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## Student Support Services at a Hispanic Serving Institution: A Non-Traditional Student Perspective

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Social and Behavioral Sciences 402  
Senior Capstone Seminar II  
Professor: Michell Figueroa

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Student Support Services at a Hispanic Serving Institution: A Non-Traditional Student  
Perspective

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California State University, Monterey Bay

Social and Behavioral Sciences, Sociology concentration

Spring 2020

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### **Abstract**

In this capstone project, the focus is on student support services that are offered to non-traditional students at California State University, Monterey Bay (CSUMB). The university is classified as a Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI), a section of non-traditional students. The project consists of the students' perspectives about the support programs as well as how it correlates to their overall experience at CSUMB. A questionnaire was administered to students to ask about their satisfaction and knowledge of student support services. In addition, the Transfer Student Success Center was observed as part of the case study to further discuss options offered on campus. Tara Yosso's Community Cultural Wealth and William J. Goode's Theory of Role Strain will be applied to examine the life that non-traditional students live in day by day. The findings indicate that non-traditional students today refute previous studies that label them as timid and unknowledgeable about campus services. Although, they also show a need for financial and mentor support.

*Key Words: Cultural, campus satisfaction, Family, First Generation, low-income students, Student Support Programs, Higher Education, College completion, class engagement, non-traditional students*

## Introduction

California State University at Monterey Bay (CSUMB) is the second youngest CSU, which makes it a unique institution of higher education. At 25 years old, CSUMB has a variety of students that are not considered to be the “traditional student” (Markle, 2015): an individual that has parents or guardians that have at least a 4 year degree, are under 25 years old, enrolled into college directly after high school and do not have any extra responsibilities aside from school. One of the main attractions of the university is that it is affordable and has a smaller population of students, making it an intimate experience. However, due to the small size yet wide range of student backgrounds, a growing university may not contain sufficient resources for its students. Students that do not fit the definition of a traditional student are categorized as “non-traditional”. Although the original definition of a “non-traditional student” is an individual that is over 25 years old and has extra sets of responsibilities such as family or full time jobs. With this project, I am offering an expansion of that definition to better fit students at CSUMB. I will be adding students that are first generation, come from low-income backgrounds, non-white, and Latinx.

With slightly more than half (51%) of the students being first generation, 50% being underrepresented minorities (URM), and 47% of undergraduates receive the Pell grant at CSU, Monterey Bay (California State University, Monterey Bay [CSUMB], n.d), and it being on the rise throughout the entirety of CSU campuses, it begs the question as to what has the California State University system has done to assist these students with their higher education experience.

For the purpose of this project, the focus is at the Monterey Bay campus and their undergraduate population.

This topic was chosen because it is incredibly important to consider the services offered due to the increasing numbers of non-traditional students entering higher education, and more specifically CSUMB. Student support services must be analyzed as the years pass in order to meet growing needs. The purpose is to bring awareness to the student support services that are offered on campus along with non-traditional students' opinions of them.

### ***Research Questions***

The following research questions are used as guides and are addressed in this study:

Q1: How often do non-traditional students utilize the services that their university offers?

Q2: Do non-traditional students feel like they are supported by their university?

The objective of these questions is to inform audiences of college students' overall experience today. With colleges and universities being a prominent topic in the media, giving a voice to students is one way for people to help them understand the value of education.

### **Literature Review**

For my literature review, I will focus on five main topics: 1) Defining Non-Traditional Students 2) Knowledge of College Campus Services, 3) Level of Family Support, 4) Level of Campus Support, and 5) Non-Traditional Students and Their Engagement on Campus. In the first topic, I will be defining who the non-traditional students are as they are labeled in literature. The following five topics provide an insight on the multiple experiences of non-traditional students in higher education.

### ***Defining Non-Traditional Students***

Students enrolled in higher education are separated in two categories; traditional and non-traditional. In literature, a non-traditional student is someone that is 25 years of age or older (Wyatt, 2011; Markle, 2015; Beeler, 2016). One study defined them as having “prior knowledge or work experience” (Wyatt, 2011) but the main factor is age. In reality, a non-traditional student has a variety of diverse characteristics that define them as so. Non-traditional students include parents and guardians, veterans, different ethnic groups, transfers, undocumented and first generations. The characteristics named includes students that are under the age of 25. Widening the definition of a non-traditional student creates inclusivity and a sense of belongingness.

The literature review that follows will take into consideration the experiences from a variety of students that would fit under the umbrella of being a non-traditional student.

### ***Knowledge of College Campus Services***

For decades, researchers have seen the differences in the amount of knowledge that first generation and non-first generation students have when it comes to anything related to higher education. This embodies the preparation for placement tests and other standardized testing and how those exams are used to predict a student’s outcome with college courses. The knowledge of college culture is essential to a student’s ability to navigate successfully, and first generation students are less likely to be prepared when arriving at college. Having knowledge on what to expect upon stepping foot at a college or university is seen through class differences (Mitchall & Jaeger 2018). A low income family is less likely to take trips to take campus tours or know how to answer questions about how to choose a college. As stated by Yee (2016), even though more first generation students are entering higher education, they still struggle to maintain higher

grades and have lower graduation rates. Not knowing how to study or what resources there are available are main components for low grades and low graduation rates among first generation students.

### ***Level of Family Support***

A parents' educational background has been found to heavily influence the attrition of a college student. Previous studies have found that first generation students are less persistent when it comes to their higher education. Their families do not understand the educational system therefore they do not offer the same guidance and support as students that come from families that have attended college. Parents are not as involved either so it makes staying motivated more difficult. If a student is first generation, low income and a parent, their family is not able to take care of their children due to having financial obligations to attend work (Mitchall & Jaeger 2018). This makes accessing secure childcare and transportation more difficult. In several literature, there are solutions offered to increase family support for first generation students. That would include educating parents about the shift in environment, academics, and expectations from high school to college (Price, 2008). The education includes informing parents of college environments and out-of-class experiences. The in-class environment includes faculty relationships and the structure of higher education. External environments include resources given to students such as tutoring, counseling, and student employment.

Despite having limited support from family, non-traditional students, especially transfer students, have found it easier to create goals and achieve them in comparison to traditional students. According to Johnson and Nussbaum (2012), the reason that transfer students accomplish their goals concerning academics is because they are less emotionally-oriented than



traditional students. Transfer students would enter a four year university with further developed emotional maturity, creating an easier path for them to concentrate on academic, task oriented goals. A similar study also supported the ideas that non-traditional and traditional students have separate meanings for when it came to motivation (Johnson et al., 2016). Although, in another study conducted by Arbelo-Marrero and Milacci (2015) at a Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI) with 10 Hispanic nontraditional students contradicted the study previously explored. Students found it difficult when their family did not support them. The students had a difficult time to stay motivated and perform academically strong. But if the family supported them, then the students declared it one of their greatest strengths. Some of the participants were parents and spouses and they stated that they seeked the degree to provide a better future for their family or they were pressured by family to “do something” with their lives.

### ***Level of Campus Support***

As for financial support, universities are given certain funds from the government that they can distribute to their students. The funds then are allocated towards students that filled out the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). Despite there being some form of federal financial aid for education, not every student is aware or they do not qualify for it. As Radey and Cheatham (2013) stated, simplifying the application for the FAFSA and offering application assistance would increase the percentage of non-traditional students who receive financial aid if applicable.

Single parents, more specifically single mothers, face additional hardships with finances and feeling of belonging to their respective institutions (Radey & Cheatham, 2013). Single parents are 52% more likely to not complete their degree in comparison to non-parents due to the

lack of being able to afford the expenses of education and child care (Nichols et al., 2017).

Although there are federal laws that protect student parents from discrimination, student parents are not able to claim that pregnancy or parenting as “disabilities”. Student parents are not protected against missing class due to childcare, hence creating a sense of not belonging or not being supported by their university.

Access to higher education has become more attainable for non-traditional students, yet it does not necessarily translate that they are being successful (Brock, 2010). Universities are not sufficiently supporting their students and they need to be better equipped in three areas: financial aid, student support services, and remedial education. Furthermore, some racial and ethnic groups have been underrepresented in their select universities.

One study had successfully contributed scholarship funds to women transfer students through a partnership between a public university and Avon foundation (Austin, 2006). Women age ranges from 26 to 43 were selected based on GPA being above a 3.0, a personal essay, letters of recommendation from their community colleges, and financial need. If selected, they would receive a \$2,000 scholarship for two years per semester. Outcomes were incredibly positive with women noting that the scholarship allowed them to concentrate better on academics, mental health, and family life since they did not have to work as often as they would in community college.

### ***Non-Traditional Students and Their Engagement on Campus***

Studies dating back to 1996 have seen correlations on how first generation students have committed to their education in higher education institutions. It is stated that first generation students take fewer courses in order to fulfill commitments to activities outside of school

(Terenzini, 1996; Ishitani, 2006). Activities include working extra hours at an off-campus job, more than likely have dependent children, and come from families of low income. They are also less likely to speak to faculty when they are in need of help. First generation students are not as likely to participate on campus due to commitments outside of their campus. Participation includes being involved in campus clubs or student government. Adjusting to campus life as a first generation student is much more difficult in comparison to a non-first generation student (Fischer, 2007). In addition, if a student is a an underrepresented minority and attending a dominantly white university, there are more likely to face discrimination, which discourages them from getting more involved on campus (Billingsley & Hurd, 2019). The discrimination can lead to mental health and confidence issues, making getting involved less attractive. Although, if a student does remain actively involved on campus, they are likely to perform better academically as well as have better mental health.

One study presented that only only 12% of non-traditional students participated in research with faculty members (Wyatt, 2011) while traditional students were 23%. Additionally, 27% of non-traditional students did not participate in extracurricular activities in comparison to the 69% of traditional students. On the other hand, 80% of non-traditional students are more likely to ask questions in class and less than 13% come unprepared to class.

Engagement on campus has been found to correlate with how often the support services and administrations reach out to students. In reference to a study mentioned earlier, Austin (2006) stated that university support services do monthly presentations on what they offer. This increased student engagement from non-traditional students. It created a welcoming environment

and made it easier to ask for assistance. The women in the study were able to create connections with fellow peers on campus.

### ***Conclusion***

The literature review has created space for non-traditional students by investigating the experiences that they come across. Several studies point to the unique paths that non-traditional students take to navigate through higher education. There is evidence that these students continue with their education through their own persistence and will to begin a new lifestyle for themselves and their families. Other pieces of evidence included that if the universities took care of their students, students would have satisfactory experiences. They come across obstacles that may occupy time but for the majority, they remain enrolled.

### **Theoretical Frameworks**

The first theory is the concept of community cultural wealth by Tara J. Yosso. It can be approached by highlighting the empowerment of students. In this theory there are six components: aspirational, linguistic, familial, social, navigational, and resistance (Yosso, 2005; Olcoñ et al, 2018). Aspirational stands for motivation such as hopes and dreams of students, linguistic stands for communication and language skills that students bring with them and familial are the resources students have for prior to higher education. The social and navigation skills refers to social and navigational skills and abilities that the students have and gain at their institution. Resistance calls for gaining skills in places that are in need of equality. These six forms are especially useful when describing how people of color use their knowledge to expose disproportions in higher education institutions. This theory can also be applied to recognize the

effort that non-traditional students showcase in higher education and acknowledge their discovery in navigating through an institution that is strange to them.

The second theory William J. Goode's theory of role strain suggests the multiple roles that individuals have in their day to day lives. For the purpose of this project, the focus will be on the split roles that non-traditional students have outside of their academic lives. The roles include juggling family, work, and school. The theory of role strain includes three dimensions: role conflict, role overload, and role contagion (Goode, 1960). Role conflict consists of having several demands that require undivided attention from an individual. Role overload indicates that there is insufficient time to complete the demands that are required from the roles. Thirdly, role contagion is when attempts to multitask is performed. Once the third step is achieved, an individual will begin to consequently have overwhelming feelings and stress. Goode (1960) offers suggestions on how to reduce role strain by ego choice manipulation. That can be accomplished by practicing at least one of the six strategies: 1) compartmentalization, 2) delegation, 3) elimination of roles, 4) extension, 5) obstacles that are against the expansion of ego's role system and 6) building barriers against intrusion.

Theoretical frameworks from Tara J. Yosso and William J. Goode will be utilized to further expand the experiences of non-traditional students. The two frameworks can be applied to non-traditional students because they both recognize the efforts and strategies that these students contribute to the world of academia.

### **Methodology**

The methodology approach consisted of a case study. A case study is an in-depth investigation of a social phenomenon using qualitative research methods (Feagin et al., 1991).

As a part of a case study I analyzed the Transfer Student Success Center (also known as the Transfer Center). The Transfer Center was opened in the Fall semester of 2019, therefore it is still establishing itself on campus. Originally, my plan was to physically attend their workshops that they offer each day of the week but due to the pandemic, I had to come up with another plan. Although, I do continue observing the Transfer Center from afar. They have moved to utilizing social media platforms to continue engaging with their audience by creating Zoom events similar to their on-campus workshops.

Additionally, I collected data to examine the usage and satisfaction of all the student support services that are offered at CSUMB. I created a qualitative questionnaire with Qualtrics Online Survey Tool, which ensured complete anonymity and confidentiality for the participant. A total of 30 students completed the survey. With the tool, I was able to use charts and graphs to assist in summarizing the results. I included questions that asked the participant about their personal backgrounds, their satisfaction with the student support programs, how often they use them, and what other services they prefer to have more access to. The survey was administered from March 11, 2020 to March 27, 2020. It was shared to the Transfer Student Success Center and other support programs such as Undocu-Otters and Allies and the Otter Cross Cultural Center. Faculty from the College of Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences shared the survey on my behalf. The case study and survey are in addition to the literature review.

### **Case Study: An Exploratory Study of the Transfer Student Success Center**

California State University, Monterey Bay (CSUMB) attracts students for various reasons. Its low tuition and fees, small population, and beautiful environment are just a few reasons. It is a popular decision for transfer students that are coming in from community

colleges. At CSUMB, there is not as much program impaction in the majors as there would be at larger California State Universities (CSU). As of Fall 2019, 1,053 of the 6,743 (15.61%) CSUMB students are transfers (CSUMB Intitutional Assessment and Research, n.d).

In Fall 2019, the Transfer Student Success Center was established. Prior to its grand opening, there was no clear center where transfer students could go to ask for assistance. Through the continuous efforts of the Transfer center coordinator and its peer mentors, more transfer students are aware that there is a place for them. Each day of the week the center would designate a day for a specific workshop. Although since the transition online, the Transfer center has made efforts to implement similar workshops virtually. According to the coordinator, he has made efforts to implement a better introduction to CSUMB through the New Student Orientation that new students are required to attend. The Transfer Center had events to create more traffic by having plans to host open houses, paint nights, study days and social nights.

### ***List of On Campus Workshops***

Mondays 12:00 PM-1:00 PM: STEM Studio,

Tuesdays 4:30 PM-5:30 PM: Drop-In Writing Tutoring for All Subjects,

Wednesdays 1:00 PM-2:00 PM: Research Support for Transfer Students,

Thursdays 2:30 PM-3:30 PM: Transfer Career Connections.

### ***List of Virtual Workshops***

Mondays 8:00 AM-11:00AM, Wednesdays 8:30 AM-11:00 AM, and Thursdays 9:00

AM-10:30AM: Students with Families, Zoom “Check-In” Hours,

Tuesdays 9:30 AM-11:00 AM: Transfer Center Housing Chat.

The campus workshops listed above were offered everyday on its designated day. I was able to attend a few of the workshops in order to observe prior to the campus closing. The STEM Studio workshop appeared to be the most popular (it is important to note that the time for this workshop is called “University Hours” hence the more attendees) while Drop-In Writing Tutoring did not have as many attendees. Each day was a hit or miss in the number of students attending. The other two workshops had about 10 attendees each day. In addition to the workshops, there are transfer peer mentors that have their own set of mentees and office hours, allowing communication for those seeking mentorship. The Transfer Student Success Center has been a valuable asset to the campus community.

### **Findings**

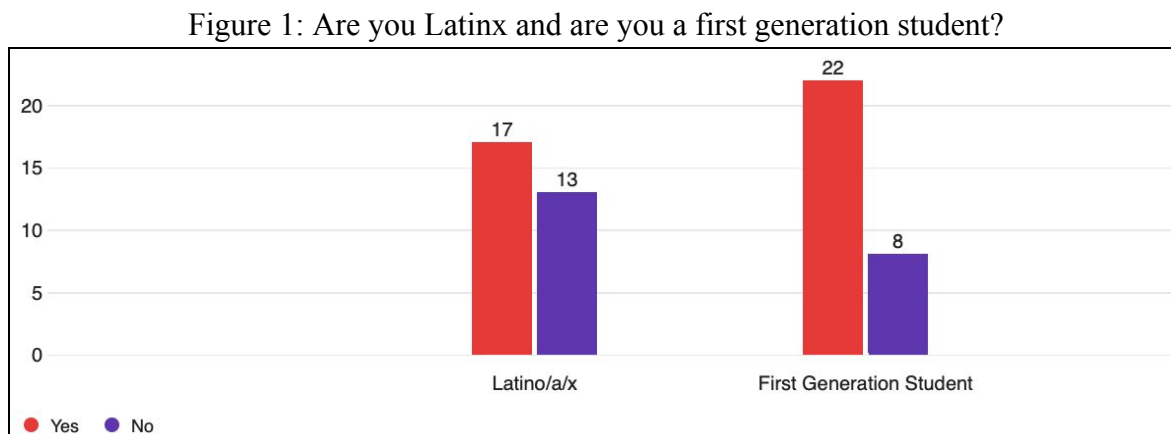
This section presents the qualitative and the quantitative findings. The findings include 1) Demographics of the Participants 2) Awareness of Student Support Services 3) Overall Satisfaction and Obtainment of Student Support Services and 4) Meeting the Needs of Non-Traditional Students.

#### ***Demographics of Participants***

A total of 30 CSUMB students responded to the survey. The majority of the students surveyed were female, which accounted for 73% of all survey responses while males accounted for 27%. In regards to the amount of students that are non-traditional, there were several questions that were asked to distinguish them as such. There were questions about age, ethnicity, being first generation, and if they have any dependents. Ages between 22 and 25 dominated with 47%. About 48% of participants were white, 19% African American or Black, 11% Asian, and 4% American Indian or Alaskan Native.



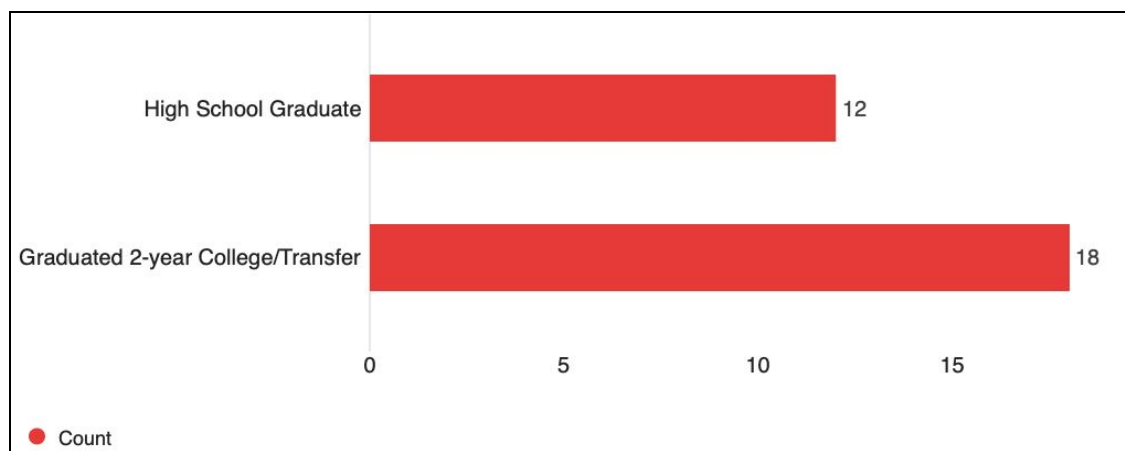
Figure 1, displays the count of Latinx students and first generation students.



As shown in figure 1, 57 % were Latinx, representing the largest ethnic demographic at CSUMB. Overall, 73% of the participants were first generation students. The other participants did not identify as Latinx or as a first generation student, but they do identify with one of those demographic options. There was also a question about their parents' educational background. The majority of students (30%) have parents that have a high school level diploma, 27% of parents have below a high school education, 23% of parents have a community college education or trade school education, 13% of parents have a graduate level degree, and 7% of parents have undergraduate degrees.

The following horizontal graph, Figure 2, displays the educational level of the questionnaire participants.

Figure 2: Education Level



Another question asked was about the participants' education levels. 60% of the students have graduated from a 2 year college and are transfer students. The rest of the 40% are high school graduates, indicating that they began their higher education academic careers as freshman at a four year university.

The participants selected their cumulative GPAs. Forty percent had a cumulative GPA that ranged from 3.6 to a 4.0. Grade point averages ranged from 2.6 to 3.0 and 3.1 to 3.5 each had 23% response from participants. Ten percent reported that their GPA ranged from a 2.0 to a 2.5. Only 3% reported that their GPA was below at 2.0. Ten percent of the participants have dependents.

The entirety of the students that participated fit the criteria of being a non-traditional student. They categorized themselves in one group or more that is considered to be non-traditional. The percentages and counts represent the ratio of the gender, age, race, and class demographics at CSUMB.

### *Awareness of Student Support Services*

The figures presented in this section contribute to the awareness of student support services by non-traditional students. Along with awareness, the obstacle of obtaining assistance and method of learning about it is acknowledged.

The following table, Figure 3, displays the services that CSUMB offers.

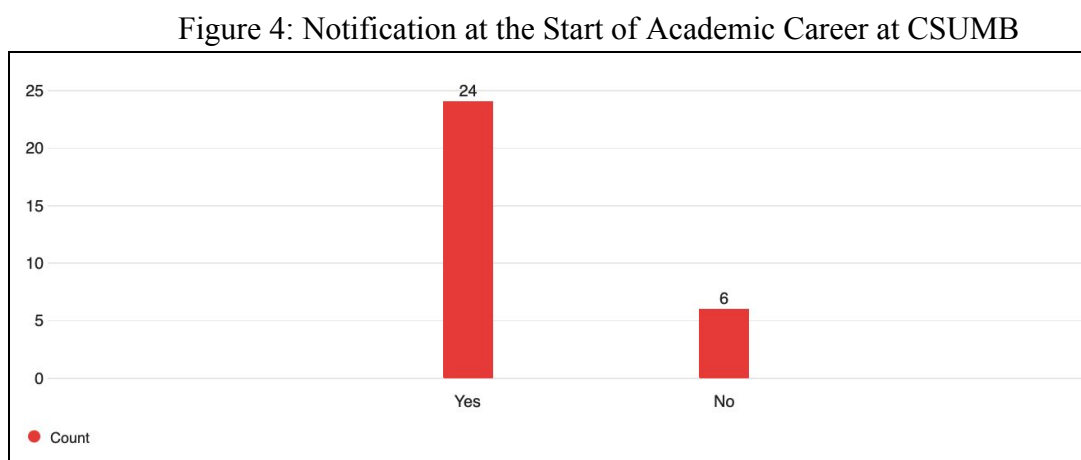
Figure 3: Awareness of Specific Student Support Services at CSUMB

<b><u>Student Support Services</u></b>	<b><u>Count</u></b>
Undocu-Success Support	6
TRiO Support Services	14
Veteran Services	11
Basic Needs	17
Campus Health Center	23
College Assistance Migrant Program	3
Cooperative Learning Center	24
Educational Opportunity Program	14
Guardian Scholars	7
Otter Cross Cultural Center	19
Personal Growth and Counseling Center	24
Student Disability Resources	17
Transfer Student Success Center	14
Undergraduate Research Opportunities Center	17
Center for Advising, Career, & Student Success	29
Associated Students	22

Each participant had the option to select which services they were aware about on campus. There were a total of 262 selections. The least known support service is the College

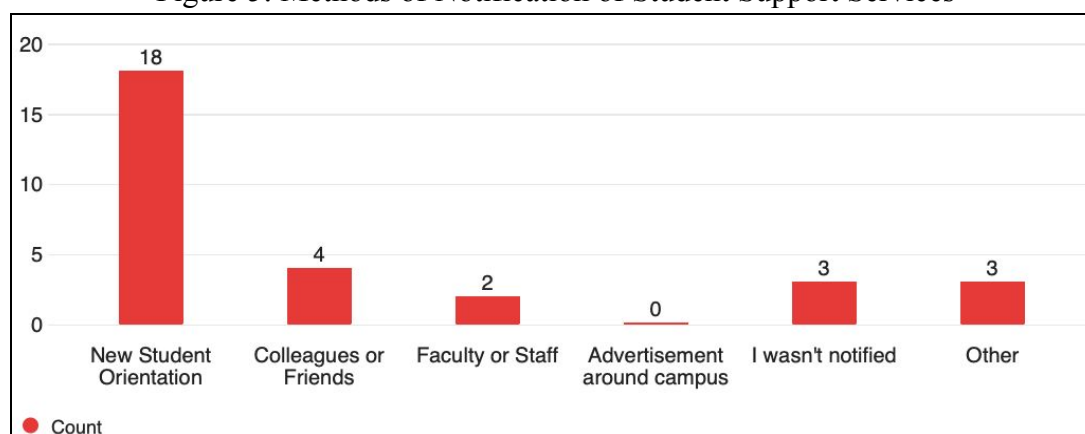
Assistance Migrant Program (CAMP) while the Center for Advising, Career, & Student Success is the most known. Despite the fact that students knew of the services, they may not use them all. Other well known services include the Personal Growth and Counseling Center (mental health), Cooperative Learning Center (offers tutoring), the Campus Health Center (overall health), and Associated Students (student government). Twenty-six (86%) of the participants selected that they use the services while the rest (13%) do not.

Figure 4, displays whether or not students were notified of the student support services as a new student.



For the majority of students (24 count), they were notified about the student support services on campus. This question specifically asked about the beginning of the academic careers at CSUMB. Students were able to describe other ways that they became aware about where they could receive additional help from the university. One student wrote “Perhaps services can be more visible around campus. I feel like during orientation time was the only time I saw them outside of their office/building”. This statement is confirmed in the graph below (figure 5). Figure 5, displays the methods that the students were notified about the student support services at CSUMB.

Figure 5: Methods of Notification of Student Support Services



Most students (60%) were notified about the services through the New Student Orientation that occurs each semester for new students, as shown in figure 5. The second method is learning from colleagues or friends (13%). Three students (10%) selected that they did not get notified about the services for an unexplained reason. Two (7%) selected that they were notified by faculty or staff members. No one selected that they became aware through the advertisement on campus which includes both paper and technological flyers. The “Other” suggestions stated that they were notified of services through online searches, emails, and from tutors. A student pointed out, “I only knew about these services due to my extensive involvement on campus”. In general, students were first notified about some services at their orientations but continuously learned about more through their connections on campus or by doing their own research.

### ***Overall Satisfaction and Obtainment of the Student Support Services***

According to the students surveyed, 57% were likely to return to CSUMB based on the services that are offered at the university. Furthermore, 73% of students stated that they would recommend the services to their friends and colleagues. Another 53% of students found the services as useful while only 6% did not believe the same. There was a question that asked if the

usual 8 AM to 5 PM time frame that the campus is open worked with the students' schedules.

Most of the students (63%) responded that they are able to attend the hours for the services. The remainder (37%) state that the hours do not work well with their schedule.

Figure 6, displays the percentages of satisfaction with the student support services that CSUMB offers.

Figure 6: Level of Satisfaction with the Student Support Services

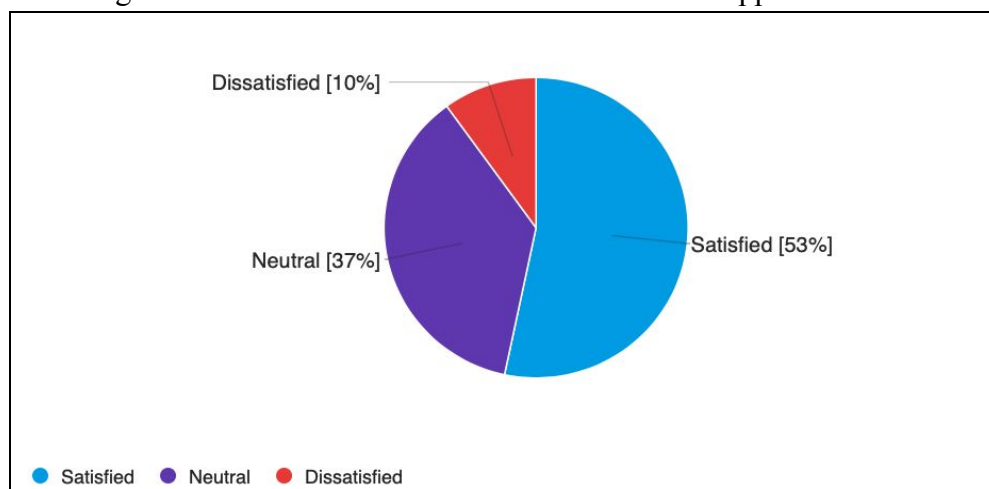
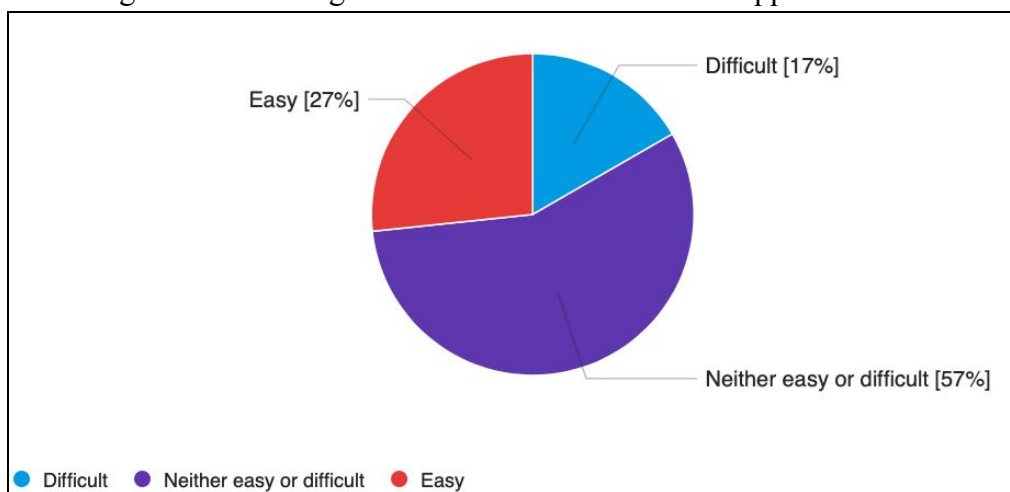


Figure 7, displays the effort that it takes for students to obtain support from the student support services.

Figure 7: Obtaining Assistance from the Student Support Services

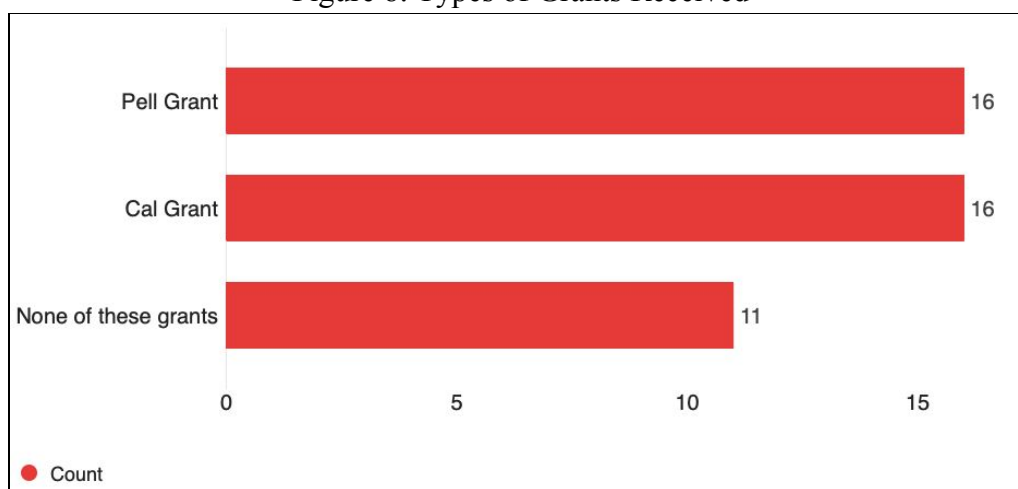


### *Meeting the Needs of the Non-Traditional Students*

This section measured the respondents' suggestions of additional options CSUMB can consider in order to help its students. The following figures demonstrate the need that students are asking for the most from CSUMB. Financial aid is also included in this section.

Figure 8, displays the grants that are offered by the federal and state governments.

Figure 8: Types of Grants Received

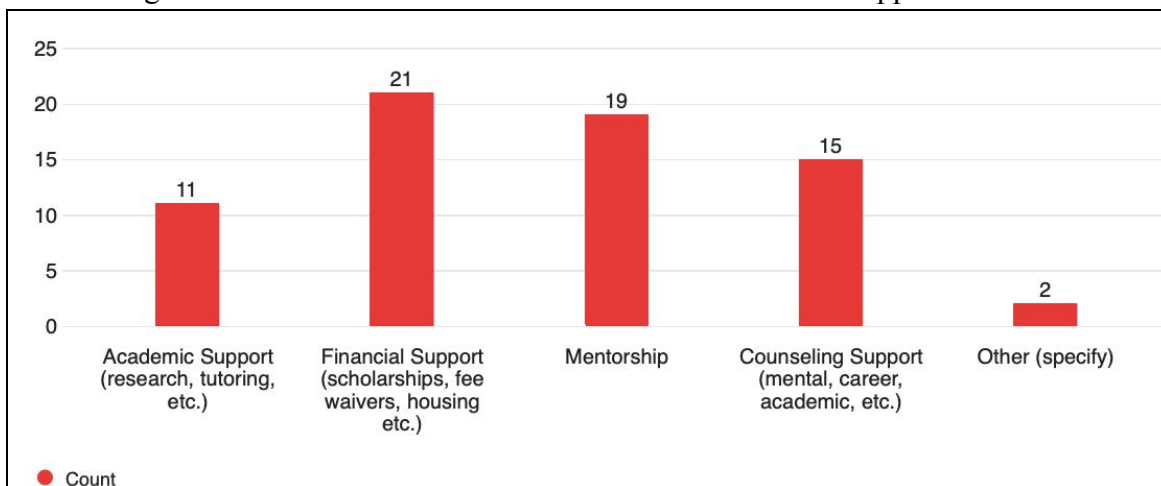


The questionnaire included a question of whether the participants are Pell Grant and Cal grant recipients, which are grants that are available to students that are low-income and or have a specific Estimated Family Contribution (EFC). In figure 8, there were an equal number of students (16) that received both the Pell Grant and the Cal Grant, equaling to 37% each grant. On the other hand, 11 students (26%) are not eligible for any of the two grants. The participants that selected none of these grants have stated that they do not qualify for the grants due to non-citizenship status or they have exceeded the years when they can receive it.

The Pell Grant is from the federal government while the California Grants are from the state. The maximum years for both the Pell Grant and the California Grants is 4 years.

Figure 9, displays the support services that the participants indicated they wish there were more of.

Figure 9: Needs of Non-Traditional in Terms of Student Support Services



In matters of improvement, students would find it more beneficial if the university were able to provide more financial services and mentorship for them. There were four options available to select aside from financial (31%) and mentorship (28%) as shown in figure 9 above. The other two options were academic support (16%) and counseling (22%). The 2 selections under “other” stated that they wish for all of these services or that CSUMB sufficiently offers these types of support systems.

Figure 10, displays a word cloud with the forty most common words that students noted in a question connected to figure 9. The words include how the university and its services can best assist them.

Figure 10: Methods CSUMB Can Assist Their Non-Traditional Students' Needs





*“Scholarships are very important, and if I didn’t have UROC, I would be lacking a mentored program, which I think is really important for everyone to have.”*

At the end of the survey, students had the opportunity to answer an open-ended question about their perspective on how the services can be improved and how they could gear towards the needs of students. As demonstrated in figures 9 and 10, common themes included financial aid, housing, learning how to navigate through career options during and after undergrad (mentorship and counseling), mental health, and remaining persistent and motivated while enrolled in classes. One student stated, “Housing is so expensive, so I wish there was a way to focus on school without having to worry about loans taken out to pay for housing”. Another student said, “Mentorship would have been nice to help me through the system as a first generation student”. Similar responses include “Allow me to get a better understanding of my options”, “Finding scholarships”, “help with direction with schooling and career navigation”, “mental preparedness for life outside of college”, and “staying in school”.

### **Discussion of Findings**

#### ***Non-traditional Students and Their Usage of Services Offered***

**Research Question 1:** How often do non-traditional students utilize the services that their university offers?

The first research question explored the routes about how students utilize the services at CSUMB. Since part of this project was a case study of the Transfer Student Success Center, I concentrated on questionnaire responses that geared towards the center. The Transfer Student Success Center was selected 14 times which expresses that despite it being a new service, it is known by many of those that participated. Credit is due to the efforts of the Transfer Center that constantly advertise their workshops and programs that they host. Also, prior to the orientation for Fall 2019, there was no information for the Transfer Center available, but now there is another indicator that the advertisement is successful.

Literature defining non-traditional students and their experiences is contradictory. There are some that define non-traditional students as off putting and timid while other literature defines them as go getters and high achievers. Based on the results from the questionnaire, the community cultural wealth concept from Tara Yosso (2005) applies and counters the literature. Non-traditional students at CSUMB are resourceful. Students use their connections by asking their peers or faculty and staff members on campus to learn more about the services that are offered on campus (navigational). They take advantage of their social networks to be able to find the help that they need (social). If they do not have this type of access, non-traditional students do their own research online through the CSUMB website or they attempt to find a space where they could feel like they belong (familial and resistance). Non-traditional students at CSUMB remain motivated, determined, and positive throughout their journey (aspirational).

*Support from California State University, Monterey Bay*

**Research Question 2:** Do non-traditional students feel like they are supported by their university?

The second research question addresses the overall feelings about the student support services. This includes satisfaction, inclusivity, quality, and resources provided. There was a significant distinction between satisfaction and dissatisfaction of the programs that are offered. Overall, non-traditional students are neutral and satisfied. Neutral indicates there are no prominent feelings about the services, which should create a drive to improve services for students in order to get more satisfaction results. Although, students that did find the student support services satisfactory stated that they would not have accomplished as much if it weren't for the support they received.

Students that receive a grant from the government have stated that they are only limited to four years for the grant. After that, they are not able to receive it any longer. In total, 47% of students at CSUMB are recipients of the Pell Grant, expressing the high need for financial assistance at this university. From the results, non-traditional students wish for additional financial aid that does not include loans such as grants and scholarships. Every year CSUMB has an application due in February for scholarships, but that is not sufficient for students. Students that took the questionnaire call for further assistance in searching for scholarships so they could limit the amount they borrow from loans.

A variety of the literature stated, more engagement on campus benefits students. As answered in the first research question, support didn't come from just the university support programs but also from faculty and staff members. To further expand on it for this research question, professors and professional staff make a great impact on students. The responses from

a number of the participants supported the literature.

The results touch aspects from Goode's (1960) theory of role strain. Even though students were involved, they over exhausted themselves at times for the sake of having a beneficial experience (role conflict). Overexhaustion applies the most to first generation students. Students had to work in order to be able to financially support themselves and family, if applicable (role overload). Responses from the participants included having mentorship offered more often. Mentorship could help them learn how to navigate higher education and learn ways to cope with role stress such as compartmentalization, delegation, and building barriers.

### **Discussion of Limitations**

Due to the circumstances that occurred during this semester, I was not able to physically attend the workshops that the Transfer Student Success Center offered during the semester. The 30 participants do not offer a deep enough insight to the opinions of the non-traditional students at CSUMB. Most of the participants were women and from the College of Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences. The events of COVID-19 changed many projects in a short amount of time, leaving uncertainty between students. The transition to an online format disrupted everyone that is a part of the CSUMB community.

### **Conclusion**

The purpose of this research was to share the perspectives that non-traditional students have on the student support services that CSUMB offers. As the years come by, the needs of students change along with the time. The findings from this research indicated that students would appreciate further financial assistance and mentorship from their fellow peers and faculty. Even though students are overall satisfied, the method that students are informed about the

services that are offered needs to be improved. Non-traditional students at CSUMB are learning about services through being actively involved on campus and/or asking their peers, faculty, and staff. This strategy works great with a number of students, but other students that participated in the questionnaire suggest that the university finds other ways to inform students. To them, it would create a sense of belonging with the university as well that the university cares about them as people and not just students.

Additional respondents as well as questions to a questionnaire would create more thorough information to work with. Further research can include observing other student support services rather than just one program. It would offer an interesting insight in comparing a support service that has been on campus for a couple years and another support service that is growing. Individual interviews of students and coordinator of the programs would supplement the data about students' experiences.

In conclusion, investigation of student experiences is important for universities to conduct constantly. Students largely base their university options on how well the university treats its students. If CSUMB wishes to continue growing, the university must provide positive service towards its students. Moreover, since Monterey Bay is a part of the California State University system, the needs and wishes of students heavily rely on the state and federal governments. Active advocacy and spreading awareness can heighten the experience for all students enrolled in higher education.

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## Appendix

### Questionnaire Questions and Responses

*What is your sex?*

	Male	Female
Sex	8	22

*What is your age?*

	18-21	22-25	26-30	31 and older
Age	8	14	6	2

*Are you Latino/a/x?*

	Yes	No
Latinx Background	17	13

*Choose one or more races you consider yourself to be.*

	White	African American or Black	American Indian or Alaskan Native	Asian	Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	Other
Race	13	5	1	3	0	5

*What is your college based on your program?*

	CAHSS	COE	COB	CHSHS	COS	Undeclared
College	20	5	1	1	3	0

CAHSS: College of Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences

COE: College of Education

COB: College of Business

CHSHS: College of Health Sciences and Human Services

COS: College of Science

*What is your current GPA? (4.0 scale)*

	2.0 and below	2.1-2.5	2.6-3.0	3.1-3.5	3.6-4.0
<b>GPA</b>	1	3	7	7	12

*Will you graduate with you B.A/B.S in the traditional 4 year time frame?*

	Yes	No
<b>4 Year Attendance</b>	11	19

*Are you a Pell Grant and/or Cal Grant recipient?*

	Pell Grant	Cal Grant	None of those grants
<b>Grants Received</b>	16	16	11

*Are you a first generation student?*

	Yes	No
<b>First Generation</b>	22	8

*Do you have dependents?*

	Yes	No
<b>Have Dependents</b>	3	27

*What is the highest level of education that you have completed?*

	High School Graduate	Graduated 2-year College/Transfer	Prefer Not to Answer
<b>Participant Education Level</b>	12	18	0

*What is your parent's highest level of education?*

	No High School Diploma	High School or equivalent	Community College or Trade School	Undergraduate	Graduate
Parent's Education Level	8	9	7	2	4

*At the start of your academic career at CSU, Monterey Bay, were you notified of the several student support services on campus?*

	Yes	No
Notified of Services	24	6

*How were you notified of the services?*

	New Student Orientation	Colleagues or Friends	Faculty or Staff
Method of Notification	18	4	2

	Advertisement on Campus	I wasn't notified	Other
Method of Notification	0	3	3

*How easy or difficult is it to obtain the resources that you need based on your specific demands?*

	Easy	Neither Easy or Difficult	Difficult
Obtaining Services	8	17	5

*How useful are the services provided at CSU, Monterey Bay?*

	Useful	Neutral	Not Useful At All
Usefulness	16	12	2

*Overall, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with your experience at this university?*

	Satisfied	Neutral	Dissatisfied
Satisfaction	16	11	3

*How likely are you to attend this university next year based on the services available to students?*

	Likely	Undecided	Not Likely
Retention Based on Services	17	7	6

*How likely are you to recommend these services to friends or colleagues?*

	Likely	Neutral	Unlikely
Recommend to Others	22	6	2

*Select the following services that you are aware about at CSU, Monterey Bay.*

Student Support Services	Count
Undocu-Success Support	6
TRiO Support Services	14
Veteran Services	11
Basic Needs	17
Campus Health Center	23
College Assistance Migrant Program	3

Cooperative Learning Center	24
Educational Opportunity Program	14
Guardian Scholars	7
Otter Cross Cultural Center	19
Personal Growth and Counseling Center	24
Student Disability Resources	17
Transfer Student Success Center	14
Undergraduate Research Opportunities Center	17
Center for Advising, Career, & Student Success	29
Associated Students	22
Total	262

*Do you use any of the services you selected above?*

	Yes	No
Usage of Services	26	4

*Does the 8 AM to 5 PM time frame offered for the services work with your schedule?*

	Yes	No
Availability	19	11

*What is a type of support that you wish were provided for you? Select all that apply.*

	Academic	Financial	Mentorship	Counseling	Other
Types of Support Needed	11	21	19	15	2