in line with adult learning theory.

Harris and Eleser (1997) commented on the efficacy of teaching critical thinking skills and the outcome of enhanced fulfillment with learning. Secondly, Young and Ley (2001) placed an emphasis on teaching comprehension and self-sustaining behaviors which are critical strategies for developmental personnel. Thirdly, Langer (2001) suggested strong attention in the area of active learning techniques to assist students in their development in relation to identified skill areas. In most cases, the developmental education offerings in Texas are combined in a co-requisite model, thus, is applicable to both reading and writing skills.

Williams et al. (2018) contended developmental education students arrive to the college with limited exposure on the necessary habits to active engagement with curricular materials. Therefore, each student must be taught the most appropriate techniques by which to digest the content and connect with their particular learning styles. As an example, Goodwin et al. (2014) suggested that students with limited exposure with words and text have very few opportunities to form connections in relation to fundamental reading skills. Additionally, Wilson-Fowler and Apel (2015) commented on how students with limited skills also exhibit difficulty in relation to morphological awareness. Additionally, Chevalier et al. (2017) suggested that learners may also grapple with basic metacognitive reading strategies which further inhibits academic success. With these identified challenges, instructors must rely on a variety of teaching methods to combat the academic inadequacies that arrive in their classrooms. Huang and Yang (2015) confirmed the ability for a student to read properly is often thought of as a fundamental building block for literacy. Similarly, reading instruction often develops various skills such as vocabulary attainment or decoding skills utilized for overall comprehension.

Hagedorn and Kuznetsova (2016) emphasized that there are several considerations in relation to structuring learning experiences of traditional students or adult learners. For example,

learning communities have become increasingly popular as a mechanism to link courses that have a common emphasis, while continually promoting the academic and social networks therein. Additionally, Hagedorn and Kuznetsova suggested that the linkage between select courses, that actually form a learning community around a particular subject area, set up a pipeline for further skill development. More recently, studies have shown that while learning communities are noteworthy, there are associated challenges with offering this type of curricular model. For example, the downside to offering structured learning experiences, by way of learning communities, include scheduling out of class time for faculty to collaborate, scheduling difficulties for students to select course offerings, and thus enrollments in certain course sections decline.

Hagedorn and Kuznetsova (2016) mentioned that another common practice that supports the developmental education curriculum is students that co-enroll in a student success course. Students that enroll in these types of courses generally need additional support in nonacademic areas such as: time management, study skills, note taking or other general college introductory acclimation skills. Hagedorn and Kuznetsova also clarified that if a student success course is linked to a developmental course, this symmetry creates an additional learning community.

Therefore, the goal of preselection co-curriculum requirements may provide evidence that this is a sound model for future consideration. Moreover, if the ultimate goal is for the student to develop certain skills that were not present initially, the co-curricular design may provide further credence towards a best practice model. Tinto's (1975, 1993) Institutional Departure Model also accepts the notion of two consistent factors being present within a student's decision to leave or persist, the social system and the academic system. Burke (2019) suggested that within the academic realm, the student must maintain an ongoing obligation

towards individual goals to persist and remain motivated. The two areas of significance found within the academic realm are grade performance and intellectual development.

Equally, Burke (2019) purported that a student must also exhibit a reasonable level of institutional obligation, which is typically observed via social influences or school events. Social integration can occur with the successful intermingling of peer group and faculty interactions. Thus, the successful union of personal aspirations and institutional obligations influences a student's ability to persist and return to the institution. Moreover, Patton et al. (2016) conveyed similar sentiments echoed by Museus and Neville (2012) which advocated that educators should provide ongoing support to students by cultivating relationships with them and recognizing their humanity. With regard to student self-efficacy, Rendon (1994) concluded that "students who felt validated by someone else were more likely to believe that they could be successful in college" (p. 7). Rendon further emphasized that these validating agents support an environment by which the student "feels more capable of learning and more accepted as a member of the campus community" (p. 7).

Seidman (2005) suggested that there is a considerable link between the classroom connection and the communal belonging shared amongst the faculty member and the enrolled student. More specifically, Seidman also confirmed the "intersection of both social and academic dimensions of the student experience" (p. 78). Seidman also indicated that instructional practices, such as active learning methodologies within the classroom, may serve an identified need related to social affiliation. Therefore, high levels of engagement within the classroom may yield identified results related to satisfaction by the student and ultimately support institutional commitment due to the ongoing engagement with the faculty member. Lastly, Seidman emphasized one of the key aspects to student persistence is their ongoing involvement as a

member of the academic learning community. Therefore, community colleges that engage their students in learning communities, “are more likely to persist” (p. 78).

Tinto’s Student Integration Model. Barclay et al. (2018) referenced Tinto’s (1975) student integration model and asserted that “students who are able to integrate socially to the campus climate have an increased sense of commitment to the institution which leads to increased graduate rates” (p. 60). Being able to retain a student, each year as positive matriculation, indicates that the student has successfully adapted to the environment and is committed to their education goals. Likewise, Dwyer’s (2017) findings convey key insights related to Tinto’s (1997, 2000) work related to social integration and the significance of academic interactions. Dwyer asserted that classroom interactions between students and faculty, with an academic undertone, espouse interactive qualities. Thus, the interaction between the faculty and the student can promote a strong linkage toward social connection with the campus.

Although dated, Karp et al. (2010) emphasized that when students engage with faculty members, the classroom conversations are vital for the ongoing development of social affiliations. Furthermore, these associations within the academic context allow students to relate within the academic community in a meaningful way. Therefore, Dwyer (2017) suggested that when faculty members are able to connect with students in a meaningful way, these engagement opportunities avail pathways to encourage ongoing persistence. Bailey and Brown (2016) also recommended finding a way to connect with students to provide an atmosphere of community and connectedness. More specifically, this connection will facilitate an opportunity for engagement within the institution as well as providing available access to support services as a requirement for remaining in compliance with accreditation standards. Similarly, Seidman

(2005) suggested that early intervention services be made available as early as possible to support retention efforts.

Furthermore, Bailey and Brown (2016) emphasized the use of technology to create ideal environments for students as a means of connection and a point of increasing student success. Moisey and Hughes (2008) conveyed the idea that students need support in adapting to the college environment such as study habits and managing their own expectations. Additionally, Bailey and Brown (2016) claimed that many students also need assistance with either tutoring or a variety of college services. Lastly, Moisey and Hughes (2008) confirmed the notion that it is imperative that a student feel an association with their institution and maintain access to helpful campus support services.

Boylan (2002) suggested that since developmental education students display a variety of learning styles, the most comprehensive set of support services may attract a higher utilization of services offered by the campus support team. Moreover, Boylan also maintained that providing a list of support services, in concert with having ongoing faculty referrals, provides a measure of campus support for these students. Finally, Boylan offers his suggested comprehensive list of support services which include: “student skills assessment, academic advising, study strategies or skills workshops, group or individual tutoring, individualized instruction and learning assistance centers” (p. 27). Although a community college campus may not be able to provide the entire set of offerings, several support services can be developed in collaboration with other campus departments. Developmental education students require several forms of support services that assist to continually build upon the skills taught in the classroom weekly. More specifically, when students have access to a variety of support services, the student is better able to feel

supported and thereby demonstrate an inclination towards engagement in positive learning habits.

Tinto's Framework for Institutional Action. Tinto (1993) suggested several considerations related to the institutional responsibility for action and the success of the student. Schuh et al. (2017) confirmed that "meaningful contacts and connections students shared with others, in the campus community, not only promote integration and persistence, but also learning" (p. 258). Tinto (2012) further claimed that the classroom is one of the most auspicious sites for efficacious practice. Schuh et al. (2017) also alluded to the proliferation of institutional conditions for student success including: "clear and high expectations of students, especially in the classroom; high levels of academic, social, and financial support of students, frequent assessment and feedback to help gauge their progress and make adjustments and engagement in the academic and social realms of the campus" (p. 259). Seidman (2005) complemented Tinto's (2012) work when the author mentioned positive encounters and mediations will reinforce persistence by heightening individual plans and obligations.

Deci and Ryan's Self-Determination Theory. Beck and Davidson (2019) reiterated Deci and Ryan's (2002) outline of the four unique stages related to self-determination theory. The theory suggested that the student moves through stages related to

> (a) the social and environmental factors provided in the school setting affect (b) the degree to which students basic needs are satisfied in that setting, which mediates (c) where they are positioned on a continuum of perceived internal, autonomous regulation versus external regulation, which causes (d) a wide variety of outcomes such as well-being, performance, commitment, and persistence. (p. 1147)

Beck and Davidson (2019) emphasized the importance of stage three within the theory being critical, in that, the student may function in a self-determined manner.

Deci and Ryan (2002) proposed three fundamental desires within their proposed theory: relatedness, autonomy, and competence. According to Beck and Davidson (2019), each of the three outlined desires carries a significance within the student experience. Competence influences individuals to asseverate and raise their capacities. Secondly, relatedness concerns the idea of being connected to one's community in close interactions or relationships. Finally, autonomy consists of excitations of liberty and individuality derived from self-action.

Summary

Beck and Davidson (2019) contended that despite the statistics of students that do not matriculate beyond their first year, higher education institutions have committed extensive time, considerations, and funds devoted to improvement of the academic and communal environment. Seidman (2005) suggested that when colleges provide a meaningful structure and is successful with integration phases of both the communal and academic realms of the institution, the student is at a higher probability of success. Additionally, Beck and Davidson (2019) exclaimed within the context of a student's journey through their first interaction with the academic setting, commitment in the quest for an earned degree also involves commitment to an educational establishment. Thus, this notion of commitment also involves an adjustment of attitude to the educational institution as well. Levin (2007) suggested that the mission of the community college "is clearly an extension of the state, legally under the authority of state legislatures" (p. 185). Therefore, the goal to educate students goes beyond the mission of the college and thereby extends to the auspices of the state. Thus, Levin has confirmed community colleges operates in a context of "social responsibility to provide an advantage for the disadvantaged" (p. 185). Finally,

community colleges will continue to act in the best interest of the public to serve the student and educate each, despite any deficiencies that may be present.

Chapter 3 presents the methodology for the study. Chapter 4 reports the findings. Chapter 5 presents a summary of the study and includes recommendations for practice and future studies.

Chapter 3: Methodology

The purpose of this study was to explore freshman student experiences in developmental education courses that encourage their persistence at one college in the West Texas region. More specifically, this study focused on the programs and services that benefit freshman community college students enrolled in developmental education courses. This study was influenced by Tinto's theory of student retention. Tinto's (1993) theory of retention is central to both the student experience and their ability to adapt to the campus environment. Tinto (1975, 1993) suggested that within the academic realm, the student must maintain an ongoing obligation towards individual goals to persist and remain motivated. The two areas of significance found within the academic realm are grade performance and intellectual development. Equally, a student must also exhibit a reasonable level of institutional obligation, this is typically observed via social influences or school events. This chapter contains the following: purpose statement and research questions, research design, site and participants, sources of data and methods of data collection, validation criterion and researcher-self, concluding thoughts.

Purpose Statement and Research Questions

The purpose of this study was to explore freshman student experiences in developmental education courses that encourage their persistence at one college in the West Texas region. More specifically, this study focused on the programs and services that benefit freshman community college students enrolled in developmental education courses. The following research questions guided this study:

RQ1: What are the academic support programs and services that encouraged persistence during their first academic term?

RQ2: What are the social support experiences that encouraged persistence while enrolled in developmental education?

RQ3: What are the personal attributes of these students that allow them to persist during the first term?

RQ4: What are the challenges, if any, that these students experience during the first academic term?

Research Design

According to Sandelowski (2010), qualitative research is relevant to capture profound understandings of descriptive accounts in language of participants, rather than a sole reliance on interpretation from an abstract framework. A qualitative case study approach was best suitable for the purposes of this study. According to Stake (1995), "Humans are generally curious, and researchers have a special compulsion to inquire" (p. 46). As such, this study sought out the working parts of an educational system that were linked to various programs and services for first year students. More specifically, Stake (1995) acknowledged that case studies often consist of bounded systems that contain both "boundaries and working parts" (p. 2). The boundaries, in this specific study, were linked to the second level courses that students were enrolled in while the working parts are the programs and services that a student can meaningfully engage in over the course of the semester. Therefore, Creswell and Poth (2018) also emphasized that when exploring the unique perspectives of participants, as a researcher, an overall acknowledgement that "people and programs clearly are prospective cases" seems to fall in line with the rationale for a study involving an educational setting and the students as the people being explored (p. 98).

Creswell and Poth (2018) acknowledged that "case study research, as a qualitative approach, explores real life, contemporary bounded system, or multiple bounded systems over

time, through detailed in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information" (p. 96). Additionally, the same authors also cautioned the use of more than one case emphasizing "the study of more than one case dilutes the overall analysis" (p. 102). Therefore, this study allowed for investigation of unique learning experiences of first-year community college students.

Yin (2013) asserted that case study methodologies are likely found within the academic realm for a variety of reasons. As such, the nature of the case study approach when delving into the experiences of students, seems ripe for the conditions of the student experience to be acknowledged. To further this point, Yin emphasized that case studies generally scrutinize the circumstantial conditions in detail. Stake (1995) also affirmed the validity of the case study approach emphasizing seeking out the issues that further allow exploration for examining conditions.

Site and Participants

A two-year, public community college in the West Texas region of the United States served as the site for this study. From a demographic perspective, as of fall 2019, the total campus population was just under 7,000 students; the campus has a designation of a Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI) and maintains one of the lowest tuition rates in the West Texas region, according to data from the THECB (2019). The location was selected for a variety of reasons. This site fit the criteria of demonstrating marginal success with at least a 40% passage rate with regard to the developmental education population as set forth by the THECB. Creswell and Poth (2018) confirmed that gatekeepers often provide access to certain groups. Therefore, contacting offices such as student support services, the office of multicultural affairs, or the campus computer lab staff are readily identified contacts that may be utilized in an online format.

Primarily, I employed purposeful sampling, as suggested by Creswell and Poth (2018), which is common for qualitative research for ongoing recruiting efforts to identify participants. The purposeful sampling approach "will intentionally sample a group of people that can best inform the researcher about the research problem under examination" (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 148).

The participants of this study included four first year students who are in good academic standing after at least one course completion of a developmental education course and three campus personnel. The main criteria for selection of potential participants were their status at the community college, in good standing, and they were in forward matriculation in a subsequent developmental education courses or have successfully completed the course sequence. With regard to the campus personnel, the selection criterion was good employment standing with the institution as well as a reasonable employee tenure of more than one year. Moreover, criteria related to campus personnel including teaching the developmental education course or having a familiarity with the subject matter for oversight.

In total, each identified student had successfully completed the first level of the integrated reading and writing portion of the curriculum, based on the assigned course sequence. Each student participant had taken consecutive developmental reading and writing courses prior to moving to the next sequence of courses. The detailed information was verified by either the student advising office or the registrar. The general class size was no more than 25 students due to most institutional standards of teacher to student ratios related to COVID-19 spacing requirements. After receiving approval from the site school, I sent an invitation email to at least two campus faculty members with a two-minute introductory video to invite participants to the study. This email sent to two identified instructors who taught the second level of the

developmental course sequence responded willingly. Additionally, the instructor could also have suggested a one-minute introductory Zoom conference so the study was explained. However, the explanation was not needed due to students' ready acceptance of the original video introduction.

Finally, based on students' successful first level course completion, the students enrolled in two separate sections of the same second level reading and writing course were invited to participate in the study (see Appendix A). The qualifications to participate in the study included, second semester of enrollment in an identified developmental education course, as indicated by successful first level course completion, or completion of the entire course sequence, if applicable. Attributes such as gender, age, race, sex, or economic status of the student did not disqualify from participation. Students that participated in the study were sent an individual email with a link inviting each to the personal interview with the researcher which was audio-recorded, videotaped, and maintained via the platform Webex. For those students who participated in the study, a gift card was provided to them for time and participation in the study. Most reading courses had a capacity set for enrollment within each course at no more than 25 students. However, due to COVID-19 in class spacing requirements, this set of students included no more than a total of eight students in one respective course. The age range of students typically varied between 18 to 55 years old. Within this study, students were perceived as adult learners, and in some cases, may be nontraditional students. According to Keith (2007), nontraditional students can be defined as one having attributes such as being "married, single, divorced, employed full or part-time, or not employed at all" (p. 1125). The participants within the study included, three female students, one male student, two female employees, and one male employee. Table 1 provides the actual participant demographic profile of each.

Table 1

Participant Demographic Profile

Student or Employee	Student/Employee Description	Male or Female
Student A	Non Traditional	Male
Student B	Traditional	Female
Student C	Transfer, Traditional	Female
Student D	Nontraditional	Female
Employee 1	Nontenured	Female
Employee 2	Nontenured	Female
Employee 3	Nontenured	Male

With the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic, faculty in the spring of 2020 were forced to move the entire curriculum online as a result of the deadly world-wide virus. The campus community was challenged to respond in various ways including: distribution of laptops to faculty and staff, expanding campus Wi-Fi access, improving online communication channels related to student services, or providing additional financial assistance opportunities. Additionally, campus administrators had to implement a return to campus plan that would include various safety measures to ensure that students could return to the campus in a safe and efficient manner. The developmental education classroom was no exception. At the research site, the institution promoted the fall 2020 safe learning option to students that included face to face, online, and hybrid options for enrollment. This was an important notation as many students were not willing, able, or may have been skeptical about returning to the classroom or online environment from the previous semester experience. The research site elected to maintain the following protocols to ensure the safety of the campus environment. First, implementing daily health screenings for faculty, staff, students, visitors, and vendors. Secondly, utilizing social

distancing protocols both inside and outside of the classroom. Also, a safe learning email address was created to ensure students could ask questions or express concerns. Lastly, the research site received a higher education emergency relief funds (HEERF) grant, created under the United States (CARES) Act. This funding was created to assist qualifying students with financial and those without qualifying status of financial aid.

Therefore, while the content of the developmental education curriculum has not changed in scope, the methods by which to deliver the content seemingly may have. As an example, within my conversation with participants, they emphasized that in some cases time with faculty outside of class had to be schedule during office hours, via the phone, or limited in person after class due to safety and spacing concerns. Prior to COVID-19, students may have lingered in the classroom for as long as needed. However, that is not the case, as the participants described in today's learning environment. Additionally, scheduled time during the library usage or with on campus or online tutoring options may have increased due to student demand. Future research considerations could explore how students view their experiences as well as the impact on limited after class engagement with the faculty. Moreover, does an increase in online engagement and tutoring cause community college to refocus their efforts toward online tutoring for a variety of subject areas not previously considered.

Sources of Data and Methods of Data Collection

Prior to conducting the study, I obtained approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at the site college, as well as the IRB from Abilene Christian University (see Appendix D). Qualitative data, according to Ivankova (2015), "produce narrative information about individual's experiences, behaviors, and feelings in their natural environment" (p. 200). There were several sources of data that I considered for this study such as: semistructured, individual

interviews, field notes, documents, and artifacts. All data were gathered in an online format to limit on campus exposure due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Multiple sources of data, as noted by Yin (2013), converge the "lines of inquiry" (p. 120). Data triangulation was a necessary attribute for this study. Triangulation allows for the need to "gain confirmation, increase credence in interpretation and demonstrate commonality of an assertion" (Stake, 1995, p. 112). In addition to triangulation, member checking can be an imperative practice to validate research findings. The accuracy of findings is clearly stated or may further suggest "feedback worthy of inclusion" (Stake, 1995, p. 115). Simply put, when seeking out a variety of sources, triangulation provides a mechanism by which to provide supporting evidence for authenticating the accuracy of the study.

Interviews

Originally, I intended to conduct 10 to 12 individual interviews with students for this study. However, based on my sample for this study, four students and three campus employees provided saturation. Semistructured interviews allowed for an in-depth exploration of the participants' lived experiences. Merriam (2007) described semistructured questions to contain a "mix of more and less structured questions" while interacting with participants (p. 73). Additionally, Merriman also described semistructured interviews as a way to "seek out specific information while guided by a list of questions or issues to be explored" (p. 74). Semistructured interviews allowed the researcher to have an open-minded approach while being open to potential new considerations related to the topic being discussed.

To that end, an interview guided protocol (see Appendices B and C) as suggested by Creswell and Poth (2018) was developed to "incorporate open-ended questions and ample space between the questions to write responses to the interviewee's comments" (p. 165). In doing so, I

was able to actively capture responses that could be fully acknowledged within the study. The individual interview guide for students consisted of two demographic questions, followed by a series of interconnected questions to each of the outlined research questions. Additionally, the individual interview guide for campus personnel consisted of one demographic question, followed by a series of interconnected questions to each of the outlined research questions that were similar to the student questions, but from the campus personnel perspective.

Lastly, free-floating conversation was a critical component within this study due to the participants' interaction with me. Moreover, Creswell and Poth (2018) suggested that free floating conversation was a needed component within the case study approach due to the "conversational manner" that remains open, yet focused on "specific questions" (p. 111). The goal of free-floating conversations was for the interviewees to "provide important insights into affairs or actions" as well as keeping lines of communication open (p. 113). Patton (2015) clarified that "previous responses can be revisited and deepened" (p. 437). As the interviewer, I was "free to go where the data and respondents lead" (p. 437). Thus, free floating conversation was needed to establish trust, but also sought out a continual open dialogue in the interest of learning more about the participants and their experiences.

Field Notes

Throughout this study, I intended to keep a journal of field notes. Yin (2013) described the component of field notes as a method by which to "maintain a chain of evidence" (p. 127). Moreover, Yin further clarified the notion of observations when he emphasized studying and gathering valuable data "from people and institutions in their everyday situations" (p. 88). Yin also recommended taking caution when conducting interviews with participants while also catering to their timetables and accessibility. Additionally, Patton (2015) recommended going

into observations as seeing the environment first-hand rather than making unconfirmed assumptions. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, my field notes were journaled observations taken during the interview with participants. I conducted interviews online via the platform of Webex.

Recording and interactions were an ongoing process to maintain throughout the data collection process. The researcher, as communicated by Patton (2015), "can also discover things no one else has really paid attention to" (p. 333). As such, journaling was utilized to holistically make sense of settings, observations, or any written documentation. Lastly, Creswell and Poth (2018) remarked that a memo to self can be enacted and recorded, at the conclusion of each interview, to gauge effective research protocols' in the areas of interpretation and data collection. Therefore, effectively documenting numerous observations, as an intricate part of the data collection process, allowed me to be mindful of my own presence as well as nonintended consequences related to the participants' environment.

Documents and Artifacts

I collected several forms of institutional documents and artifacts during the study. This information may be found either within data reported by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, institutional reports via the institutional effectiveness office, institutional web pages, or requested information from the department chair in developmental education. More specifically, Yin (2013) suggested student test scores, detailed notations from the institutional fact book, or student exit survey data may be collected and reviewed. Additionally, documents or artifacts included "newspapers, school improvement plans or achievement test scores as a measure for the case" (p. 68). Each of the listed documents and artifacts generally would "corroborate evidence from other sources" (p. 107). Each of the identified documents or artifacts provided key information in relation to how the student views and interacts with the

instructor's teaching methods, or particular attributes that allow for a student to become a successful course completer. Gaining access to enrollment reports, completion statistics, the institutional services catalog, or course feedback documents alluded to proportioned correspondence with the research site.

Data Analysis

Coding is a vital process to ensure that the data sets that are being assessed and are grouped in a method to understand and draw conclusions from. Glowacki-Dudka and Griswold (2016) and Ivankova (2015) emphasized the need to develop a strategy by which to make inferences based on the experiences of participants.

Data analysis for this study represented several cycles of coding and identification of themes. Recorded interview data were a consistent method by which to gather participant feedback, while common themes emerged from all data sets. According to Miles et al. (2019), "First cycle coding is a way to initially summarize segments of data" (p. 79). Thus, the open coding method was utilized as the first coding technique to denote common attributes amongst participants. Creswell and Poth (2018) confirmed the necessity of open coding, "as a beginning stage, while calling for the identification within the data for major categories of information" (p. 85).

Additionally, Saldana (2013) emphasized the notion of "being open to all possible theoretical directions indicated by the readings of the data" (p. 100). By electing to synthesize the data down into distinct segments, during the examination process, this method enabled my efforts to identify common similarities and differences within the data sets.

After the first coding pass was completed, Saldana (2013) suggested implementing the data management technique of code mapping to further highlight topical areas within the study.

The second round of coding of participant data, followed the methodology of pattern coding to further identify developing themes. With regard to the second coding pass gathered within the study, Saldana (2013) suggested that the primary goal was to develop categories of organization from the first cycle of coding. The second cycle of coding that was initiated is referred to as the method of pattern coding to further generate interrelated themes. Saldana (2013) suggested that pattern codes describe interrelationships or suggest a major theme.

Miles and Huberman (1994) suggested, and later confirmed by Saldana (2013), that pattern coding is "appropriate for the second cycle of coding, after initial coding, and develops major themes from the data" (p. 210). Pattern coding can also be useful in seeking out "rules, causes and explanations in the data" (p. 210). Lastly, pattern coding was utilized to examine "social networks, patterns of human relationships, and thereby forming the theoretical constructs and processes needed within the study. Thus, pattern coding essentially enabled me to utilize a systematic process to form vivid descriptions from the statements being made. To that end, I was thereby able to "synthesize large amounts of data into a single trope" (p. 212).

All data collected were categorized, stored, and kept in a confidential location. The collection of data will be destroyed after six months. Pseudonyms was provided to each participant and the research site to de-identify and provide additional safety measures for all collected data. Data analysis resulted in identification of meaningful themes, or categories that spoke to the research purposes and questions.

Validation Criteria and Researcher's Self

Having the opportunity to return to the selected research site and conduct a doctoral research study was a fulfilling experience. I am acutely aware that I am bringing all of my past experiences with me in relation to having been a faculty member for a total of one year in

developmental education. I have had the lived experience of once being enrolled at a community college within Texas as a student. Thus, being a student is most certainly a true self-reflective moment and an opportunity to have observed the lived experience of others on their own journey.

As a male and minority campus leader, I often interacted with currently enrolled students that are transferring from community colleges that have recently completed the developmental education curriculum. On particular occasions, Phipps (1998) commented that students may express feelings of inadequacies or the inability to cope with the transition period toward high levels of academic rigor. When students express these particular academic concerns, previous research supported the notion that most educational trends and demographic suggested that remediation will be a validated role for the predictive future.

The participants in this study included a diverse cadre of backgrounds. While reflecting upon my collegiate experience as a minority male student, participants' experiences suggested a similar, welcoming, or indifferent college experience to delve further into. One of the aims within the study was to maintain a delicate balance to ensure that I would not lead participants' responses or convey any notable influence from my values, perceptions, experience or lived reality as a minority male or previous faculty member.

Maintaining a cognizant role of a sole researcher required my thoughts and observations to not inflict any previous experiences or misconceptions on the students with whom I would interact. The stories and moments of reflection did provide an in depth look into the current state of students and their experience with the developmental education curriculum and the faculty that guide their experiences. Creswell and Poth (2018) asserted that research, in relation to case studies, should focus on real life experiences in order for information to not be dissolved due to

the occurrence of time. Understanding my researcher self was an important component to ensure that the focus of my research did not deviate from the lived experience of students.

As participants conveyed their thoughts and feelings toward their own lived experience, I was able to analyze each of their perspectives to make a concrete assessment of their experiences or lack thereof. Field notes served as a vital resource to ensure the participant's comments were accurately documented and accounted for. Additionally, interviews, observations, and artifacts also provided an abundance of information by which to gleam from the lived experience of students and faculty members. Therefore, utilizing a variety of data collection methods, as described above, served as a needed validation step of triangulation. As such, verifying numerous pieces of evidence, from a variety of study participants, enhanced the credibility of this study.

Finally, reflexivity was a vital component of this qualitative study and an additional protection for maintaining the study's credibility. Yin (2013) defined reflexivity as "conversations can lead to a mutual and subtle influence between the researcher and the interviewee … causing an undesirable coloring of the interview material" (p. 112). Creswell and Poth (2018) echoed this definition by saying, "engaging in a self-understanding about the biases, values, and experiences each brings to a study" (p. 229). Therefore, as the researcher, I continually reflected and created an awareness for understanding first and identify my own experience so my thoughts did not cloud my perception while conducting interviews. Keeping reflexive notes was also a vital component of the ongoing research process and will serve the interest topic well.

Stake (1995) suggested that member checking can be an imperative practice, with regard to triangulation, for ongoing observations or interpretations related to the sources of data.

Member checking was utilized as a method by which to validate the exactness of the ongoing analysis and the detailed findings. Creswell (2014) suggested that member checking be employed as a way to "take findings back to participants as a way to measure their feelings related to accuracy" (p. 201). Creswell (2014) also confirmed that "following up with interviewees and providing each with an opportunity to comment on the findings" provides validity for the study (p. 202).

Moreover, triangulation is a necessary procedure, in relation to a case study researcher, to further support one's conclusions based on a variety of divergent sources of information. To that end, Patton (2015) confirmed that "triangulation is ideal and strengthens a study by combining methods" (p. 316). Trustworthiness was instrumental in validating qualitative research findings. Establishing trustworthiness equated to "time spent at the research site, time spent interviewing, as well as building sound relationships with respondents" (p. 685).

Finally, to ensure validity and reliability for this study, Creswell (2014) suggested the deployment of *rich and thick* descriptions. Employing this practice allowed findings to be conveyed in a manner that transports readers to the setting and gives the discussion an element of shared experiences" (p. 202). Creswell (2014) emphasized that "providing detailed descriptions of the setting and offering many perspectives about a theme allows the results to become richer and realistic" (p. 202). Therefore, by employing each of the listed strategies above, each carefully identified step was accounted for as well as enhanced the study for overall accuracy.

Based on the current interview protocol, an expert review was conducted with an individual who had knowledge of the topic to determine if the right questions were being asked of participants. If the questions were found to be unwarranted, I refined the guided protocol prior to the first interview being conducted.

Assumptions

There are a variety of assumptions that should be considered in relation to this study. For example, all first semester students were considered course completers. Secondly, those who are enrolled in the developmental education course did not have a qualifying TSI score or were considered a poor test taker. Thirdly, students in developmental education had a clear indication of a relevant path toward degree attainment. Finally, students in developmental education were generally aware of the programs and services that can assist them to become course completers. I was under the assumption that participants were truthful about their campus experiences. Students may have a difficult time expressing their experiences within the campus environment. Yin (2013) emphasized that the participants should remember what is stated and be willing to share.

Limitations

This study had clear limitations. The study focused only on second semester incoming students, from one select community college within the state of Texas, while beginning their college careers. Secondly, the programs and services offered at this campus may not be offered on all campuses within the state in terms of a comparison. Thirdly, the faculty ratio of student to teacher may not be reflected the same as within other colleges across the state. Moreover, the study does not account for the perspectives of students after they move beyond the developmental education curriculum. Lastly, although this study may uncover perspectives from students not previously considered, they do not reflect the same sentiments of all first semester students. This study begins to fill the gap in literature with relevant information towards the enrolled student perspective. Also, as a previous faculty member in the developmental education reading curriculum, I did not have an opportunity to teach the writing curricular objectives.

The students across the state of Texas who are enrolled in developmental education are generally underprepared in a variety of subject areas. The pathway to an associate degree, within the context at the community college, was much different than those students that start out enrolled in the traditional college curriculum. Students who are enrolled in developmental education maintained an extended timeline for course work, often not covered by financial aid. Lastly, students in developmental education were at a higher risk of attrition than those in the general curriculum. Whiton et al. (2018) emphasized that "students in two- year colleges are at a higher risk of academic failure than students in four-year institutions related to course work" (p. 8). As such, previous teaching experience in the field may offer a limited perspective from over 10 years ago. Students who have successfully completed at least one developmental course at the college, have progressed, and were enrolled in good standing in a subsequent course are the students who offered their unique perspectives in the current study.

Delimitations

The main criteria for selection of potential participants were their status at the selected community college, in good standing, and that they were in forward matriculation in a subsequent developmental education courses or had successfully completed the first course sequence. Attributes such as gender, age, race, sex, or economic status of the student did not disqualify from participation. The students within the study could be first generation, traditional, nontraditional, undocumented, transfer, or an international student. The main criterion for selection of potential participants in terms of campus personnel was good employment status at the college. Moreover, considerations such as being either employed in the division of where the subject matter was taught or having oversight for instructional practices. Attributes such as gender, age, race, sex, or economic status of the employee did not disqualify from participation.

Summary

Chapter 3 contains information about how this study was conducted. Chapter 4 contains the analysis of the data for this study. In Chapter 5, I summarize the study, suggest conclusions, and recommend implications for practice and future studies.

Chapter 4: Data

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore freshman student experiences in developmental education courses that encourage their persistence at one college in the West Texas region. More specifically, this study focused on the programs and services that benefit freshman community college students and their perceptions and personal attributes related to persistence. Within this chapter, I report the findings from interviews with students enrolled in the second semester of fall 2020, as well as the perspectives of campus personnel related to the same research questions.

The participants in this study were four students and three campus employees. The four students identified themselves as either a nontraditional student or a traditional student. Both male and female students were interviewed, as well as having varied backgrounds, majors, and characteristics of having children of their own, pursuing a variety of career paths, or having transferred from another community college within the state. The students interviewed had less than a year of enrollment at the campus and met the specific criterion of being enrolled in the second semester of the developmental course sequence. The students were also co-enrolled in an English composition course as required by the enrollment policies of the campus. Each of the students described their experiences as very similar yet confirmed different educational paths and goals which led them toward enrollment at the community college. The campus employees in the study identified themselves as being in good employment standing with a considerable employment length of nontenure employment status with the institution. Campus employees included two females and one male participant. Each of the campus employees were full time members of the instructional division.

While conducting interviews with students of the same co-curricular enrollment section, the course enrollment size was less than 10 students. Also, the employment tenure at the college ranged from at least two years to over 10 years of service.

Research Question 1

Addressing research question 1, I explored academic support programs and services that encouraged persistence. There were several themes that emerged from the offerings that the campus environment provided to the student. These themes included the learning resource center and continual class assistance from course faculty.

Learning Resource Center

Students emphasized that the learning resource center was a helpful destination when concerns with course work arose. Moreover, the tutors were available at extended hours to provide assistance with course work which was a benefit for working students. The learning resource center was also equipped with online recorded information to provide assistance such as topics on: what is plagiarism, how to locate online periodicals, or how to submit information to the online writing lab. Since the developmental education course is co-listed with an English composition course, these online recordings are vital when students are preparing for course work, during an eight-week period, related to paragraph development. Student B expressed the following, “During regular hours, it was beneficial to me when I started all of this.”

Student B noted, “I have two of my classmates that I talk to on a regular basis and they tell me I am really grateful for the English tutoring services, cause if it were not for them I would not be passing.” The student went on to convey, “But, I think we are grateful to always be given the opportunity, it’s not forced, it’s not mandatory, if you choose not to, it’s on you.” The same student went on to express, “I think the kids really appreciate that it is a consistent opportunity to

take advantage of it.” Figure 1 is a chart that depicts the various offerings noted in the student course syllabus for student utilization. Students can elect to utilize on campus or online resources as a part of their learning endeavors. Figure 1 depicts nine total learning resources from which students can select.

Figure 1

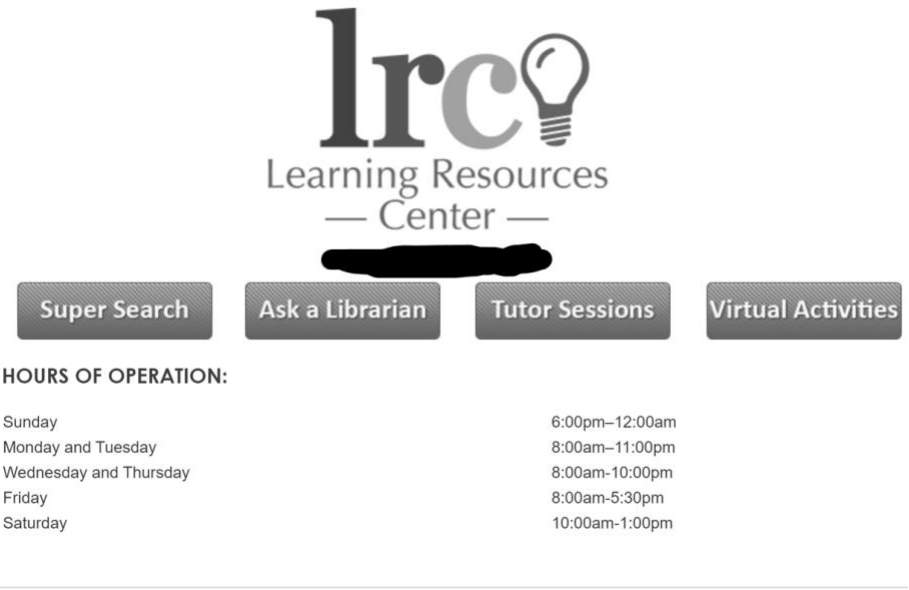
Student Learning Resource Center – Offerings (Image Included in the Course Syllabus)

Equipment/Services Available	Used For	Available
Books, videos, CDs	Research	On Campus and Online
Specialized databases not available online for free	Research	On Campus and Online
Magazines, newspapers, & scholarly journals	Research	On Campus and Online
Computers	Research & word processing	On Campus
Selected textbooks for short-term use	Course work	On Campus
Trained staff	Answer "where do I find?"	On Campus and Online
Tutorials	Tips for research strategies	On Campus and Online
Photocopiers, VHS/DVD players, FAX service	For course work	On Campus
Quiet study areas	For course work	On Campus

Students expressed that the campus library resource center provided availability of various subject area assistance in Math, English, and Science supported the overall development as a student. More specifically, students expressed that assistance with English concepts allows a student to engage in additional practice towards understanding course material. Student C expressed her appreciation for the services being offered by stating the following, “It's great. I'm there all day. Every day until close like, late at night. So, if I have to work late, I come there and I'm like, oh, it's nice to do homework and they can help you.” Figure 2 shows an advertisement online available to students to display time offerings at the learning resource center.

Figure 2

Learning Resources Center – On Campus and Online Operations



Note. Images are blacked out for confidentiality.

As such, engagement with assignments could include writing problems or sentences out, talking through scenarios via white board examples, step by step demonstrations, or extended time spent with other course concerns. Furthermore, since the developmental course work is co-listed with an English composition course, the English tutoring meets an online need for paragraph development which spans various assignments.

Continual Assistance From Course Faculty

Each of the students expressed that continual assistance from the faculty member meant that faculty members cared about their course experience in terms of engaging with them daily, providing accommodations, understanding what being student centered means, calling or responding promptly to emails. The students expressed faculty members cared about their course experiences as well as their education.

Continual assistance from course faculty is an important aspect related to the student teacher interaction. Moreover, students have the ability to feel acknowledged in their ongoing achievement endeavors related to the curriculum. This was specifically conveyed in a comment from Student C when she shared, “Faculty members approached me about my status in the course, or provided ongoing reminders that there is help on the campus.” The student went on to specifically mention the following:

> Although I sit in the back of the classroom, my teacher knows my name and would come up to my desk and confirm that I am actually doing well in the class. Her approach towards me let me know that she cared.

The students also expressed that when faculty members stay beyond the allocated time in class to provide assistance, this portrays that office hours are important, but remaining in the class demonstrates a true concern for their educational experience. Lastly, students conveyed that weekly verbal reminders related to available on campus assistance programs and services allowed them to readily accept more help. Consistent encouragement from faculty was evident. For example, Student C commented that “faculty were considerate and gave me my accommodations; they understand where I'm coming from.” This student continued by saying, “The teachers are not like, hey, you need to just focus. Instead, they were like come back and you can do this.”

Other students made similar comments regarding faculty engagement. For example, one student made it clear that faculty were continually engaged with their students throughout the eight-week semester. Although shorter than a traditional 16-week semester, this particular student expressed that faculty wanted to see “them cross the finish line toward graduation and that faculty truly cared.” Overall, students expressed great appreciation for the faculty concern in

each of their individual goals as noted in the following statement from Student A, who commented, “The only reason you won’t graduate is due to your own procrastination, also, every single teacher that I have spoken to encourages tutoring.”

During the academic semester, students have a variety of options related to tutoring resources at the college that continue to include continual assistance with course faculty. Students enrolled in the developmental course sequence may elect to engage in the English tutoring option since this is a co-enrollment requirement with the second course sequence of developmental education. Other students expressed their own unique experiences as describe by Student B when he mentioned, “COVID-19 has made it a lot harder working one on one and meeting with teachers that you would prefer.” The student went on to say, “Other than that, emails for one on one assistance is how most students proceed when they need help.” Similarly, Student C discussed her appreciation of the college by stating:

> I really feel like this is an awesome college. I feel like people at this college want to be interactive, help you, and make sure they are doing their jobs and they want to see me at the finish line. My teacher says it every single week in class, don’t forget we have tutoring for Developmental English, I know some of you all are struggling, so use this as an opportunity to get ahead. They [the faculty] really push you for the tutoring and I really appreciate that, if they did not push me, I doubt I would ever take it.

Figure 3 gives examples of tutoring options for student engagement with faculty.

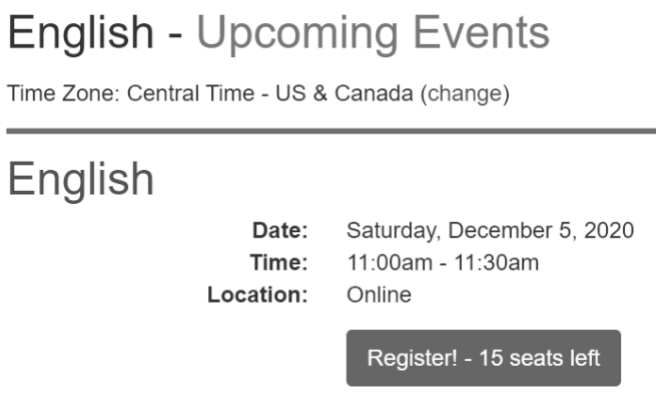
Figure 3

Examples of Tutoring Options for Enrolled Students

Students who elect to engage in a tutoring session with a faculty member or assistant must select an identified time frame as a scheduled appointment time. This is due to spacing requirements in the buildings, related to COVID-19 and the availability of tutors for scheduled hours. Figure 4 denotes an example of a tutoring option for a student to select from on a calendar availability log.

Figure 4

Examples of Tutoring Options for Enrolled Students - Online (Time Block Offering)



Again, to illustrate the appreciation students voiced for their professors, Student D said, "Sometimes I don't think I am smart enough, but I am hanging in there. My teachers are working diligently with me."

Lastly, the employees of the college emphasized the importance of the integration for the supplemental instructor within the actual course itself. The supplemental instructor was described and defined by Employee 3 as "the bridge between the faculty member and the tutor." Generally, the supplemental instructor, similar to a part-time adjunct instructor or personal in class tutor, monitors class activities and also has the flexibility to break out into groups with students. This flexibility allows the instructor to focus on one set of students, while the supplemental instructor focuses on another set. This model of incorporation within the actual class setting as well as the online environment provides the following advantages: in person or online support for the faculty member, one on one engagement with students, group work with the supplemental instructor, or additional after class support for students. For example, Student B described the interaction with the supplemental instructor:

> They do have online tutoring, but I know with my class there is a second teacher and we can go to her online, you can do a Zoom meeting with her as well. This is a work around for going to the library.

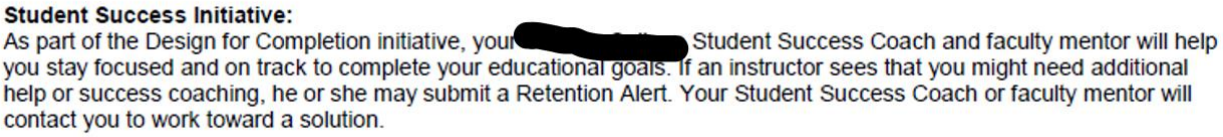
With regard to the theme of continual assistance from course faculty, the attributes described below by Employee 3 conveyed the ideal engagement strategies via continual assistance from course faculty and the methods by which employees can engage with students to meet their needs. Employee 3 described the attributes that prompt the continual assistance opportunities such as:

- “Actually, being in class with the faculty member to provide assistance to a group of in class students, or breaking them up in smaller groups to work with them separately.”
- “Providing assistance online for the other half of the week related to student correspondence.”
- “Providing an online web class, or a specific talk through session with students, if they are uncomfortable or confused. This can be described as a collaborate session.”
- “Meetings with the faculty, weekly, and discussing goals for the week.”
- “Activities for in-class sessions with students half with instructor of record and half with the imbedded supplemental instructor.”
- “Educational reinforcement strategies discussion.”
- “Meeting outside of class once a week with faculty members including email exchanges.”
- “Documentation for learning exercises for one on one sessions with students.”

Employee 3 explained how most of the employees who work hands on with students, subscribe to an engagement model referred to as the drop rate improvement program. This was described from the employee perspective as “working into the entire ethos of the campus environment.” Figure 5 describes the student success initiative at the campus otherwise referred to as the drop rate improvement program. This is taken from the course syllabus. Images are blacked out for confidentially. The drop rate improvement program and the student success initiative terms are synonymous.

Figure 5

Student Success Initiative Statement


Student Success Initiative:
As part of the Design for Completion initiative, your [redacted] Student Success Coach and faculty mentor will help you stay focused and on track to complete your educational goals. If an instructor sees that you might need additional help or success coaching, he or she may submit a Retention Alert. Your Student Success Coach or faculty mentor will contact you to work toward a solution.

The elements in the drop rate improvement program at the college consist of the following as described by Employee 3:

- "First, learning your student's names, so you can address them specifically"
- "Making sure you have a one on one conference quickly with your students early in the semester"
- "If there is an issue, reach out immediately"
- "Be a practitioner of your discipline, as in maintaining rigorous education, and being flexible when needed."

Research Question 2

With research question 2, I explored the social support experiences that students engaged in while enrolled in developmental education. One primary theme emerged as a result of the dialogue with participants which was the availability of multiple social campus engagement opportunities. Thus, all comments indicated that these were all related to social support experiences.

Campus social support experiences provide an opportunity for students to connect with the campus in a meaningful way outside of the classroom experience. Moreover, these social support experiences provide either mental, physical, or communicative connection opportunities

with other students. Student A expressed that in terms of social experiences, students "have consistent reminders related to the availability to participate in various campus activities such as: campus flyers handed out, flyers posted on wall areas of the campus or via the educational learning platform." In addition, Student B noted, "Prior to COVID-19, I would gather with friends at the library or the learning assistance center. But now it is just crazy related to safe distancing." Student C commented, "Since I moved here in August, we get emails about 3 or 4 times a day like a trick or treat event, a harvest party, Bible study groups, places for little kids with single mothers for socialization." The student went on to say:

> At my prior institution, it is nothing like this, you would be lucky to have one event per month. But not here, we have so many options to choose from. It's open and social here, passing out flyers, and I like the environments that are given the option, you give me the option to choose to be involved.

Figure 6 lists information related to the Halloween activities offered by the student activities office. Again, images are blacked out for confidentiality.

Figure 6

Campus Engagement Activity: Halloween Costume Contest

Student D conveyed the following:

> I like the Bible studies and the sports events that are on campus. I have a reminder on the canvas learning platform as a pop-up calendar of activities to participate in. These events pump me up and makes me feel excited about myself. That is what I like about interacting with others on campus. However, with COVID-19 it is really difficult to go back to what it used to be.

The campus personnel offered a unique perspective related to their view of the social support experiences. These perspectives are important as an acknowledgment of how the campus employees view the experiences. For example, Employee 3 commented:

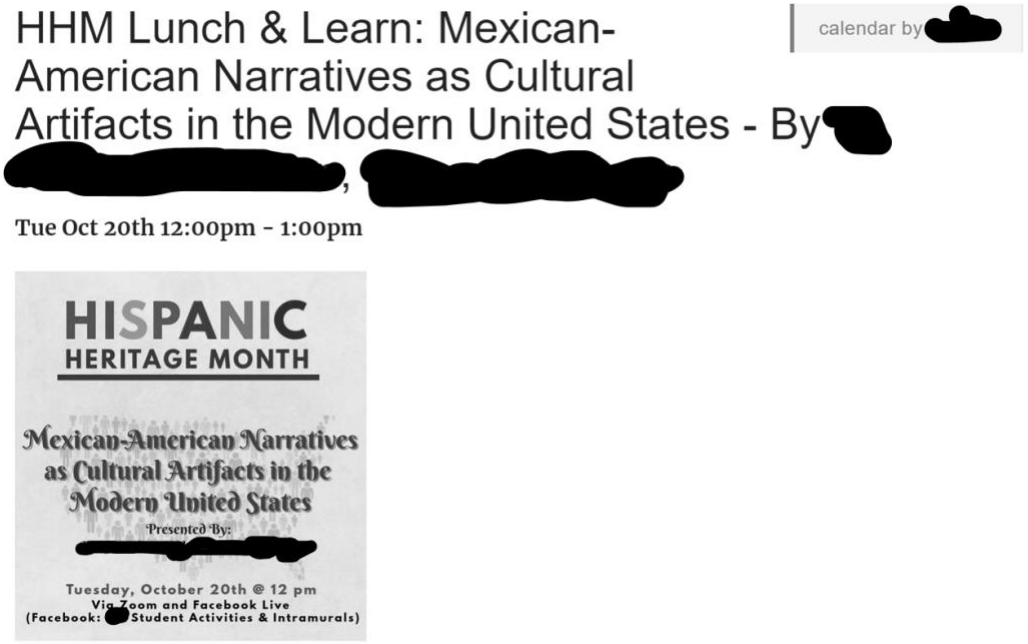
> Pre-COVID there were lots of sports and arts events, community help events, working at the food to kids program. There are also dances, a trick or treat event at the child center on campus, outdoor films, and Mardi Gras parade around campus to include a gumbo

cook-off and fashion shows. We also do lots of cultural programming and lunch and learns activities. One event is a large event around Veterans Day.

Lastly, Employee 3 stated, “Oh yes, I go to a lot of sporting events including the Shakespeare festival that comes to campus.” Figure 7 describes a cultural programming activity with images blacked out for confidentiality Cultural activities allow the opportunity to celebrate heritage events or an openness to teach others about this celebration.

Figure 7

Hispanic Heritage Month Flyer. Via Zoom and Facebook Live



The college has instituted a method by which to engage students via their cellphones. As such students are able to check in to campus events online or in person via their mobile device. This allows students to have a direct connection with the campus and also creates more engagement opportunities due to the frequent use of the mobile device. Figure 8 details how students are to connect with campus events via their mobile device. Images are blacked out for

confidentiality. Students can utilize technology to check into events online or on campus for engagement with campus sponsored events.

Figure 8

Cell Phone Check in to Events

Figures 9, 10, 11, and 12 all depict the types of activities that students can become involved with under any of the following categories: Physical or Communicative. Again, images are blacked out for confidentiality. The images provide a description in terms of allowing students the opportunity to engage either in a public setting or online. Having these options in place supports students having an outlet for social support experiences during the academic year.

Figure 9

Fitness Challenge. Category: Physical

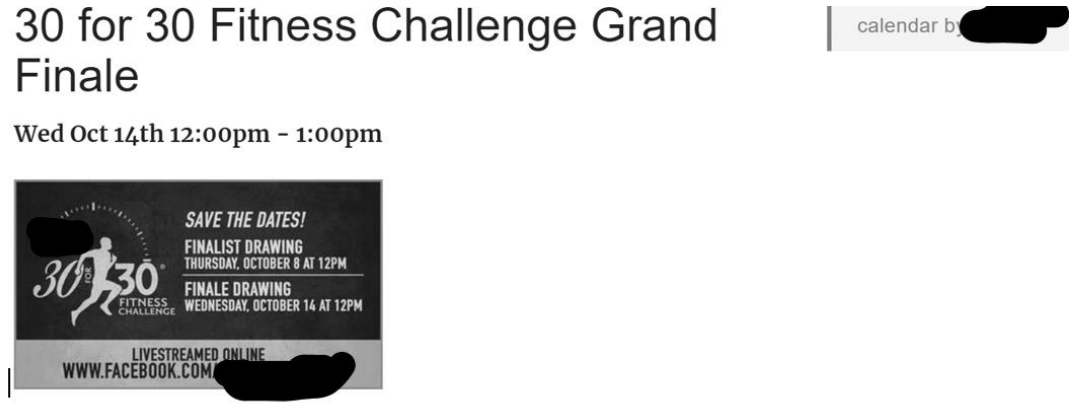


Figure 10

Breast Cancer Awareness Participation. Category: Communicative

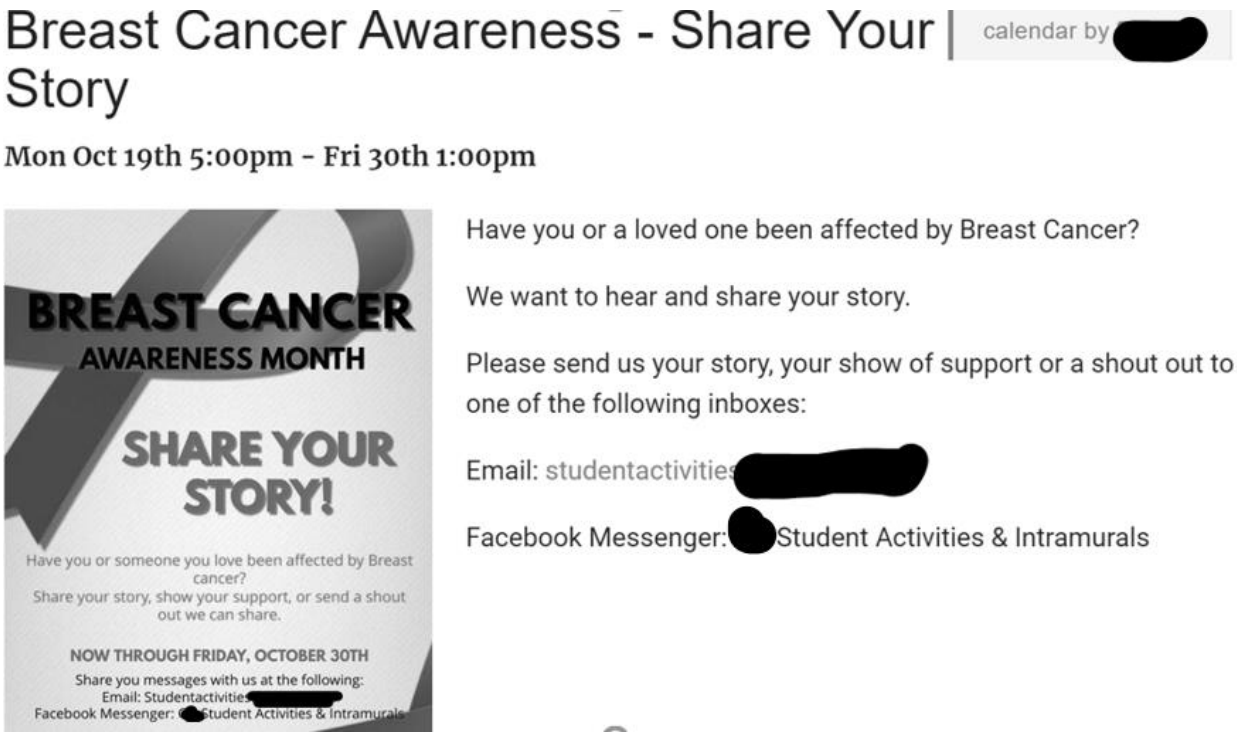


Figure 11

Coping with COVID-19 Panel. Category: Communicative

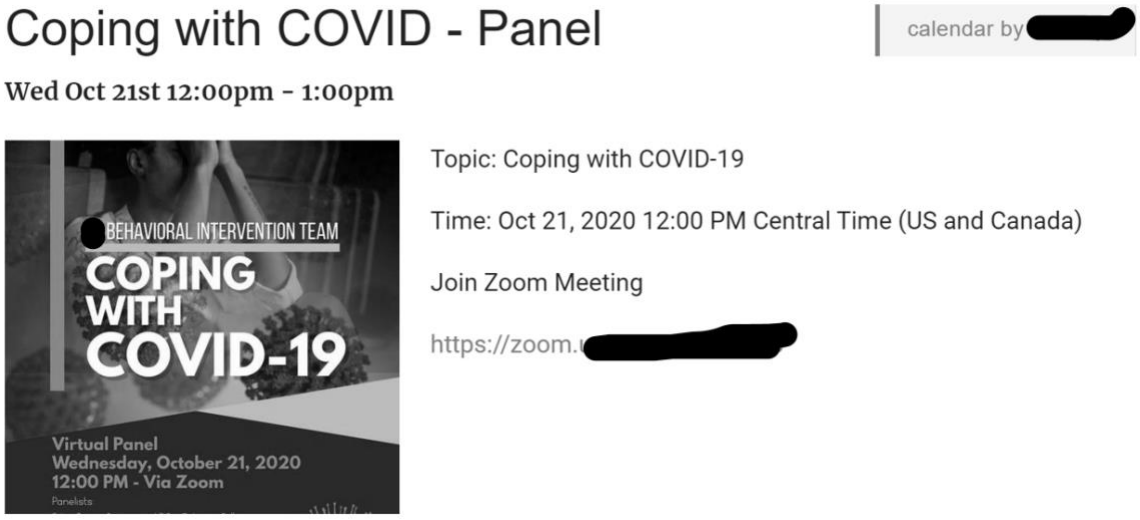
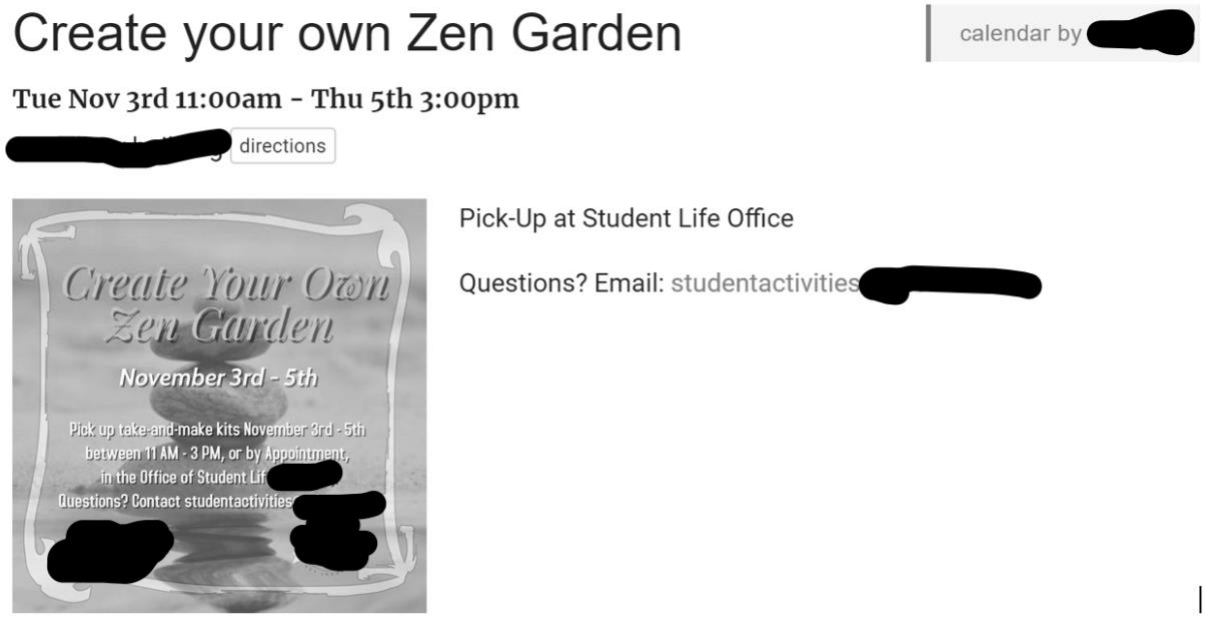


Figure 12

Creating Your Own Zen Garden. Category: Physical



Research Question 3

With research question 3, I explored the personal attributes of these students that allowed them to persist during the first term. Several themes emerged as a result of the dialogue with participants which were: managing academic obstacles, asking questions, being determined, and being organized.

Managing Academic Obstacles

From the interviews that were conducted, students and employees commented on a variety of ways in which students are able to manage academic obstacles during the enrollment term. For example, Employee 3 expressed that students often "reach out via email to the instructor and the tutoring center is right in our building, so we can walk over together." Also, the employee went on to say, "I have found it very interesting that they have managed to create peer study groups or cohorts via text and chat functions on cell phones." Moreover, the same employee expressed that students "would stay in the parking lot to access Wi-Fi when the buildings would close." Thus, overcoming an obstacle and being creative to solve academic dilemmas or obstacles was noted in several instances by the employee.

In contrast, Student D expressed that to manage academic obstacles, "First I will send an email, and after 24 hours, if a response is not provided, I will pick up the phone for further assistance from my faculty member." Similarly, Student B commented:

> When we struggle as a study group, we get together via text and ask each other what is everyone struggling on or who needs help on a certain assignment. This is our way of turning from an in-person study group to an online study group.

Employee 2 stated the following related to her observations:

> They need consistency, if they are not showing up, I need to be on that communication, in that, I need to hear from them regularly. I would label that as a consistent approach towards engagement because sometimes they will say: I thought it was late or my mom was sick, etc., the last thing would be I need to know what their world is like. I do not have all the answers, but they have to own a piece of it as well.

Lastly, Employee 2 commented:

> I think overall they need to know that I care about them, as it depends on the student. So, I am going to show things in a different way for them to understand. It's got to be something that connects to their world related to course material, so if they show up, I am presenting things in a way that relates to them, that is the key for their success.

Asking Questions

One student remarked on how asking questions was a vital strategy for overcoming inadequacies for positive progression. Student D remarked, "If you don't have the answer, ask lots of questions, there is never a wrong question when you are seeking help." As an example, Student D commented, "I pick up the phone and asked my teacher for help, I am drowning here and my faculty member says take a deep breath, I got you." Similarly, Employee 2 also conveyed how important asking questions can be for students. The employee stated, "If a student is unclear about something, clarity has to be there." Furthermore, Student C remarked, "The importance and the willingness to ask for help, because I have had trouble with that in the past." Therefore, asking questions and providing clarity was a resounding comment made by both the employees and the students that were interviewed.

Being Determined

One student commented on the importance of being determined about the progress in their courses and how that impacts the student's vision toward the ultimate goal of graduation. Although students and personnel used varying descriptions in their comments, overall, the essence of their sentiments revolved around the theme of determination. For example, Student C expressed:

> I am determined to apply for graduation and wear that cap and gown, as well as applying for jobs in my chosen field. I am determined, hardworking and focused to see myself helping others, because that is what I dream about and that is what I strive for.

Students and employees were asked to reference the personal attributes that they believed allowed students to persist during the first academic term. There was general agreement that being organized is an important attribute for a student, because for some, this may not come naturally. Moreover, as the adjustment to college is critical while enrolled in the developmental course sequence, being organized assists students to become grounded and focused.

From the students' perspective in relation to academic traits, the top three responses emphasized determination, although they worded it this way: being persistent in one's course work, remaining goal oriented and talking with their instructors regularly to ask questions. Student D expressed the following sentiment, "Without being persistent you would lose yourself and fall behind in your schoolwork. You always must stay on board with what you are doing, if you don't, that is going to bring you down." Moreover, the same student expressed, "If you are struggling, there are some students that are afraid to ask questions, but that is needed with their instructors." A second student confirmed by stating, "They teach you to put things in order, strategies for success, they give you a basis for the knowledge of where you want to go." Student

C continued with the theme of being organized by suggesting the importance of hard work and determination included the need to ask for help and be focused. Student C said, “I am there taking notes, doing everything I can to pass this class and I tend to isolate myself and get into my zone, and being driven.”

The top two responses obtained from the employee’s perspective emphasized determination, although it was often expressed as being motivated to finish as well as having a purpose and a goal for being in college. Employee 3 expressed their sentiments as such:

> First off, I think our students are motivated and goal oriented. For example, once they come here they have got their schedules all lined out for you. We [the college] have it set up so that all the classes you are going to take are outlined, and they have to opt out if they are not coming.

Employee 1 commented, “Students have to understand why they are here and having a vision beyond that first course they are taking.” Employee 2 noted this regarding determination:

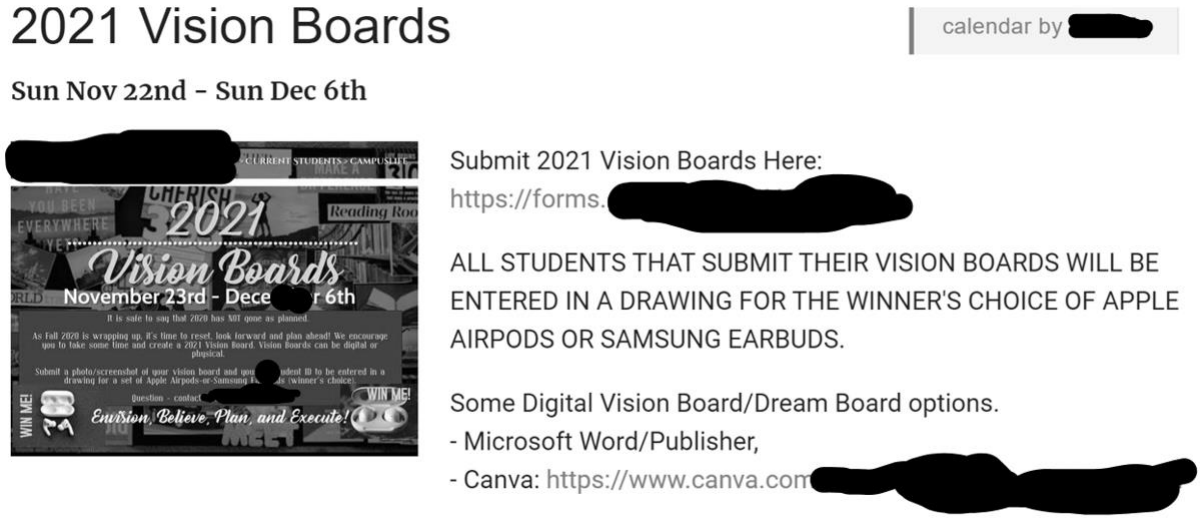
> I think they really need to show up and come to class is the main thing. If they ask questions, that clarity must be there to decipher what is expected of them and transferring that to whatever organizational system they use. Realize that it is a skill set you must use, as you can learn to be a good college student. You can make whatever grade you want; there is a reason students are successful.

Similarly, Employee 1 also talked about determination as the importance of seeing oneself, as a student, and “having a vision beyond that first or second course.” Moreover, the employee also exclaimed that students “having a purpose and knowing why they are there” breeds positive outcomes. The employee went on to convey, “You have to ask the why and the purpose behind your enrollment as in what you see yourself in the future doing.” To that end,

Employee 1 also expressed, “Knowing why you are there and seeing beyond the development education curriculum mentally that helps with persistence, because you will also face challenges, especially in the beginning.” Figure 13 lists an event which supports students to develop a vision board for themselves which helps create determination and build a positive outlook and stated vision goals while enrolled.

Figure 13

Student Vision Board Participation Opportunity



Being Organized

Students and employees were asked to reference the attributes they believed allowed students to persist during the first academic term in relation to course work and study habits. From the students’ perspective, the top three responses included: taking notes, keeping a planner, and adhering to the weekly reminder from instructors, all of which emphasized the need for being organized. Being organized is important for students and ongoing communication to remain diligent and for any misunderstandings to be corrected. Moreover, being organized assists so that, students feel more at ease communicating with faculty members which may thereby

transcend towards ongoing reciprocal classroom habits. For example, Student B expressed the following, “I keep a list of due dates printed, taking lots of notes, and find it helpful to have weekly reminders from my instructor.” From the employee perspective, the following was expressed:

> Being an AVID demonstration site, AVID is a program for helping k-12 students, and it helps students to think about how they learn and how they can become independent learners. So as an example, we teach our students how to grasp onto good note taking skills, engaging in reading strategies, or utilizing strategies for recall related to their learning like to stop periodically during class, and ask what did you catch on to.

Figure 14 below provides a course syllabus example statement related to the attributes of an AVID course designation.

Figure 14

Course Syllabus Example- AVID Statement

AVID
This course has been identified as a course by Arts and Sciences as one in which teaching and learning strategies adopted by AVID will be implemented. As a student, you will be expected to develop an understanding of the strategies, to model the strategies, to maintain fidelity of implementation, and to examine how these strategies may impact your effectiveness as a professional in your chosen area of occupation, either through coursework or practicum experience as outlined by the course instructor.

Participants agreed that a major part of being organized was being able to take notes. Taking good notes in courses allows students the ability to concentrate on specific items related to content and instructor points of emphasis. The students expressed clarity in the quality of good note taking skills and its ongoing importance.

Student B expressed:

> Making time for your work is the most important thing overall. But, I would say staying on top of your reading, I believe this is important not to get behind. Staying persistent is

> important because you don't want to lose yourself. Good note taking, if you are not good at this, you have things everywhere and having communication with your teacher. If you are struggling, you can go to another friend, because I know some are scared to go to their teacher.

Student D emphasized taking notes, but added other components important to being organized. These included: listening closely to the instructor and listening to what you want or how to say it. This student also emphasized the need for repetition "because the more you do it the better you are going to be at it." Being organized for this student also included striving for your goals, believing in yourself, and asking questions.

Research Question 4

With research question 4, I explored the challenges, if any, that these students experience during the first academic term. Two themes emerged as a result of the dialogue with participants such as the development of positive student behaviors and the high school to college adjustment.

Students and employees were asked to reference the challenges they experienced which allowed students to persist during the first academic term. From the students' perspective many described a transition that required a mindset shift, knowing the expectations of college and being realistic about what college was and was not. Moreover, students expressed sentiments about what they were prepared for and were not prepared for in terms of adjustment to those challenges.

Development of Positive Student Behaviors

Students who are underprepared for certain course experiences often may arrive to the college setting with underdeveloped skills. As such, participants described the need to develop positive student behaviors that allowed them to adjust to the challenges during the first academic

term. Moreover, each of the students discussed unique characteristics that allowed them to progress during the academic semester. Two students discussed the appropriate mindset needed as an adjustment to the college environment as a challenge. Figure 15 describes the student expectations within the course as noted within the course syllabus.

Figure 15

Course Syllabus Statement - Student Expectations

Student Course Participation

As a student, I understand that I am responsible for keeping up with the course. To help with this, I will

- identify alternative computer and internet access in case my primary computer crashes or my internet service is unavailable;
- recognize that the college provides free wi-fi and computer labs during regular campus hours to help me with accessing my course; and,
- understand that my instructor does not have to accept my technical issues as a legitimate reason for late or missing work if my equipment or service is unreliable.

As a student, I understand that it is my responsibility to understand course material and requirements and to keep up with the course calendar. While my instructor is available for help and clarification, I will

- seek out help from my instructor and/or from tutors;
- ask questions if I don't understand; and
- access my course several times during the week to keep up with assignments and announcements.

Therefore, it is imperative for students to understand the responsibilities that each must maintain in order to meet the course requirements that are submitted to them. The students expressed their challenges related to the development of positive student behaviors in the following manner. For example, Student A said, "Mindset, if you don't have the right mindset to get through college, it may not work out well for you." He clarified by saying, "not I want, but I need to get this done. That is the mindset that a student should have going into this." He went on to say, "What I believe prepared me was that I needed to eliminate excuses from why I could not do this. Learning how to turn things in and being computer savvy is a big part of learning to acclimate to college." He noted:

> The challenges that I was ready for were the timing related to FAFSA and being able to pay for college, rather than taking a loan. What I was not prepared for was learning to navigate the campus, they should offer a campus tour of where things were located on campus.

Lastly, he stated, “My final thought is, this college helped me believe in myself.”

Student C also noted the importance and challenge of developing a positive mindset. She said, “Mindset, you have to be prepared that school is going to take up a majority of your day. Also, you have to see the big picture of what you see at the end of all of this, like what is your finish line.” Two other students discussed the necessity of positive behaviors such as taking notes as a challenge to overcome and reaching out to faculty members when they needed assistance.

Student B noted another need to develop positive behaviors. She said:

> Be ready for all of the notes you are going to be hit with, things are very time consuming in college, so you have to be ready for that. Also, you have to be ready for the time-consuming nature of college. Also, if you don’t do well when you start out, you have to learn how to pick yourself back up. This is not like high school, you have to be on top of your learning. Being enrolled in a dual credit course prepared me that helped me get the gist of college. What I was not prepared for was the note taking aspect, what I was prepared for was being scared of the expectations of college overall. Lastly there are so many essays to complete, I was not ready for that as well.

Lastly, Employee 3 commented on the need to develop positive behaviors. He said:

> For students, I think being focused on their goals, being willing to try new learning techniques (like AVID), coming to class, as I encourage them if you miss class reach out

quickly, building the relationships as most important, I think the success program makes it a place that people like to be. It is not sterile, and it is not just a place where you take classes and leave, there is a life here.

The course syllabus is a key faculty for understanding how the course will function and how student need to respond during the academic semester. Figure 16 provides a sample of syllabus statement.

Figure 16

Course Syllabus Statement – Expectations for Engagement for Instructor

Expectations for Engagement for Instructor:
As an instructor, I understand the importance of clear, timely communication with my students. In order to maintain sufficient communication, I will

- provide my contact information at the beginning of the syllabus;
- respond to all messages within 24 hours if received Monday through Thursday, and within 48 hours if received Friday through Sunday; and,
- notify students of any extended times that I will be unavailable and provide them with alternative contact information (for me or for my supervisor) in case of during the time I am unavailable.

High School to College Adjustment

Two employees interviewed discussed the high school to college adjustment period. The adjustment from high school to college can be an arduous task for students because the way one student makes the adjustment is not done in the exact same manner as another. More importantly, students may arrive to the college classroom with a variety of concerns, family obligations, or must be employed while going to school which may make the adjustment period more difficult. Lastly, the same classroom study habits or classroom adaptation behaviors that worked in high school, may not evolve as quickly within the college setting. As such, the following comments below were described from each of their perspectives:

Employee 1 stated it this way:

It starts with what they know about your college, via word of mouth and how are they oriented into the institution. Also, the resources that the college has, this is what we have

> to offer to get you to finish. When students register with us, we are starting to have these conversations, as a first-time college student you have your college life coach that will be engaged with you through the first year.

The main concerns that students had in making the transition from high school to college appeared to be was understanding that the professors are available to answer their questions. For example, Employee 1 said:

> [They need to understand] I know who to ask questions to if I need help or get lost. We have to teach students how to ask questions, you get to a certain age and think you should know everything, but that is not the case. We have to teach students it is a safe space to ask questions. As such, the college provides a dedicated time for student to ask various questions about what they should anticipate related to college enrollment and course items.

Figure 17 is a depiction of the advertisement related to new student orientation which is a mechanism and opportunity for students to ask questions while being oriented into the institution properly.

Figure 17

Incoming New Student Orientation

The same employee added:

> The community college is so diverse, so unlike the k-12 setting, the preparedness is not there due to the initial shock of a teacher's constant check in or make up work opportunities as in high school. In college, they need to be prepared as in working on time management, be prepared before class, it is a bit jarring in that first year, thus some fall through the cracks related to cognitive dissonance.

Employee 2 asserted the challenge of the transition from high school to college also. She said:

> There is an ideal readiness and realistic readiness, so you have to learn the skills set to succeed in college. Growth of any kind is painful, because you have to face challenges. You should have a willingness, determination, a resolve to expose yourself no matter what it takes. You have to face triggers, such as criticism in one's writing. They are facing criticism related to their writing, being judged as a person is a trigger to your own confidence, so to expose yourself and really grow by learning a new skill set. It takes a special kind of person to do that. You will grow and your reward will be 100 fold.

This employee concluded by emphasizing that students need to avail themselves of available resources. She urged students, “If the resources are there, you should take them.” This employee then continued the conversation when she mentioned that students should put their phones away when they come to class and “be ready for notes on your paper, have this assignment read prior.” She noted, “I don’t think they always know.” Consequently, she does “constant assessments to see where they are at. They are not always prepared.” She then noted the following:

> We can’t assume they [students] know what they are supposed to do when they arrive to campus. So, we must show and teach them, it’s not a they versus us, you are a person first that is in a situation. I think they will get that sense, of that respect, if there initially.

Summary

In Chapter 4, I have reported the results of the interviews. In Chapter 5, I provide a summary of the study, discuss conclusions, suggest implications for practice, and make recommendations for future research studies.

Chapter 5: Summary, Conclusions, Implications for Practice, and Recommendations

The purpose of this study was to explore freshman student experiences in developmental education courses that encourage their persistence at one college in the West Texas region. Participating students were enrolled within their second semester course work, had various ethnic and demographic backgrounds, and aspired to have thriving educational experiences after the initial completion of the developmental course sequence. According to Xu (2016), students who enroll in developmental education, in some instances, are referred to in a remedial education context. However, students in this particular population at this community college also co-enrolled in an English composition course in hopes to speed up their learning process toward college readiness standards. The co-enrollment process was a requirement set forth by the community college. The students who participated in this study have a range of life experiences which ultimately led each of them to pursue course work at the identified site. The semester of enrollment for students took place in the fall semester of 2020. The students therefore often described their experiences with the campus community both in the context of pre and post COVID-19 experiences. This chapter includes a summary of the study, the conclusions and discussion of the findings, implications for practice, future research considerations, and closing remarks.

Summary of the Study

The summary of the study includes the background of the study, purpose statement and research questions, methodology, and a summary of findings.

Background of the Study

According to the state of Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board's (THECB) 2019 Almanac Public Higher Education (2019), Texas currently ranks number 37 among all states in

terms of educational attainment for the demographic population of 25 to 34 years of age for associate degree of higher education learners (p. 5). Moreover, according to Xu (2016), "due to their lower cost and flexibility, community colleges have increasingly become an entry point to higher education" (p. 496). More specifically, the state of Texas reported in the THECB (2016) that despite various educator's best efforts to educate Texas students, deficiencies remain related to performance outcomes. Xu (2016) clarified that "the impact of developmental education on students who are assigned to the lowest level of the sequence … has been largely left unexplored" (p. 496). Thus, community colleges remain a vital option to educate students within the developmental education curriculum.

Purpose Statement and Research Questions

The purpose of this study was to explore freshman student experiences in developmental education courses that encourage their persistence at one college in the West Texas region. More specifically, this study focused on the programs and services that benefit freshman community college students enrolled in developmental education courses. The following research questions guided this study:

RQ1: What are the academic support programs and services that encouraged persistence during their first academic term?

RQ2: What are the social support experiences that encouraged persistence while enrolled in developmental education?

RQ3: What are the personal attributes of these students that allow them to persist during the first term?

RQ4: What are the challenges, if any, that these students experience during the first academic term?

Methodology

This study was influenced by Tinto's theory of student retention. Tinto's (1993) theory of retention is central to both the student experience and their ability to adapt to the campus environment. Tinto (1975, 1993) suggested that within the academic realm, the student must maintain an ongoing obligation towards individual goals to persist and remain motivated. The two areas of significance found within the academic realm are grade performance and intellectual development. Equally, a student must also exhibit a reasonable level of institutional obligation, this is typically observed via social influences or school events. This study follows case study methodology to examine the student experience. The data were collected by way of personal interviews with students and employees that lasted on average of 45 minutes via the software Webex. The interviews were all located online from one community college in the west Texas region of the state. Participants were invited to be involved with the study by way of a recorded two-minute video sent to two instructors at the identified campus location. Four students and three employees elected to participate in this study. Students were identified as either a traditional, nontraditional or a transfer student. The employees that elected to participate were all part of the instructional division of the community college. Both male and female participants in each identified group were interviewed by way of a created guided protocol. The data were analyzed by two coding methods. The first cycle of coding was done by an open coding process. The second cycle of coding was completed by way of pattern coding to analyze interrelated themes.

Summary of Findings

The following is a summary of the findings in relation to each of the four research questions. With research questions 1, I explored the academic support programs and services that encouraged persistence during their first academic term. The findings included the following:

- The learning resources center
- Continual assistance from course faculty

With research question 2, I explored the social support experiences that encouraged persistence while enrolled in developmental education. The findings included the following:

- The availability of multiple campus engagement opportunities

With research question 3, I explored the personal attributes of these students that allow them to persist during the first term. The findings included the following:

- Managing academic obstacles
- Asking questions
- Being determined
- Being organized

With research question 4, I explored the challenges, if any, that these students experienced during the first academic term. The findings included the following:

- The need to develop positive student behaviors
- The high school to college adjustment

Conclusions and Discussion of the Findings

This case study described the support programs and services, social experiences, personal attributes, and challenges developmental students encounter as they progress during the second term of enrollment. According to Allen et al. (2017), “many Community Colleges have found

that there is a continued need for developmental courses to improve student success" (p. 203). An overall conclusion derived from this research is that this community college has a fundamental framework in place which supports students in their persistence to be successful in college. Moreover, faculty and support mechanisms are drivers to student success as the student experience in developmental education can be fragile in nature. The findings in this research study support the work of Tinto (1975, 1993) related to his Institutional Departure Model which accepts the notion of two consistent factors being present within a student's decision to leave or persist, the social system and the academic system. Similarly, Tinto's (1993) theory of retention was validated and confirmed as central to both the student experience and their ability to adapt to the campus environment. Hawley and Chiang (2017) also confirmed that "developmental education has come to play an increasingly important role as a gatekeeper to long-term success in post-secondary education" (p. 389).

Research Question 1

Using research question 1, I investigated the academic support programs and services that encouraged persistence during their first academic term. One of the main findings was a resource center that is readily available to students and faculty creates an atmosphere of support and signals to students that additional practice towards understanding course material is readily available. More importantly, the placement of information is key for students to gravitate toward this type of assistance, which thereby promotes an atmosphere of ongoing assistance. Cooper et al. (2016) encouraged "each and every person who is a part of the ecosystem … makes every action, task, lecture assignment, each experience an expression of care and emotion" (p. 82). In doing so, academic support is found to be helpful and inviting when learning about academic support resources, which is vital.

Moreover, students conveyed the importance of continual assistance from course faculty as a vital encouragement factor related to persistence during the first term. According to Cain and Hutchings (2015), "Faculty engagement has been recognized as an essential element of successful programs …which underscores faculty central role in ensuring the quality of the education experience in relation to shifting campus culture" (as cited in Kuh et al., 2015, p. 95). Furthermore, Patton et al. (2016) suggested that "educators should provide holistic support by going beyond the call of duty and work genuinely to support students by acknowledging their humanity and fostering strong relationships with them" (p. 263). Similarly, Cooper et al. (2016) conveyed "the ability to personally understand and relate emotionally with the student is what motivated empathetic educators to act and to offer assistance" (p. 82).

The findings in the current study, suggest the conclusion that it is important for community colleges to provide multiple available resources for academic persistence early in the students' attendance. Hiring faculty who are committed to being available to continually engage with students is also a suggested conclusion.

Research Question 2

Research question 2 explored the social support experiences that encouraged persistence while enrolled in developmental education. According to Cooper et al. (2016), the authors conveyed the idea that "student ready colleges embrace the discipline of developing, providing and embedding holistic services to the point that this service orientation becomes part of the campus's very identity" (p. 102). In doing so, seemingly, this current research site encouraged the importance of various engagement opportunities to solidify the student experience while offering unique noncurricular learning opportunities to connect with the campus community.

These opportunities can be in the form of social, mental, or physical which are optimal for a well-rounded and healthy student.

The research findings also showed that students do gravitate toward these experiences as well as encourage others to engage with them. According to Cooper et al. (2016), "student ready colleges cultivate more effective opportunities to support the academic and social needs of their students" (p. 110). Lastly, the ability to connect these experiences to the student's mobile device signals and ongoing engagement attempt as well as leveraging the capability of ever-evolving technology. Based on the findings in the current study, a suggested conclusion is that persistence for developmental students is supported when there are a variety of available offerings to involve students in social activities.

Research Question 3

Research question 3 explored the personal attributes of these students that allow them to persist during the first term. The identified attributes included managing academic obstacles, asking questions, being determined, and being organized. According to Poole (2016), one of the key indicators of college attrition is the "failure to cope with academic demands" (p. 2). This indicator also speaks to the importance of the student's ability to have the necessary attributes, noted above, in order to successfully navigate the classroom demands as well as developing good habits as they maintain positive matriculation. Managing obstacles, asking questions, being determined, and being organized are four key attributes not just for developmental courses, but can be universally applied to any credit or noncredit bearing course. As such, a suggested conclusion is that good habit development in this area is vital for long term student success.

The research findings showed that students who possess these specific skills are better able to acclimate to the curricular outcomes and the overall expectations of the course.

According to Xu (2016), developmental education courses "provide students who enter colleges with weak academic skills, the opportunity to strengthen those skills and bring them up to an adequate level" (p. 496). Based on the findings in the current study, it is important for community colleges to provide ongoing opportunities for students to develop these habits as well as provide constructive conversation related to ensuring that positive personal attributes are encouraged.

Research Question 4

Research question 4 examined the challenges, if any, that these students experience during the first academic term. Two themes were consistent as the development of positive student behaviors and the high school to college adjustment. With regard to the development of positive student behaviors, characteristics such as building a mindset for college, believing in oneself and the adjustment to course expectations were all notable comments. Lavonier (2016) suggested that "developmental courses may help students succeed by increasing student cognitive skills such as inferring, encoding, analyzing and comparing" (p. 525). These skills also would assist to meet course expectations as well.

Moreover, with regard to the high school to college adjustment period, this time period is a critical adjustment phase in the life cycle of a student when balancing new educational endeavors. Williams et al. (2018) commented "since a high percentage of seniors graduate from high school with low reading skills, it is possible that difficulties with basic literacy … impede achievement in college" (p. 4). Moreover, Paulson (2014) exclaimed that "developmental reading courses are typically designed to increase reading proficiency of college students who are underprepared for college level reading" (p. 2). If basic literacy is a main concern during the

transition period, it would seem plausible that an adjustment period to college is thereby validated.

The research findings showed that students need certain fundamental skills in order to be successful while developing positive behaviors as well as a true adjustment period to the community college. Based on the findings in the current study, it is important for community colleges to realize that students will arrive to the campus with not only a myriad of prior skills sets, but also need time to develop into a fully functional college student as suggested by Lavonier (2016). Cooper et al. (2016) complemented the previous statement by mentioning the importance of "knowing who your students are and will be" (p. 80). Therefore, a suggested conclusion regarding challenges is that students in community college developmental education courses are likely to be unprepared due to high school preparation which influences academics as study skills in general.

Implications for Practice

One of the most concerning areas related to developmental education is the time actually involved with the completion of course work. Hawley and Chiang (2017) stated that "community colleges role in developmental education has increased, and adult undergraduates account for a large fraction of developmental education enrollments" (p. 388). As a result, many community colleges have just begun to revise curriculum standards or pair courses that offer a mindful segue towards particular learning objectives. As an example, Saxon (2017) emphasized that "it is apparent that developmental education courses are the first line of support and preparation for many college students" (p. 494).

Furthermore, Hawley and Chiang (2017) confirmed that "adult undergraduates differ from traditional students by the increased need to take developmental education to succeed in

college" (p. 388). Thus, innovative strategies may actually accelerate the actual time towards graduation. However, if the acceleration model is not deemed successful, many students may fall into one of the three identified categories: noncompleters, stop outs, or successful college completers. The goal is always a successful completer that has obtained at least an associate degree while enrolled within the community college setting. According to the Texas Public Higher Education Coordinating Board Almanac (2020), Texas currently ranks fourth in affordability among all states (p. 6). Additionally, according to the Texas Public Higher Education Coordinating Board Almanac (2020), "graduates finish with less debt in community colleges at thirty one percent, compared to 50% at public universities" (p. 11). Lastly, according to the Texas Public Higher Education Coordinating Board Almanac (2020) "transfer rates are an important indicator of post-secondary success since more than 70 percent of all Texas students take at least one college course at a public two-year college" (p. 16).

Despite no national readiness standards between states, the field of developmental education lacks a true unified stance on what actually constitutes college readiness. Texas has taken several steps to ensure that high schools and community colleges actively collaborate for the benefit of future generations. Whiton et al. (2018) suggested "studies indicate that academic preparation in high school is a key influence on post-secondary outcomes" (p. 9). If the dialogue is consistent, the lack of shared knowledge is diminished in preparation of students within the pipeline. Booth et al. (2014) explored various innovative programs as an indication that programs can evolve to service students more meaningfully. Lastly, many non-governmental agencies have generously made concerted efforts to promote achievement for the underprepared student. Despite the community college sole reliance on limited funding mechanisms, noted agencies recognize that students will not meet the challenges of the future if additional

mechanisms of support, outside of the classroom, are not available on a consistent basis. To that end, Texas community colleges districts overall have a major financial impact to the statewide budget. As an example, according to the Texas Comptroller of Public accounts (2020) “it is estimated that Texas community colleges contribute an estimated 9.8 billion to the state economy” (p. 1).

Therefore, based on the findings from this study, it is suggested that community colleges implement the following practices to promote persistence of developmental students:

- Provide various student social experiences that reflect true opportunities for engagement, including a vast learning center with online availability to meet student needs (Goldwasser et al., 2017).
- Provide options for the instructional sessions to maintain a duality of offerings both in-person and online engagement; and a mechanism to involve either a supplemental instructor, assignments for working with tutors, or suggested engagement with the learning assistance center (Williams et al., 2018).
- Have a prescriptive method by which all faculty, staff, employees, or adjuncts engage with their students related to an identified engagement process (Goldwasser et al., 2017).
- Promote programs and services via the learning management system as student’s actually log in for campus updates and activity reminders (Seidman, 2005).
- Continually engage with faculty members is vital to course success (Goldwasser et al., 2017).
- Capitalize on and supporting positive student behaviors that drive course success (Lavonier, 2016).

- Teach students how asking questions could be their key towards course success (Moisey & Hughes, 2008).
- Faculty must encourage and train students to utilize the academic support services that are available to them and ensure that resources are available in a variety of formats (Bailey & Brown, 2016).
- Faculty continue to support their students in a variety of contexts, to ensure that students understand the long-lasting benefits of continual engagement (Moisey & Hughes, 2008).
- Community college leaders must evaluate their offerings to students for consideration of social support experiences. In doing so, the college can put forth appealing and a broad range of programs to support the entire student body as well as supportive engagement from campus employees (Goldwasser et al., 2017).
- Community college leaders should incorporate ongoing professional development among faculty members to better serve the needs of students in this area (Goldwasser et al., 2017).

Future Studies

In this study, I have examined and described the support programs and services, social experiences, personal attributes, and challenges developmental students encounter as the progress during the second term of enrollment. Possible future studies may include a variety of topics that investigate the developmental education student experience. For example, a future study could examine how instructors who set expectations the first week of class impacts course outcomes with considerations for the eight-week course scheduling in Texas. Secondly, another study consideration could investigate the course adaptations that have been made since the onset of COVID-19 and how those changes positively or negatively impact the discipline moving

forward. Thirdly, another study consideration could focus on the impact of embedded course tutors or course strategies that involve defined participation with the campus learning center or other course enhancements for positive course outcomes. Similarly, now that instructors have become accustomed to the hybrid model of offering both in-person and online developmental education courses in a hybrid model, a study could focus on the latest course modules effects over the past three semesters since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. Lastly, additional future studies could include comparisons studies of freshmen student experiences in developmental education that encourage persistence at community colleges in Texas based on SES.

Finally, with 50 community colleges in the state of Texas, an overview of faculty perspectives related to the ongoing concern over the cost of textbooks and the impact of a universal nontextbook approach to reduce any barrier toward course progression. The community college setting seems to be an ideal environment for the developmental curriculum to be housed and thrive within. Moreover, various state legislative sessions will continue to focus on meeting statewide goals as the literature is consistent with examples of how widespread are the developmental education curricular concerns. To that point, Allen et al. (2017), was clear in his suggestion to “examine the impact of developmental course work” (p. 204). Lastly, with college enrollment currently experiencing a decline in enrollments across the state, an in depth look at the number of course offering in developmental education could be considered in relation to meeting the outlined goals of the 60 x 30 initiative. Questions that college administrators may have to address include what is the lowest enrollment for a class to make per section or considering the student demand for on campus enrollment projections.

Closing Remarks

As the field of developmental education continues to put forth various theories, suggested practices, or new findings for consideration, the goal of this study was to seek out validated student perspectives as well as explore meaningful ways to support ongoing practices within the field. Having taught in the field over 10 years ago, most of the literature has evolved. Similarly, many college programs and services are fully developed to advance the mission by which to educate students in the most practical ways. Having witnessed first-hand the learning processes of students enrolled within the first level of developmental education, the goal of this study was to explore more about participants' experiences as well as confirm the best practices that ultimately impact practice. Academic readiness is a widely discussed topic within the community college setting as students often arrive to many campuses underprepared. Thus, campus administrators, faculty, and staff are undeniably seeking new research conducted within the field to support their learners. The state of Texas maintains a total of roughly 50 community colleges within the state. Each campus may function in a multi-campus setting, single site location or, maintain satellite locations in the service area with a goal to serve the community.

If the goal of any academic setting is to educate its students, my goal was to seek out the participants lived experiences and explore which programs and services were described as most conducive to their setting. The voice of the participants should be acknowledged, and in doing so, this study further explores what students find helpful, which may create other avenues to capitalize on. The topic of college readiness provides many areas to explore as well as discovering the many best practices that elevate developmental education students. While no consistent placement policies across the United States exist, many states continue to debate on the actual necessity of developmental education. New research is therefore appropriate to

validate current concerns as well as disseminate new approaches. In many cases, the students that arrive to the classroom are already overwhelmed with an overabundance of concerns about the semester. The community college environment should have in place validated programs and services to offer students so each can thrive within their chosen environment. Without validated best practice programs and services, students are left to only rely on the instruction provided within the classroom. The field of developmental education continues to evolve as new research puts forth new practices, new discoveries, or the curricular outlines within each state call for new implementations. The fundamental process of assisting students to develop new skills will remain unchanged. However, the pedagogy by which the process disseminated is likely to experience various evolutions. The literature is clear that professional development for instructors has been implemented recently; however, the credentials by the faculty to teach these students is lacking. Thus, a dichotomy is ever present, with the levels of those prepared to teach the subject directly to the underprepared within the classroom.

As a researcher, what I hoped to achieve was a well-rounded investigation into the current student experience with respect to the outcomes that best assist students toward completion outcomes. Moreover, understanding first-hand through semistructured interviews, the classroom dynamic of the instructor to student interaction process will assist to determine any current gaps for acknowledgment towards professional practice.

The future remains bright for the field of developmental education as community colleges have an opportunity to make a difference in the lives of students and within the scope of college readiness standards. More specifically, the underprepared student stands to gain the most from a variety of programs and services that decades ago were not available. Ongoing research is

therefore imperative to ensure that awareness to these concerning matters remains at the forefront of best practices within the field.

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Appendix A: Consent Form

You may be eligible to take part in a research study. This form provides important information about that study, including the risks and benefits to you, the potential participant. Please read this form carefully and ask any questions that you may have regarding the procedures, your involvement, and any risks or benefits you may experience. You may also wish to discuss your

Introduction: Abundant Potential: A case study of College readiness among Freshman Community College Students in the West Texas Region

participation with other people, such as a family member.

PURPOSE AND DESCRIPTION:

The purpose of this study is to explore programs, services, and experiences among freshman community college students in the central West Texas region. More specifically, this study focuses on the programs and services that benefit second semester community college students enrolled INRW 375.

If you decide to participate, your participation would involve:

- A one hour interview, held over the internet and recorded
- Reviewing the interview transcript for accuracy
- Answering follow up questions, if needed, for clarification

RISKS & BENEFITS: There are risks to taking part in this research study. Below is a list of the foreseeable risks, including the seriousness of those risks and how likely they are to occur:

1. A participant may be uncomfortable with the interview questions; less likely

2. A participant may get fatigue from the length of questions ; less likely

3. A breach of confidentiality, as a rare occurrence, if all information on a jump drive is stolen; less likely.

There are potential benefits to participating in this study.

To the participants, there may be no direct benefits from participating. However, to science and society, new information may be gained in developmental education .

PRIVACY & CONFIDENTIALITY: Information collected about you will be handled in a confidential manner in accordance with the law. Some identifiable data may have to be shared with individuals outside of the study team, such as members of the ACU Institutional Review Board Aside from these required disclosures, your confidentiality will be protected the use of

Pseudonyms and any information contained on a jump drive or computer will be password protected. Information will be stored at the researcher's home in a locked file cabinet.

CONTACTS: If you have questions about the research study, the Principal Investigator is Brandon A. Hernandez, MLA and may be contacted at XXX-XXX-XXXX, XXXXXX@acu.edu. If you are unable to reach the Principal Investigator or wish to speak to someone other than the Principal Investigator, you may contact Sandra Harris, Ph.D. XXX-XXX-XXXX or XXXXXX@acu.edu If you have concerns about this study, believe you may have been injured because of this study, or have general questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact ACU's Chair of the Institutional Review Board and Executive Director of Research, Megan Roth, Ph.D. Dr. Roth may be reached at

XXX XXX-XXXX
XXXXXXX@acu.edu
320 Hardin Administration Bldg, ACU Box XXXXXX
Abilene, TX 79699

Your participation in this research is entirely voluntary. You may decline to participate or withdraw from the study at any time and for any reason without any penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

There is expected to be a total of 10-12 students that may elect to participate in this study, which may include a limited number of campus personnel.

Consent Signature Section

At the conclusion of the interview, an electronic gift card from the vendor Amazon will be sent to each identified participant in the amount of twenty-five ($25) dollars to the email address provided by the student.

Please sign this form if you voluntarily agree to participate in this study. Sign only after you have read all of the information provided and your questions have been answered to your satisfaction. You should receive a copy of this signed consent form via email. You do not waive any legal rights by signing this form. The mode of transmission for the acceptance of signatures will be done via HelloSign.

Printed Name of Participant	Signature of Participant	Date
Printed Name of Person Obtaining Consent	Signature of Person Obtaining Consent	Date

Appendix B: Individual Interview Guide for Students

Introductory/ Demographic questions:

How and why did you elect to purse your education at a community college?

What in particular made you select this community college for your education?

RQ 1 - What are the academic support programs and services that encouraged their persistence during their first academic term?

a. What programs and services advertised on campus do students readily visit, when assistance with course work is needed? Have you had experience with any of these programs?

b. In what way do faculty actively encourage participation in the program and services on campus? Please explain?

c. Have you been engaged in these programs and/or activities? If yes, then which ones? If not, why not?

d. What do you as a student think currently of the programs and services being offered. Please explain

e. Did you take any readiness tests or exams as an incoming student to the community college campus? Please explain.

f. What did your results indicate about your incoming abilities as a student?

g. Do you think that institutional programs and activities are beneficial for you? Please explain.

h. Describe your experiences, or lack thereof, as you have been engaged with the programs and services on your campus?

i. What do students think currently of the programs and services being offered? Please explain

j. What form of support in programs and services do you look for when those academic obstacles arise?

RQ 2- What are the social support experiences that you have experienced while enrolled in developmental education?

a. What social experiences impacted your experience at this community college?

b. Did you attended any get togethers or campus events that would fall under a social gatherings? Why or why not?

c. Can you provide me with a copy of a paper that was written related to this event? (this could be website information, school paper information, etc.)

RQ 3 - What are the personal attributes of these students that allow them to persist during the first term?

a. What academic traits do you believe you maintain that helped you with your first semester classes?

b. What attributes do you believe allowed you to progress in your course work and study habits during your first term of enrollment?

c. Of the attributes named, what do you believe are to be considered as your top five?

d. How do you manage any academic obstacles as they arise?

RQ- 4 What are the challenges, if any, that these students experience during the first academic term?

a. What do you deem or perceive as being ready for college, as a student?

b. What in particular do you believe prepared you for the community college environment?

c. Describe your first semester experience as an enrolled student?

d. What challenges did you encounter, during your first semester that you were prepared for and not prepared for?

e. Is there anything else you would like to add that I may not have asked you?

Appendix C: Individual Interview Guide for Campus Employees

Introductory/ Demographic questions:

How and why did you elect to purse teaching at a community college?

RQ 1 - What are the academic support programs and services that encouraged their persistence during their first academic term?

a. What programs and services advertised on campus do students readily visit, when assistance with course work is needed? Have you suggested any of these programs?

b. In what way do faculty actively encourage participation in the program and services on campus? Please explain?

c. Do any of your assigned course work involve the programs and services being offered? Please explain

d. Did your students take any readiness tests or exams as an incoming student to the community college campus? Please explain.

e. Describe your experiences, or lack thereof, as you have been engaged with the programs and services on your campus?

f. What form of support in programs and services do you perceive students to look for when academic obstacles arise?

RQ 2 - What are the social support experiences have you witnessed or been a part of while teaching in developmental education or found to be helpful to students?

a. What are the social experiences at this community college in any given semester?

b. Did you attended any get togethers or campus events that would fall under a social gatherings? Why or why not?

c. Can you provide me with a copy of a teaching outline or assignment related to this event? (this could be website information, school paper information, etc.).

RQ 3 - What are the personal attributes of these students that allow them to persist during the first term?

a. What academic traits do you believe assist students first semester classes?

b. What attributes do you believe assist students to progress in their course work and study habits during your first term of enrollment?

c. Of the attributes named, what do you believe are to be considered as the top five?

d. How do students manage academic obstacles as they arise?

RQ 4 - What are the challenges, if any, that these students experience during the first academic term?

a. What do you deem or perceive as being ready for college, as a faculty member?

b. What in particular do you believe prepared most of your students for the community college environment?

c. Describe the first semester experiences as an enrolled student, from the faculty semester?

d. What challenges, during the first semester, were students prepared for and not prepared for?

e. Is there anything else you would like to add that I may not have asked you?

Appendix D: IRB Approval Letters

ABILENE CHRISTIAN UNIVERSITY
Educating Students for Christian Service and Leadership Throughout the World

Office of Research and Sponsored Programs
320 Hardin Administration Building, ACU Box 29103, Abilene, Texas 79699-9103
325-674-2885

September 9, 2020

Brandon A. Hernandez
Department of Graduate and Professional Studies
Abilene Christian University

Dear Brandon,

On behalf of the Institutional Review Board, I am pleased to inform you that your project titled "Abundant Potential: A Case Study of College Readiness Among Freshman Community College Students in the West Texas Region",

was approved by expedited review (Category 6 & 7) on 9/9/2020 (IRB # 20-119). Upon completion of this study, please submit the Inactivation Request Form within 30 days of study completion.

If you wish to make any changes to this study, including but not limited to changes in study personnel, number of participants recruited, changes to the consent form or process, and/or changes in overall methodology, please complete the Study Amendment Request Form.

If any problems develop with the study, including any unanticipated events that may change the risk profile of your study or if there were any unapproved changes in your protocol, please inform the Office of Research and Sponsored Programs and the IRB promptly using the Unanticipated Events/Noncompliance Form.

I wish you well with your work.

Sincerely,

Megan Roth

Megan Roth, Ph.D.
Director of Research and Sponsored Programs

ABILENE CHRISTIAN UNIVERSITY
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Office of Research and Sponsored Programs
320 Hardin Administration Building, ACU Box 29103, Abilene, Texas 79699-9103
325-674-2885

November 12, 2020

Brandon Hernandez
Dept of Graduate and Professional Studies
Abilene Christian University

Dear Brandon,

On behalf of the Institutional Review Board, I am pleased to inform you that the changes you requested on the Study Amendment Form dated 11/5/2020 for the project titled

"Abundant Potential: A Case Study of College Readiness among Freshman Community College Students in the West Texas Region",
(IRB# 20-119) have been approved on 11/12/2020 by expedited review. The changes requested and approved are summarized below:

Minor: Expand the focus of study from enrolled students to also include at least 2 or 3 campus personnel. Interview participants will consist of both enrolled students and a limited number of campus personnel 2 or 3.

If you wish to make any further changes to this study, please complete a new Study Amendment Request Form.

I wish you well with your work.

Sincerely,

Megan Roth

Megan Roth, Ph.D.
Director of Research and Sponsored Programs