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THE PERSISTENCE OF COMMUNITY COLLEGE STUDENTS:

A SINGLE SITE CASE STUDY

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Dissertation

Presented to the Affiliated Faculty of

The College of Graduate and Professional Studies at the University of New England

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of Requirements

For the degree of Doctor of Education

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THE PERSISTENCE OF COMMUNITY COLLEGE STUDENTS:  
A SINGLE SITE CASE STUDY

ABSTRACT

Only 22% of all students who enroll in community colleges complete an associate degree within three years, and only 16% of students at urban community colleges earn a degree in the same time frame. Community college administrators recognize that a majority of their student population desires to earn a degree, but many lack the knowledge, skills, and support to complete college. The purpose of this single site qualitative case study was to understand how community college students perceive wraparound services and how these services impact students' persistence. Deil-Amen (2011) was used as the theoretical underpinning for this study. The setting was a community college in the Midwest. Twelve interview questions and three instruments were used in this study. The instruments included a demographic questionnaire, a semi-structured interview, and a personal artifact form. The population was defined as eight ( $N = 8$ ) second year community college students. The sample mean age was 21 ( $M = 21$ ) and 50% of the sample were male ( $n = 4$ ) and 50% were female ( $n = 4$ ). Using NVivo 12 Pro, 50 nodes were found, nine overarching themes were expressed, and eight findings were noted. These findings included:

- tutoring is essential,
- motivation is not inherent and must be fostered,
- coaching can promote persistence,
- overcoming social and academic barriers promotes the motivation to stay on track,

- life assistance helps grow financial stability,
- resources and services help students achieve stability,
- professor support encourages participation in social and academic activities and maintains confidence, and
- use of wraparound services is need driven and helps student persistence.

Findings from this study provide recommendations for students, which included:

- use wraparound services often and as needed,
- learn transformative leadership skills to overcome social and academic barriers,
- take advantage of life assistance for food and shelter to avoid insecurities in these areas, and
- learn to utilize professors' support when offered and when needed.

Key words: community college, Deil-Amen Theoretical Framework, social and academic barriers, students, wraparound services

University of New England

Doctor of Education  
Educational Leadership

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## DEDICATION

To my late father, Green Blanchard, you always knew the right things to say with love and without judgment.

To my wife, Tamara Rose, you are the “Wind Beneath My Wings.”



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## **CHAPTER 1**

### **INTRODUCTION**

According to the United States Department of Education (2008), only 22% of all students who enroll in community colleges complete an associate degree within three years, and only 16% of students at urban community colleges earn a degree in the same time frame. This rate rises to 35% after five years; however, 45% of these degree-seekers drop out and do not graduate (Dynarski, 2016). Community college administrators recognize that a majority of their student population desires to earn a degree, but many lack the knowledge, skills, and support to complete college. For example, only 68% of students enroll in a 2-year or 4-year course program in post-secondary institutions upon completing their high school studies (ACT, 2013).

Very few community college students graduate and the completion rate of those who enroll in 2-year institutions was found to be only 30% (ACT, 2013). This low graduation rate is related to college readiness of the learner prior to enrollment (ACT, 2013). Thus, community college faculty and administrators agree that addressing the problems of academically unprepared students and the developmental programs intended to help those students need to be essential components of any framework for understanding and improving community college persistence (Bailey & Alfonso, 2005).

Castleman and Goodman (2008) found that community colleges that provide wraparound services such as mental health counseling and social service programs to their students have the potential to improve postsecondary outcomes. Furthermore, community college wraparound support programs help college students to access existing resources. In addition, this support helps students complete important administrative and financial aid requirements. Moreover,



these services can also address transportation issues, as well as lack of childcare, all of which influence student outcomes.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Although *community* is linked to the term *community college* owing to the locations of the institutions, these colleges are not necessarily indelibly intertwined with the communities they serve (Deil-Amen, 2011). Regardless of the reason, community college graduation rates vary by college (Bailey, Calcagno, Jenkins, Leinbach, & Kienzl, in press). Wraparound service programs address subtle barriers, such as a lack of funds necessary to navigate college (Castleman & Page, 2016; Castleman, Page, & Schooley, 2014). According to *Community College X* (CCX, 2014), the problem within their satellite colleges is their lack of control over external factors (i.e., academically unprepared students, lack of family support, lack of financial support, and student maturity). This lack of control contributes to the high dropout rate. According to Dadgar, Venezia, Nodine, & Bracco (2013), these community colleges must develop expertise on the issue of college persistence. A foremost problem facing many community colleges is how to promote success with the students already enrolled (Dadgar et al., 2013). There is evidence that suggests that colleges differ in their effectiveness in helping college students graduate on time (Dadgar et al., 2013). This evidence may be due in part to the prevailing external factors stated above. Community colleges should control college-related problems as well as community-related problems though they may not succeed at controlling them both simultaneously (Dadgar et al., 2013).

Community colleges have long attempted to address persistence by adjusting and correcting the institutional systems that might create barriers to graduation, such as a student's ability to become socially or academically integrated, a process also known as the *warming up*

process. These factors are (a) students who make a commitment to college or who gain self-confidence that they belong in college, (b) college faculty who give support to improve student confidence, and (c) college faculty who are influential in encouraging students. According to Deil-Amen (2011), preparing students for academic success and persistence is triggered in students as a result of an institutional factor or structure more than by cognitive or affective variables. Deil-Amen (2011) suggested that community colleges might invest time, funds, and training toward ensuring that their support systems actually contribute to increasing student persistence.

### **Purpose of the Study**

There is a dearth of literature regarding how students and postsecondary institutions use and augment wraparound services to improve persistence and graduation (Hossler, 2006; Tinto, 2006). According to Tinto (2006), educational institutions might create informed methods of improving persistence in order to achieve greater persistence. Educational institutions might have a better understanding of the student-institution interaction as well as external factors (i.e., academically unprepared students, lack of family support, lack of financial support, and student maturity) from which student persistence is created. The purpose of this study is to understand how community college students perceive wraparound services and how these services impact students' persistence. Currently, only 8% of students from CCX graduate within two years, and the focus of community college administrators and faculty should be on the challenges of at-risk students who often struggle at the beginning of their community college career because of unpreparedness. While there is extensive research on the determinants of educational outcomes for K–12 education, and there is a growing body of literature on this topic for baccalaureate

institutions, few researchers have attempted to address the issue for community colleges (Hanushek, 2003).

Nationwide, community colleges, including CCX, continue to search for strategies to better support their students and improve student success rates (Gallagher, 2010; Karp, 2013). However, many community colleges are ill-equipped to deal with the range of non-academic barriers to college completion and persistence that student populations face (Gallagher, 2010; Karp, 2013). Advising departments are often under-resourced and instead focus on academic concerns (Gallagher, 2010; Karp, 2013). Community colleges need wraparound services to address institutional and community support services that are often dispersed, making it very difficult for students to access the extensive assortment of options (Dadgar, Venezia, Nodine, & Bracco, 2013; Karp, O’Gara, & Hughes, 2008). The purpose of this inquiry is to examine community college students’ experiences with wraparound services and how these affect their integration and assimilation into the college, while identifying the challenges and barriers that the students perceive as obstacles to success.

### **Research Questions**

The intent of this study was to examine the perceived effect of community college wraparound resource center services to augment the persistence of second year community college students in order to achieve academic success. The following questions provided the foundation for this study:

- RQ1: How do second year community college students understand the role of the college wraparound services in their academic success?

RQ2: How do existing mechanisms and modalities used by community college wraparound services impact academic and social integration of community college students?

### **Rationale and Significance**

According to the Indiana Commission for Higher Education (2012), community colleges were created to be a gateway to a career or entrance to 4-year colleges. However, with continued low graduation rates, community colleges have received the reputation of being institutions of very low achievers (Indiana Commission for Higher Education, 2012). Community colleges should address the fact that most students attend classes and study while working, while caring for dependents, and also while juggling personal, academic, and financial challenges. One strategy is to implement wraparound services so community colleges can help students plan their coursework around their other commitments and help students develop skills to manage the demands on their time (Dynarski, 2016). The rationale of this study was to investigate whether having access to non-academic wraparound services and alternative sources of financial support could provide strategies to improve student success in community colleges. These wraparound services allow students to benefit from a specialized department that assesses student needs. They also direct students to available resources, assist with application processes, and bring needed services to campus.

### **Definition of Terms**

**Persistence:** *Persistence* refers to second year students who have enrolled consecutively in a fall and spring semester and are in their second year of community college, culminating in the student continuing toward a defined educational goal such as earning an associate's or bachelor's degree (National Center for Education Statistic, 1997).

**Cohort:** A *cohort* is a specific group, such as first-time and degree-seeking undergraduate students enrolling at an institution in a given fall enrollment period (National Center for Education Statistics, 1997).

**Graduation:** For the purpose of this study, *graduation* was defined as completing the degree program and receiving a diploma. However, it should be noted that administrators and faculty must give consideration to the fact that students who attend a 2-year community college do so as part-time students. Additionally, many community college students are not first-time students. Many have enrolled, dropped out, and re-enrolled. None of the aforementioned students would be counted toward the community college graduation rate. Many community colleges and their organizations lobby the department of education to change how graduation rates are measured so that they will reflect more fairly on 2-year colleges.

**On-Time Graduation:** On-Time graduation is calculated by the time published multiplied by 150%.

**Retention Rate:** The *retention rate* is the percentage of a given cohort that enrolled at the institution the following fall after initial enrollment (High School Academic Curriculum and the Persistence Path through College, 2001).

**Academic Integration:** Two dimensions exist when defining *academic integration*. From a structural dimension, academic integration adheres to explicit standards set by the institution. In the normative dimension, students integrate by identifying with a prescribed or standard structure of the academic system (Tinto, 1975).

**Social Integration:** *Social integration* occurs when students interact with peers, faculty, staff, and administration, achieving levels of engagement and congruency with the social systems of an institution (Tinto, 1975).

**Learning Community:** The *learning community* consists of students, faculty, and administrators.

**Wraparound Services:** *Wraparound services* consist of a resource center staff within a community college campus for the purpose of providing solutions to academic and non-academic barriers for community college students.

### **Conceptual Framework**

According to Weaver-Hightower (2014), a conceptual framework illustrates how a study is theorized and presented. The conceptual framework is composed of three elements. The first is the personal interest that drives a researcher to conduct a study. The next is the topical research, which is the empirical literature search focused on the subject of the study. Finally, the theoretical framework is part of the study's conceptual framework, and the theoretical framework contains the specific theories that illuminate the phenomenon under review. The conceptual model guiding this current study is Deil-Amen's Conceptual Model on Persistence (2011).

Deil-Amen's Conceptual Model on Persistence (2011) was used to guide the major premises of this study. Deil-Amen (2011) designed a Conceptual Model on Persistence for 4-year university students and 2-year community college students, based on the early work of Tinto (1993). According to Deil-Amen (2011), her work has a theoretical underpinning that uses social and academic integration. Deil-Amen (2011) theorized that Tinto's theory (1993), despite its origin, left room for an examination of a student's institutional experience. Tinto (1993) built on the classic work of Durkheim (1951).

A conceptual cornerstone of Tinto's theory (1993) is a subjective sense of belonging. Building on this theorization, Deil-Amen (2011) contended that students choose to persist when

they perceive intellectual and social congruence. Where Deil-Amen (2011) diverges from Tinto (1993) is the theoretical assumption that academic and social integration meet and fuse.

According to the theoretical underpinnings for Deil-Amen's work, academic and social integration do not necessarily have to meet or fuse. One can supersede the other (Deil-Amen, personal communication, 2017). Thus, further theoretical underpinnings include (a) access to services, (b) use of services, (c) a sense of belonging, and (d) commitment.

Extrapolating further from Deil-Amen's (2011) Conceptual Model on Persistence, key constructs/concepts germane to persistence was included in the interviewing tool to extrapolate how students view persistence. Key concepts included:

- use of wraparound services,
- using wraparound services for on-time graduation,
- using wraparound services to create a sense of well-being (belonging), and
- a sense of commitment.

The four key constructs guided the development of the research design, research questions, and the instrumentation. Deil-Amen's (2011) socio-academic integration concept suggested that students persist in higher education when institutional interventions such as wraparound services and resource centers influenced their experiences, both inside and outside of the classroom, creating a sense of belonging and positive self-identification as a successful college student.

### **Assumptions**

A primary assumption in this study was that the wraparound services center would assist students to recognize and experience these services as helpful. It is also an assumption that wraparound services would be able to work collaboratively with the government, institutions, and community organizations to increase access to public benefits and other support resources,

so community college students will have the support needed to overcome barriers to success in college. Lastly, there is an assumption that students perceive wraparound services as important to their success and that these services could improve their persistence.

### **Limitations and Scope**

All qualitative studies have given limitations. For example, Bailey and Alfonzo (2005) noted that one limitation in their study was the fact that a majority of the research inspired by various models had consisted of single institution studies. Consequently, these models did not allow an analysis of the influence of differences in institutional characteristics. Similarly, findings from this study will not be able to conclude or draw causal factors indicating that wraparound services caused the outcomes because the methodology used in this study does not allow this type of causal inference. Furthermore, the findings from this study only explain the perceptions of student experiences at this single case study location.

### **Conclusion**

In Chapter 1, the introduction discussed national data indicating low community college persistence and the use of wraparound services to assist students to overcome challenges to course completion. The chapter described Deil-Amen's (2011) Conceptual Model on Persistence selected to guide the study and used to investigate perceived student persistence experiences with wraparound services. Finally, the chapter concluded by identifying the rationale, significance, limitations, scope, and assumptions for the single case study proposal.

In Chapter 2, the literature is reviewed. Chapter 2 also evaluates the research and examines why many community college students fail to persist to completion in higher education. Finally, the literature review identified an emerging segment of the literature that describes institutional programs and practices that appear to be linked to success in supporting



retention of community college students. This literature reviewed makes recommendations for community colleges on how to improve persistence, retention, and completion of community college students.

In Chapter 3, the researcher describes the methods that were chosen for the study. These methods include data sampling, data collection, and data analysis. Chapter 4 describes each participant and the sample group interview sessions with a full description of the interview data collected. Finally, Chapter 5 addresses the research questions, described data to offer suggested conclusions, identifies the limitations of the study, and concludes by making recommendations for future research, improved practice, and implications for educational policy.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

The national persistence rate for community college students is 50%, suggesting that community colleges lose half of their students during the first year of enrollment (National Student Clearinghouse Research Center, 2017). To better understand the community college experience as well as the barriers (both academic and non-academic) that students experience in their quest for degree attainment, this literature review will address and discuss distinct areas of prior research on the persistence of community college students. These areas include (a) understanding persistence, (b) why students persist, (c) response to academic and non-academic barriers, and (d) using Deil-Amen's model, how successful students persist. This literature review examines whether implementing community college wraparound service resources may increase student persistence.

The first section details the trends on understanding persistence. Further exploration on the research of the departure of community college students will be evaluated in this section. Finally, contemporary research on the factors that led to students' failure to persist will be reviewed. The second section deals with rationale: why it is that some students persist.

The third section will provide an examination on response to academic and non-academic barriers. Finally, the fourth section details academic research on how successful students persist using Deil-Amen's model (2011). The use of this model demonstrates the importance of community college systems and structures. Both community college systems and structures act as triggers for aspiration-dampening agents. However, when students are exposed to effective institutional systems such as tutoring, advising, mentoring, or occupational programming (typical

wraparound services), student aspiration is actually warmed up (heightened) to create the conditions for increased student persistence (Deil-Amen, 2011).

### **Understanding Persistence**

Defining the meaning of persistence and identifying the factors that influence persistence in order to increase success among students are central to this type of research, according to Deil-Amen (2011) and Tinto (1993). Tinto's (1987) research on student departure provided a construct of demographic variables, student behaviors, and institutional factors to explain the various processes of student persistence toward the college degree. Tinto (1993) noted that an individual's departure from an institution occurred from a longitudinal process of interactions. Institutional departure can occur when an individual encounters difficulty with skills, financial resources, prior educational experiences, intentions, and commitments. These factors impact how students navigate academic and social system barriers of the institution. The student's positive experiences in those systems, as designated by intellectual, academic, and social integration, influenced intentions and commitments by reinforcing persistence toward the goal of college completion (Cabrera, Castaneda, Nora, & Hengstler, 1992). In contrast, negative experiences weakened intentions and commitments, specifically commitments to the institution, and thus enhanced the likelihood of leaving (Cabrera, Castaneda, Nora, & Hengstler, 1992). While negative experiences weaken a student's intention and commitment to an institution, such experiences might arise for a number of other reasons. One of these reasons might include unpreparedness.

### **Unpreparedness of Students**

Community college faculty and administrators agree that recognizing the problems of academically unprepared students and providing developmental programs intended to help those

students need to be essential components of any framework for understanding and improving community college persistence or retention (Bailey & Alfonso, 2005). Ender and Wilkie (2000) suggested that unprepared students may “have a negative self-concept with respect to the academic environment; it is important that advisors provide the unprepared student with positive and encouraging feedback when appropriate” (p. 135). Furthermore, unprepared students are likely to exhibit any number of characteristics such as low academic self-concept, impractical grade and career expectations, unclear career objectives, extrinsic motivation, external locus of control, low self-efficacy, insufficient study skills for college success, and a belief that learning is memorizing and a result of passive learning (Ender & Wilkie, 2000). Wraparound services can provide support to assist students to achieve academically through graduation (Grant-Vallone, Reid, Umali, & Pohert, 2004; Grillo & Leist, 2013).

### **Effect of Remediation on Persistence**

According to Wiehe (2010), colleges spend millions of dollars to educate incoming freshmen to succeed in college-level courses. Approximately 1.4 billion dollars annually is allocated to remedial education (Wiehe, 2010). Wiehe’s (2010) analysis found that more than 2.3 billion dollars were expended on students who left community college before being prepared to succeed in college level courses. Wiehe (2010) further suggested that community colleges must provide support for unprepared students in order to increase student persistence.

The purpose of remedial education is to cultivate in each learner the skills and attitudes necessary for the achievement of academic, career, and life goals (Guerin & Denti, 1999). Guerin and Denti (1999) suggested that students who test into higher-level courses in lieu of remedial courses were more likely not to take advantage of the resources available to raise their student success. This is due to the students’ lack of basic

knowledge of post-secondary education and other challenges that these students experience during their transition from secondary education. Furthermore, poor academic performance is a clear indication of students who are at risk. Remedial courses are readily available to students who cannot achieve a successful score to take higher-level courses (Guerin & Denti, 1999). Another element for at-risk students appears to be in contrast with the general theoretical advice that a holistic approach to the success for these students' continuous encouragement is to augment success and prevent dropout (Tinto, 1993).

Bailey and Alfonso (2005) noted that it is arduous to identify a causal relationship between remedial education and subsequent educational achievement. According to Tinto (2016), 12 years of poor education cannot be corrected in a summer program or a one-hour credit course on study habits. Moreover, poorly educated students cannot be remediated by open admissions. Identifying variables that might have a positive impact on persistence may be of value to students, faculty, and administrators.

### **Lack of Family Support**

According to Bryan and Simmons (2009), a first-generation college student is defined as a student whose parent(s) or legal guardian(s) have not completed a bachelor's degree. First-generation college students (FGCS) are those who are the first in their families to attend college. A more robust definition of FGCS includes those persons whose parents generally have no formal education beyond high school. Gibbons and Borders (2010) conducted a study on middle school students whose parents did not receive formal higher education, referring to them as prospective first-generation college students (PFGCS). Their study focused on PFGCS and their imminent transition into college. These researchers examined differences in college-going

expectations in 227 seventh-grade students. Analysis of the data suggested that there was a difference in college expectations between PFGCS and their non-PFGCS counterparts. Further analysis suggested that PFGCS demonstrated lower self-efficacy, higher negative outcome expectations, and had more perceived barriers (Gibbon & Borders, 2010).

First-generation college students display many unique characteristics that distinguish them from their peers. For instance, students who are the first in their families to attend college usually begin their academic endeavor with a limited understanding of higher education (McMurray & Sorrells, 2009). Compared to their peers, they are often unprepared for the transition into a college lifestyle, and the freedoms that accompany college life (McMurray & Sorrells, 2009). Unlike some of their peers whose parents attended college, PFGCS generally cannot rely on their parents for guidance. Generally, PFGCS also cannot turn to their parents for advice about choosing a college or university, financial aid concerns, or anxieties they may have about becoming a college student. In addition to minimal parental involvement, these students have additional pull factors, or pre-college characteristics. These pull factors include high school social experiences and academic achievement (McMurray & Sorrells, 2009). These factors are sometimes viewed as exerting pulling away or drawing in forces that affect students' academic and social behaviors in college (McMurray & Sorrells, 2009). For example, non-academic challenges such as having to work, attending to family obligations, addressing financial issues, and teen pregnancies are pull factors that can interfere with students' academic achievement (Crisp, Nora, & Taggart, 2009).

### **Academic Dismissal and Voluntary Withdrawal**

Tinto's (1993) Model of Institutional Departure categorized student departures as taking two forms: academic dismissal and voluntary withdrawal. However, only 15% to 25% of

institutional departures come as a result of academic failure. The remaining 75% to 85% come as a result of voluntary withdrawal. Tinto's (1993) departure theory further suggested that individuals entered institutions of higher education with a range of differing family and community backgrounds (such as social status and/or parental education). These differing backgrounds also include a variety of personal attributes (such as gender and/or race), skills (including social and/or intellectual skills), financial resources, dispositions (including motivations and/or political affiliations), and various types of pre-college educational experiences and achievements. These characteristics are filtered through the students' commitment to the institution and their personal goal to graduate. Each attribute is posited as having a direct impact upon departure from college (Tinto, 1993).

Tinto (1993) identified three major causes of student departure. These causes included academic difficulties, the inability of individuals to resolve their educational and occupational goals, and their failure to become or remain incorporated in the intellectual and social life of the institution. Tinto's Model of Institutional Departure noted that to persist, students needed integration into formal (academic performance) and informal (faculty/staff interactions) academic systems. Furthermore, Tinto's theory suggests that students also needed integration into formal (extracurricular activities) and informal (peer-group interactions) social systems (1993).

### **Personal Commitments**

Students often come to college with at least one of two types of personal commitments. Institutional commitment is one type of personal commitment. By definition, institutional commitment is the degree to which students are aligned with the college in which they are enrolled (Mangold, Bean, Adams, Schwab, & Lynch, 2003; Padget & Reid, 2003). When a

student is displeased with their institution of enrollment, drop out becomes more common (Mangold, Bean, Adams, Schwab, & Lynch, 2003; Padget & Reid, 2003). Many researchers have found that institutional involvement is a predictor of persistence for students (Mangold, Bean, Adams, Schwab, & Lynch, 2003; Padget & Reid, 2003). In contrast to institutional engagement is commitment to a degree. Degree attainment, by definition, is the value a student places on obtaining a degree (Cofer & Somers, 2000). According to Davidson (2009), it is paramount to distinguish between institutional commitment and degree commitment. For example, a student may value the opportunity to earn a degree, but be dissatisfied with the college where the degree is earned (Davidson, 2009). In this sense, according to Cofer and Somers (2000), students with a high degree commitment are more likely to persist than students who value a college degree less.

Other reasons exist for a lack of personal commitment. For example, the typical community college student is more likely to have external pressures and responsibilities (Cohen & Brawer, 2003). The typical community college student is older (average age, 29) than traditional students (18–24), and frequently females outnumber males. Furthermore, typical community college students are more likely to be academically underprepared, are responsible for their own finances, and have delayed starting their postsecondary career. A great number of community college students are the first in their families to attend college. Therefore, they are less likely to have the same support systems and resources as peers whose parents have also been through the college process (Cohen & Brawer, 2003).

Historically, individuals attending 2-year educational institutions are more likely to withdraw from college and are less likely to persist to completion than individuals attending 4-year institutions (Hoachlander, Sikora, & Horn, 2003). For some students, the completion of a



postsecondary degree was never their original goal. For more than 30 years, postsecondary institutions have studied attrition and its association with numerous variables (Leppel, 2005). For instance, Leppel (2005) examined the relationship between valuing financial gains and continuing at the same academic institution. Findings from this study suggested that students who highly valued financial prosperity were less likely to continue at the same institution from their first to their second year of college and were more likely to drop out of college than students who valued financial gain differently. Further findings from this study also suggested that students who considered financial success as important to their accomplishments often discounted future benefits at a higher rate than other students. Leppel (2005) found that many students who highly valued financial prosperity selected ill-fitting majors and dropped out of college. To prevent dropouts, according to Kramer et al. (1989), faculty advising is critical to the reality of retaining students and increasing persistence.

### **Academic Advising and Mentoring**

Academic advising can provide the connection between the college and the student, especially during the critical first year. Kramer et al. (1989) indicated that academic advising could reduce alienation and enhance learning. If advisors are available and well informed, they can contribute to a student's sense of belonging to the campus community. Quality advising supports student learning and promotes student involvement in the institution, both of which are germane to the persistence of students.

Mentoring is another form of faculty interaction. Johnson (1989) noted that mentoring encompasses the entire personality of an individual in order to advise, counsel, and provide them with guidance. Mentors fill many roles, such as friend, advisor, activities coordinator, or personal counselor. Their roles differ from student to student. Mentors may lecture in a classroom or teach

one-on-one. Data indicated that mentoring ranges from peer mentoring in secondary education to student to professor tutoring in graduate education in doctoral programs (Queen, 1994; Wilde & Schau, 1991). The mentoring relationship itself can take on various activities (e.g., advising, counseling, instructing, guiding, or explaining). However, this form of faculty interaction is valuable and critical to student persistence.

According to Horn and Neville (2006), research has mostly focused on 4-year institutions. In contrast to earlier findings, Horn and Neville (2006) found that only 31% of community college students attended school full-time (compared to 63% of 4-year institution students). After thorough analysis of their data, Horn and Neville (2006) noted that among students who worked, 41% of community college students did so full-time (compared to 23% of 4-year college students). Given the unique challenges faced by community college students, the need for researchers to examine the relationship between advising and retention for community college students' persistence exists.

Tutoring and coaching are other forms of mentoring. Researchers have explored the relevance of tutoring to persistence (Barkley, 2017; Bean, & Eaton, 2002; Bergman, Gross, Berry, & Shuck, 2014; Bettinger & Baker, 2011; Rheinheimer, Grace-Odeleye, Francois, & Kusorgbor, 2010; Shipp Meeks, 2009). Other researchers adding to the body of literature include Brooms and Davis (2017), Brown and Posner (2015), and Caruthers and Fox (2015).

### **Financial Resources**

Financial aid is a major factor in the deficiency of student persistence. Saint John, Cabrera, Nora, and Asker (2000) indicated that national studies showed that finance-related factors (student aid, tuition, living expenses) accounted for about half of the total variance in the student persistence process. According to Merriam, Caffarella, and Baumgartner (2012), a lack

of financial resources is the most cited reason for nonparticipation in adult education, including higher education. Tinto (1993) noted that the effect of finances on student attrition could be indirect and long-term as well as short-term. Family finances impact persistence through their influence on educational goals. Finances also affect decisions on whether to attend college, the type of education to pursue, and where one elects to attend college. Financial worries can cause students to enter institutions that are ill suited for them and that could increase the likelihood of departure prior to degree completion. For instance, a person may choose to attend an inexpensive 2-year college rather than seek the 4-year degree they desire. They might choose to attend a lower stature institution because of lack of resources. With family resources, or a lack thereof, many students must work part- or full-time just to meet their expenses.

Valentine (1997) found that 33.4% of adults identified cost as a barrier for job-related education, while 25.4% reported cost as a barrier to non-work-related education. While students operate on a small budget, any unforeseen family event (i.e., illness of a parent or marriage of a child) can cause them to withdraw from college. The federal government has shifted from offering grants and scholarships to providing student loans. Many students are unwilling to take on debt without the promise of a high paying job (Valentine, 1999). The problem of awarding monetary assistance has shifted to states to provide financial assistance for economically challenged individuals. However, this money is reserved for full-time students (Caruthers & Fox, 2015; Christie, Teff, Cree, Hounsell, & McCune, 2008; Corrin, Sepanik, Rosen, & Shane, 2016; Valentine, 1999). Therefore, older, part-time students are often left without the appropriate amount of aid to attend college. Other forms of financial barriers include life assistance which includes housing, food, and utilities. For example, Hallett and Freas (2017) conducted a qualitative study using life histories to determine how students experiencing homelessness

succeeded in community college. These researchers (Hallett & Freas, 2017) found that students who were homeless described a life filled with instabilities. Other insecurities include food. Food insecurities have been described throughout the literature (Cady, 2014; United States Department of Agriculture, 2013; Gaines, Robb, Knol, & Sickler, 2014; Patton-Lopez, Lopez-Cervillos, Cancel-Tirado, & Vazquez, 2014).

### **Non-Traditional Students**

Over the past few decades, universities have experienced significant changes to their operating environments and greater student diversity. The success of the open access (equality of access based on ability) university system has come to the forefront as a measure of achievement for many universities (Longden, 2006; Wiggers & Arnold, 2011). More women are attending universities as well as students that span multiple generations. In fact, today more students represent lower socioeconomic groups and ethnic minorities than in the past (Deutsch & Schmertz, 2011; Moran, 2010).

Non-traditional students are indicating that they have less satisfaction with their academic experiences. They are not finding the classroom enjoyable or the material intellectually stimulating or challenging, leading to concern by faculty and administrators. Rising expectations regarding student achievement and clarifying those expectations provide a roadmap for achievement because learning is connected to student retention and student persistence (Tinto, 2000). In general, non-traditional students need more assistance than their traditional counterparts to persist (Keith, 2007; Liao, Cuttita Ferdenzi, & Edlin, 2012; Liao, Edlin, & Ferdenzi, 5q2014; Littlepage & Hepworth, 2016; Markle, 2015; Tinto, 2000).

## **Why Do Students Persist?**

Before developing solutions to increase persistence in community college students, understanding how and why students persist is germane. There are two decisive factors related to student persistence. These are academic preparation and a student's ability to pay for college (Labov, 2012; Woodard, Mallory, & DeLuca, 2001).

Tinto (1987) believed that persistence is a function that exists within the parameters of a student's motivation and academic ability and the institutional response to those parameters. The greater the institutional commitment to retaining the student, the more likely it is that the student will persist and graduate. Tinto (1993) also noted that financial considerations (aid for tuition, books, and housing) must be taken into account when addressing factors related to student persistence.

### **Statistical Updates on Why Students Persist**

According to the National Student Clearinghouse Research Center (2017), among students who started college in fall 2015 at 2-year public institutions, the persistence rate was 62.7%, unchanged from the prior year, and up 1.7% in comparison to the fall 2009 cohort. The persistence rate was 70.2% for those who entered community college on a full-time basis, compared to 56.9% for those who entered college on a part-time basis. Of all of the students who started community college in fall 2015, 49.1% returned to the same institution in Fall 2016 (National Student Clearinghouse Research Center, 2017).

National persistence statistical data has led many community colleges to develop academic and student services programs that are designed to improve the probability of success for their academically challenged students. The form and function of these services and programs vary by community college. However, the fundamental theme of these programs or services is to

include some type of college orientation curriculum equipping students with a “roadmap” for how to seek out services to help them with their coursework (Illich et al., 2004; Wibrowski, Matthews, & Kitsantas, 2017; Woods, & Williams, 2013; Zeidenberg et al., 2007). In addition, the success curriculum embeds counseling and advising services along with life and study skills components. These services are geared toward assisting students with test-taking, time management, financial planning, and personal advising to help eliminate barriers to success (Illich et al., 2004; Zeidenberg et al., 2007).

### **Student Maturity**

Kasworm (2005) found that maturity was a strong factor in student success at community colleges, regardless of class, race, or gender. Adult students in the study expressed an increase in self-efficacy and security in their identities as they progressed through their courses. The development of classroom engagement led students to expand their judgments of appropriate social norms, academic performance, and a positive student image. As adult students further understood their own identity, they also recognized the opportunity for meaningful experiences (Kasworm, 2005). As students discover their abilities, identity, and self-efficacy, confidence and competence are linked, both directly and indirectly (Chemers, Hu, & Garcia, 2001).

Kasworm (2003) observed that the needs and goals of adult students were different from their younger colleagues’ needs. The author further postulated that adult students viewed the world and their futures dissimilarly. Furthermore, this research suggests that adult students were not only older, but these students demonstrated maturity and developmental complexity acquired through life responsibilities.

## **Faculty-Student Relationships**

The scholarly evidence supporting faculty-student contact outside the classroom is plentiful and the positive outcomes with which this contact is associated are numerous. Umbach and Wawrzynski (2005) found that if faculty members employed collaborative teaching and learning methods, students were likely to have higher levels of engagement. Umbach and Wawrzynski (2005) also found that if faculty members respected students and challenged them academically, students were more likely to have higher learning outcomes. Similar to these researchers, Strauss and Volkwein (2004) found that student experiences included classroom involvement, faculty-student interaction, and intellectual-growth participation. Further findings suggested that student friendships, social involvement, and academic growth were connected to student commitment. Kasworm (2003) further noted that faculty availability and advisement needed to be a priority of program efforts. Nitecki (2011) also noted that faculty availability and faculty advisements were important. The programs Nitecki (2011) studied were structured to emphasize professionalism, responsibility, faculty advising, one-on-one mentoring, and supportive student-peer-group components.

Kuh (2004) noted that interaction with faculty, either in or outside the traditional learning environment, appeared to have a positive influence on student development and persistence. The more that faculty discuss career plans, class assignments, and do research with students, the more likely students will persist. Pascarella and Terenzini (2005) found that the nature and frequency of contact with faculty was meaningful, so it is not simply contact with faculty that matters but purposeful contact that has a goal and is significant to students (Cotton & Wilson, 2006; Gerhardt, 2016; Peaslee, 2017).

### **Time Management, Prioritization, and Stress**

Experience and capabilities in decision-making and problem solving may enhance confidence and may contribute to reduced stress for community college students, both with improved time management and student-parent responsibilities. MacCann, Fogarty, and Roberts (2012) noted that full-time students set priorities for time efficiency more readily than part-time students. These researchers also found that the limited time available to full-time students generally influenced their commitments to accomplish top priorities in areas of work, school, and family responsibilities.

Kirby, Biever, Martinez, and Gomez (2004) found that adult students needed information about how to reduce stress while attempting to balance college, work, and home responsibilities. Kirby, Biever, Martinez, and Gomez (2004) also found that some of the students believed that the resulting pressure and anxiety from work and home responsibilities were not worth their efforts. Consequently, stress affected their persistence and endurance to continue.

Dill and Henley (1998) utilized a 9-point Likert-type scale, the Adolescent Perceived Events Scale (APES), to measure stress. They found that time and role demands were sources of anxiety and tension and they also discovered that many non-traditional students did not have the time to devote to friends and peers because of other commitments. In contrast, traditional students reported more vacations, trips, and summer breaks than non-traditional students.

Deutsch and Schmentz (2011) discovered a common sentiment from participants regarding the characteristic of time in relation to child responsibilities, household chores, class obligations, and studies. A study participant stated, as an exemplar:



On Tuesdays I'm here from 9:00 in the morning until 9:00 at night and my poor child is at school; and then he's with me for a while and then he goes off with somebody else for my night class. (p. 492)

This study illustrated the importance of student persistence and their aptitude for time management and priorities.

### **Stress**

Pierceall and Keim (2007) studied mechanisms that students utilize to cope with stress while attending community college. Their study identified stress relievers, including talking to family and friends, relaxing, and exercising. Ironically, these stress relievers take time, which, in turn, may add an element of stress related to time management.

Crane, Schuster, Fusar-Poli, and Gonzalez (2013), as well as Stavro, Pelletier, and Potvin (2013), similarly found that increased learning occurs when stress is lowered. However, these researchers also found a consideration that relates to the use of cannabis, alcohol, and other drugs. These substances were found to have a negative effect on learning, attention, and retrieval. Students use drugs and alcohol to reduce stress. However, by slowing neurotransmission, drugs and alcohol serve as non-motivators, making them harmful and ineffective coping mechanisms for stress reduction.

### **Student-Parents**

Data from numerous research studies indicated that an important factor impacting persistence among community college students was the ability to balance academic and parental responsibilities. Taniguchi and Kaufman (2005) found that the characteristics of full-time student status were minimal part-time work, positive interactions with instructors, and a supportive family environment. All of these factors contributed to successful completion. In addition,

Taniguchi and Kaufman (2005) found that childcare issues (i.e., babysitting, affordable childcare) related to time limitations adversely affected completion unless childcare was distributed among caregivers or student-parents were assisted with balancing their academic and parental duties. Student-parents who shared childcare with others experienced value in the variety of good role models for their children and these arrangements often enhanced the psychological well-being of both the child and the student-parent (Taniguchi & Kaufman, 2005).

Gerrard and Roberts (2006) found that financial hardship accompanied female student-parents already committed to loans and grants. These student-parents incurred expenses with their children beyond the expenses of traditional or married students. Gerrard and Roberts (2006) pointed to the frustration and stress that occurred with these families due to limited food choices as a result of fewer financial resources. Adult women often operated from a disadvantage and yet they still tackled the economic and family demands, viewing these challenges as worth the return for the expected long-term payoffs, including personal growth and satisfaction (Deutsch & Schmertz, 2011).

Oden (2011) found that external factors were more substantial forces for persistence than social integration on college campuses for underserved students. In addition, their persistence was improved by support from family and by self-determination. Student-parents that received financial support and prioritization of needs, and who possessed the values of ambition, openness, and communication were found to be persistent (Goldrick-Rab & Sorensen, 2010). These factors indicated that community colleges must develop support systems specifically to address the challenges facing student-parents to promote persistence for this group.

### **Response to Academic and Non-Academic Barriers**

For more than five decades, community colleges have attempted to address academic and non-academic barriers to student persistence. These colleges did so by developing effective first-year programs that enhanced the persistence of first-year students. Such programs were intended to encourage student involvement in campus life. Noel-Levitz (1990) noted that when students successfully completed the first year, this success augmented the likelihood that they would persist.

Very little research exists on student persistence and how postsecondary institutions organize themselves to improve student persistence and graduation, as Tinto (2006) and Hossler (2006) have indicated. According to Hossler (2006), educational institutions need to create informed methods for improving persistence. Hossler (2006) further suggested that a better understanding of the student-institution interaction is required to achieve greater student persistence.

Community colleges have attempted to address persistence by adjusting and correcting institutional systems that may create barriers to graduation, such as a student's ability to become socially integrated (or warmed up). Deil-Amen's (2011) study of three community colleges found that there are three distinct aspects to the warming up process. These are students making a strong commitment and being confident that they belong in college, college faculty providing support to improve student confidence, and faculty encouraging students to pursue further education. These aspects are added to the overall premise claimed by Deil-Amen (2006) that warming up is triggered in students as a result of institutional factors or structures more so than cognitive or affective variables. Community colleges need to invest time, funds, and training toward ensuring that their support systems actually contribute to increasing student persistence.

Today a great number of online courses are offered. Some researchers (Coates et al., 2004; Krieg & Henson, 2015; Xu & Jaggar, 2013) concluded that online courses might actually decrease student persistence.

In issuing a report on academic barriers on African-American girls' high school and college completion rates, the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund (2014) noted that one-third of African-American girls were more likely to not persist to graduation from college (NAACP, 2014) compared to their white peers. Taniguchi and Kauffman (2005) also found that college grade point average had a small negative effect on degree completion for men but not for women. Taniguchi and Kauffman (2005) further found that academic factors did not significantly affect college completion. Students also perceive that culture and race/ethnicity can also impede how they seek and receive help to overcoming academic barriers (Donovan, 2002; Giger, 2016). Other researchers have found that academic barriers should be removed to assist students to persist to graduation (Doty, 2014; Dulabaum, 2016; Fong, Acee, & Weinstein, 2016).

Academic factors that may impact students' persistence to graduation are also inconsistent in the body of research. Some researchers have found positive relationships between grade point average and persistence to graduation (Swenson Goguen, Hester, & Nordstrom, 2011), while other researchers found no relationship between grade point average and persistence to graduation (Bergman, Gross, Berry, & Shuck, 2014). Types of enrollment (full or part-time) have been found to have a positive relationship on persistence (Deutsch & Schmertz, 2011; Marandet & Wainwright, 2010).

### **Online Courses**

Community college policies concerning online courses must take into account the potential for losses in educational outcomes. Coates et al. (2004) noted that students who took

online courses saw worse learning outcomes and were less likely to persist in the field or to graduation than if they had selected the face-to-face version of the same course. Online courses also had negative effects on test scores, follow-up grades, and the probability of completing the course (Coates et al., 2004; Krieg & Henson, 2015; Xu & Jaggar, 2013).

Given that completion rates are already a matter of concern at community colleges (Allcott, 2015), it might be troubling to administrators of community colleges that one of the largest recent changes in the way that community colleges operate (i.e., the addition of online courses), is likely to have a negative effect on completion rates. Data from some research studies suggest that caution should be used when implementing online courses (Allcott, 2015). Furthermore, implementation should be considered on a course-by-course basis and empirical results on efficacy considered. In addition, administrators should consider whether student selection might have negative results (Allcott, 2015).

### **Support for Non-Traditional Students**

The enrollment of non-traditional students in community colleges has increased steadily since 1980 as displaced workers, underprepared adults, reverse-transfer students, and others see this option as more affordable than a 4-year program (Friedel & Wilson, 2015; Matus-Grossman & Gooden, 2002; Mullin, 2012). As a result, there are several types of support provided to aid non-traditional student persistence. Findings from research studies on community college student-parents suggest that community colleges need to increase the availability of affordable on-site childcare (Peterson, 2016). Peterson (2016) concluded that the national trend to reduce community college childcare needed to be reversed by establishing learning communities that adopt the structures, schedules, and leadership that students need. Peterson (2016) also noted that further effort to achieve this goal might also include organizing information networks to discuss

common issues: stress, time management, parenting-while-studying strategies, community resources, childcare and child-enrichment activities, and professional preparation for new careers (Peterson, 2016).

Keeping students on track and motivating students is important for persistence to graduation (Martin, Galentino, & Townsend, 2014). For example, Brooms and Davis (2017) found that the social networks and micro-communities enhanced and supported black male persistence in college (Brooms & Davis, 2017). Creating venues and formats with workshops, breakout groups, and speakers, emphasizing using time restrictions compatible with busy student-parents' schedules might be compatible with students' needs (Peterson, 2016).

### **Policy and Support Systems**

Deil-Amen's (2011) socio-academic integration concept suggested that students persist in higher education when institutional factors influence their experiences both inside and outside the classroom (social integration). According to Deil-Amen (2011), social integration creates a sense of belonging and positive self-identification as a successful college student. Community colleges might consider auditing policies and practices to ensure that institutional practices are not negatively impacting student persistence (Deil-Amen, 2011).

To improve persistence, Schlossberg, Lynch, and Chickering (1989) suggested that educators might consider the implementation of policies that educate college personnel to policies that create barriers and improve policies to help students persist. Reichle, Backes, and Dette-Hagenmeyer (2012) illustrated several practices that are in effect on many community college campuses. For example, Montana Community College's learning research study found that evidence exists that colleges are selecting positive support system needs (Reichle, Backes, & Dette-Hagenmeyer, 2012). Counselors are having conversations with student-parents, reflecting

the importance of stability in the home and family. Students need to find time for focused study and for their children. This underscores the need for policies and systems to adapt to student needs (Reichle, Backes, & Dette-Hagenmeyer, 2012).

### **Use of Wraparound Programs to Improve Persistence**

Two ongoing studies by the City University of New York (CUNY) (Dynarski & Oster, 2016) and the RAND Corporation (Dynarski, 2016) suggest that student persistence may be improved by providing wraparound services to community college students who may need assistance to address academic and non-academic barriers. Analysis of the data from the CUNY study suggests that an increasing number of students attend classes and study while working, caring for dependents, and balancing personal, academic, and financial challenges. Colleges can support students by helping to plan their coursework around their other commitments and support student skill development to help them manage their time (Dynarski, & Oster, 2016). Community colleges, which enroll nearly 40% of undergraduates nationally, have very low graduation rates (Dynarski & Oster, 2016). Only 20% of full-time community college students who seek a degree manage to graduate within three years (Dynarski & Oster, 2016). This rate increases to 35% after five years. By six years, however, 45% of degree-seekers have given up and dropped out of college (Dynarski & Oster, 2016). Further findings from the CUNY study (Dynarski & Oster, 2016) indicated that community colleges could improve persistence by reducing the academic and non-academic barriers faced by students.

In 2016, a research firm that specialized in evaluations of social policies released the results of a randomized trial completed at the City University of New York (CUNY). MDRC (formerly known as the Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation) in concert with CUNY, conducted a study to test an innovative program of wraparound support services known

as Accelerated Study in Associate Programs (ASAP). This accelerated program required that students enroll full-time and attend advising and tutoring sessions. In addition, students who enrolled in ASAP were provided financial support (Dynarski & Oster, 2016). The ASAP initiative gave students much-needed attention. For example, students met with advisers 38 times per semester, compared with six times per semester for non-ASAP students. Unlike typical CUNY advisers, who had a caseload of 600 to 1,500 students, ASAP counselors advised only 60 to 80 students (Dynarski & Oster, 2016). The ASAP students also received more tutoring, attending an average of 34 sessions per semester (compared with seven sessions per semester in the control group). In the CUNY study, students were given a MetroCard with a value of \$100 a month. This MetroCard gave these students free access to the city's extensive transportation network (Dynarski & Oster, 2016). The students and the counselors noted that the incentive of the MetroCard was particularly helpful in increasing participation at the meetings. This initiative illustrates that mentoring, creating better relationships with students, spending more time with students, and making sure educational leaders are engaged daily with community college students during their educational journey might increase persistence (Dynarski & Oster, 2016).

The RAND Corporation (Daugherty, Johnson, & Tsai, 2017) conducted a study to examine an innovative effort to provide students with a comprehensive range of support services. The study examined the participation of four community college systems in the Single Stop U.S.A. Community College Initiative. Another definition of Single Stop is a benefit that provides students with a range of free services. These free services include screenings and applications for public benefit programs, tax services, financial counseling, and legal services. These free services include case management with referrals to a wide variety of resources and support programs across the institution and the community (Daugherty, Johnson, & Tsai, 2017).



Findings from this study suggested that students participating in the program were more likely to persist in attending community college. Single Stop users were at least 3% more likely to persist into the second year of community college as compared to similar students who did not use the services (Daugherty, Johnson, & Tsai, 2017). Analysis of the data further suggested that the potential to improve college outcomes was augmented because of such services (Daugherty, Johnson, & Tsai, 2017).

RAND researchers (Daugherty, Johnson, & Tsai, 2017) said the study provided important evidence of the value of an effort that connected students to a network of support programs and access to public benefits as a source of financial support. Institutions might consider how they might offer programs like Single Stop to create a central location for students to access wraparound supports, and to provide students with greater access to government benefits programs and other critical services. RAND researchers caution, however, that more work is needed to attribute causal effects to the program and to determine how the implementation and context might matter (Daugherty, Johnson, & Tsai, 2017).

According to Bridges (2008), student support services are needed to help students achieve success in higher education. These services are particularly important for the cases of academically challenged students, low-income students, and first-generation students (Savitz-Romer, Jager-Hyman, & Coles, 2009). According to Tinto (1988), programs and support services are especially needed in the first year of college, when students are most likely to feel overwhelmed or discouraged and drop out (Tinto, 1988). Tinto (1988) also noted that collaborative support programs for students entering community college are needed to assist students in the transition into higher education and provide continued support so they remain

engaged and enrolled. Wraparound services can be beneficial because attending and graduating from college can impact student success (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005).

### **Conceptual Framework**

The conceptual framework is made up of personal interest involving the purpose of conducting the study and the topical research, which is the scholarly literature search that is focused on the subject of the study (Weaver-Hightower, 2014). Lastly, the theoretical framework is part of the study's conceptual framework but employs specific theories that illuminate the phenomenon of why and how (Yin, 2003).

### **Personal Interest**

Community colleges face the challenge of implementing effective strategies, methods, and support systems to maximize student persistence in college until graduation. Currently, only 8% of students graduate within two years (Dynarski & Oster, 2016). The focus of college administrators should be on the challenges of remedial students who might struggle at the beginning of their community college career. Lack of remediation may lead to 50% of such students dropping out after their first year (Dynarski & Oster, 2016). Wraparound services at Community College X (CCX) might help other community colleges determine if these services would increase community college persistence rates similar to studies at the RAND Corporation and the City University of New York (CUNY). It is imperative that community colleges make this determination (Dynarski & Oster, 2016).

### **Topical Research**

The CUNY program, Accelerated Study in Associate Programs, nearly doubled the share of students graduating within three years from 22% to 40% (Dynarski, 2015; Dynarski & Oster, 2016). ASAP also increased the number of students enrolling in a 4-year college from 17% to

25%, which may increase the number of students earning a bachelor's degree (Dynarski & Oster, 2016). The average number of academic advising contacts with students was 36 contacts per semester in contrast with the previous six contacts per semester (Dynarski, 2015; Dynarski & Oster, 2016).

It is a common misperception that community colleges are considered warehouses for students who may need extensive remedial academic assistance (Deil-Amen, 2011). The academic mission of CCX was to assist underprepared students who had no clear direction about their long-term career and academic goals. Some researchers (Deil-Amen, 2011; Tinto, 1993) suggested that the community college was viewed as an institution in which students were *cooled out*. Deil-Amen (2011) noted *cooled out* is defined as when community college systems and structures, and specifically academic support systems, act as triggers to dampen community college students' goals. This consequently diminished students' academic aspirations through enrollment in remedial coursework or vocational programs that were not aligned with their original academic goal (Deil-Amen, 2011; Tinto, 1993).

According to Deil-Amen (2011), community college administrations worked for decades to challenge the ideology that students who are either academically challenged or who are undecided about their career pursuits were cooled out by the structures, policies, and curriculum of the 2-year college. However, when these same students were exposed to effective institutional systems or structures, students' aspirations improved. The goal of this study was to investigate and determine if implementing wraparound services to improve institutional systems such as academic counseling, admission counseling, social support, tutoring, student mentoring, and faculty relationships have a positive or negative effect on student persistence through the first year of degree programs.

## **Theoretical Underpinnings**

From this researcher's literature review emerged the conceptual model that identified and measured the second-year community college students' persistence in higher education. This study is built on the conceptual model of Regina Deil-Amen's research. Deil-Amen (2011) built her conceptual model on persistence for 4-year university students and 2-year community college students on the early work of Tinto (1993). Deil-Amen's work (2011) has a theoretical underpinning that uses social and academic integration.

Deil-Amen (2011) noted that Tinto's theory (1993) leaves room for an examination of a student's institutional experience. Deil-Amen (2011) contended that students choose to persist when they perceive intellectual and social congruence. According to the theoretical underpinnings for Deil-Amen's work, academic and social integration do not necessarily have to meet or fuse with each other. One can supersede the other (Deil-Amen, personal communication, October 11, 2017). Thus, further theoretical underpinnings include access to services, use of services, a sense of belonging, and commitment.

Deil-Amen's conceptual model (2011) was used to guide the major premises of this study. The socio-academic integration concept suggested that students persist in higher education when institutional interventions (such as wraparound services and resource centers) influence their experiences both inside and outside of the classroom, creating a sense of belonging and positive self-identification as a successful college student (Deil-Amen, 2011). Extrapolating further from Deil-Amen's conceptual model, key constructs germane to persistence are included in this study's interviewing tool to learn about how participant students view persistence. Key constructs include use of wraparound services, use of wraparound services for on-time graduation, use of wraparound services to create a sense of well-being (belonging) and a sense of

commitment. These constructs guide the development of the research design, research questions, and the instrumentation.

### **Conclusion**

According to Hossler (2006) and Tinto (2006; 2007), research on student persistence has neglected to examine how postsecondary institutions organize themselves to improve student persistence and graduation. Socio-academic integration efforts on community college campuses through the use of wraparound services have taken constructive steps in addressing the academic and institutional barriers facing community college students. To expand the literature, researchers could study student perceptions as they relate to wraparound services and their influence on student persistence (Fowler & Boylan, 2010).

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **METHODOLOGY**

The purpose of this qualitative, single case study was to investigate the experience of second year community college students who access and utilize the wraparound resource center offered by their college. This chapter begins with a rationale for the selection of the qualitative research design utilized in the study, followed by a description of the case study, the research site, and the participants. The next section explores the procedures used to construct a set of semi-structured interview questions, with open-ended questions for student and faculty participants. Finally, the chapter ends with a procedure for interviewing the participants.

This study aimed to describe students' perceptions of how community college students perceive wraparound services. A secondary purpose was to determine how these services impact community college students' persistence. This study was built on the conceptual model on persistence of Deil-Amen (2011). The tenets of Deil-Amen's conceptual model on persistence (2011) were described in Chapters 1 and 2. Deil-Amen's conceptual model's key constructs were included in questions in the interviewing instrument to extrapolate how students view persistence. Key concepts of the Deil-Amen conceptual model include (a) use of wraparound services, (b) using wraparound services for on-time graduation, (c) using wraparound services to create a sense of well-being (belonging), and (d) a sense of commitment. These four constructs guided the development of the research design, research questions, and the instrumentation.

#### **Research Design**

Yin (2003) defined the case study research method as an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context. Creswell (2008) noted that while examining and observing cases, the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not

clearly evident and the task of the researcher is to interpret and extrapolate data through the personal lens of inquiry. Yin's (2003) rationale for conducting this type of case study design included that apprentice researchers should select the design that provides them with the maximum instrumentality to answer their research questions, and to consider the strengths and limitations of each design and the difficulties to be avoided while implementing each of them.

This study used a qualitative, single case design. The single case design is used most often as a research design in such fields of inquiry involving psychology, education, and human behavior (Cooper, Heron, & Heward, 2008). It is used particularly in cases in which the subject serves as his/her own control, rather than using another individual or group (Cooper, Heron, & Heward, 2008). In addition, the researcher serves as a control by designating who is qualified to participate. The design was adapted and defined by Yin (2003) from the traditions of exploratory case study as designed by Stake (1989; 2000).

Because the advent of wraparound services and measuring the impact on community college students is a new field of research, a case study positioned the researcher to examine the perceptions of second year students regarding their experience of persistence. Researchers choose to use single case design because such studies are often thought to be sensitive to individual differences (Strickland, Waltz, & Lenz, 2016; Tripodi, 1998). Group designs on the other hand, are typically more sensitive to averages of groups (Strickland, Waltz, & Lenz, 2016; Tripodi, 1998). Researchers might conclude that a logical reason for using a single case study is because this type of design often approximates three levels of knowledge (a) descriptive, (b) correlational, and (c) causal (Tripodi, 1998). Using this underpinning, it is presumed that from these three levels of knowledge, the data being examined are stable because the trends reveal low variability (Tripodi, 1998).

The purpose of this study was to examine community college students' experience with wraparound services and how such services affect the students' integration and assimilation into the college. At the same time, this study intended to identify the challenges and barriers that students perceive as obstacles to success. Furthermore, this study sought to understand best practices in wraparound services provided in higher education and to determine how to support students through the use of wraparound resource center services.

With this goal in mind, and using Deil-Amen's (2011) conceptual model, the following research questions guided this study:

RQ<sub>1</sub>: How do second year community college students understand the role of the college wraparound services in their academic success?

RQ<sub>2</sub>: How do the existing mechanisms and modalities used by community college wraparound services impact the academic and social integration of community college students?

### **Setting**

Community College X (CCX) was chosen as the research site for this study because of its current practices in student persistence. CCX, as an institution, also offers an opportunity for a single case study and provides an opportunity to examine the existence of a learning community for second year community college students. It also provided a unique contextual condition where student insight on persistence and success in the student's second year can be determined by the researcher.

CCX was founded in 1963 and its initial purpose was to provide technical and vocational education services to people working in various industries. By 2008, because of incremental growth, the organization had become one of the largest public college systems in the Midwest



and is one of the most culturally diverse community colleges. CCX is one of 30 campuses in 14 regions throughout the state. CCX provides various educational services to more than 200,000 students annually. Most community colleges' competitors are affordable public colleges and universities (Indiana Commission for Higher Education, 2012).

CCX administrators continue to address the problem of low graduation rates affecting both retention and persistence rates. Currently, the institution has concluded that work with their communities to improve persistence rates must continue (Indiana Commission of Higher Education, 2012). According to the National Center for Education Statistics (2017), approximately 59% of students who began seeking a bachelor's degree at a 4-year institution in fall 2009 completed that degree within six years. In 2016, these same data compared to the overall graduation rate of CCX was only 9% (Education Reform Now, 2016). Even when these data were measured after six years (only 23% graduated) and only 8% graduated in two years (National Center for Education Statistics, 2017). This represents a downward trajectory for institutional educational achievement for 2-year colleges, as compared to 4-year colleges in the United States. Because many of these students arrive at college underprepared, one in four students often enroll in remedial classes their first year of college, costing their families nearly \$1.5 billion, according to Education Reform Now (2016). This might suggest that institutions such as CCX continually devote resources to remedial education, while graduation rates continue to be far below what is acceptable to stakeholders in many community colleges (Indiana Commission for Higher Education, 2012). Because of the extended time to graduation and higher attrition, many students leave institutions of higher learning without degrees and with significant debt (Indiana Commission for Higher Education, 2012).

## Participants/Sample

Participants for the research study were chosen based on responses to emails requesting participation from second year community college students. A purposive sampling method was used in this study. By definition, a purposive sample is a non-probability sample that is selected based on the characteristics of a population and the objective of the study (Waltz, Strickland, & Lentz, 2016). This type of sampling can be very useful in situations when there is a need to reach a targeted sample quickly, but only when sampling for proportionality is not the main concern (Waltz, Strickland, & Lentz, 2016). More specifically, there are seven different types of purposive sampling, and typical case sampling is most closely aligned to this study. Typical case sampling is useful to study a phenomenon or trend as it relates to what are considered typical or average members of the affected population (Strickland, Waltz, & Lentz, 2016). Therefore, this study used purposive, typical case sampling.

To delimit the scope and specificity of those allowed to participate, stringent inclusion criteria were developed. Inclusion criteria includes:

- must be a second year student,
- must have registered for second year only once,
- must not have taken more than four semesters of coursework,
- must be on track to graduate at the federally defined rate for an on-time graduation of 150% of the published graduation date, and
- must be between 19 and 25 years of age.

Eight participants were included in this study and all participants were from the student population at CCX, a campus of nearly 6,000 students. In a single case study, a small number of subjects are used. It can be as few as one, or as many as 15 (Cooper, Heron, & Heward, 2007).

Allowing for eight participants was ideally suited for analysis because more than 10 subjects might have generated a possibility for redundancy (Waltz, Strickland, & Lentz, 2016). Data saturation was achieved at eight participants (Waltz & Strickland, 2016).

### **Data Collection Methods**

An email was sent (Appendix B) with the permission of the Office of Student Services at CCX to all students in the accelerated program at CCX with the inclusion criteria specified. In the selection phase of this study, potential participants were asked to respond to the email by calling the researcher's phone number. When eight qualified participants were identified by inclusion criteria in the priority order of selection, the subject selection portion of this study was concluded. The researcher worked with potential participants to schedule interviews, and discussed the procedures and paperwork at the beginning of the interview. All participants were asked to read and sign the consent form and each participant was given a copy of the signed informed consent form. The interviews started by asking the participant to fill out a demographic survey. After completing the form, the interview process commenced. Semi-structured interviews were recorded via audio tape recorder and transcribed verbatim by Alliance Business LLC, a transcription service provider. The interviews lasted approximately 45 minutes and were held on a CCX campus site.

### **Instrumentation**

This study utilized two data collection instruments that were combined to be administered to the students at the on-site interview. These instruments were a Demographic Questionnaire and a Semi-Structured Interview. Both instruments were administered sequentially as indicated previously. In addition, a third instrument was the student's selection of a personal artifact

brought to the interview and appended to the student's personal paperwork (Appendix C, Instruments).

### **Demographic Questionnaire (Instrument 1)**

A demographic questionnaire was developed based on the participants' inclusion criteria. The demographic questionnaire collected data regarding participants: age, gender, year in college, registration as second year student, and an indication of being on track for on-time graduation. This demographic questionnaire was used at the (on-site) interview. This demographic questionnaire was attached to the Semi-Structured Interview form.

### **Semi-Structured Interview (Instrument 2)**

The primary purpose of interviewing second year students included investigating the strategies used by these students that helped them to persist into their second year. A secondary purpose was to investigate whether students were impacted by the wraparound resource center. Through triangulation of the data from second year students' perceived experiences of wraparound services, a procedure was used to search for convergence among multiple and different sources of information (Creswell & Miller, 2000).

An interview protocol was developed by the researcher with questions that allowed the participant to answer in an open-ended format regarding wraparound services. The objective of these questions was to elicit cohesive responses concerning persistence and its role to success in this community college setting. Each interview lasted approximately 45 minutes. According to Stake (1995), semi-structured interviewing is used when the researcher has only one chance to interview each participant. For this study, a semi-structured interview style was used in order to maintain consistency with each participant in the interview process and to ensure reliable, comparable qualitative data.

**Obtaining reliability and validity of the semi-structured interview protocol.** To obtain reliability and validity of the semi-structured interview, prior to administering the interview protocol, the interview protocol was given to two administrators in wraparound services at CCX. While the Dissertation Committee had ultimate say over the final version of the instrument, these administrators were asked to review the instrument for the following:

- to check clarity,
- to determine if the content and focus of the items are appropriate for wraparound services,
- to determine if the questions aligned with the lived experiences of Community College students,
- to suggest re-organization and re-structure of questions to ensure that wraparound services are adequately described, and
- to ascertain whether all the categories pertaining to wraparound services are contained in the Semi-Structured Interview.

### **Personal Artifact Collection (Instrument 3)**

The third instrument was created to collect personal artifacts or items brought to the interview. With this instrument, students were asked to identify which artifact collection was brought to the interview by checking it on the form and then attaching it to the instrument. The personal artifact collection was another form of data source triangulation (as described under data analysis). Each participant was asked to bring to the interview a personal artifact to validate the degree of persistence. Such items included:

- a transcript from end of first year at CCX as provided by the students with no identifying attributes,

- a letter from someone who encouraged them, or
- a letter acknowledging placement on Dean's List, or
- other items such as a photo of someone or group who the student thought motivated them to persist.

### **Member Checking**

After the interviews were transcribed, member checking was employed to validate the data. Member checking is also known as informant feedback or respondent validation, and is used to improve the accuracy, credibility, and validity of a study (Strickland, Waltz, & Lentz, 2016). Members read the transcript and (a) suggested changes to the transcript, (b) added any additional information as they deemed appropriate, and (c) deleted information that was not clear or was incorrect. Members were emailed their transcribed text. In addition, each member was given 10 days to respond to the request for revisions. No revisions were suggested, and member checking was closed.

### **Data Analysis Methods**

The transcribed interviews and the artifacts collected were analyzed using the NVivo 12 Pro software analysis system. To perform an analysis of qualitative data, six steps were taken, in order of priority. When using NVivo 12 Pro, it was essential to attend to each step carefully because if a step was taken out of order, it might have been difficult to perform the analysis accurately (Bazeley & Jackson, 2013). The goal of this data analysis with NVivo was to assist the researcher in finding a more comprehensive approach to data analysis and to present these findings in a more comprehensive manner (Bazeley & Jackson, 2013). The six steps in priority order are found below.

## **Step One**

Each participant was assigned a pseudonym that was used throughout, not only in the transcription process, but in all reporting of data and publication. This was done to protect the identity of the participant (Waltz, Strickland, & Lentz, 2016). After member checking was completed with each participant, the transcribed interviews were converted to a PDF and uploaded into NVivo for analysis. Looking for themes was necessary to identify codes and to begin the coding process. A code was stored in NVivo in what is termed a *node list* (Bazeley & Jackson, 2013). The node list allowed the researcher to see the codes found in the PDF in a more organized fashion (Bazeley & Jackson, 2013). A code is an abstract representation of an object or phenomenon (Bernard & Ryan, 2010). According to Bazeley and Jackson (2013), a code can range from purely descriptive clusters of words, to labels for topics or themes (more overarching than simple word clusters), to the more interpretive or analytical concepts about given topics (more overarching than labels for topics or themes). In this study descriptive coding was first undertaken. NVivo has the ability to autocode the nodes. By definition, this means that the researcher had a readily available method to code data into the node list through this method. In other words, the program remembers where an object was seen in the text (either in paragraph form or PDF). It then automatically located and found that passage and autocoded it (Bazeley & Jackson, 2013).

## **Step Two**

Because the study had 12 interview questions, each interview question was used as a heading for analysis through a node (Bazeley & Jackson, 2013). Heading levels in NVivo were useful because the researcher wanted to divide or separate the data collected based on the interviews question (Bazeley & Jackson, 2013). For example, if heading 1 represented interview

question 1, autocoding was used to code all the nodes for heading 1 or interview question 1 (Bazeley & Jackson, 2013). Autocoding was described above in Step one. Thus when the analysis was performed, it was possible to discern what the nodes were for each specific interview question (Bazeley & Jackson, 2013).

### **Step Three**

After reviewing the PDFs to determine common or typical themes in the transcripts, a node list (NVivo or quick code) was generated for each research question. Next, the nodes were further reviewed to lump them into themes (Bernard & Ryan, 2010). The NVivo computer program lumped the themes and this was done to look for overarching themes. Lumping is a term that is used in NVivo (Bazeley & Jackson, 2013). Thus, with NVivo, what is termed *coding in source* was used (Bazeley & Jackson, 2013). NVivo gave a confirmation when the node list for coding in source was completed for each interview question.

### **Step Four**

The data was run in an aggregate analysis to generate overarching themes for each research question (Bazeley & Jackson, 2013). In NVivo 12 Pro, the coding process was deductive as the program operates in what is sometimes termed top down, logical reasoning (Bazeley & Jackson, 2013). Logical reasoning, and what is termed deductive reasoning, suggest that all of the underlying premises and concordances are considered to be true (Bazeley & Jackson, 2013). In addition, because NVivo, like most software products, is only capable of deductive analysis, all of the information placed in the program was assumed to be correct (Bazeley & Jackson, 2013).



## Step Five

As described in Step One, a code is an abstract representation of an object or phenomenon (Bernard & Ryan, 2010). According to Bazeley and Jackson (2013), a code can range from purely descriptive clusters of words to labels for topics or themes (more overarching than simple word clusters), to the more interpretive or analytical concepts about given topics (more overarching than labels for topics or themes). NVivo 12 Pro also undertook the process of open coding. Open coding labels concepts, defines, and develops categories that are based on specific properties and dimensions inherent to these concepts and categories (Bazeley & Jackson, 2013). Opening coding was then combined with axial coding. Thus, one of the last steps was termed axial coding. By definition, axial coding is the process of relating codes to each other via deductive reasoning (described above). In this step, the researcher was trying to determine the relationship between the open codes, the properties, and the participants' actual words (see the table of examples below and Appendix D, Table 4.1, Illustrations of Axial Coding).

Table I

### *Illustration of Axial Coding*

| <b>Axial Codes</b>                      | <b>Properties</b>   | <b>Example of Participant's Words</b>  |
|---|---|--|
| Wanting help with experiential learning | Excited about learning<br>Hopeful that learning experiences can be expanded | Seeking new and further experiences<br>Needs help to extrapolate from the learning experiences<br>Wants study sessions |

## Step Six

From the above coding or nodes, depending on the interview question, themes emerged. The themes were captured from the analysis per interview question and reported by interview question in the node list. In essence, the data were run in aggregate analysis to generate

overarching themes (Bazeley & Jackson, 2013). In addition, open coding and axial coding were performed to lump the themes in an effort to both further add to known codes/themes and/or create new ones.

### **Data Source Triangulation**

The interviews and the artifacts also underwent data source triangulation (Cypress, 2017). With this process, there was more than one method of data collection, thereby making it possible to conduct data source triangulation (Cypress, 2017). With NVivo 12 Pro, another data set was created similar to the steps described above for the personal interview. This data set included nodes or codes for the personal artifacts to do data source triangulation. The two data sets were performed in aggregate analyses to determine agreement between the two data sets (Bazeley & Jackson, 2013). If there is agreement between the two data sets this would suggest that there is similarity in perspective and might validate the findings (Waltz, Strickland, & Lentz, 2016). Similar to the above analysis, this process was deductive and involves coding (as described above). Data source triangulation is a powerful technique that facilitates data validation through cross verification from two or more sources (Cypress, 2017). This process provided more validity than a coding mechanism alone (Cypress, 2017; Bazeley, 2013; Grbich, 2013). Triangulation is unlike coding (analytical or descriptive), categories, and subcategories (Saldana, 2016). Saldana (2016) noted that there are a series of biases against coding, which include (a) it is reductionist, (b) it is not objective, (c) it is mechanistic, (d) coding may be nothing more than counting, (e) coding is often perceived as destructive, and (f) it is often perceived as outdated. While data source triangulation may also be perceived as subjective, it investigated the emergent themes by more than just frequency.

## **Participants' Rights**

The primary ethical consideration is to protect the identity of the research participants. The researcher selected a pseudonym for each participant to ensure anonymity. No identifiable or attributable details were used in the data collection, analysis, interpretation, or communication of the findings. Once participants contacted the researcher via telephone, met the inclusion criteria, and agreed to participate, the interviews were scheduled. At the interview site, a consent form was signed prior to the interview. The interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim.

## **Institutional Review Board (IRB)**

Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval was sought from the University of New England and from CCX where the single case study was conducted. All emails, flyers, and questionnaires were appended to both IRB applications. The study did not begin until permission from both IRBs was received (Appendix A).

## **Trustworthiness**

While the researcher was responsible for trustworthiness, a number of factors were added. To ensure a degree of trustworthiness, there were structurally defined inclusion criteria for participation and therefore there was a degree of trustworthiness about the sample. Triangulation provided a method of validation because two or more persons, or two or more data sources, were used to uncover themes, ensuring that there was little or no bias in selecting these themes, and provided more assurance of trustworthiness (Cypress, 2017). The college used in the single case design had a long and illustrious history with students and assured a reasonable degree of trustworthiness.

### **Limitations**

Every research study has limitations. The limitations of this study related to the single case study design with a one college approach. This study may not be generalizable because the same parameters for wraparound services may not be present at other sites to conduct this study. The primary limitations of this study were that a qualitative study with eight student participants cannot be generalizable to all community college students or even to all second-year community college students. Because data were collected by selecting only those participants who were between 19 and 25 years of age, the study could lose valuable information about the persistence and lived experiences of students outside of that age range.

### **Conclusion**

This chapter detailed the methodology and offered insight and rationale for selecting second year community college students and a qualitative narrative research design in which a single case study was investigated. Purposive/criterion sampling was described as well the inclusion criteria utilized to identify participants for the study. The chapter also described the data collection process. Use of NVivo software to conduct data analysis through node coding was described. In addition, data source triangulation was discussed. Finally, the chapter outlined how the research processes of the study were built on a foundation of trustworthiness.

## CHAPTER 4

### RESULTS

The purpose of this study was to understand how community college students perceive wraparound services and how these services impact students' persistence. This chapter will present an analysis in five sections. Section one contains a description of the participant sample and a review of the instrumentation. Section two contains the analysis of the data utilizing NVivo 12 Pro. Section three contains the interview questions and the presentation of the results using NVivo 12 Pro. Section four contains the triangulation of data using the measured themes garnered in NVivo 12 Pro and the personal artifacts. Finally, section five contains a summary that includes the problem statement and the association with results.

#### **Description of Sample, Review of Instrumentation**

This section offers a description of data gleaned from the demographic questionnaire instrument (description of the sample). The demographic questionnaire instrument (previously defined in chapter three and findings presented below) is done to understand the sample in order to make reasonable conclusions about the nodes and major themes expressed in NVivo 12 Pro. In addition, the interview questions are presented to confirm whether the interviews produced consistent, coherent, and organized information to create a node list in NVivo 12 Pro.

#### **Description of the Sample**

The population was defined as eight ( $N = 8$ ) second year community college students who had not registered more than once for the second year, and who were between 19 and 25 years of age. Further, all participants were on time for graduation as defined by the federal government at no more than time published multiplied by 150%. In analyzing the demographic data, the sample mean age was 21 ( $M = 21$ ). Additionally, 50% of the sample were male ( $n = 4$ )

and 50% were female ( $n = 4$ ). With these demographics, all of the students ( $N = 8$ ) met the inclusion criteria for participation. The data collection was described in chapter three. Prior to beginning the structured interview, each participant was provided the informed consent form to read and sign. Each participant completed a demographic instrument questionnaire and a personal artifact collection form to which the artifact brought to the interview was affixed. The structured interview protocol was begun with appropriate interview questions.

### **Instrumentation**

This study utilized two data collection instruments that were administered to the students at the on-site interview. These instruments were described in detail in chapter three, but are presented briefly in this chapter to assist with understanding of the data analysis. These instruments were a demographic questionnaire and a semi-structured interview (available in Appendix C). Both instruments were administered sequentially, as indicated previously. In addition, a third instrument was the student's selection of a personal artifact brought to the interview and appended to the personal artifact collection form (Appendix C, Instruments).

**Demographic Questionnaire (Instrument 1).** A demographic questionnaire was developed based on the participants' inclusion criteria. The demographic questionnaire collected data regarding participants' age, gender, year in college, registration as a second year student, and an indication of being on track for on-time graduation. This demographic questionnaire was administered at the on-site interview. This demographic questionnaire was attached to the personal artifact form. Data from this demographic instrument was collected in an effort to understand the sample.

**Semi-Structured Interview (Instrument 2).** An interview protocol was developed by the researcher with questions that allowed the participant to answer in an open-ended format

regarding wraparound services. The objective of these questions was to elicit responses concerning persistence and its role to success in this community college setting. Each interview lasted approximately 45 minutes.

**Personal Artifact Collection Form (Instrument 3).** The third instrument was created to collect personal artifacts or items brought to the interview. With this instrument, students were asked to identify the artifact they brought to the interview by checking it on the form and then attaching it to the instrument. The Personal Artifact Collection Form was another method of data source triangulation (as described under data analysis). Each participant was asked to bring to the interview a personal artifact to validate the degree of persistence. Such items included

- a transcript from end of first year at CCX as provided by the students with no identifying attributes,
- a letter from someone who encouraged them,
- a letter acknowledging placement on Dean's List or
- other items such as a photo of someone or group who the student thought motivated them to persist.

### **Articulation, Interpretation, and Analysis of the Data Using NVivo 12 Pro**

Six steps to analyze data with NVivo 12 Pro are presented in this section. To code and store nodes in NVivo 12 Pro, it was necessary to follow these steps in order of priority. In addition, axial coding is explained and a table is presented to illustrate axial coding. With axial coding, open codes, properties, and examples of the students' exact words are also presented to understand the process of axial coding and findings. In addition, major themes from the interview questions are presented in the axial coding table. As previously stated, member checking was taken. The axial code table is found in Appendix D, Illustrations of Axial Coding.

## **Member Checking**

After the interviews were transcribed, member checking was employed to validate the data. Member checking is also known as informant feedback or respondent validation, and is used to improve the accuracy, credibility, and validity of a study (Waltz, Strickland, & Lentz, 2016). Members read the transcript and suggested changes, added any additional information as they deemed appropriate, or deleted information that was not clear or was incorrect. Each participant was given 10 days to respond to the request for revisions. The participants did not suggest any revisions and member checking was closed. Seven of eight members returned their transcript for an 87.5% return rate. This return rate was considered satisfactory to meet the return criteria to begin the data analysis. After member checking, the researcher undertook the articulation of the data using NVivo 12 Pro.

### **Articulation of Data Analysis Using NVivo 12 Pro**

The transcribed interviews were analyzed using the NVivo software analysis system. To perform an analysis of qualitative data, six steps were taken in order of priority. When using NVivo, it was essential to attend to each step carefully because if a step was taken out of order, it might have been difficult to perform the analysis accurately (Bazeley & Jackson, 2013). The goal of this data analysis with NVivo 12 Pro was to assist the researcher in finding a way to present these findings in a more comprehensive manner (Bazeley & Jackson, 2013). The six steps in order are found below. These steps were described in detail in chapter 3. Therefore the steps taken in NVivo 12 Pro are detailed only briefly in this chapter.

#### **Step One**

After member checking was completed with each participant and prior to starting the six steps, the transcribed interviews were converted to a PDF and uploaded into NVivo 12 Pro for



analysis. Looking for themes was necessary to identify codes and to begin the coding process. A code was stored in NVivo in what is termed a node list (Bazeley & Jackson, 2013). The node list allowed the researcher to see the codes found in the PDF in a more organized fashion (Bazeley & Jackson, 2013). A code is an abstract representation of an object or phenomenon (Bernard & Ryan, 2010). According to Bazeley and Jackson (2013), a code can range from purely descriptive clusters of words to labels for topics or themes (more overarching than simple word clusters), to the more interpretive or analytical concepts about given topics (more overarching than labels for topics or themes). In this study, descriptive coding was undertaken first. In this instance, all seven PDFs were examined interview question by interview question, and a node list was established by the researcher. NVivo also has the ability to autocode the nodes. However, the researcher chose to code the nodes by hand by going through each question and the supporting interview questions in each file. In other words, with autocoding, the researcher had a readily available method to code data into the node list through this method. The program (NVivo 12 Pro) could remember where an object was seen in the text (either in paragraph form or in a PDF). It then could automatically locate and find that passage and auto code it (Bazeley & Jackson, 2013). However, as previously stated, because the researcher chose to hand code the node list, the data became familiar.

## **Step Two**

There were 12 interview questions that were used as a heading for analysis (Bazeley & Jackson, 2013). To code nodes in NVivo 12 Pro, interview questions were necessary to see the nodes, interview question by interview question. Thus, when the interview questions were searched question by question, the node list can be generated automatically or by hand. When any other data is needed, it is then searched by nodes.

### Step Three

After reviewing the PDFs to determine common or typical themes in the transcripts, a node list was generated for its appropriate interview question. Next, the nodes were further reviewed to lump them into themes (Bernard & Ryan, 2010). *Lumping* is a term that is used in NVivo (Bazeley & Jackson, 2013). The NVivo computer program lumped the themes and this was done to look for overarching themes. Thus, with NVivo, what is termed coding in source was used (Bazeley & Jackson, 2013).

There were 12 interview questions that yielded 50 nodes. Initially there were 11 lumped (emergent) themes. As previously stated, these 11 themes came from 50 nodes. When these 11 emergent themes were lumped, aggregated, and in-source coded, nine overarching themes emerged because of percent of coverage (frequencies). As indicated, two of eleven themes overlapped to create the nine overarching themes. Again, these themes will be discussed further in this chapter. NVivo 12 Pro gave a confirmation when the node list for coding in source was completed. Of course this confirmation prompt was disregarded and more nodes were added. The data suggested that there were nine overarching themes when two were removed because they were lumped into two already existing categories. A weighted table of themes (frequencies), sub-themes, and exemplars from the participants is found in Table 4.3 in Appendix F.

### Step Four

The data was run in an aggregate analysis to generate overarching themes for the interview questions (Bazeley & Jackson, 2013). In NVivo, the coding process was deductive as the program operates in what is sometimes termed top down, logical reasoning. Logical reasoning, and what is termed *deductive reasoning*, suggest that all of the underlying premises and concordances are considered to be true (Bazeley & Jackson, 2013). In addition, because

NVivo, like most software products, is only capable of deductive analysis, all of the information placed in the program was assumed to be correct (Bazeley & Jackson, 2013).

### **Step Five**

As described in step one, and presented in chapter three, a code is an abstract representation of an object or phenomenon (Bernard & Ryan, 2010). According to Bazeley and Jackson (2013), a code can range from purely descriptive clusters of words, to labels for topics or themes (more overarching than simple word clusters), to more interpretive or analytical concepts about given topics (more overarching than labels for topics or themes). NVivo also undertook a process of open coding. Open coding labels concepts and defines and develops categories that are based on specific properties and dimensions inherent to these concepts and categories (Bazeley & Jackson, 2013). In this study, open coding was then combined with axial coding. Thus, one of the last steps was termed axial coding. By definition, axial coding is the process of relating codes to each other via deductive reasoning (described previously in chapter three). In this step, the researcher was trying to determine the relationship between the open codes, the properties, and the participants' actual words (see Appendix D, Table 4.1, Illustrations of Axial Coding).

### **Step Six**

The data were run in aggregate analysis to generate overarching themes for appropriate interview questions (Bazeley & Jackson, 2013). Frequent themes were identified. When the data was run in aggregate analyses, 11 overarching themes were identified. The themes were further lumped by NVivo 12 Pro because two themes overlapped and 9 overarching themes emerged (Appendix F).

Axial coding was performed to lump the themes in an effort to both further add to known codes/themes and/or create new ones that existed. In Appendix D. Table 4.1 presents illustrations of axial coding. For example, in one axial coding sequence, the following was found. The axial codes were *excited about learning* and *hopeful that learning experiences could be expanded*. The properties included feeling ambitious, eager to learn, seeking credentials, and experiential learning. One participant said:

I think they assist by offering a lot of resources [. . .] tutoring to help you through. They offer assistance for signing up for classes, financial aid. Just some support when you're struggling. So, I think they motivate you more to stay in school. They have lots of resources for you to not want to drop out if you're feeling like you want to drop out. They also have online tutoring.

This example illustrates the importance of tutoring as it relates to engagement and motivation, as well as the importance of axial coding.

In another axial coding sequence, the following was noted. The axial codes included *being groomed* and *excited to learn new things*. The properties included feeling comfortable in seeking services, embracing new ideas, and excited to learn new things. Another student said:

[. . .] I've gone to a couple events and services they've held here [. . .] I think it's helped me get to know people more, which has also helped me know more information about things such as applying for college or for graduation. I didn't even know you needed to apply for graduation. So that kind of helped getting out and talking to people around here and seeing what's going on. I think this is real motivation. Not even with that but with how to do things pretty much. I mean you have to kind of figure things out on your own. But yeah, just offering all the

services they've offered and all the events they've held that I've gone to just have helped me learn more about what's going on in the community and what's going on in school and stuff like that.

This student continued by saying:

I have been helped by, I mean when I'm struggling with classes mostly [. . .] I had talked to a lot of my classmates who, a lot of them actually work in the potter, do their internship in the POD so they know a lot of services in there just from working in their community resources and stuff. So, I'm just hearing what they have to say. Talking to advisors here, talking to the chair of my program [. . .] they offer a lot of information to me.

These examples provided an illustration of how axial coding tutoring was important.

Tutoring was perceived as a necessary strategy in wraparound services.

In another coding sequence, the axial code *looking for support* was noted. In the properties, another student was excited about the services available. That student said:

They offer a lot of support and a lot of motivation [. . .] they offer services to make you want to actually come here, just to come here for the events and stuff. And then, I mean there's just a lot of encouragement around school. There are signs reminding you to sign up for classes and there was an email sent out saying when registration's open and stuff like that, there's a lot of encouragement. There's always something reminding you to keep going.

Similarly, in another axial code sequencing, the axial code found was *being groomed for social and academic integration to overcome social and academic barriers*. While the properties included seeking assistance, this student said:

The way that has improved it is just [ . . . ] it's made me aware that there's a lot of community resources out there that I wasn't aware of that can actually help other people like myself, especially like insurance, I'm 21, but I didn't know where I would get insurance. That really helped me out. And then I can refer people to the POD and tell them, oh, we have this and this and this and that would really help the students out.

In the exemplar above, the students noted the importance of life assistance to success with persistence to graduation.

### **Presentation of Results**

In this section, the presentation of the data is offered. To organize the presentation of the data, the interview questions are presented. Understanding the nature of the interview questions was essential to understanding the nodes as they are expressed. The nodes were then in-source coded to express the overarching themes with NVivo 12 Pro.

### **Organization of the Results**

To organize the results, interview questions are presented. There were 12 interview questions. These interview questions included:

1. Describe your understanding of community college wraparound service programs and how they assist students toward college completion.
2. How have you received information about the services provided by the community college wraparound services?
3. How have community college wraparound services improved your probability of academic success?

4. How have you been assisted with academic challenges by community college wraparound services?
5. How comfortable are you with seeking assistance from the community college wraparound service center to address academic challenges?
6. How have community college wraparound services programs shaped your perception of the process of college completion?
7. Describe at least three wraparound services available to you at your institution.
8. How have community college wraparound services influenced you to attend class regularly and complete courses?
9. How have community college wraparound services helped you to become more involved in social and academic campus activities?
10. How have community college wraparound services helped assist you with social or academic obstacles?
11. How have community college wraparound services helped you persist in becoming a second-year community college student?
12. How often have you used available wraparound services at your institution?

Appendix E contains Table 4.2, which presents the 50 nodes interview question by interview question. For example, IQ1 contained two nodes, in which (a) academic tutoring and (b) non-academic tutoring were included. IQ2 contained two nodes, which were (a) email and (b)

life assistance/support. Similarly, IQ3 contained 10 nodes, which included (a) community resources (life support), (b) developing confidence, (c) getting to know people, (d) keeping on track, (e) motivation, (f) providing services, (g) support system (academic support), (h) support system (life assistance/support), (i) tutoring, and (j) understanding the academic processes. Additionally, IQ4 contained two nodes, which were (a) tutoring and assistance with writing, and (b) internship in POD 7 (resource center). IQ5 contained three nodes, which included (a) comfortable with reaching out, (b) comfortable with talking with someone (tutoring and participation), and c) comfortable with joining academic and social societies. IQ6 contained three nodes, which included (a) food pantry, (b) help with goal setting (tutoring and Motivation), and (c) life coach (life support).

In IQ7 two nodes were found, and they included (a) resources for tutoring, and (b) thorough explanation when tutoring. In IQ8, six nodes were found, and they included (a) life coach, (b) reminders to sign up for class, (c) professor support, (d) tutoring, (e) resources and services, and (f) on-lining tutoring, In IQ9 there were six nodes, which included (a) knowledge of the Sun Program and National Honor Society, (b) motivated to join Sun Program and National Honor Society, (c) student life program, (d) encouragement by teachers to go to various services, (e) encouragement by teachers to participate in student government, and (f) feeling welcome. In IQ10, there were four nodes, which included (a) academic advisors (tutoring) and life support during the hurricane, (b) food pantry, (c) help with social skills, and (d) tutoring with writing. In IQ11, there were five nodes. These nodes included (a) smooth transition, (b) support, (c) keeping on track, (d) tutoring with homework, and (e) coaching. Finally, in IQ12, there were five nodes, which included (a) semester driven, (b) often because of tutoring, (c) three times a month, (d) monthly to stay on track and focused, and (e) four times a semester.



## **Themes**

As stated previously, there were 12 interview questions. NVivo 12 Pro was used to lump and aggregate the 50 nodes from the interview questions and when in-source coding was conducted, 11 emergent themes were identified. When these 11 emergent themes were lumped, 9 emergent or expressed themes were identified as a percent of coverage (frequencies):

1. Tutoring is essential;
2. Motivation/encouragement is built;
3. Persistence/coaching can promote graduation;
4. Overcoming social and academic barriers is necessary for persistence;
5. Keeping on track helps achieve persistence;
6. Life assistance maintains financial stability;
7. Resources and service achieve stability;
8. Professor support encourages participation in social and academic activities and maintains confidence; and
9. Use of wraparound services is need driven and helps to persist.

Appendix F, Table 4.3 presents overarching themes, subthemes, and participants' words (exemplars).

### **Theme 1: Tutoring Is Essential**

This theme was present 20.7% of the time. NVivo calculates the frequency of occurrence of a theme across the aggregate of the transcripts, not the occurrences of the theme as spoken by a single participant. The frequency of tutoring therefore occurred exponentially more times when NVivo searched for the word tutoring than the other themes did throughout all of the eight transcripts. Eight of eight participants used this expressed theme in at least one of the interview

questions in the aggregated transcripts. The sub-themes included social services to include tutoring and easy to access social services. Adam noted that, “The services here are a plus for me.” Whereas Boy said:

I've gotten lots of emails with events going on for the community and for the students there's our POD 7 [tutoring], which since I'm in the Human Services Program, I know a lot about that POD 7 and it offers lots of services. They have a food pantry so you can always go there. They have life coaches if you need somebody to talk to you about situations or just any kind of information with outside resources. So that's helped a lot and that's where I pretty much get they have [. . .] flyers around the school with people talking about what's going on. POD seven is very good for tutoring.

Findings from the study suggested that tutoring was essential and students benefited from tutoring when offered.

## **Theme 2. Motivation/Encouragement Is Built**

The theme of motivation/encouragement is built was present 17.5% of time when aggregated throughout all of the transcripts. When NVivo calculated the use of motivation/encouragement, this theme occurred with six of the eight participants using this terminology at least once in the transcripts. The sub-themes were *resources need to be easy to access* and the professor *motivates you to stay in school*. Exemplars of the participants' thoughts about motivation and encouragement included Boy, who said:

[. . .] I think they assist by offering a lot of resources [. . .] to help you through. They offer assistance with things like signing up for classes, financial aid. These supports are helpful when you're struggling. So, I think they motivate you more to

stay in school. They have lots of resources for you to not want to drop out if you're feeling like you want to drop out.

Findings from study suggested that motivation/encouragement was perceived as important to persistence.

### **Theme 3. Persistence/Coaching Can Promote Graduation**

This theme was present 13% of the time in the aggregated transcripts of eight participants. Four of eight participants used this theme somewhere in their transcript. The sub-theme was *coaching keeps you engaged*. Frank noted that, “It goes back to the life coach and I would have me meet with her every week, making sure, I rewrite my goals, I update my goals, making sure that I'm staying on my goals. So, they keep us engaged.” Boy also noted:

They have life coaches if you need somebody to talk to you about situations or just any kind of information with outside resources. So that's helped a lot and that's where I pretty much get they have [. . .] flyers around the school with people talking about what's going on.

This finding suggested that persistence was achieved with coaching.

### **Theme 4. Overcoming Social and Academic Barriers Is Necessary for Persistence**

This fourth theme of overcoming social and academic barriers was present 12.5% of the time in the aggregate across all eight of the transcripts and in 1 of 12 of the interview questions. Thus, three of eight participants used this theme somewhere in their transcript. The sub-theme was *accessing social events and organizations*. Henry said:

[. . .] helped out a lot. I like the Sun with the National Honor Society, they do this thing where, you know, not when you joined the program or do something you would think it's a work for just yourself individualized self, you know what, with

this was incorporated with the group. I am more of a private person. I don't like to talk a lot or anything, but the first thing that started with the National Honor Society and it was a best friend and at first thing you get to do is tell a person you've never met before about yourself and things about you. So that opened things for me. That helped me and opened me up a lot to socializing.

This exemplar illustrates the necessity of providing methods for students to overcome social and academic barriers.

### **Theme 5. Keeping on Track Helps Achieve Persistence**

This theme was present 10% of the time in the aggregate of the transcripts. This theme was overused (used in other themes) across the aggregate of the transcripts and was used by four of eight participants. The sub-theme was *goal-oriented*. Charles noted:

So, they helped me by helping, just keeping me on track like that motivation because they do provide those services as well, but they also help the individual on Tuesday by setting goals during [. . .] they had me write down goals, like what I wanted to do and by the end of the semester, what grades I want to improve tremendously to keep me on track.

This example illustrates the importance of students keeping on track.

### **Theme 6. Life Assistance Maintains Financial Stability**

The theme that discussed life assistance and financial stability was present 9% in the aggregate of the transcripts. Four of eight participants used this theme somewhere in the aggregate of the transcripts. The sub-theme was *life resources*. Adam noted:

They actually came to my class and just basically told us what's there for you and that you can go in there for anything, even food you're just hungry or if you need to talk. They walk out and they try to communicate to everyone, letting them

know if you feel damaged, they're there for support. I feel damaged a lot of the time. Never having enough food, money to pay rent, or for necessary other things.

Similarly, George stated that:

The social services that they provide here are good. So, I think that they've been helping a lot of students. I've actually been there multiple times so they've helped me with trying to lease back my home, with the hurricanes that affected my family and they actually helped me with that, with donations. They helped me mentally because I was so emotional that I lost focus in school so I would just go there for help. They also helped me getting healthcare so they've helped me so much since I transferred to this school.

This exemplar illustrates the importance of life assistance to persistence to graduation.

### **Theme 7. Resources and Service Achieves Stability**

This theme was found throughout 7% of the transcripts. Three of eight participants used this in the aggregate of the transcripts. The sub-themes were *academic counseling through tutoring* and *learning to communicate*. Adam noted:

So, for instance, if I'm confused on what to do in class, I could go to the tutor or if I'm not sure where to go, they also have resources outside of campus that would help. They've also helped me with online things. I think about what resources are online.

This example illustrates the importance of resources and service to staying on track, and setting and achieving goals to persist to graduation.

### **Theme 8. Professor Support Encourages Participation in Social and Academic Activities and Maintains Confidence**

This theme was noted 6% of the time. This theme was used by three of eight of the participants in the aggregate of the transcripts. The sub-theme was professor *encouragement during difficult times*. George noted:

The professors helped me keep more motivated with the year of my father passing. I was in college. I was going to college maybe that next year and I told him where I was going to go and where I was going to do when, when I, you know, when he passed, it took a toll on me and I actually started failing in all my classes and all my courses and I ended up telling the instructors why, and when they found out about my father passing, each of them in all my courses took the time to actually help me in letting me go to office hours to do the leg work late and helped me come up and get everything done because they understood how it felt and that's what motivated me. That is, it showed that at this community college, the instructors actually care about their students and what their students are doing. So that motivated me to complete because they gave me motivation and I have motivation from my father. Their help kept me on track.

The example above illustrates the importance of professor support in assisting students in both academic and personal areas of a student's life.

### **Theme 9. Use of Wraparound Services Is Need Driven and Helps to Persist**

This final theme was present 5% of the time in the aggregate of the transcripts. Two of eight participants used this theme somewhere in the aggregated transcripts. The sub-theme was *providing services*. George noted:

I would say this will be the first year. I used it a lot. I used it this year a lot more than I did in the last year, maybe more than two years ago, I believe it was last year for math class. I was using the tutor center, helping me with it, so now that I did it at this community college, I plan on doing it more at the university after I graduate because I learned that being in programs actually helps you more than hurts you so it broadens up and motivates you and keeps your mind clear as some of the students you don't know actually be in the same courses as you were going into the same field of study. I met a lot of people that from the National Honor Society, so doing that now helped me out a lot. I plan on doing it for the rest of my, you know, college here.

This example illustrates the need for wraparound services. Wraparound services when used often and early appeared to be useful to persistence to graduation.

The above nine themes are represented in descending order of frequency used in NVivo 12 Pro. These frequencies suggest that participants described these themes in order of priority necessary to achieve persistence to graduation.

### **Interpretation of the Results**

In this section, a brief interpretation of the results is offered (Overarching Themes, Appendix F, Table 4.3). More details of these results are presented in chapter five. The results are briefly contrasted and aligned with available literature. More details of the findings with the aligned existing literature will be presented in depth in chapter five.

There were 12 interview questions. There were nine lumped (emergent) themes. These nine themes came from 50 nodes. As stated previously, when the nodes were lumped,

aggregated, and in-source coded, the following nine major themes emerged because of percent of coverage (frequencies). These emergent themes included:

1. Tutoring is essential,
2. Motivation/Encouragement is built,
3. Persistence/Coaching can promote graduation,
4. Overcoming social and academic barriers is necessary for persistence,
5. Keeping on track to achieve persistence,
6. Life assistance maintains financial stability,
7. Resources and service achieve stability,
8. Professor support to encourage participation in social and academic activities maintains confidence, and
9. Use of wraparound services is need driven and helps to persist.

Appendix F shows the above nine overarching themes, weight of the themes (frequencies), sub-themes, and exemplars of the words of the students, theme by theme.

There were nine themes expressed with NVivo 12 Pro and a table of these expressed themes, weights (frequencies), sub-themes, and experiences of participants with their words are found in Table 4.3 in Appendix F. For example, Adam said, regarding the theme tutoring:

I've gone to a couple events and services they've held here. I think it's helped me get to know people more, which has also helped me know more information about things such as applying for college or for graduation. I didn't even know you need to apply for graduation. So that kind of helped getting out and talking to people around here and seeing what's going on. Not even just with that but how to do things pretty much. I mean you have to kind of figure things out on your own. Just



offering all the services they've offered and all the events they've held that I've gone to just have helped me learn more about what's going on in the community, in school and stuff like that.

In contrast, David noted:

The tutoring center, it helped out a lot. I remember a class, it was an astronomy class that I start to struggle with the lab reports and I didn't have time for my wife's cousin to help me make it to the tutor center, then they started doing tutoring online and I was able to just get on from my job and complete my work and this is also very beneficial with the services they do here. Services such as announcements. Other students and teachers, they inform you about events if there are students who needed help in classes in this and that they either offer a tutor or office hours.

Findings suggested that tutoring was essential to setting and achieving goals, attending class regularly, and learning about community services.

For motivation/encouragement, David noted, "I've gone to tutoring for sure. The professors really motivated you, they have open hours and they helped a lot to understand certain assignments that I myself couldn't understand." The above suggested that motivation/encouragement are built and are necessary for students to persist.

Detailed discussion of these themes with the alignment to the literature is found in chapter five. Nevertheless, despite the research question and supporting interview questions, these findings are supported by prior literature on persistence (Deil-Amen, 2011; Tinto, 2002). The most expressed theme was tutoring and this theme appeared to be consistent with the available literature for what community college students say contributes the most to persistence

to stay in college (Cooper, 2010; Rheinheimer, Grace-Odeleye, Francoise, & Kusorgbor, 2017). Similarly, motivation/encouragement was found to be a theme and this theme is not dissimilar to what students say are influences on persistence (Wibrowski, Matthews, & Kitsantas, 2017). As indicated, a detailed interpretation of the findings aligned with the literature is provided in chapter five.

### **Data Source Triangulation of Major Themes and Personal Artifacts**

In this study, participants were asked to bring a personal artifact to the interview. This was done in an effort to triangulate the personal artifacts against the major themes. Data source triangulation is a powerful technique that facilitates validation of data through cross verification from two or more sources (Waltz, Strickland, & Lentz, 2016). In particular, it refers to the application and combination of several research methods in the study of the same phenomenon (e.g., the personal interview against the personal interview) (Waltz, Strickland, & Lentz, 2016). In data triangulation, findings are correlated with different research methods (Waltz, Strickland, & Lentz, 2016). In this study, each participant brought a personal artifact to the interview. In examining what was brought to the interview, the participants (without being told how to identify the artifact) nonetheless identified the artifact and the theme to which it related. For example, if they brought a family photo, they indicated it was because these were the people that motivated and encouraged them.

To triangulate the personal artifacts with the major themes, NVivo 12 Pro was used to triangulate against all nine themes, and two of the nine themes agreed. In fact, seven of eight participants brought two artifacts. For example, seven of the eight participants brought family photos and indicated that these photos were of people who motivated and encouraged them. Photos were triangulated with motivation/encouragement. Five of eight students brought

academic letters (e.g., the National Honor Society), and indicated that such an honor was because of tutoring. Tutoring then was triangulated against honors, and agreement occurred. For example, Henry brought in a letter from the National Honor Society and said, “I never would have thought I could join the National Honor Society, but the tutoring was helpful.” Similarly, for (Motivation/Encouragement and Portraits), Adam brought a family photo and indicated, “These are the people who keep me grounded and motivated.” Similarly, Henry brought a photo of the family and indicated, “If it was not for these people, I would not have a reason for being. My father is in this picture, and he is gone now, and he motivated me.” George brought a cross and said, “This cross belonged to my father and now I have it. My father motivated me and so does this cross.” These exemplars illustrated the usefulness of data triangulation in adding another method to reviewing the findings.

### **Summary**

The purpose of this study was to understand how community college students perceive wraparound services and how these services impact students’ persistence. Interview results to 12 interview questions found 50 nodes and expressed nine major themes. These nine major themes included:

1. Tutoring is essential,
2. Motivation/Encouragement is built,
3. Persistence/coaching can promote graduation,
4. Overcoming social and academic barriers is necessary for persistence,
5. Keeping on track to achieve persistence,
6. Life assistance maintains financial stability,
7. Resources and services achieve stability,

8. Professor support to encourage participation in social and academic activities maintains confidence, and
9. Use of wraparound services is need driven and helps to persist.

Altogether, nine major themes were expressed, when tutoring and motivation/encouragement were counted only once. Students expressed satisfaction with having tutoring and motivation/encouragement. Findings from this study associated well with previous research findings and the problem statement presented in chapter one.

When colleges include wraparound service programs, these programs often address barriers, such as a lack of funds necessary to navigate college (Castleman & Page, 2016; Castleman, Page, & Schooley, 2014). One of the problems within community colleges is their lack of control over external factors (i.e., academically unprepared students, lack of family support, lack of financial support, and student maturity) (CCX, 2014). Lack of control contributes to the high dropout rate in many community colleges. According to Ivy Tech Community College of Indiana (2014), these community colleges must develop expertise on the issue of college persistence. These facts are found in this present study. For example, Adam noted:

I think that they've actually helped students. I've actually been there multiple times so they've helped me with trying to lease back my home, after the hurricanes that affected my family and they actually helped me with that, with donations. They helped me mentally because I was so emotional that I lost focus in school so I would go there for help. They also helped me with getting healthcare so they've helped me so much since I transferred to this school. So, they showed you the services are a plus.

The findings in this study suggested that life assistance is necessary to maintain financial stability among community college students to promote persistence.

There is evidence that suggests that many colleges differ in their effectiveness and their efforts in helping college students graduate on time (Ivy Tech Community College of Indiana, 2014). Community colleges should control college-related problems as well as community-related problems, though they may not succeed at controlling them both simultaneously (Ivy Tech Community College of Indiana, 2014). A foremost problem facing many community colleges is how to promote success with the students already enrolled (Ivy Tech Community College of Indiana, 2014). For example, Boy stated:

I've gotten lots of emails with events going on for the community and for the students there's our POD seven, which since I'm in the Human Services Program, I know a lot about that POD seven [tutoring] and it offers lots of services. They have a food pantry so you can always go there. They have life coaches if you need somebody to talk to you about situations or just any kind of information with outside resources. So that's helped a lot and that's where I pretty much get they have [. . .] flyers around the school with people talking about what's going on. POD seven is very good for tutoring.

The findings suggested that both tutoring and coaching are essential in wraparound services to assist students to achieve and persist to graduation.

Findings from this study suggested that a traditional barrier to persistence, such as lack of tutoring, was perceived to exist within this student population. Themes of tutoring, motivation/encouragement, keeping students on track, helping students with academic and social obstacles, life assistances, resources and service, professor support to encourage participation in

social and academic activities, and use of wraparound services appeared to contribute to persistence to stay in college and to graduate. Students verbalized how important another theme, life assistance (e.g., food pantry, help with finding financial resources to manage outside activity as well as college-related activities, etc.), was to their ability to persist. For example, Charles noted:

I'm at wraparound services, kind of like what POD has or maybe even student life, you know, they provide lots of students with the ability to meet other people in the night activities and having a support system, meeting those people also, making sure, you know, as far as parts of Ivan (social support in the POD) goes with the food and things that maybe some students aren't able to get. Just having support and necessary things the tutoring center, you know, if you're falling behind in classes, things like that.

This finding suggested that life assistance is necessary to maintain financial stability. Further results suggested also that overcoming social and academic barriers is necessary for persistence.

When the data was triangulated with the themes expressed from NVivo 12 Pro and personal artifacts, two of the major themes agreed. These two themes were tutoring and motivation/encouragement. For example, Henry brought in a letter from the National Honor Society and said, "I never would have thought I could join the National Honor Society, but the tutoring was helpful." Similarly, for motivation/encouragement and portraits, Adam brought a family photo and indicated, "These are the people who keep me grounded and motivated." Similarly, Boy brought a photo of the family and indicated, "If it was not for these people, I would not have a reason for being. My father is in this picture, and he is gone now, and he motivated me." This agreement added a degree of trustworthiness to the findings and confidence.

There appeared to be an association with the themes, research questions, interview questions, and the problem statement. Chapter five includes the conclusions, which includes the themes as they are aligned with the current literature, implications, recommendations for future research, and recommendations for actions.

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **CONCLUSIONS**

The purpose of this study was to understand how community college students perceive wraparound services and how these services impact students' persistence. The population was eight ( $N = 8$ ) second year students enrolled at Community College X. Chapter five is divided into five sections. The first section includes an interpretation of the findings. This section includes conclusions of all themes found and the associated research questions as supported by findings in the literature. The second section includes a review of how Deil-Amen's (2011) theoretical frameworks were integrated into this study. The third section includes implications and recommendations for actions. The fourth section contains recommendations for researchers interested in this topic including suggested next steps. The fifth section includes the conclusions with a summary of the research presented along with the significance of the work.

#### **Alignment of the Findings with the Literature**

The data gleaned from the semi-structured interview are presented in more detail in this section, theme by theme. Contemporary scholarly literature is used to support and substantiate or disclaim the findings in this study theme by theme. RQ<sub>1</sub> and RQ<sub>2</sub> offer the major themes and the supporting literature and are presented below.

#### **Research Questions and Conclusions from Findings**

Two research questions were offered in this study. These research questions were structured to develop a better understanding of the use of wraparound services and persistence to graduation for community college students. The research questions were:

RQ<sub>1</sub>: How do second year community college students understand the role of the college wraparound services in their academic success?



RQ2: How do existing mechanisms and modalities used by community college wraparound services impact-academic and social integration of community college students?

### **Findings**

When NVivo 12 Pro was used to lump and aggregate the 50 nodes from 12 interview questions, and when in-source coding was conducted, nine themes emerged as major themes. These nine themes expressed eight findings because keeping on track was excluded. Keeping on track was found in another theme and thus not used as a finding. These eight major findings were:

1. Tutoring Is Essential,
2. Motivation/Encouragement is Built; It Is Not Inherent, It Must be Fostered,
3. Persistence/Coaching Can Promote Graduation,
4. Overcoming Social and Academic Barriers Promotes the Motivation to Stay on Track,
5. Life Assistance Helps Grow Financial Stability,
6. Resources and Service Achieve Stability,
7. Professor Support to Encourage Participation in Social and Academic Activities Maintains Confidence, and
8. Use of Wraparound Services is Need Driven and Helps to Persist.

#### **Finding 1: Tutoring Is Essential**

Tutoring was the most frequently expressed finding in this study as a means of persistence for community college students. In fact, this finding was expressed 20.7% in the data gleaned and this finding was found across all eight transcripts, or more explicitly, all eight participants had used the term somewhere in their transcripts. The findings in this study

suggested that participants thought that tutoring was essential to help them persistent to graduation. In the narratives, participants noted the need for tutoring, and some participants gave examples of how it strengthened their college experiences, while others explained how their college experiences were hampered if tutoring was not offered. For example, Henry noted:

The tutor center, it helped out a lot with me. I remember a class, it was an astronomy class that I start to struggle with the lab reports and I didn't have time for my wife's cousin to make it to the tutor center, then they started doing tutoring online and I was able to just get on from my job and complete my work also is very beneficial with the services they have here.

Likewise, Adam noted:

They helped me mentally; because I was so emotional that I lost focus in school so I would just go to tutoring for help. They also helped me by directing me to get healthcare so they've helped me so much since I transferred to this school. So, they showed you the services are a plus for me, especially tutoring.

In addition, Edward said, “Knowing that I always have support for helping me through college has always been something that I think is influenced my work at that college and is something that can help me if I ever have a struggle to use the tutoring services.”

These examples illustrate the usefulness of tutoring as an important component in wraparound services.

The literature suggested that tutoring plays a crucial role in an undergraduate’s sense of social and academic integration (Tinto, 2000; Bean & Eaton, 2001; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). Findings from this study are similar to other studies regarding the literature on tutoring. For example, Rheinheimer, Grace-Odeleye, Francois, and Kusorgbor (2010) conducted a

longitudinal study at a public university in Pennsylvania with 129 students from a state-funded program (ACT 101) to look at the advantages of tutoring. This state-funded program was designed to provide support services to economically and educationally disadvantaged students. This study had several variables including measures of academic performance, retention, and use and frequency of tutoring. Other variables included the number of years in college, gender, as well as total credits earned towards graduation. Data were analyzed utilizing *t*-tests, chi-square tests, multivariate and multiple regression, and logistic regression. Although this was a quantitative study, Rheinheimer, Grace-Odeleye, Francois, and Kusorgbor (2010) suggested that tutoring had a positive relationship with retention and academic performance. Further findings from this study also suggested that tutoring could be effective as a strategy for succeeding toward graduation (Rheinheimer, Grace-Odeleye, Francois, & Kusorgbor, 2010).

While Rheinheimer, Grace-Odeleye, Francois, and Kusorgbor (2010) used gender as a variable to determine effectiveness of tutoring on persistence, in this study, gender was only an inclusion variable for participation. In similar findings, Cooper (2010) conducted a study at a tutoring center to determine the effectiveness of drop-in tutoring. Cooper (2010) measured the effectiveness of drop-in tutoring and the rate of persistence. Findings suggested that among the students who visited the center more than 10 times a quarter, those students demonstrated more than a 10% higher rate of persistence. Moreover, those students generally had a higher GPA (0.2 points on a 4.0 GPA scale) as compared to their counterparts who did not regularly visit the center (Cooper, 2010). Tutoring is essential to academic achievement. Participants in this study noted that tutoring helped them keep their grades at the passing level, stay on track, and attend classes regularly. Participants also noted that tutoring was essential to increasing their confidence and willingness to stay in school. Further findings regarding tutoring suggested that participants

appeared to engage more often in the academic environment with both faculty and other students when tutoring occurred.

### **Finding 2: Motivation/Encouragement is Built; Motivation Is Not Inherent, and Must be Fostered**

This is a finding that was expressed 17.5% of the time. At least six of eight participants expressed a need for motivation and encouragement somewhere in their transcripts. The results of this study promoted the idea that encouragement was necessary to build confidence and character in students in order to help them persist to graduation. Participants expressed the need to interact with others in a social and academic environment to gain necessary skills to learn. For example, in this study, Boy said, “I think they assist by offering a lot of resources to help you through. They offer assistance with signing up for classes, financial aid. Just support when you're struggling. So, I think they motivate you.”

Another comment concerning motivation came from Charles, who noted, “They have lots of resources for you to not want to drop out if you're feeling like you want to drop out.

This is motivating to stay in school.”

George noted:

I promised my dad I would graduate from college, so he has always motivated me. He was a pastor and always wore a cross. I got the cross when he died, and now I always wear it. It motivates me as he did when he was alive.

Henry noted:

Teachers are a family who assist me. They are coaches. That is what they are called in the POD. I have other classmates that I was able to email and assist me

in the otherwise easier things. I have had great instructors that helped me through classes at, you know, my hard time.

These examples illustrate the importance of motivation/encouragement to persistence.

The participants wanted to believe in the ability to persist.

While findings in this study on motivation/encouragement are similar to other research findings, in this study, the literature on motivation/encouragement appeared to vary in scope. One definition of motivation includes two rather finite terms, intrinsic and extrinsic (Pintrich & Schunk, 2002). Intrinsic motivation is the process of engaging in an activity for its own sake (Pintrich & Schunk, 2002). In contrast, extrinsic motivation is to perform an action that serves as a means to an end (Pintrich & Schunk, 2002). In extrinsic motivation, the key concepts include internalization and integration (Liao, Edlin, & Fendenzi, 2012). Some researchers who appeared to utilize neither definition for the term motivation include Fong, Acee, and Weinstein (2016), Grillo and Leist (2013), and Martin, Galentino, and Townsend (2014). These researchers' findings are more closely aligned with this study.

In this study, Henry noted:

Tutoring helped me be more because it motivated me to do things that I needed to do. The year of my father passing, I was in college. I was going to college maybe that next year and I told him where I was going to go and what I was going to do when, when I, you know, when he passed, it took a toll on me and I actually started failing in all my classes and all my courses and I ended up telling the instructors why and when they found out about my father passing, they, each of them in all my courses took the time to actually help me in letting me go to office hours to do the leg work late and helped me come up and get everything done

because they understood how it felt and that's what motivated me. That is, it showed that at this community college, the instructors actually care about their students and how their students are doing. So that motivated me to complete because they gave me motivation and I have motivation from my father.

These examples illustrate the importance of professor support to assist students with academic and life challenges through goal-setting.

Similarly, Fong, Acee, and Weinstein (2016) found a high level of mastery-approach goals and a moderate level of performance-approach goal orientation, all of which suggested an ideal combination of academic motivation for grade point average and persistence among this student population. Grillo and Leist (2013) found that motivation/encouragement was a mode of academic support and had a higher likelihood of producing a positive result such as graduation. Similarly, Martin, Galentino, and Townsend (2014) found that successful graduates have strong motivation/encouragement factors, which resulted in persistence. This finding is similar to what was found in this study, suggesting that motivation and encouragement were associated with persistence to graduation.

Liao, Ferdenzi, and Edlin (2012) conducted a study to determine how intrinsic motivation, extrinsic motivation, and self-regulated learning efficacy influenced academic achievement among international and domestic community college students. Findings from this study suggested that self-regulated learning activities affected academic achievement only for international students. However, these researchers (Liao, Ferdenzi, & Edlin, 2012) constructed a path model that was used to describe directed dependencies, in this case the direct and indirect relationship among the variables for motivation. These researchers (Liao, Ferdenzi & Edlin,

2012) found that among the international students, both forms of motivation indirectly affected academic achievement. However, this path model did not yield similar results for domestic students. Thus, these researchers (Liao, Ferdenzi, & Edlin, 2012) concluded that motivation, whether intrinsic or extrinsic, did not have a direct effect on persistence, academic achievement, or graduation for domestic students. In other words, these researchers (Liao, Ferdenzi, & Edlin, 2012) found that motivational variables were not predictive of academic achievement for community college students. Motivation/encouragement comes from multiple sources. Motivation/encouragement is cited as important for college students to graduate on time (Liao, Ferdenzi, & Edlin, 2012). Findings from this study suggested that these participants appeared to highly value motivation/encouragement. Further findings suggested that such motivation was academically as well as socially linked.

### **Finding 3: Coaching Can Promote Persistence**

Findings from this study suggested that persistence/coaching is cited by students as a helpful technique to assist them to develop skills to study and progress in college. In this study, coaching was found 13% of the time or four of eight participants cited coaching as important to promote persistence somewhere in the aggregated transcripts. For example, Boy noted:

They have life coaches if you need somebody to talk to you about situations or just any kind of information with outside resources. So that's helped a lot and that's where I pretty much get they have [. . .] flyers around the school with people talking about what's going on.

In contrast, Charles noted:

I'm at wraparound services, kind of or maybe even student life, you know, they provide students lots of different services, their ability to meet other people in the

night activities and having support system, meeting those people also, making sure, you know, as far as parts of Ivan (social support in the POD) goes with the food and things that maybe some students aren't able to get. Just having support and necessary things like the tutoring center, you know if you're falling behind in classes. This is what they call coaching here.

Henry noted:

Teachers are a family who assist me. They are coaches. That is what they are called in the POD. I have other classmates that I was able to email and assist me in the otherwise easier things. I have had great instructors that helped me through classes at, you know, my hard time. So, the way I've got assisted in this service is important. In the POD, they are called coaches.

These examples provide support for coaching as an intervention for academic achievement.

Coaching by definition is a combination of assistance including mentoring, assistance with federal financial aid applications, and other non-pecuniary interventions (Caruthers & Fox, 2015). In other words, academic coaching begins as the coaching style relationship and progresses to academic needs (Barkley, 2011). For college instructors, academic coaching starts with the understanding that when the levels of success and retention are low, they are improved through intervention, and changed in teaching (Barkley, 2011). Coaching was expressed as a theme and a finding in this study. This is similar to findings in the literature. For example, Woods and Williams (2013) conducted a study to identify variables predictive of first-year persistence among black male students enrolled in community colleges. These researchers examined persistence variables in four domains: (a) background/defining variables, (b) academic variables, (c) social variables, and (d) environmental variables. With hierarchical logistic



regression analyses, findings suggested that among this population, activities such as participation in intramural sports, extracurricular activities, talking with faculty, study habits, hours worked per week, supporting others, and life stressors were predictive of persistence. In other words, these findings suggested that environmental variables were substantially more predictive of persistence/coaching and academic achievement.

Similarly, Bettinger and Baker (2011) conducted a randomized experiment to test the effectiveness of an individualized student coaching program. In this study, students were randomly assigned to be coached. The coach contacted the students at regular time frames in an effort to guide students to complete their long-term goals, build skills, learn time management techniques, increase self-advocacy, and increase study skills. Bettinger and Baker (2011) found that students who were randomly assigned to a coach were more likely to persist, and more importantly, were more likely to be attending college one year after the coaching had concluded. These researchers concluded that coaching as a technique was a more cost-effective mode of achieving retention and completion goals as compared to other retention strategies such as increasing financial aid. Persistence and coaching are related to student success. In this study students expressed a need for coaching in an effort to persist to graduation. The participants in this study also felt a level of satisfaction and a degree of competence when a coach was assigned to assist them.

**Finding 4: Overcoming Social and Academic Barriers Promotes the Motivation to Stay on Track.**

This finding reflects the fact that participants (12% or three of eight participants) frequently cited a need to be more socially acclimated to gain confidence as a result of overcoming social and academic barriers. For example, Henry noted:

It helped me pass, not one course, but three, four courses that I needed help in. The staff there that are helping you, they really take the time out to work with you. They don't let you do it by yourself if you need help. They help. They help with even the smallest thing they help you. So, it helped me achieve a lot in my courses.

George noted:

I have learned to use academic support because I came to know that this support is there to help me through college. I think this has influenced my work at the college and is something that can help me. Knowing these services exist helped me overcome a lot of barriers.

Frank, in contrast, noted:

I haven't really been to any social events. Actually, it probably diminished my first year. I would go to eat lunch and stuff in facilities here, but now I just, I guess maybe not so much because of my work schedule, not necessarily something that the college did, but just basically my own personal life. It affected me to not attend social activities in the college.

These examples illustrate the importance of overcoming academic and social barriers.

These participants also noted that they were affected (barriers) when they were not doing well in school or not attending social activities at the college.

Academic and social barriers include demographic factors, academic factors, and situational factors. In considering demographic variables, Markle (2015) noted that there is little evidence to suggest that demographic variables directly influence persistence among non-

traditional college students. Taniguchi and Kaufman (2005) found no significant relationship between gender, race/ethnicity, or income.

In issuing a report on academic barriers on African-American girls' high school and college completion rates, the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund (2014) noted that the existing literature is just the opposite for women and particularly for women of color. In fact, the report noted that one-third of African-American girls did not graduate from high school on time (within four years), compared to only 18% of white female students and 22% of all female students. Moreover, if these girls enrolled in college, they were more likely to not persist to graduation (NAACP, 2014) compared to their white peers. Taniguchi and Kauffman (2005) also found that college grade point average had a small negative effect on degree completion for men but not for women. Taniguchi and Kauffman (2005) further found that academic factors did not significantly affect college completion.

Academic factors that may impact students' persistence to graduation are also inconsistent in the body of research. Some researchers have found positive relationships between grade point average and persistence to graduation (Swenson Goguen, Hester, & Nordstrom, 2011), while other researchers found no relationship between grade point average and persistence to graduation (Bergman et al., 2014). Types of enrollment (full or part-time) have been found to have a positive relationship on persistence. For example, Taniguchi and Kaufman (2005) found that type of enrollment (part-time) negatively affected persistence, while Bergman et al. (2014) found that type of enrollment had no effect on persistence. While academic factors may or may not have a relationship to persistence to graduation among community college students, researchers have examined various situational factors. Situational factors encompass inter-role conflicts found across multiple domains including work, family, and school. For

example, some researchers have found that women have higher levels of conflict often associated with their internalization of the dual roles of mothering and the ideal student role (Christie, Teff, Cree, Hounsell, & McCune, 2008; Deutsch & Schmertz, 2011; Marandet & Wainwright, 2010).

Furthermore, students believed that if they had assistance to stay on track, they would complete their programs of study. For example, Adam noted:

They helped me by keeping me on track by motivation because they do provide those services as well, but they also help the individual on Tuesday by setting goals during that time, they had me write down goals. Goals included what I wanted to do by the end of the semester and what grades I wanted to improve tremendously to keep me on track.

David also noted:

I know that like I don't try to skip or anything, but if I do, I do struggle, I just had to do a five-page essay and I didn't know how to start, what is it called? Oh, the outline for it. So, I went to the tutoring center or I can also meet with a life coach so I can get organized. That helped me out. They helped me stay on track and try to do that paper on time.

Findings in this study suggested that keeping students on track is augmented by helping them with goal setting, prioritizing the order of work to be done, and recognizing the importance of using the services available.

Keeping students on track is a common theme explored in the literature. Brooms and Davis (2017) conducted a qualitative study to investigate the collegiate experience of 59 black males enrolled at three historically white colleges. These researchers studied how these students constructed meaning from their collegiate experiences and their efforts for educational success.

The researchers found that these students articulated two themes, which positively shaped their collegiate experiences. These two themes that kept students on track were (a) peer-to-peer bonding and associations with other black males and (b) mentoring from black faculty members. These researchers concluded that the social networks and micro-communities enhanced and supported black male persistence in college (Brooms & Davis, 2017).

Overcoming social and academic barriers requires motivation and motivation takes a team effort. Findings from this study suggested that participants perceived keeping on track as important for persistence to graduation, and their motivation was affected by their ability to overcome obstacles and barriers. Further findings suggested these participants viewed activities to stay on track as goal setting, prioritizing the work to be completed, and staying on time with the work to be completed. Participants noted that overcoming social and academic barriers was important to persist to graduation. In this study, participants noted that if they were enrolled only part-time, they were unable to take advantage of all of the wraparound services and therefore unable to overcome social and academic barriers. In some cases, their grade point average was affected.

#### **Finding 5: Life Assistance Helps Grow Financial Stability**

The participants of this study talked of their need to have assistance even if they were answering another interview question. Four of eight participants noted that they were unable to concentrate on their study needs in college to be successful and to persist to graduate if they experienced any financial insecurity. For example, Adam noted:

So, they actually came to my class and basically told us I what's there. You can go in there for anything like food or if you're just hungry or you need to talk. They

walk out and they try to communicate to everyone, letting them know if you are damaged, they're there for support.

Charles noted:

We have a very good system here for students to know that, that if you're struggling, we have the resources to help you and lots of directions people can take. A faculty member could walk a student down to the tutoring center or to a POD 7, or the Samaritan Center to counseling and stuff.

Frank noted:

It made me aware that there's a lot of community resources out there that I wasn't aware of that they can actually help other people like myself, especially insurance, I'm 21, but I didn't know where I would get insurance. That really helped me out. And then I can refer people to the POD and tell them, oh, we have this and this and this and that would really help the students out.

Edward noted, "My understanding is if you have any problems, financially or I guess homelessness or something like that, there are services that help you with that and try to guide you to get further." The above exemplars illustrate the importance of life assistance to success to persistence to graduation.

In the literature, life assistance includes housing, food, help with utilities, and family caregiving. For example, Hallett and Freas (2017) conducted a qualitative study using life histories to determine how students experiencing homelessness succeeded in community college. Themes that emerged from their study (Hallett & Freas, 2017) suggested that students who were homeless described a life filled with instabilities. According to Hallett and Freas (2017), residential insecurity forces students to prioritize meeting basic needs over educational

achievement. These researchers (Hallett & Freas, 2017) concluded that lacking residential security permeated students' thoughts and framed how they approached the educational process. Other insecurities exist for students such as food.

Students in this study noted how food assistance was important. Food insecurity is defined as a life condition in which a person or a family does not have adequate resources to buy or secure the necessary food items to sustain them (United States Department of Agriculture, 2013). Gaines, Robb, Knol, and Sickler (2014) conducted a study and found that 14% of the students interviewed were experiencing some type of food insecurity at some point. Patton-Lopez, Lopez-Cervillos, Cancel-Tirado, and Vazquez (2014) conducted a study in rural Oregon and found that 59% of the student population had experienced food insecurity with or without hunger in the past year. Life assistance is a basic need for student health, engagement, and success. In this study, participants noted that food, utility, or housing insecurities contributed to their lack of success in college.

### **Finding 6: Resources and Services Help Students Achieve Stability**

In this study, three of the eight participants noted that the availability of resources and services were necessary if they were to achieve success and persist to graduation. For example, George noted:

The tutor center is excellent as a resource here. While, I don't know if it counts, but the National Honor Society is an excellent resource. I also like the café lounge here and that, that helped me because of communicating with other students and people and I feel like this promotes bonding, get new relationships, and building up a strong foundation. I think all of these things can be barriers if you don't get help with them.

Henry noted:

The tutor center, it helped out a lot with me. I remember a class, it was an astronomy class that I start to struggle with the lab reports and I didn't have time for my wife's cousin to make it to the tutor center, then they started doing tutoring online and I was able to just get on from my job and complete my work also is very beneficial with the services they have here.

The above exemplars illustrate that participants recognized the need for wraparound services such as tutoring to increase their chances for persistence to graduation.

Keith (2015) found that younger students, unemployed students, and students stressed by increased tuition used support services more often than nontraditional students. Keith (2015) concluded that in researching use of support services, students were often asked what the likelihood was that they would use supports services, rather than how often they actually did use such services. Grant-Vallone, Reid, Umali, and Pohert (2004) found that to increase student retention rates and enhance persistence to graduation, colleges needed to provide social support services. Resources and service are vital to student understanding and success. In this study, the mean age was 21 and these participants were traditional students. They noted that they needed resources and services as a support if they were to persist to graduation.

#### **Finding 7: Professor Support Encourages Participation in Social and Academic Activities and Maintains Confidence**

This finding was found 12% of the time in the aggregate of the transcripts. In the transcripts, three of eight participants noted that overtures of assistance from their professors provided them with support to keep them engaged in college. For example, Edward noted:



The instructors help you study for tests then. So, for instance, if I'm confused on what to do in class, I could go to the tutor or if I'm not sure on where to go, they also have resources outside of campus that would help. They've also helped me with online things that make me, I think, knowledgeable about what online resources are available. They help you with your homework if you need it, and that's really great.

Adam noted, "The instructors here help you with writing your goals, getting to know what resources are available inside or outside the college." Boy noted, "I wanted to be in the National Honor Society and my professors kept me on target to do just that."

Findings from this study suggested that some participants had no confidence in their ability to complete college. Some students enter college with less confidence in themselves and their abilities and this often hastens their departure (Peaslee, 2017). Faculty members are in a unique position to impact students' self-efficacy, ultimately impacting their academic success (Peaslee, 2017). Peaslee (2017) conducted an exploratory study to quantitatively assess whether a relationship existed between confirmation employed by faculty members in the classroom and changes in reported academic self-efficacy among students. Findings suggested there is relationship between a change in self-efficacy and perceived self-confirmation (Peaslee, 2017). Other researchers have found that a relationship between student and faculty interaction influenced a student's decision to stay or leave college (Cotton & Wilson, 2006). Similarly, Gerhardt (2016) found that when faculty members monitor his/her verbal as well as non-verbal communication and treat students as individuals, they enhance the students' prospects for academic success. Professor support is vital to student success. Participants in this study noted that when a professor gave them solicited or unsolicited support, they benefited and gained the

confidence they needed to persist to graduation. Participants expressed satisfaction with professors who recognized the need for support.

### **Finding 8: Use of Wraparound Services Is Need Driven and Helps Student Persistence**

In this study, the use of wraparound services was found 5% of the time in the aggregate of the transcripts and was noted by two of the eight participants somewhere in their transcripts. As a finding on more than one interview question, participants in this study noted that use of wraparound services had an impact on their grade point average and success to persist to graduation.

Henry noted:

I get caught up in the work and stuff. So, it definitely helped me a great deal more to become attentive. I struggled with a class my first year and, I went to some wraparound services with, uh, the tutoring maybe several times a month. It definitely made me be more attendant in class because of how far back you get when you are not engaged.

Findings from this study suggested that the availability of wraparound services was not as important as the use of wraparound services.

Use of wraparound services is a theme that is interspersed throughout the data-based literature. For example, Shipp Meeks (2009) conducted a qualitative case study to understand how students' involvement in TRIO Upward Bound and Student Support Services challenged them to make decisions to persist in obtaining a postsecondary degree. The aim of this study was to explore critical influences on the students' participation in these services. Of concern were critical indicators that influenced their decision to obtain or not obtain a postsecondary degree. Shipp Meeks (2009) focused on answering the following three research questions (a) How has

Upward Bound influenced students to enroll in college? (b) How has Student Support Services influenced the persistence of college students? and (c) What factors do students describe as most influential for them as they made decisions to persist in college after being involved in both programs? Findings from the study indicated that five factors were influential in enabling students to enroll and persist in college (a) the creation of a support team to help students stay motivated and focused, (b) the provision of quality one-on-one tutoring, (c) teaching students study strategies for all subjects, (d) providing college knowledge workshops, and (e) providing college tours.

The results of this study (Shipp Meeks, 2009) suggested that these types of activities are effective in increasing the forms of capital outlined in the Neo-Capitalist theories (Social, Cultural, Economic, and Human Capital), all of which can help students enroll and persist in obtaining a postsecondary degree. Shipp Meeks (2009) concluded that the programs implemented by Upward Bound and Student Support Services contributed to help circumvent the forces that are known to impede persistence in obtaining a postsecondary degree. These forces include the militating, negative external, and negative internal forces. The findings also suggested that the family background is not the final factor in determining a student's level of Social and Cultural Capital needs (Shipp Meeks, 2009). The support provided by Upward Bound and Student Support Services was shown to be a stronger determining factor of whether a student will enroll and persist in obtaining a college degree. The use of wraparound services is need driven. Participants in this study noted that use of wraparound services aid in achieving better grades, going to class regularly, and keeping on track. These were the beneficial results of using wraparound services regularly. Participants also noted that having wraparound services was not as important as using these services.

### **Discrepancies in the Findings**

A discrepancy was found only in one finding: Overcoming Social and Academic Barriers. As stated previously, academic factors impacting students' persistence to graduation was also inconsistent.

In this study, George noted:

I have learned to use academic support because I came to know that always this support is there to help me through college. It has always been something that I think has influenced my work at the college and is something that can help me if I ever am struggling and have used the tutoring services. Knowing these services exist helped me overcome a lot of barriers.

Overcoming academic and social barriers is a theme explored frequently through the literature. For example, some researchers have found positive relationships between grade point average and persistence to graduation (Swenson Goguen, Hester, & Nordstrom, 2011), while other researchers have found no relationship between grade point average and persistence to graduation (Bergman et al., 2014). While academic factors may or may not have a relationship on persistence to graduation among community college students, researchers have examined various situational factors. Situational factors encompass inter-role conflicts found across multiple domains including work, family, and school. For example, some researchers have found that women have higher levels of conflict often associated with their internalization of the dual roles of mothering and the ideal student role (Christie, Teff, Cree, Hounsell, & McCune, 2008; Deutsch & Schmertz, 2011; Marandet & Wainwright, 2010). The discrepancy occurs when situational factors such as gender are not considered.

### **Use of Deil-Amen's Social and Academic Integration Theoretical Framework**

Deil-Amen's (2011) theoretical framework on persistence was a suitable framework for this study. As previously stated, according to Weaver-Hightower (2014), a conceptual framework illustrates how a study is theorized and presented. Extrapolating further from Deil-Amen's (2011) conceptual model on persistence, key constructs germane to persistence were included in the interviewing tool to examine how students view persistence. Key concepts included

- use of wraparound services,
- using wraparound services for on-time graduation,
- using wraparound services to create a sense of well-being (belonging), and
- a sense of commitment.

The four key constructs stated above guided the development of the research design, research questions, and the instrumentation in this study.

Deil-Amen's theoretical framework served as the underpinning of this study. Participants noted the importance of overcoming social and academic barriers (social and academic integration) in an effort to persist to graduation. For example, in this study, Adam noted that:

So, for instance, if I'm confused on what to do in class, I could go to the tutor or if I'm not sure on where to go, they also have resources outside of campus that would help. They've also helped me with online things. I think they made me knowledgeable about what online resources are available.

Deil-Amen's (2011) socio-academic integration concept suggested that students persist in higher education when institutional interventions such as wraparound services and resource centers influenced their experiences. This can occur both inside and outside of the classroom, creating a

sense of belonging and positive self-identification as a successful college student. For example, in this study, Boy noted:

I've gone to a couple events and services they've held here. I think it's helped me get to know people more, which has also helped me know more information about things such as applying for college or for graduation. I didn't even know you needed to apply for graduation. So that kind of helped getting out and talking to people around here and seeing what's going on. I mean you have to kind of figure things out on your own. Just offering all the services they've offered and all the events they've held that I've gone to have just helped me learn more about what's going on in the community and what's going on.

Participants noted that wraparound services augmented their use of academic services and their ability to engage in social activities.

Deil-Amen (2011) examined socio-academic integrative moments among two-year college students in career-related programs. Specifically, Deil-Amen (2011) addressed college student persistence and dropouts. A secondary purpose of Deil-Amen's study (2011) was to determine how students successfully cultivate feelings of belonging and competence, reinforce goal commitment, and access valuable social capital. Deil-Amen's findings are in concert with the findings of this study. For example, Deil-Amen (2011) found that when social and academic integration occurs, students are more likely to persist. Social and academic integration includes removing academic and social barriers by providing avenues for students to seek social capital that extends beyond financial aid to address food and housing insecurities. Deil-Amen also found that when faculty are more engaged and provide support through approachability, this engenders and motivates behavior. Deil-Amen (2011) surveyed 238 students with semi-structured

interviews. One differentiation between this study and Deil-Amen's study (2011) was that Deil-Amen attempted to ensure variability in race, gender, social economic status (SES), and age. In this study, gender and age were only used as inclusion variables; and race and SES were not used at all.

### **Implications**

Every study should be well grounded with implications across a broad spectrum based on the findings. The implications should be based on the study and a wide body of the literature if the results are to be used by others to improve their offering. Finally, the implications should address transformative leadership and learning and demonstrate a relationship between transformative leadership and learning and persistence. Participants in this study all appeared to value wraparound services, further suggesting that when offered, they took advantage of such services.

Participants in this study noted the importance of tutoring. Findings suggested that when tutoring was used students thought that their grades were improved, that they attended class and were more engaged, and that they were kept on track. For example, Boy noted:

Tutoring helped me pass, not one course, but three, four courses that I needed help in. The staff there that are helping you, that really take the time out to work with you. They don't let you do it by yourself if you need help. They're the smallest thing they help you on. So, it helped me achieve a lot in my courses here.

Below, implications for individuals, communities, and organizations are offered.

**Individuals.** This study may be of use to students in particular. For example, in this study, when speaking about wraparound services, Charles noted:

I think whenever I need assistance with maybe a paper I'm writing or any schoolwork I know that I can go to the professor and that they can help me go through, you know, finish it out or whatever and my professors seemed like they would reach out to me.

The lessons that can be learned for students are how to challenge and break academic and social barriers while enrolled in college as an avenue to persist to graduation. In this study, Frank reflected:

Knowing that I have that to always be a support for helping me through college has always been something that I think has influenced my work at that college is something that can help me if I ever have a struggle to use the tutoring services.

Findings from this study suggested that when students perceived that support existed, they were influenced toward completing college on time. Doty (2014) found that improving community college graduation rates was an important step towards ensuring economic mobility. Doty (2014) further noted that students sit at the center of the equation for success with persistence. Similarly, Dulabaum (2016) conducted a study with a sample of African-American and Latino males and found, across both groups, financial resources and paying for college emerged as a significant barrier. Dulabaum (2016) also found that when these students were awarded financial aid, they were uncertain how to use this aid. But the barriers do not stop with financial aid. In this study, academic and social barriers were expressed as a theme. In fact, these students expressed concern about the need for life assistance. Lack of social capital such as food and shelter also contribute to inability to persist (Cady, 2014).



In light of the associated findings (Cady, 2014; Doty, 2014) in the literature on academic and social barriers, students need to be taught how to access available resources for life assistance, not only on campus, but also in the wider community, if they are to persist. In other words, they need to be taught how to use transformative learning and how to lead to overcome academic and social barriers. In this study, Henry noted, “What academic challenges that I've had, I've gone to tutoring for sure. The professors’ open hours really helped a lot to understand certain assignments that I myself couldn't understand.” George noted that leadership was important to academic success, reflecting that:

Wow, I have been providing leadership to my classmates through tutoring.

Everyone here is very, very nice. In the POD they tell you that to learn to lead, you have to help someone with what you have learned. I feel good when I am helping someone else learn.

Students must assess resources on their college campus such as those available in wraparound services.

As noted in the discussion of the themes or findings, academic factors impacting students’ persistence to graduation is also inconsistent. Some researchers have found positive relationships between grade point average and persistence to graduation (Swenson Goguen, Hester, & Nordstrom, 2011), while other researchers found no relationship between grade point average and persistence to graduation (Bergman et al., 2014).

To recapture recommendations for students, students should:

- use wraparound services often and as needed,
- learn transformative leadership skills to overcome social and academic barriers,

- take advantage of life assistance for food and shelter to avoid insecurities in these areas, and
- learn to utilize professors' support when offered and when needed.

**Communities.** Communities are essential to the survival of community college students to persistence to graduation. There is a dearth of literature demonstrating the nature of this relationship. In most cities, there are fraternities and sororities that can serve as mentors to community college students, conduct study sessions, and internalize students into the social settings of the community. Communities can provide life assistance resources and part-time jobs. Students who attend community college are an integral part of the community. In this study, Adam noted that:

Basically, they should make the social services that they provide here available to students at all schools. I think that they've been actually helping a lot of students that I've actually been there multiple times so they've helped me with trying to lease back home, like the hurricanes that affected my family and they actually helped me with that, with donations. They helped me mentally; because I was so emotional that I lost focus in school so I would just go there for help. They also helped me getting healthcare so they've helped me so much since I transferred to this school. So, they showed you the services are a plus for me.

The above statement illustrates the usefulness of wraparound services to students as they progress in their programs of study.

To recapture recommendations for communities, communities should:

- provide life assistance through food, utility services, and housing programs;
- provide part-time jobs as available; and

- organize churches, fraternities, and sororities in an effort to adopt students to socialize them into the community.

**Organizations/Institutions.** In this study, Charles noted:

I'm at wraparound services, kind of or maybe even student life, you know, they provide students lots of different services, their ability to meet other people in the night activities and having support system, meeting those people also, making sure, you know, as far as parts of Ivan (social support in the POD) goes with the food and things that maybe some students aren't able to get. Just having support and necessary things like the tutoring center, you know, if you're falling behind in classes, things like that. This is what they called coaching here.

Organizations/Institutions and the value to persistence to graduation is an area frequently discussed in the literature. These categories align with similar statements of the participants in this study. As previously stated in chapter two, the seminal work on wraparound services was done at the City University of New York (CUNY) (Dynarski & Oster, 2016). CUNY conducted a randomized, controlled study, the Accelerated Study in Associate Programs (ASAP) (Dynarski & Oster, 2016). In this study, CUNY targeted barriers and provided comprehensive financial and time-intensive support for a cohort of low-income community college remedial students, most of whom were students of color (Dynarski & Oster, 2016). As stated previously in chapter two, with the ASAP program, a group of remedial students was required to enroll in block schedules full-time, to meet with counselors two times a month, and to take a non-credit first-year seminar.

Additionally, these CUNY students were also required to get tutoring, and to complete remedial courses early on in their education. They were also given tuition over what their financial aid offered, and they received free transportation, free textbooks, and several free social

events. The program costs to the college was \$5000 per student per year (Dynarski & Oster, 2016). The ASAP study used a comparison group (a group of similar students who did not receive any of this extra support) who started at the same time as the ASAP students (the experimental group). The comparison group graduated at a rate of 21% after three years whereas, the ASAP group graduated at a rate of 48% in the same time period; ASAP more than doubled CUNY's three-year remedial graduation rate.

According to Dynarski and Oster (2016), the ASAP program works with all types of community college students because it addresses the actual barriers that at-risk students face, regardless of remedial status, because most students at community colleges are at risk. As previously discussed, ASAP addressed problems with transportation by giving students free MetroCards. In addition, books and other expenses over tuition were covered in the program. Problems with navigating the difficult terrain of college registration are discussed with students (Dynarski & Oster, 2016).

To recapture recommendations for organizations/institutions, they should:

- teach students to utilize professor support when offered and when needed;
- teach students to utilize wraparound services when offered and when needed;
- teach students transformative learning and leadership skills in an effort to assist students to overcome academic and social barriers; and
- teach students how to access life assistance such as food and shelter, not only in the college, but also in the community at large.

### **Recommendations for Action**

It is always essential to identify who the stakeholders are in any business or entity (Eden & Ackermann, 2013). Anyone that is affected by the entity in question is a stakeholder in that

entity (Eden & Ackerman, 2013). The term stakeholder originates from economics theory. An entity such as a company can be imaged as a pentagon (Eden & Ackermann (2013)). One set of stakeholders are the owners, another set are the employees. A third set are the suppliers, and a fourth set are the customers. The fifth set are the regulatory agencies. Stakeholders set business practices, product performance standards, taxation regimes, etc. For example, Eden and Ackermann (2013) define stakeholders as “People or small groups with the power to respond to, negotiate with, and change the strategic future of the organization.” The concept of stakeholders is important to a study because it is not possible to make recommendations to stakeholders until they are known. Recommendation for actions are presented below.

### **Recommendation #1: Strive to Be Inclusive**

Community colleges and universities have not always been inclusive. For example, in this study, a serendipitous finding was elicited. Frank noted:

I had had great instructors that helped me through classes at, you know, my hardest time. So, the way I've got assisted in these services, starting out. I wasn't comfortable the first year, and in the second year I was still uncomfortable because I felt as if I'm going getting the help. It's pretty much saying like, you're not smart enough or you weren't, you know, educated like you should have been. But I, I had told myself that it would be bad if I didn't get help, I would fail a course and if I did get help I will pass the course. So, I decided to overcome my fear of being looked at different and the way to get help will help me pass. I do not like being looked at as different from everybody else. I am just as smart as everybody else here, and maybe I should just accept the help.

Some participants noted that they felt different from their counterparts. This finding illustrates the need for inclusion for everyone in the community college to perceive that they are an integral part of the community. Recommendations include:

**Education should be inclusive if students are to learn.** Students from different racial, cultural, ethnic, religious, or other backgrounds have some difficulty adjusting to predominately white colleges as evident from the above statement from one of the participants. In fact, southern colleges/universities were segregated until civil rights icon James Meredith became the first African-American student admitted to the segregated University of Mississippi in 1962 (Donovan, 2002). Meredith was inspired after the intervention of the federal government, an event that was a flashpoint in the Civil Rights Movement (*Brown v. Board of Education*) and decided to exercise his constitutional rights and apply to the University of Mississippi. His goal was to put pressure on the Kennedy administration to enforce civil rights for African-Americans. The integration of Ole Miss came eight years after *Brown v. the Board of Education* (Donovan, 2002). Inclusivity was important to this study because wraparound services are not used when students do not feel welcome or comfortable in the environment,

Inclusivity brings diversity to the college/university (Giger, 2016). In this study, Frank noted:

The way that has improved me it is just, made me aware that there's a lot of community resources out there that I wasn't aware of that can actually help other people like myself, especially like insurance, I'm 21, but I didn't know where I would get insurance. That really helped me out. And then I can refer people to the POD and tell them, oh, we have this and this and this and that would really help all students out.

Students must be exposed to cultural diversity, racial diversity, diversity in thought and content, and students and faculty from every corner of the earth (Giger, 2016). Giger (2016) contends that cultural diversity, even if taught within the classroom, must be extended beyond the classroom. Moreover, Giger (2016) contends that inclusivity acts as a moderating variable to learning. As indicated above, students fail to use wraparound services when they feel unwelcome. Another recommendation is found below.

### **Recommendation #2: Intervene Early and Often to Help Students Persist**

Colleges and other stakeholders must intervene early and often to help students persist. Findings from this study suggested that when intervention occurs often and early, students have a chance to persist to graduation. In this study, Henry noted:

It (wraparound services) helped out a lot back then. I started going for help when I told a lot of people that I was going to tech, some people disagreed. They thought it wasn't good enough for me. But these services helped out a lot because being here they taught me how to mature and grow up and handle workloads. It helped me pretty much with the courses. It wasn't bad. I had, you know, great instructors, good people in the centers and they do online tutoring and coaching too. There's not a lot of universities that do online tutors. We've got to do tutors in college. Here you are not paying for the tutoring centers like in some colleges and here is free and it's, you know, you set your schedule for any appointment. So that's how it helped me out a lot.

In this study, findings also suggested that students should be encouraged to seek assistance often and when needed when they first perceive a need.

Intervening early and often is also interspersed through the literature. Markle (2015) conducted a study on nontraditional students (one-third of all students enrolled in colleges and universities are non-traditional, greater than 25 years of age) to examine factors influencing persistence among a sample of 494 nontraditional men and women. Findings from this study (Markle, 2015) suggested that persistence rates did not differ between men and women although the factors influencing persistence did. For example, grade point average and confidence in graduating positively influenced persistence for both men and women. Inter-role conflict led more women to consider withdrawing from college. The idea of intervening early and often is not new, but it is an idea that is not widely used. In the seminal ASAP study done at CUNY previously referenced above, administrators at CUNY recognized that to intervene early and often was linked to persistence to graduation (Dynarski & Oster, 2016).

### **Recommendation #3: Recognize That Persistence Involves Everyone**

Persistence is another recommendation and involves everyone if a student is to be successful to persist to graduation. All stakeholders must be involved in the process of academic and social integration (Deil-Amen, 2011). In this study, Edward noted:

My understanding is if you have any problems, financially or I guess homelessness or something like that, there are services that help you with that and try to guide you to get further. Everyone here is very, very nice. You have tutoring when you need it. They have community resources that help you also. Well they're here to help you. And I think that that is what helped me to understand it better. I mean, I'm glad for them for people that actually need it.

The above participant's comments are consistent with the literature. For example, Littlepage and Hepworth (2016) found that while academic success had been measured historically (e.g.,



assignments and semester grades, course withdrawals) and continuously (e.g., persistence, program completion) outcomes of observed integrative behaviors had not. Using a correlational research design along with nonparametric statistics, these researchers sought to test the relationship between the levels of commitment by the institution to student welfare using a hypothesis that stated persistence is positively related to the level of social integration. Findings from this study suggested that an independent relationship between institutional commitments to social integration was not found. In contrast, in Deil-Amen's (2011) study, this finding was just the opposite. Deil-Amen (2011) contends that social integration is essential to every stakeholder if the student is to persist to graduation.

### **Benefits to Stakeholders**

The benefits to every stakeholder are measurable and immense. When students persist to graduation, every stakeholder benefits in some way. Well-educated individuals enhance the community in which they dwell. In addition, well-educated community dwellers enhance the economic fortunes of the community. In this study, Boy noted:

I've gone to a couple events and services they've held here. I think it's helped me like to get to know people more, which has also helped me know more information about things such as applying for college or for graduation. I didn't even know you needed to apply for graduation. So that kind of helped getting out and talking to people around here and seeing what's going on. Not even just with that but how to do things pretty much. I mean you have to kind of figure things out on your own. But yeah, just offering all the services they've offered and all the events they've held that I've gone to just have helped me learn more about what's going on in the community and what's going on, in school and stuff like that.

For the student, the economic advantage to holding a degree is essential to removing life's associated insecurities (Cady, 2014). For the community, findings from this study suggested that the multidimensional advantages of helping students to persist to graduation include (a) improving the economy of the community; (b) providing social integration of well-educated community dwellers; and (c) having more community-dwellers who can, in turn, serve as mentors to students enrolled in the community colleges. For the organizations/institutions, the benefits include the immediate increase in the verifiable statistical data as to the graduation rates and also is economy driven.

### **Recommendations for Further Study**

#### **Next Steps for Researchers Interested in This Topic**

This study did not consider gender, race/ethnicity, or SES. This study also did not show causal relationships or correlate the finding of gender, race/ethnicity, or SES to persistence. Based on the findings and the associated data-based literature presented in each theme, the following recommendations for further study are offered:

- conduct a mixed method study that correlates or shows causal relationships among gender, race/ethnicity, SES, and persistence;
- conduct a multi-site study to compare and contrast community colleges in different regions of the country; and
- add Transformative Learning and Leadership to research questions and conduct a correlational study to determine if there is relationship between these concepts and persistence.

### **Disseminations to Stakeholders and Others**

Research is only as valuable as wide dissemination makes it (Waltz, Strickland, & Lentz, 2016). Research should never be disseminated piecemeal, but widely and as coherently as possible (Waltz, Strickland, & Lentz, 2016). However, how it is disseminated depends on the stakeholder(s). The following dissemination strategy is offered by category of stakeholders.

#### **Students**

- present findings at the National Student Association, and
- prepare easy to read pamphlets that can be disseminated at colleges for students.

#### **Communities**

- prepare pamphlets for communities to be given out at community outreach forums; and
- give presentations to churches, fraternities, sororities, and other community groups.

#### **Organizations/Institutions**

- develop and submit a manuscript to a peer-reviewed journal, and
- submit an abstract and a manuscript to the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund.

### **Conclusion**

The purpose of this study was to understand how community college students perceive wraparound services and how these services impact students' persistence. This research uses tenets/constructs of Deil-Amen's (2011) theoretical underpinnings on persistence and social and academic integration. The research reexamines Deil-Amen's (2011) theoretical underpinnings and offers a data-based review of persistence. This chapter clearly links the available data-based literature to findings in this study. This chapter also reviews nine (9) themes found by using NVivo 12 Pro. Although 11 themes were found, 2 were duplicates. At the end of each theme, a conclusion is offered about whether the existing data-based literature supported the theme. The

support for all 9 themes is reached from the existing data-based literature. The chapter makes recommendations for further research and offers next steps for this future research. The researcher draws implications and also articulates the benefits for stakeholders at every level. Recommendations for dissemination in print and by presentation are offered in this chapter.

This study presents a reasoned articulation about transformative leadership and learning through the use of wraparound services. In addition, this study is significant because it augments the existing data-based literature in areas where there is a dearth of literature. This study may serve to add evidence for colleges to find ways to implement wraparound services. Students in this study have stated that wraparound services are needed and are used when available. Wraparound services must be used early and often if such services are to be integral to the student's success with persistence. Participants described the types of services that are useful interventions to stay on track as they attempt to persist to graduation. Findings from this study also suggest that when colleges engage students to use wraparound services, they produce a more economical way to assist students to persist and graduate on time. This study is significant because findings suggest that wraparound services are economically and personally beneficial.

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## APPENDIX A: INFORMED CONSENT FORM

January 2018

Dear Participant:

You may choose to voluntarily participate in this study or decline/withdraw from the study at any time. Do not hesitate to ask questions or present concerns throughout the research study process. Your personal identifying information will not be reported with the findings. Only the researcher will know your identifying information. Your responses will remain anonymous. At any time during the study, you may request access to your own individual data, and in June 2018, you may request access to the study's results reported in a manner that protects the confidentiality of all participants.

### **Purpose of this study**

The purpose of this present inquiry is to examine community college students' experience with wraparound services and how such services affect the students' integration and assimilation into the college. At the same time, this present inquiry identifies the challenges and barriers that students perceive as obstacles to success. Furthermore, this study seeks to understand best practice in wraparound services provided in higher education and to determine how to support students through the use of wraparound resource center services.

### **What participant will be asked to do**

If you agree to participate, you will be asked to:

1. Participate in an audio-recorded interview that will last approximately 45 minutes.
2. When the audio-recorded interview is transcribed verbatim, you will be asked to check it for accuracy and return it with any corrections in writing to the researcher. If no comments are returned, the transcript will be considered accurate.

**Time for participation.** The interview process and checking the verbatim transcript is expected to take about 55 minutes of your time (45 minutes for the interview and 10 minutes to check the transcribed document).

**Potential risk to participant:** This study will not present any known risks throughout the process, other than inconveniencing you for your time to complete the interview (approximately 55 minutes).

**Risk/Benefit ratio.** While this study has no known risk, the expected benefit of your participation is to allow educators and administrators to assist students to persistence in a community college environment.

**How is confidentially maintained.** Your participation in this study is strictly confidential. There are no identifiable markers that connects you in any way to this study.

**Incentives to participate.** If you chose to participate, upon conclusion of your participation, you will be given a \$15.00 gift certificate.

**If you chose to participate.** Please sign/agree to this consent form with full knowledge of the purpose and procedures of the study, its survey, and possible follow-up interview and data collection. A copy of the consent form will be emailed/given to you.

I, (participant's name) \_\_\_\_\_, agree to participate in this study, titled

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Michael Blanchard, Doctoral Student  
THE PERSISTENCE OF COMMUNITY COLLEGE STUDENTS:  
A SINGLE SITE CASE STUDY  
University of New England's Department of Education

## APPENDIX B: EMAIL TO STUDENTS

Dear Students:

I am conducting a study to understand how community college students perceive wraparound services and how these services impact students' persistence. The study is entitled: The Persistence of Community College Students: A Single Site Case Study and I am Michael Blanchard, a doctoral student enrolled at the University of New England. I am looking for second year students to participate in this study. To be eligible to participate you must meet the following criteria:

1. Must be a second-year student.
2. Must have registered for second year only once.
3. Must not have taken more than four (4) semesters of coursework.
4. Must be on track to graduate at the federally defined rate for an on-time graduation of 150% of the published graduation date (3.5 years).
5. Must be between 19 and 25 years of age.

Your participation is needed to answer interview questions one-on-one with the investigator about your experiences with wraparound services. This interview will last approximately 45 minutes and will be audio-recorded. The audiotape will be transcribed using an anonymous name to protect your identity. Once the interview is complete, you will be emailed your transcript to correct any inaccuracies and returned to the researcher by email at: MBlanchard1@UNE.edu, should you find any. This process should take approximately 15 minutes. For your participation you will receive a \$15.00 gift card to Subway. If you are interested in participating,

please call Michael Blanchard, (574) 532-1743 or email address at:

MBlanchard1@UNE.edu

Students are also asked to bring one of the following artifacts:

1. \_\_\_\_\_ Transcript from end of first year at CCX as provided by the participant with no identifying attributes.
2. \_\_\_\_\_ Letter from someone who encouraged you.
3. \_\_\_\_\_ Letter acknowledging placement on Dean's List.
4. \_\_\_\_\_ Other, please identify in the space below.



## APPENDIX C: INSTRUMENTS

**Instrument 1: Demographic Questionnaire**

1. What is your age\_\_\_\_\_?

2. What is your gender?

\_\_\_\_\_M

\_\_\_\_\_F

3. Year of Registration in Community College?

\_\_\_\_\_ First Year

\_\_\_\_\_ Second Year

4. How many times have you been registered for second year course work?

\_\_\_\_\_ Once

\_\_\_\_\_ Twice

\_\_\_\_\_ Three Times

\_\_\_\_\_ Four Times

5. Will you graduate on time (at least with 3.5 years)?

\_\_\_\_\_ Yes

\_\_\_\_\_ No

## **Instrument 2: Semi-Structured Interview Questions**

### **RQ1: How do second year community college students understand the role of the college wraparound services in their academic success?**

1. Describe your understanding of community college wraparound service programs and how they assist students toward college completion?
2. How have you received information about the services provided by the community college wraparound services?
3. How have community college wraparound services improved your probability of academic success?
4. How have you been assisted with academic challenges by community college wraparound services?
5. How comfortable are you with seeking assistance from the community college wraparound service center to address academic challenges?
6. How have community college wraparound services programs shaped your perception of the process of college completion?
7. Describe at least three wraparound services available to you at your institution.

### **RQ2: How do the existing mechanisms and modalities used by community college wraparound services impact the academic and social integration of community college students?**

1. How have community college wraparound services influenced you to attend class regularly and complete courses?
2. How have community college wraparound services helped you to become more involved in social and academic campus activities?
3. How have community college wraparound services helped assist you with social or academic obstacles?
4. How have community college wraparound services helped you persist in becoming a 2nd year community college student?
5. How often have you used available wraparound services at your institution?

### **Instrument 3: Personal Artifact Collection**

This instrument is created to ascertain personal artifact collection items brought to the interview. On this instrument, please identify which artifact collection was brought to the interview by checking it on this scale. Please check all that apply and staple to this instrument.

1. \_\_\_\_\_ Transcript from end of first year at CCX as provided by the participant with no identifying attributes.
2. \_\_\_\_\_ Letter from someone who encouraged you.
3. \_\_\_\_\_ Letter acknowledging placement on Dean's List.
4. \_\_\_\_\_ Other, please identify in the space below.

## Appendix D

Table 4.1:  
*Illustrations of Axial Coding*

| Axial Code(s)   | Properties  | Example of Participant's Words  |
|---|---|---|
| <p>Excited about learning<br/>           Hopeful that learning experiences can be expanded<br/>           Experiential learning</p> | <p>Feeling Ambitious<br/>           Eager to Learn<br/>           Seeking Credentials</p>                                   | <p>I think they assist by offering a lot of resources like <b>tutoring</b> to help you through. They offer assistance with like signing up for classes, financial aid. I like support when you're struggling. So, I think they motivate you more to stay in school. They have lots of resources for you to not want to drop out if you're feeling like you want to drop out. They also have online <b>tutoring</b>.</p> |
| <p>Being groomed<br/> <br/>           Excited to Learn new things<br/> <br/>           Accepting Assistance</p>                     | <p>Feeling comfortable in seeking services<br/> <br/>           Embracing new ideas<br/> <br/>           Being mentored</p> | <p>[. . .] I've gone to a couple events and services they've held here [. . .] I think it's helped me get to know people more, which has also helped me know more information about things such as applying for college or for graduation. I didn't even know you needed to apply for graduation. So that kind of</p>   |

| Axial Code(s)        | Properties     | Example of Participant's Words  |
|----------------------|----------------|---|
| Accepting Assistance | Being Mentored | <p>helped getting out and talking to people around here and seeing like what's going on. I think this is real <b>motivation</b>.</p> <p>Not even just with that but how to do things pretty much. I mean you have to kind of figure things out on your own. But yeah, I just offering all the services they've offered and all the events they've held that I've gone to just have helped me learn more about what's going on in the community and what's going on. Like in school and stuff like that.</p> <p>I have been helped by, I mean when I'm struggling with classes mostly [. . .] I had talked to a lot of my classmates who, a lot of them actually work in the POD, do their internship in the POD so they know like a lot of services in there just from working in their community resources and stuff. So, I'm just hearing what they have to say. Talking to advisors here, talking to the</p> |

| Axial Code(s)  | Properties   | Example of Participant's Words   |
|--|--|--|
|  |  | chair of my program [...] <b>they offer a lot of information to me.</b>  |
| Looking for Support  | Excited about support available                                  | They offer a lot of <b>support</b> and a lot of <b>motivation</b> [...] they offer services to like want you to actually come here just to come here for like events and stuff. And then, I mean there's just a lot of <b>encouragement</b> around school. There are signs reminding you to sign up for classes and there was an email sent out saying when registration's open and stuff like that, there's a lot of <b>encouragement</b> . There's always something reminding you to keep going. |
| Being Groomed for Social and Academic Integration to Overcome Social and Academic Barriers | Seeking Assistance<br>Looking for Campus and Community Resources | The way that has improved it is just [...] it's made me aware that there's a lot of <i>community resources</i> out there that I wasn't aware of that can actually help other people like myself, especially <b>like insurance</b> , I'm 21, but I didn't know where I would get insurance. Like that really helped me out. And then  |

| Axial Code(s)                                       | Properties   | Example of Participant's Words   |
|---|--|--|
|   |  | I can refer people to the POD and tell them, oh, we have this and this and this and that would really help the students out.   |
| Being Mentored                                      | Using Resources to Stay on Track   | POD 7: Tutoring Center Samaritan.<br>[...] Student Life Samaritan is the counseling center. It's right, right next to POD 7. There's <b>a life counseling and just positive stuff</b> . I think so. I know all this <b>keeps me on track</b> .   |
| Mentoring<br>Being Groomed                          | Using Coaching Resources to Staying on Track<br>Using Life Coach   | I know that I don't try to skip or anything [...] if I do struggle, like I had to do a five-page essay and I didn't know how to start the outline for it. I went to the <b>tutoring center</b> or I can also meet with a <b>life coach</b> so I can get organized. That helped me out. I just like to <b>stay on track</b> and try to do that paper on time. |
| Being Groomed<br>Learning Social Integration Skills | Being Mentored for Social and Academic Integration to Overcome Social and Academic Barriers<br>Feeling Comfortable | Socially, before this I wasn't as talkative because I went to St. Mary's and I really wasn't participating in any events or any clubs. I will just go to my classes, go back to my room, but   |

| Axial Code(s)                               | Properties   | Example of Participant's Words  |
|---|--|---|
|   |  | <p>here like I feel like a little bit more welcomed. <b>Yeah. I'm not as socially awkward anymore</b>, but I like to actually be involved in helping people now and talking about my experiences and just trying to participate even more.</p>  |
| <p>Being Groomed</p> <p>Life assistance</p> | <p>Eager to Accept Assistance</p> <p>Comfortable with Accepting Assistance</p> | <p>Would that just be like helping people write for the <b>tutoring</b>?</p> <p>They just help you study for tests then I help you on your homework if you need it, and that's really great.</p> <p>They also have a <b>food pantry</b> here and this helps with social problems.</p> |



## APPENDIX E

Table 4.2:  
Nodes

| Interview Questions | Node(s)                                     |
|---------------------|---|
| IQ1                 | Academic <b>Tutoring</b>                    |
|                     | Non-Academic <b>Tutoring</b>                |
| IQ2                 | Email                                       |
|                     | <b>Life Assistance/Support</b>              |
| IQ3                 | Community Resources ( <b>Life Support</b> ) |
|                     | Developing Confidence                       |
|                     | Getting to Know People                      |
|                     | <b>Keeping on Track</b>                     |
|                     | <b>Motivation</b>                           |
|                     | <b>Providing Services</b>                   |
|                     | <b>Support System (Academic Support)</b>    |

| Interview Questions    | Node(s)   |
|------------------------|---|
|                        | <b>Support System (Life Assistance/Support)</b>                             |
|                        | <b>Tutoring</b>   |
|                        | Understanding the Academic Processes  |
| IQ4                    | <b>Tutoring and Assistance with Writing</b>                                 |
|                        | <b>Internship in POD 7 (Resources Center)</b>                               |
| IQ5                    | Comfortable with Reaching Out   |
|                        | Comfortable with Talking with Someone ( <b>Tutoring and Participation</b> ) |
|                        | <b>Comfortable with Joining Academic and Social Societies</b>               |
| IQ6<br>IQ6 (Continued) | <b>Food Pantry</b>  |
|                        | Help with Goal Setting ( <b>Tutoring and Motivation</b> )                   |
|                        | Life Coach ( <b>Life Support</b> )  |
| IQ7                    | Resources for <b>Tutoring</b>   |
|                        | Through Explanation When <b>Tutoring</b>                                    |
| IQ8                    | <b>Life Coach</b>   |
|                        | <b>Reminders to Sign Up for Class</b>                                       |
|                        | <b>Professor Support</b>  |
|                        | <b>Tutoring</b>   |
|                        | <b>Resources and Services</b>   |

| Interview Questions | Node(s)   |
|---------------------|---|
|                     | <b>On-lining Tutoring</b>   |
| <b>IQ9</b>          | <b>The Sun Program and National Honor's Society</b>                       |
|                     | <b>Motivated to Join Sun Program and National Honor's Society</b>         |
|                     | <b>Student Life Program</b>   |
|                     | <b>Encouragement by Teachers to go to Various Services</b>                |
|                     | <b>Encouraged to Participate in Student Government</b>                    |
|                     | <b>Feeling Welcome</b>  |
| <b>IQ10</b>         | <b>Academic Advisors (Tutoring) and Life Support During the Hurricane</b> |
|                     | <b>Food Pantry</b>  |
|                     | <b>Help with Social skills</b>  |
|                     | <b>IQ10 (Continued)</b>   |
| <b>IQ11</b>         | <b>Smooth Transition</b>  |
|                     | <b>Support</b>  |
|                     | <b>Keeping on Track</b>   |
|                     | <b>Tutoring with Home Work</b>  |

| Interview Questions | Node(s)                                     |
|---------------------|---|
|                     | <b>Coaching</b>                             |
| <b>IQ12</b>         | <b>Semester Driven</b>                      |
|                     | <b>Often Because of Tutoring</b>            |
|                     | <b>Three Times a Month</b>                  |
|                     | <b>Monthly to Stay on Track and Focused</b> |
|                     | <b>Four Times a Semester</b>                |

## APPENDIX F

Table 4.3:  
*Overarching Themes, Weights (Frequencies), Sub-Themes, and Exemplars (As expressed by students)*

| Overarching Themes | Frequency of Themes Calculated by NVivo 12 Pro | Sub-Themes                          | Experiences of Students as Taken from NVivo 12 Pro using Law Enforcement Alphabet Code for Identification   |
|--------------------|--|-------------------------------------|---|
| Tutoring           | 20.7% %  | Social Services to include tutoring | <p><b>Adam</b></p> <p>The services here are a plus for me, especially <b>tutoring.</b></p>  |
|                    |  | Easy to Access Social Services      | <p><b>Boy</b></p> <p>I've gotten lots of emails with events going on for the community and for the students there's our pod seven, which since I'm in the Human Services Program, I know a lot about that <b>Pod seven (Tutoring)</b> offers lots of services. They have a food pantry so you can always go there. They have life coaches if you need somebody to talk to you about</p> |

| Overarching Themes   | Frequency of Themes Calculated by NVivo 12 Pro | Sub-Themes  | Experiences of Students as Taken from NVivo 12 Pro using Law Enforcement Alphabet Code for Identification   |
|----------------------|--|---|---|
| Tutoring (Continued) |  |   | <p>situations or just any kind of information with outside resources. So that's helped a lot and that's where I pretty much get they have ... flyers around the school where people are talking about what's going on. <b>POD seven is very good for tutoring.</b></p>  |
|                      |  | <p>POD 7 provides academic and non-academic resources</p> | <p><b>Charles</b></p> <p>I'm at wraparound service, kind of like what POD has or maybe even student life ... we provide lots of students their ability to meet other people in the night activities and having support system, meeting those people also, um, making sure, you know, as far as parts of Ivan (social part of the pod) goes with the food and things that maybe some students aren't able to get [...] just having support and necessary things like the tutoring center [...] you know, if you're</p> |

| Overarching Themes   | Frequency of Themes Calculated by NVivo 12 Pro | Sub-Themes | Experiences of Students as Taken from NVivo 12 Pro using Law Enforcement Alphabet Code for Identification  |
|----------------------|--|------------|--|
| Tutoring (Continued) |  |            | falling behind in classes, things like that. <b>I like going to POD seven for tutoring.</b>  |
|                      |  |            | <p><b>David</b></p> <p>I understand what it is and working in a way that it helps the students with any nonacademic needs that it may become a barrier for them to pursue their education or their education. There is help with academic needs like <b>tutoring</b> here and that is very useful.</p> |
|                      |  |            | <p><b>Edward</b></p> <p>[...] knowing that I always have support for helping me through college has always been something that I think influenced my work at this college and is something that can help me if I ever have a struggle</p>  |

| Overarching Themes           | Frequency of Themes Calculated by NVivo 12 Pro | Sub-Themes   | Experiences of Students as Taken from NVivo 12 Pro using Law Enforcement Alphabet Code for Identification   |
|------------------------------|--|--|---|
| Tutoring (Continued)         |  |  | to using the <b>tutoring</b> services. I've used them once or twice in my early years here.   |
|                              |  |  | <p><b>George</b></p> <p>I will, I will say the <b>tutor center</b> [...] it helped out a lot with me. I remember a class, it was an astronomy class that I started to struggle with the lab reports and I didn't have time for my wife's cousin to make it to the tutor center, then they started doing tutoring online and I was able to just get on from my job and complete my work [...] is very beneficial with the services they do here.</p> |
| Motivation/<br>Encouragement | 17.5%  | <p>Resources easy to access</p> <p>Motivates you to stay in school</p> | <p><b>Boy</b></p> <p>[...] I think they assist by offering a lot of resources [...] to help you through. They offer assistance with things like signing up for classes, financial aid. These</p>  |



| Overarching Themes                          | Frequency of Themes Calculated by NVivo 12 Pro | Sub-Themes             | Experiences of Students as Taken from NVivo 12 Pro using Law Enforcement Alphabet Code for Identification   |
|---|--|------------------------|---|
| Motivation/<br>Encouragement<br>(Continued) |  |                        | <p>supports are helpful when you're struggling. So, I think <b>they motivate</b> you more to stay in school. They have lots of resources for you to not want to drop out if you're feeling like you want to drop out.</p>   |
| Persistence/Coaching                        | 13%  | Coaching keeps engaged | <p><b>Frank</b></p> <p>So, it goes back to the <b>life coach</b> and I would have me meet with her every week, making sure, like I rewrite my goals, I update my goals, making sure that I'm staying on my goals. So, they, they keep us engaged.</p> <p><b>Boy</b></p> <p>They have <b>life coaches</b> if you need somebody to talk to you about situations or just any kind of information with outside resources. So that's helped a lot and that's where I pretty much get they have [...]</p> |

| Overarching Themes                      | Frequency of Themes Calculated by NVivo 12 Pro | Sub-Themes                                | Experiences of Students as Taken from NVivo 12 Pro using Law Enforcement Alphabet Code for Identification   |
|---|--|---|---|
| Persistence/Coaching (Continued)        |  |   | like flyers around the school with people talking about what's going on.  |
| Overcoming Social and Academic Barriers | 12%  | Accessing social events and organizations | <p><b>Frank</b></p> <p>I think the people who are doing it, providing these services, are mainly here to help my academic and social skills with it and it'd be just their friendly from the people. So, I think that's something that influences that for me.</p> <p><b>Henry</b></p> <p>Helped out a lot. I like the Sun with the National Honor Society, they do this thing where, you know, not when you joined the program or do something you would think it's a work for just yourself individualized self, you know what, with this was incorporated with the group. I am more of a private</p> |

| Overarching Themes                                  | Frequency of Themes Calculated by NVivo 12 Pro | Sub-Themes | Experiences of Students as Taken from NVivo 12 Pro using Law Enforcement Alphabet Code for Identification   |
|---|--|------------|---|
| Overcoming Social and Academic Barriers (Continued) |  |            | <p>person. I don't like to talk a lot or anything, but the first thing that started with the National Honor Society and it was a best friend and at first thing you get to do is tell a person you've never met before about yourself and things about you. So that opened things for me, that helped me and opened me up a lot to socializing.</p> |
|   |  |            | <p><b>Charles</b></p> <p>Having a support system here at the school is good for here. My boss for one [...] she always tells me school first [...] but she helps me tell me what is available to me, what kind of conferences I can go to. That's always very supportive and there's no way I cannot go home to my brother because my family is</p> |

| Overarching Themes | Frequency of Themes Calculated by NVivo 12 Pro | Sub-Themes    | Experiences of Students as Taken from NVivo 12 Pro using Law Enforcement Alphabet Code for Identification   |
|--------------------|--|---------------|---|
|                    |  |               | in Colorado, knowing that I would have the support system.  |
| Keeping on Track   | 10%  | Goal-Oriented | <p><b>Charles</b></p> <p>So, they helped me by helping, just <b>keeping me on track</b> like that motivation because they do provide those services as well, but they also help like the individual on Tuesday by setting goals during [...] they had me write down goals, like what I wanted to do and by the end of the semester, what grades I want to improve tremendously to keep me on track.</p> |



| Overarching Themes             | Frequency of Themes Calculated by NVivo 12 Pro | Sub-Themes | Experiences of Students as Taken from NVivo 12 Pro using Law Enforcement Alphabet Code for Identification  |
|--------------------------------|--|------------|--|
| Life Assistance<br>(Continued) |  |            | <p><b>back home</b>, the hurricanes that affected my family and they actually helped me with that, with donations. They helped me mentally because I was so emotional that I lost focus in school so I would just go there for help. They also helped me <b>getting healthcare</b> so they've helped me so much since I transferred to this school.</p>                                    |
|                                |  |            | <p><b>Boy</b></p> <p>I think they assist by offering a lot of resources [...] to help you through. They offer assistance with like signing up for classes, <b>financial aid</b>. Support when you're struggling. So, I think they <b>motivate</b> you more to stay in school. They have lots of resources for you to not want to drop out if you're feeling like you want to drop out.</p> |

| Overarching Themes             | Frequency of Themes Calculated by NVivo 12 Pro | Sub-Themes | Experiences of Students as Taken from NVivo 12 Pro using Law Enforcement Alphabet Code for Identification   |
|--------------------------------|--|------------|---|
| Life Assistance<br>(Continued) |  |            | <p><b>David</b></p> <p>The way that has improved it is just, it's made me aware that there's a lot of <b>community resources</b> out there that I wasn't aware of that can actually help other people like myself, especially like <b>insurance</b>, like I'm 21, but I didn't know where I would get insurance. That really helped me out. And then I can refer people to the pod and tell them, oh, we have this and this and this and that would really help the students out.</p> |
|                                |  |            | <p><b>Adam</b></p> <p>So, we have the, we have the <b>healthcare service</b> where they help you to get healthcare if you can't afford to get I can't remember what it's called? I think it's Medicare if you can't afford that, so you could go</p>  |

| Overarching Themes           | Frequency of Themes Calculated by NVivo 12 Pro | Sub-Themes | Experiences of Students as Taken from NVivo 12 Pro using Law Enforcement Alphabet Code for Identification  |
|------------------------------|--|------------|--|
|                              |  |            | <p>in there, you can go in there and there's a <b>food pantry</b> available. So, for instance, if you don't have food or you're hungry, it's going. You don't have no money. You could go in there and ask for snack.</p> <p>Also, they have the, <b>the life coach</b>. She helps with that. Goals setting smart goals, setting physically goals and therapy and counseling</p> |
| Tutoring                     | Over lumped                                    |            |  |
| Motivation/<br>Encouragement | Over lumped                                    |            |  |



| Overarching Themes     | Frequency of Themes Calculated by NVivo 12 Pro | Sub-Themes   | Experiences of Students as Taken from NVivo 12 Pro using Law Enforcement Alphabet Code for Identification  |
|------------------------|--|--|--|
| Resources and Services | 7%   | <p>Academic Counseling through Tutoring</p> <p>Learning to Communicate</p> | <p><b>Adam</b></p> <p>So, for instance, if I'm confused on what to do in class, I could go to the tutor or I'm not sure on where to go, they also have <b>resources</b> outside of campus that would help. They've also helped me with online things that I think about what resources are online.</p>   |
| Professor Support      | 6%   | Professor Encouragement during difficult times.                            | <p><b>George</b></p> <p>It helped me keep more motivated with the year of my father passing. I was in college. I was going to college maybe that next year and I told him where I was going to go and where I was going to do when, when I, you know, when he passed, it took a toll on me and I actually started failing in all my classes and all my courses and I ended up telling the <b>instructors</b></p> |

| Overarching Themes                 | Frequency of Themes Calculated by NVivo 12 Pro | Sub-Themes         | Experiences of Students as Taken from NVivo 12 Pro using Law Enforcement Alphabet Code for Identification  |
|------------------------------------|--|--------------------|--|
| Professor Support<br>(Continued)   |  |                    | <p>why, and when they found out about my father passing, each of them in all my courses took the time to actually help me in letting me go to office hours to do the leg work late and helped me come up and get everything done because they understood how it felt and that's what motivated me. That is, it showed that at this community college, the instructors actually care about their students and what their students are doing. So that motivated me to complete because they gave me motivation and I have motivation from my father. They help kept me on track.</p> |
| Wraparound Services is Need Driven | 5%   | Providing Services | <p><b>George</b></p> <p>I would say this will be the first year. <b>I used it a lot.</b> I used it this year was a lot in the last year, maybe two years ago, I believe it was last year for math class. I</p>   |

| Overarching Themes                             | Frequency of Themes Calculated by NVivo 12 Pro | Sub-Themes | Experiences of Students as Taken from NVivo 12 Pro using Law Enforcement Alphabet Code for Identification   |
|--|--|------------|---|
| Wraparound Services is Need Driven (Continued) |  |            | <p>was using the tutor center, helping me with it, so now that I did it at this community college, I plan on doing it more at the university after I graduate because I learned that being in programs actually help you more than hurt you so it broadens up and motivates you and keeps your mind clear as some of the students you don't know actually be in the same courses as you were going into the same field of study. I met a lot of people like that from the National Honor Society, so doing that now helped me out a lot. I plan on doing it for the rest of my, you know, college here.</p> |