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Roberto D. Torres

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DePaul University  
College of Education

Developing a Culture of Care and Support:  
A Review of Institutional Practices and Growth Opportunities Affecting Black Male Student-Athletes at Southtown Community College

A Capstone in Education with a Concentration in Educational Leadership

Roberto D. Torres  
Doctor of Education  
June 2021

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Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Education

June 2021

I approve the capstone of Roberto D. Torres

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Andrea Kayne". The signature is written in a cursive style and is underlined.A handwritten date in blue ink that reads "5/10/21".

Andrea Kayne, J.D  
Program Director & Associate Professor in Educational Leadership  
Capstone Advisor

Date

## **Certification of Authorship**

I certify that I am the sole author of this capstone. Any assistance received in the preparation of this capstone has been acknowledged and disclosed within it. Any sources utilized, including the use of data, ideas and words, those quoted directly or paraphrased, have been cited. I certify that I have prepared this capstone according to program guidelines as directed.

Author Signature  Date 05/05//2021  
Roberto D. Torres

## Executive Summary

In December 2018, the Dean of Academic Affairs (DAA) was approached by the coach and members of the Southtown Community College (STC) basketball team regarding academic support for the team. The academic affairs team would delve into this situation and discover several areas where the college had failed these students. This study examines the conditions and climate that lead to the maltreatment of Black male student-athletes at STC and the feedback from the students affected. The feedback from these student-athletes gives a glimpse of their feelings of being mistreated because of their race and arguably their gender. The three goals of this research study are to

1. Qualitatively examine the factors, conditions, and practices that created a hostile, racist environment for Black student-athletes at STC;
2. Capture the experiences of individual Black male student-athletes through one-on-one interviews; and
3. Offer best practice recommendations to address the issues articulated by the experiences of Black male student-athletes at STC.

Members of the men's basketball team participated in taking surveys and provided additional feedback articulating their mistrust of the athletic director. They further stated, based on their observations and experience, that the athletic director exhibited racist attitudes and behaviors towards the men's basketball team, almost all of whom are Black. These attitudes and behaviors were exhibited by a number of administrators connected to the STC athletic program and were reported to college administrators.

This study looks at data surrounding the academic readiness and performance of Black male student-athletes in community colleges and available public data from the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA). It also examined theories and academic framework that demonstrate the best approach to community college students of color who are victims of poverty. This study further examines the lived reality, experiences and expectations of Black male student-athletes where institutions focus on athletic and not academic formation and ignore life needs beyond the college experience like lack of financial resources, food, shelter, and the lack of a support system.

This case highlights the following recommendations for an improved student experience at STC:

1. Improve the hiring process by eliminating political connections through a transparent, inclusive process that involves all constituents affected by a given position. For example, the hiring committee for an athletic director should include student-athletes, coaches, district-level athletic leaders, college administrators and members from the community associated or connected to the athletic program in some way.
2. Professional formation program that includes understanding the importance of social-emotional health and racial sensitivity. This program should be done from the perspective of Critical Race Theory, allowing survivors of racism and emotional abuse at STC to tell their stories so that all can understand the effects of patterns of behavior and selfish leadership perspectives.

3. Adopt a hands-on approach to student support and student success – use the success of the student-athlete study sessions and the Intercessory Session by finding ways to apply the successful approach and results to other student services areas.
4. Academic Affairs and Student Affairs must work together to provide continued support for all students. Both areas must creatively develop ways to help students navigate the intricacies of college life. The development of the Intercessory Session is an example of an innovative program that serves students in need in a creative way.
5. The cultivation and implementation of a culture of care model for student support that unites external and internal constituents in student development and success.

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## **Background**

### Introduction

In November 2018, an English professor brought a student to the Dean of Academic Affairs' (DAA) office. The student allegedly had submitted an assignment that required a librarian's signature with a forged signature. The professor brought the student to the DAA's office because, in the professor's words, the DAA would "treat him with compassion and respect. He needs help." The DAA met with the professor and the student a few minutes later. After engaging the student in conversation, it was apparent to the DAA that the student would need help. The student, Derrick, was a member of STC's basketball team. Derrick was estranged from his family, was living with his girlfriend, was an expectant parent, and was struggling financially. He was also now facing the reality that he may fail one of his classes, which would put his academic eligibility into question as a student-athlete. Derrick had just transferred to STC from a local university after failing a class in the proceeding Fall term and becoming academically ineligible to play basketball in the following Spring term (2017 and 2018 respectively). After having additional conversations with Derrick, the DAA discovered that he also did not have money to eat and would oftentimes come to the College for class and then participate in team practice having not eaten anything for the day. Basketball was important to him – for Derrick, basketball could be a way out of poverty and a way to pursue a dream he has. Basketball was also a way that he could provide for his family. Shortly after meeting Derrick, a few more men's basketball team members would come to meet with the DAA after the semester ended in December 2018. They were in the same academic situation as Derrick – had failed a course in the Fall semester and were now academically ineligible for the Spring semester.

The DAA reached out to the Athletic Director (AD) for some guidance and information. The DAA asked what systems does STC have in place to support our student-athletes who find themselves in the aforementioned situations. Specifically, knowing that a student such as Derrick was coming to STC with academic issues from his previous institution, what did STC do to support him regarding his academic challenges? The answer was simple – nothing was put in place. The AD further elaborated that the student-athletes were young adults and it was not her responsibility to treat young adults like children. It became apparent to the DAA that this particular group of students would need additional support.

The DAA was familiar with the needs of student-athletes based on prior professional experience on the high school level. The DAA was in administrative roles at several high schools that had successful boys' basketball programs. The schools had won state championships in their respective school classification class for several years and the students were being recruited to Division I colleges and universities to play basketball. As the young men were starting their college journey, the high school administration would receive reports from the colleges or universities about difficulties the students were having with regard to successfully transitioning to the collegiate level. Some of the issues included coming to class and practice on time, communication skills, and basic life skills. These issues were examined and the administration decided to address them at the high school level beginning at the junior year. The administration and faculty adjusted the curriculum based on feedback from partner colleges and universities and recent alumni. This work contributed to a 30% increase in retention of recent graduates at the college level. What the DAA was now experiencing at the community college level was the result of not having such a program in place at the high school level. Based on the DAA's experience,

successful student-athletes need to understand the following information about their college before transitioning to their respective institutions:

- Knowledge of the college/university attending
  - Who's your advisor?
  - Where's the business office?
  - Where's the financial aid office?
    - What is the financial aid package being offered (know before you sign)?
  - Where's the wellness center (physical, social, and emotional health)?
  - What academic supports are in place for student-athletes?
  - What's my academic plan for success?
  - What are the expectations of student-athletes?
  - What are the housing options?
  - Is there a meal plan?
  - Do you have reliable transportation to and from school?
    - If not, what are your options?
- Identify your support system
  - Who can you see for help?
  - Do you have financial support?
  - Do you have someone to talk to?
  - How do you engage with your instructors?
  - How do you engage with your advisors?

The situations the DAA was encountering at the community college level were not only issues of students not being prepared for college life, but issues that also demonstrated a lack of support and interest at the college staff level of anything other than the athletic talent or membership of the student-athletes. In the aforementioned scenario regarding Derrick, the college missed major opportunities in which he should have been given support and care. For example, Derrick transferred from a local university where he had become academically ineligible to play because he had failed a course. When he transferred to STC, college officials, specifically athletic department administrators and the athletic academic advisor, knew this but yet put no academic success plan in place to help ensure he would successfully engage in his courses. His academic advisor was not notified of his situation and thus the advisor did not have any conversations with Derrick to discuss supplemental resources available to him for his success, like the tutoring center or the wellness center. Derrick was estranged from his family, thus having very little to no family backing, including social/emotional and financial support. Further, Derrick lived with his girlfriend who was expecting their child. Although his situation was unique, it is not uncommon. Student-athletes, like other college students, deal with major issues that detract from their attention to academic matters. Another student-athlete who also became ineligible that same semester was homeless and living in his car.

Realizing the gap in services and care provided to the student-athletes, the Dean of Academic Affairs (DAA) wondered what kind of support they needed to be successful. Both the coach and members of the men's basketball team requested a mandatory study session each day. Understanding that the needs extended outside of the classroom, the DAA reached out to various departments in the College to build a strong program of support. In mid-January, the STC Academic Affairs team was able to offer guided study sessions for the student-athletes that

included wellness (social/emotional health), mentoring (from faculty volunteers), tutoring (from the Academic Support Center), academic advising (from their advisor), and technology to successfully engage in their course work (laptops for each student from the College's IT department). The study sessions had the following goals:

- To provide academic support services and activities to enhance students' academic and personal development
- To collaborate with academic and administrative departments to help students develop the necessary analytical and problem-solving skills to become independent learners
- To provide the opportunity for student-athletes to pursue excellence in developing personal and academic skills in addition to athletic skills
- To provide the opportunity for student-athletes to address non-academic (wellness) related issues, particularly social and emotional issues, to further strengthen their personal development

In addition to the aforementioned program, reengaging student-athletes with their instructors was crucial to break down mental models of each other from both perspectives. The DAA reengaged the student-athletes with their instructors by facilitating meetings. The objective of the meetings was to "introduce" the student to their instructor and engage in a conversation about each other's backgrounds and expectations of one another in the course. These meetings proved particularly valuable for the student, particularly in courses where they were not meeting academic expectations. The meetings helped to humanize the student-athlete and to help educators understand that the student had a story and had much to offer other than their athletic ability. In many cases, the educator supported the student-athlete by coming to sporting events and demonstrating that they cared. The aforementioned situations at the end of the Fall 2018 semester also led to changes that would culminate with new academic delivery options for all students in Fall 2019. These options would demonstrate the very best of shared governance and collaboration between administration and educators to put students at the center of our work but would also highlight the very worst behavior of ego-driven, selfish, racist and homophobic administrators who felt they were losing power and were determined to "win" at all costs.

#### Purpose of this Study

The three goals of this research study are to

1. Qualitatively examine the factors, conditions, and practices that created a hostile, racist environment for Black student-athletes at STC;
2. Capture the experiences of individual Black male student-athletes through one-on-one interviews;
3. Offer best practice recommendations to address the issues articulated by the experiences of Black male student-athletes at STC; and
4. Offer a student care and support model that addresses student life issues that affect learning.

The situation with the athletics program at Southtown College (STC) highlights systemic racism and an apathetic approach to at-risk students that can permeate the administration of intercollegiate sports at a community college. STC's athletic program not only discriminated against Black male athletes, but through its practice and pattern of behavior, illustrated an embedded disdain for students with low socio-economic status and with low social and cultural capital that was fostered

by its athletic department administrators. I aim to demonstrate how developing a thoughtful, fully integrated, student care model, partnered with attention to academic, social, emotional, and psychological wellness, empowers community college student-athletes to achieve success by achieving their articulated academic and career goals in a safe, nurturing college and community environment by eliminating the barriers that may inhibit their success. This study is intended to assist higher education administrators working in academic and student affairs who engage specifically with student-athletes at the community college level by further demonstrating the need to simultaneously address social, emotional, psychological, and academic needs coupled with necessary institutional changes that address institutional cultures and behaviors that support structural racism, bias and discrimination among faculty, staff, and administration.

### Institutional Context

Southtown Community College (STC) is the fictional name of a real community college on which this study is based. STC is an urban community college located in a large metropolitan area. STC is part of a larger community college system, serving approximately 13,000 students. Of the 13,000 students served, 6,100 students are enrolled in credit courses, 5,300 are in adult education courses, and 2,200 students are enrolled in continuing education courses. Of STC's credit taking students, nearly half are full-time students, and approximately 30% are aged 25 and older. STC is classified as a Hispanic Serving Institution<sup>1</sup> with a student demographic breakdown in which 60% of students are Hispanic/Latinx, 15% are White, and 20% are African American.

STC has diverse faculty, administration, and staff, employing 621 higher education professionals. Overall, the STC's staff ethnic and racial breakdown is 27.6% Hispanic/Latinx, 26.3% African-American, 39.6% White, and 6.5% Other or Unknown. STC has 29 administrators of which 41% are Hispanic/Latinx, 21% African-American, and 38% are White. Of the 55 full-time faculty, 42% are White, 24% are African-American, 11% are Hispanic/Latinx, 18% are Asian, and 6% are Unknown.

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<sup>1</sup> Hispanic Serving Institutions are defined by Federal Law as an accredited, degree-granting, public institution of higher education with 25% or more total undergraduate Hispanic full-time equivalent student enrollment (Higher Education Opportunity Act Title V, 2008)

## **Literature Review**

### Theoretical Framework

This examination uses the lenses of Appreciative Inquiry (AI), Critical Race Theory (CRT), and the principals of Guided Pathways (GP) in an effort to develop a thoughtful, fully integrated, individuated instruction and advising model that puts the entire post-secondary academic trajectory into a tangible, equitable, and easily understandable format for community college students. Bailey, Jaggars and Jenkins (2015) note that most community colleges operate as “cafeteria colleges model”, meaning they tend to focus on courses rather than programs. The typical student is overwhelmed by the number of course choices she/he must make, often with little assistance. This results, in many cases, in poor program or course selection decisions that cost time and money. This can likely lead to many students dropping out in frustration which leaves them with student loan debt and an accumulation of credits that do not lead to program completion. Once additional layers are added to the aforementioned scenario such as the lack of academic, social, emotional, and psychological preparation for college or complex life scenarios of students, the resulting situation can be extremely difficult if not impossible for a community college student to navigate.

### Appreciative Inquiry Model

Appreciative Inquiry is a way of thinking, seeing and acting for powerful, purposeful change in organizations (Hall & Hammond, 1998). AI works on “the assumption that whatever you want more of, already exists in all organizations” (Hall & Hammond, 1998). Instead of asking, “What are root causes of failure or defect?” in a given situation, one would ask, “What are the root causes of success?” AI emphasizes the search for solutions that already exist; amplifies what is working in an organization; and focuses on life-giving forces.

### Critical Race Theory

Race has been, and continues to be a significant aspect in education as it pertains to issues of access, opportunities, and outcomes. CRT is a framework that offers researchers, practitioners, and policy-makers a race-conscious approach to understanding educational inequality and structural racism to find solutions that lead to greater justice (Price, 2016).

### Guided Pathways Model

Two guiding questions have led the development of the Guided Pathways model – How can colleges minimize student confusion over the many choices available to them? How can colleges create curricula that enable students to develop competencies that will lead to success? (Bailey, Jaggars, & Jenkins, 2015). GP aims to provide students with more simplified programs based on maps that are developed collaboratively with faculty and advisors. These career maps provide students with a more simplified program that are more coherent sequences of courses and competencies that are aligned with the requirements for success for further education and employment. These maps help to structure a student’s decision while empowering their ability to choose among the options. It is important to note that the GP model is not only providing streamlined course mappings/offers but lays out a student’s post-secondary plans and provides the student with an active role in her/his educational journey. The GP model also requires active guidance on the part of the college to support students academically, socially, and emotionally.

## Research

Bringing the three aforementioned concepts together helps in framing the approach, understanding, and institutional response to issues facing Black male student athletes at Southtown College (STC). Based on the aforementioned situation at STC and research regarding success and inequitable practices toward Black male athletes in higher education, three questions emerged as necessary to explore. The development of these questions is a direct result of conversation with STC faculty, staff and administrators, which at times, expresses their implicit bias toward student athletes: 1) Are Black male student-athletes socialized to value sports over academics? 2) Do colleges and universities reap tremendous benefits at the expense of Black male student-athletes? 3) Do disparities exist in academic and social preparation for college for Black male student-athletes?

### **Are Black male student-athletes socialized to value sports over academics?**

It was surprising to hear from faculty who have had student-athletes in their courses at STC that they believe that most athletes care more about athletics than academics. Some of the comments the DAA heard was, “they are only here because of basketball,” or “they don’t care about anything in the classroom.” According to Beamon, the socialization process of Black males has been shown to be intentionally geared toward athletics and other forms of entertainment (Beamon, 2010). During this socialization process, some Black males develop an athletic identity that follows them through adulthood. This socialization process integrates new members into society by teaching norms, values, and behavior that is appropriate for developing their sense of self (Thompson & Hickey, 1999). This socialization is completed by various components of the individual’s support system – family, school, peers, community. It is also completed by the media. According to Beamon (2010), it is through these various agents that the athletes in her study developed athletic identities and professional sports aspirations and learned the importance of sports in the Black community. The media plays a significant role in socializing Black children towards sports (Coakley, 1998). The media often sensationalizes the achievement of certain athletes and romanticizes their lives. This is further reinforced through television reality shows showcasing certain athletes and the highly publicized financial details of professional sports contracts. Beamon cites Harry Edwards (1983), noted scholar in this field, who maintained that the media limit “African American children’s access to images of African American adults working in many high prestige, non-athletic, or non-entertainment related occupational fields” (p. 38). Edwards contends that unlike White children, Black children see very few lawyers, doctors, teachers, or scientists of their own race in the media and in life. This may cause them to gravitate toward athletes as role models because that is the successful image with which they are presented on a regular basis (Edwards, 1983). There are several studies that have discussed the tendency for Black males to have Black athletes as their role models. Assibey-Mensah (1997) looked at role models among Black male youth and the effect on their personal development. The majority of respondents in all age groups identified athletes or sports figures as their role model. The role modeling has been associated with the disproportionate overrepresentation of Black athletes in football, basketball, and track and field (Sailes, 1998).

In working with student-athletes over the last fifteen years on the high school and collegiate levels, the STC Dean of Academic Affairs (DAA) witnessed that oftentimes the student seems to value sports more because of parental influence. Specifically, if parents were student-athletes at any level, the child emulates their love of the particular sport. At times, the parent pushes the



student-athlete to succeed athletically for a variety of reasons from financial reasons to seeing their child as an extension of their high school or collegiate experience. According to Beaman (2010), sports sociologists note that family, including parents and siblings, are the earliest and most influential socializing agents into sports participation. In Beaman's qualitative study, she finds that although most of her respondents did not express that they were forced or pushed into playing sports, all but two of the respondents perceived that their parental support for athletic achievement outweighed the support they received for academic achievement. This support included attending games and practices, encouraging sports as an opportunity for success as opposed to emphasizing other opportunities and being involved in sports decision making. This is not to say that family support was not present for academics, but the overwhelming support for athletics and athletic development/achievement sends an implicit message that sports development is more important. Beaman and Bell (2002, 2006) note that this type of support can be detrimental to their academic success and lead to unrealistic expectations to play on the professional level. Beaman (2010), uses the social imitation theory to guide her study. The theory maintains that the individuals learn roles and behaviors by observing them and their consequences. The respondents in her 2010 study were socialized to overemphasize sports by observing athletes become successful and highly esteemed in the media, their neighborhoods, and their families. They also observed positive outcomes of emphasizing athletics and neglecting other talents through the media imaging of successful Black athletes or entertainers. The aforementioned socializing agents and the socializing environment came together to socialize this particular group of student-athletes toward athletics.

The DAA was shocked but not surprised by the comments of faculty regarding Black student-athletes shared earlier. Beaman (2014) discusses these types of comments in her review of the experiences of African American athletes regarding racism and stereotyping on college campuses. She notes that Black student-athletes face several problems on college campuses which are a lack of preparation for college courses, isolation, a lack of African Americans in leadership positions in athletic departments, and stereotypes that are held by professors and members of athletic departments. She also notes that educational stereotypes of Black athletes continue to persist with some White faculty members and students having lower expectations of the academic potential of African American student-athletes. In the case of Southtown College, the athletic administration was not only led by White administrators, but White female administrators who did not have experience working with Black male student-athletes or students from lower socio-economic statuses. Southtown College (STC) student-athletes felt antagonized not only by their instructors but also by athletic leadership.

### **Do colleges and universities reap tremendous benefits at the expense of Black male athletes?**

Noted sociologist and scholar activist, Harry Edwards, was a pioneer in examining the intersection between Black male student athletes and the factors they experience at colleges and universities. He stressed how racism and other macro-level or societal/structural factors have stifled the education and holistic development of Black athletes in organized school sports (Edwards, 1984). Edwards wrote, "They must contend, of course, with the connotations and social reverberations of the traditional 'dumb jock' caricature. But Black student-athletes are burdened also with the insidiously racist implications of the myth of 'innate Black athletic superiority' and the more blatantly racist stereotypes of the 'dumb negro' condemned by racial heritage to intellectual inferiority" (Edwards, 1984, p. 21). Yearwood's (2018) article, "Playing without Power: Black Male NCAA Student-Athletes Living with Structural Racism," examines NCAA

Black male athletes' experiences with structural violence and their feelings of powerlessness. She recalls on April 6, 2014, after winning a national championship in basketball, University of Connecticut player, Shabazz Napier, stated that he often had "hungry nights" and sometimes went to bed "starving." Napier's comments sparked surprise at the press conference and among viewers of college sports who presumed these high profile players lived lives of luxury. This is not the case. In fact, most of the student-athletes with whom the STC Dean of Academic Affairs collaborated at the community college level often did not have money to eat or to get to and from school. Napier was responding to the ongoing question around whether the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) and universities should pay student-athletes. His statement, according to Yearwood, "reveals that Black male student-athletes are keenly aware of their subjugated position in relation to the system." (Yearwood, 2018, p. 24) She writes that despite Napier's status as a national champion in a high profile sport, his hunger reflects his pervasive disadvantage. She writes, "with all of the money student-athletes bring in for the team, the university, and the sport, their realities are far from luxurious – they in fact consider themselves to be oppressed by systems of power" (Yearwood, 2018, p. 27).

In 2018, the University of Southern California's (USC) Race and Equity Center issued a report delivering some disturbing news that college athletic programs exist as mechanisms of exploitation, particularly of African American men. The report, authored by Dr. Shaun Harper, an education professor at USC, concludes that "perhaps nowhere in higher education is the disenfranchisement of Black male students more insidious than in college athletics" (Harper, 2018). The report notes that of the 65 universities studied, Black men comprised 2.4 percent of all undergraduates but 55 percent of football team members and 56 percent of basketball team members. Total student-athlete graduation rate was 69.3 percent over six years, and 76.3 percent for all students, but only 55.2 percent for Black male student-athletes. At 40 percent of the universities, Black male athlete graduation rates have dropped by 6.5 percent in the last two years. Harper contends that in spite of the research indicating the importance of engaging student-athletes in educationally purposeful activities and enriching curricular and co-curricular experiences, Black male student-athletes rarely benefit from "high levels of purposeful engagement" beyond athletics. What does this mean for faculty-student interaction? Engagement with faculty and academic advisors was essential to the academic achievement of all student-athletes, according to Comeaux and Harrison (Comeaux & Harrison, 2007). In spite of the aforementioned, however, Comeaux and Harrison found that professors are spending significantly more out of class time with White student-athletes. Some faculty, consequently, dismiss Black male student athletes and characterize them as "disinterested" in academics or "only here for sports." That sentiment can be infectious among the perspective of other college leaders, as was the case at STC.

### **Do disparities exist in academic and social preparation for college for Black male student-athletes?**

A significant majority of students entering community college embark on their journey with a weak foundation of academic skills (Bailey et al., 2015). They are often referred to developmental education courses in math or English which become required based on their academic placement but are not considered part of their academic plan and therefore are not covered by Title IV funding (federal financial aid). The academic barriers that they face not only include poor preparation in math and English, but also a poor foundation of metacognitive skills – the ability to perceive their own weaknesses and apply strategies to overcome the weaknesses

(Bailey et al., 2015). The harsh reality, according to Greene, Marti, and McClemey, is that many students who begin their academic studies at community college often leave before completing their intended academic goals (Greene et al., 2008). Within this group of non-completers, students of color are overrepresented.

For Black male student-athletes in community colleges, the scenario becomes increasingly complicated. Academic success, according to the NCAA, is the ability to maintain eligibility. For student-athletes participating at the Division I level, academic success includes “progress toward degree” policies that mandate student-athletes must annually advance toward graduation. At the community college level, student-athletes must not only maintain the aforementioned, but these metrics are also connected to the student’s access to Title IV funds, commonly known as financial aid. If students are not meeting satisfactory academic progress (SAP) by maintaining a semester grade point average of 2.0 or above, their ability to access federal financial aid money or state grant opportunities can be jeopardized. For student-athletes who are not on a scholarship or on a partial scholarship, they would need to maintain eligibility to access and federal grants for which they may qualify. Most schools will not allow student-athletes (or any student) to proceed with their studies if their accounts are not satisfied. Why is this important? A student-athlete’s ability to participate in athletics at the community college level not only depends on athletic ability, but the ability to be successful academically as this success is tied to the ability to finance this educational opportunity.

It is important to note that for many Black male-student athletes who come to community college to pursue their academic and athletic goals, the community college represents a second chance opportunity. At STC, for example, 60 percent of the 2018-2019 men’s basketball team were transfer students who were not academically successful at their previous institutions. When these student-athletes were engaged in one-on-one tutoring services, a list of academic challenges were identified by tutors working with the group which included reading comprehension issues, communication issues, writing challenges, and analytical thinking challenges. STC athletic administrators knew the student-athletes who transferred were not previously academically successful and did not put any programs in place to assist the student-athletes to achieve success in and out of the classroom. An adversarial culture existed between many instructors and student-athletes because of the current (2019-20) and immediate past athletic directors’ non-collaborative approach to them. Students were told to avoid certain instructors because they were not “athlete-friendly” which further fanned the flames of distrust between student-athletes and instructors. A student-athlete, who had a self-disclosed juvenile record, was told he would not succeed by an athletic administrator. The student-athlete, who had issues expressing himself, eventually dropped out of STC because, in his words, he had “no support.” Parham (1993) contends that Black student-athletes face developmental challenges that include balancing athletic and academic endeavors, coping with social isolation and participation in student activities, managing athletic success, managing their athletic health to include injury and rehabilitation, negotiating personal relationships with coaches, parents and family, teammates and peers and the community, and adjusting to athletic retirement and transition to a life after college athletics.

An important issue connected with college academic preparation is the status and development of the student-athlete’s social capital. Social capital refers to the networks, formal or informal, that an individual has or develops over time through educational, professional, or social interactions (Bourdieu, 1986). Another way to understand social capital in the context of the community college student-athlete is to examine the student-athlete’s established support system. In general, a student’s support system exists of family (parents, siblings, other relatives),

close friends (can be referred to as family by the student), and former teachers and classmates. In addition to this list, for the student-athlete, one will find past and current basketball coaches, former teammates, and teachers or instructors with whom the student-athlete had a positive interaction. The development of one's social capital is also dependent on one's ability to develop the social capital, specifically social skills commonly referred to as soft skills. In a recent study by Wang et al. (2018), sources and influences of social capital on community college students' first year success is explored. Their study contends that "age stage is an important factor that may intersect with how community college students accumulate social capital and how different sources of social capital influence success, because these stages could represent the different developmental needs that students face" (Wang et al., 2018, paragraph 23). Depending on where the student is in their college journey, they reported that younger community college students depend more on family and peers as a source of information and support because those are the individuals with whom they have the most contact. Working adult community college students may rely on their coworkers as well as peers and instructors because of the frequency of their interactions. In all, this study contends that community college students of varying age are likely to rely on different kinds of social relations within and beyond college and family settings as their sources of social capital (Wang et al., 2018). The study also reveals that regardless of age and extent of the student's support system, the student's access to knowledge relevant to college success (the classes needed to complete their program, the number of credits needed to graduate, registration deadlines, scholarship information) was most important. The transactional information of college life is important for any student's success, particularly their access to this information.

## Process

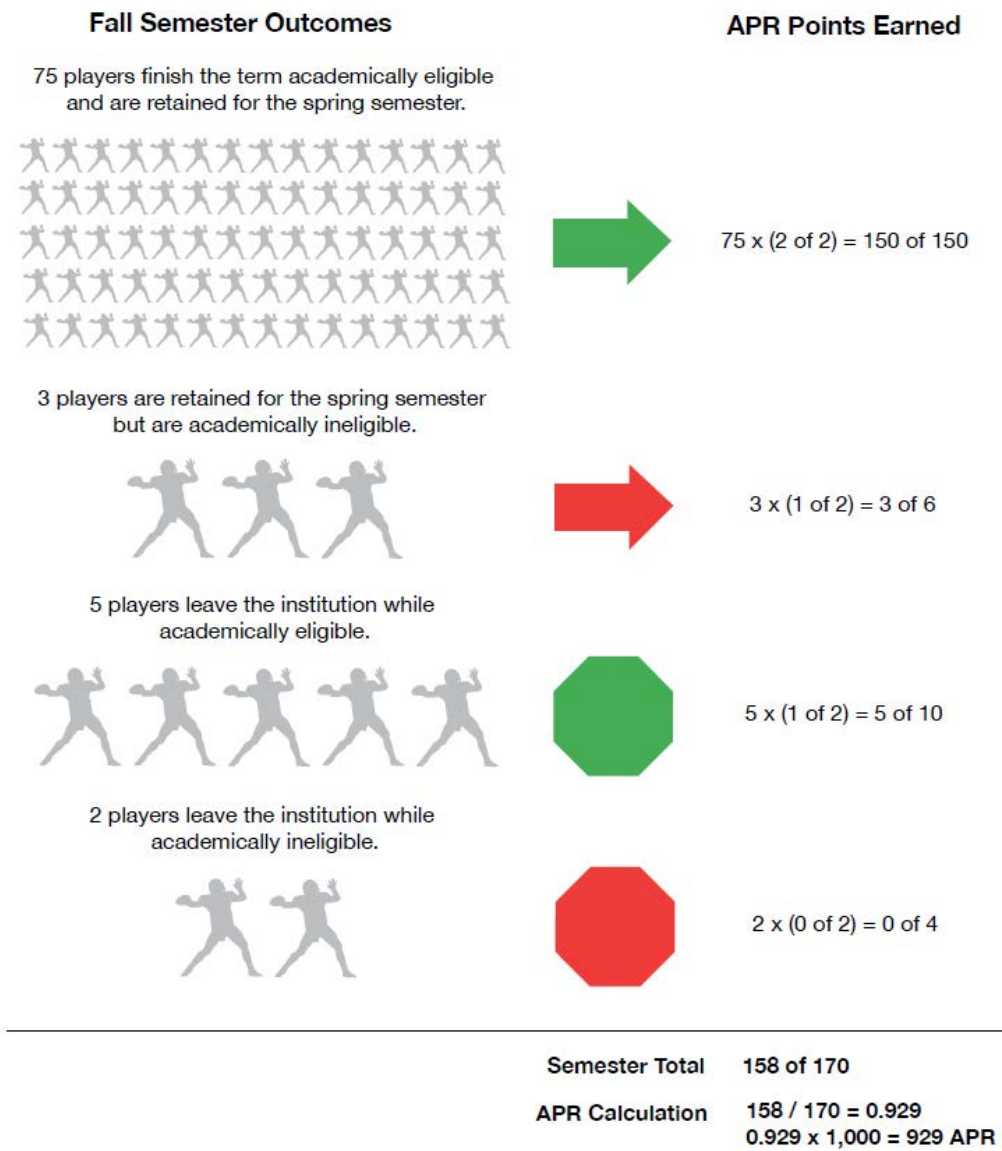
The academic challenges faced by student-athletes at STC are not unique to athletics in higher education. In 2003, the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) implemented the Academic Progress Rate (APR) as part of an academic reform effort in Division I athletics. The APR, according to NCAA (NCAA, 2015), holds institutions accountable for academic progress of their student-athletes through a team-based metric that accounts for the eligibility and retention of each student-athlete for each academic year. Prior to the APR, Division I institutions relied solely on graduation rates that were calculated under the federally mandated methodology that was based on a six-year window and did not take transfer students into account. In addition to APR, the Division I institution presidents also adopted a new graduation rate methodology that more accurately reflects student-athlete transfer patterns and other factors affecting graduation known as the Graduation Success Rate. The APR is calculated as follows (NCAA, 2015):

- Each student-athlete receiving athletically related financial aid earns one point for staying in school and one point for being academically eligible.
- A team's total points are divided by points possible and then multiplied by 1,000 to equal the team's Academic Progress Rate.
- In addition to a team's current-year APR, its rolling four-year APR is also used to determine accountability.

The NCAA notes that while the APR is intended as an incentive-based approach, it does come with a progression of penalties for teams that under-perform academically over time (NCAA, 2015). To further explain APR, the NCAA provides the following example using a hypothetical Division I football team comprising 85 members:

Figure F - 1

**How APR is Calculated**  
 Hypothetical Division I football team (85 members)



<https://www.ncaa.org/about/resources/research/academic-progress-rate-explained#:~:text=The%20APR%20is%20calculated%20as,the%20team's%20Academic%20Progress%20Rate.>

In May 2020, the NCAA issued a report outlining the national and sport-group APR averages and trends (NCAA Research, 2020). The average APRs by sport for men's teams (four-year APR for 2015-16 through 2018-19) is listed below in descending order.

*Table T - 1*

<b>SPORT</b>	<b># Teams</b>	<b>Four-Year APR Average</b>
<b>Skiing</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>989</b>
<b>Gymnastics</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>989</b>
<b>Golf</b>	<b>299</b>	<b>987</b>
<b>Volleyball</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>986</b>
<b>Ice Hockey</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>985</b>
<b>Rifle (co-ed)</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>985</b>
<b>Lacrosse</b>	<b>73</b>	<b>984</b>
<b>Tennis</b>	<b>251</b>	<b>983</b>
<b>Swimming</b>	<b>132</b>	<b>983</b>
<b>Fencing</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>983</b>
<b>Cross Country</b>	<b>315</b>	<b>982</b>
<b>Water Polo</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>978</b>
<b>Soccer</b>	<b>205</b>	<b>978</b>
<b>Baseball</b>	<b>298</b>	<b>977</b>
<b>Wrestling</b>	<b>76</b>	<b>975</b>
<b>Track &amp; Field</b>	<b>288</b>	<b>974</b>
<b>Football (FBS)</b>	<b>130</b>	<b>968</b>
<b>Basketball</b>	<b>352</b>	<b>966</b>
<b>Football (FCS)</b>	<b>124</b>	<b>959</b>

In the same report, the NCAA also reported the average four-year retention rate by sport for men's teams for 2015-16 through 2018-19 in descending order. The retention rate for men's basketball is 951, the lowest APR on the list (NCAA Research, 2020).

*Table T – 2*

<b>SPORT</b>	<b>Four-Year Retention Rate Average</b>
<b>Gymnastics</b>	<b>988</b>
<b>Volleyball</b>	<b>985</b>
<b>Golf</b>	<b>982</b>
<b>Swimming</b>	<b>981</b>
<b>Fencing</b>	<b>981</b>
<b>Lacrosse</b>	<b>980</b>
<b>Rifle (co-ed)</b>	<b>980</b>
<b>Skiing</b>	<b>979</b>
<b>Cross Country</b>	<b>979</b>
<b>Ice Hockey</b>	<b>979</b>
<b>Tennis</b>	<b>975</b>
<b>Water Polo</b>	<b>974</b>
<b>Track &amp; Field</b>	<b>973</b>
<b>Wrestling</b>	<b>969</b>
<b>Soccer</b>	<b>968</b>
<b>Football (FBS)</b>	<b>962</b>
<b>Baseball</b>	<b>961</b>
<b>Football (FCS)</b>	<b>956</b>
<b>Basketball</b>	<b>951</b>



When we dive into NCAA’s retention rate data a bit further, we can see that men’s basketball has consistently had the lowest APR of the men’s sports since the 2011-12 academic year. It is important to note that the APR has risen 14 points over the last 7 years (NCAA Research, 2020).

*Table T - 3*

### **Average Retention Rates by Sport for Men’s Teams**

(Single-Year Retention Rates in Sports with 50 or More Teams)

<b>SPORT</b>	<b>2011-12</b>	<b>2012-13</b>	<b>2013-14</b>	<b>2014-15</b>	<b>2015-16</b>	<b>2016-17</b>	<b>2017-18</b>	<b>2018-19</b>
<b>Baseball</b>	<b>948</b>	<b>957</b>	<b>960</b>	<b>956</b>	<b>960</b>	<b>965</b>	<b>959</b>	<b>962</b>
<b>Basketball</b>	<b>938</b>	<b>949</b>	<b>948</b>	<b>950</b>	<b>952</b>	<b>951</b>	<b>951</b>	<b>952</b>
<b>Cross Country</b>	<b>977</b>	<b>977</b>	<b>975</b>	<b>977</b>	<b>979</b>	<b>981</b>	<b>981</b>	<b>976</b>
<b>Football</b>	<b>951</b>	<b>955</b>	<b>958</b>	<b>960</b>	<b>959</b>	<b>960</b>	<b>961</b>	<b>959</b>
<b>Golf</b>	<b>969</b>	<b>978</b>	<b>983</b>	<b>980</b>	<b>979</b>	<b>982</b>	<b>982</b>	<b>984</b>
<b>Ice Hockey</b>	<b>978</b>	<b>978</b>	<b>979</b>	<b>981</b>	<b>976</b>	<b>982</b>	<b>977</b>	<b>976</b>
<b>Lacrosse</b>	<b>972</b>	<b>969</b>	<b>973</b>	<b>974</b>	<b>979</b>	<b>982</b>	<b>981</b>	<b>985</b>
<b>Soccer</b>	<b>958</b>	<b>960</b>	<b>968</b>	<b>967</b>	<b>971</b>	<b>968</b>	<b>970</b>	<b>963</b>
<b>Swimming</b>	<b>977</b>	<b>978</b>	<b>982</b>	<b>977</b>	<b>978</b>	<b>983</b>	<b>983</b>	<b>980</b>
<b>Tennis</b>	<b>970</b>	<b>973</b>	<b>971</b>	<b>977</b>	<b>975</b>	<b>975</b>	<b>974</b>	<b>975</b>
<b>Track &amp; Field</b>	<b>975</b>	<b>970</b>	<b>973</b>	<b>972</b>	<b>976</b>	<b>976</b>	<b>973</b>	<b>971</b>
<b>Wrestling</b>	<b>961</b>	<b>963</b>	<b>963</b>	<b>974</b>	<b>972</b>	<b>966</b>	<b>970</b>	<b>968</b>

What does the aforementioned information mean? The data indicates that colleges and universities whose sports programs fall specifically under NCAA guidelines have struggled with their student-athletes’ academic performance, specifically men’s basketball. Does this mean that members who play basketball are not academically prepared? Not necessarily. We must ask, however, how the colleges and universities are supporting their student-athletes in their academic endeavors. What support programs are in place to promote, encourage and sustain academic success?

Retention and student academic success rates at the community college level are harder to understand as most community colleges do not post such data specifically regarding their student-athletes. Most community college athletic programs fall under the auspices of the National Junior College Athletic Association (NJCAA). The NJCAA does not post student-athlete retention or academic success rate data but rather only participatory data. Nationwide, I could only identify two community colleges that shared such data – Monroe College in Monroe, New York (most recent data from 2015) and Glendale College in Glendale, California (most recent data from 2008). The larger community college district in which Southwest College belongs published graduation rate data for its student-athletes from the 2014 cohort. STC’s student-athlete graduation rate is around 20%. Retention rates are also listed but they are not specific to student-athletes. Therefore, that data will not be shared in this report.

An exploration of the aforementioned and missing data, specifically community college student-athlete retention and academic success data, is essential to understand the current state of community college athletics and the lack of accountability on the part of community college leaders to report such data in the spirit of transparency and good stewardship (good use of public

money). The absence of such data could be an indication that either the data does not reflect good practices on the part of the colleges to help retain and ensure academic success for student-athletes or the overall success of the student-athletes, most of whom are students of color, is not an institutional priority. This was the case at STC.

Near the end of the fall 2018 semester, members of the STC men’s basketball team approached the Dean of Academic Affairs (DAA) with some concerns regarding their instructors and the athletic director. Members of the team voiced their concerns and mentioned that they felt that they were not being assisted or given proper direction as to how to get assistance with extra help for class or issues with instructors. These members recounted some unfortunate situations that, based on the information they provided, seemed to indicate bias towards them or even racist attitudes. The members of the team who came to see the DAA simply wanted a structured study/tutoring opportunity that allowed the team to do their course work before their scheduled practice. The DAA reached out to the athletic director (AD) shortly after this meeting and shared with her the team’s request for a structured study session. The AD became visibly upset and stated that she had tried having such sessions and no member would show up. So, she stopped the sessions. The DAA mentioned to her that perhaps we could partner together on a new endeavor where we could bring the best of student and academic affairs together to better serve our students in a one-stop-shop opportunity. The DAA envisioned having a representative from Wellness (mental health services), the academic advisor for athletics, tutors, and mentors (faculty volunteers) that would be able to address any need that the students may have during a session. She was not interested and was not willing to assist. The DAA conducted a survey to get some additional information from the team. Initial surveys were conducted with the members of STC’s men’s basketball team from the 2018-2019 academic year and later (fall 2019) with the members from the 2019-2020 academic year. Participants were asked to volunteer to answer the surveys and were told their answers would be part of this research study. The number of members and responses for each academic year are listed below:

*Table T - 4*

<b>Academic Year</b>	<b>Total Members</b>	<b>Total Survey Responses</b>
2018-2019	12	8
2019-2020	11	9

On the survey was a statement that asked the respondent if they would be interested in participating in an interview to discuss their experience at STC as a student-athlete. The number of members and volunteers for interview for each academic year are as follows:

*Table T - 5*

<b>Academic Year</b>	<b>Total Members</b>	<b>Total Interview Volunteers</b>
2018-2019	12	8
2019-2020	11	7

Demographic information for the total members for both academic years is as follows:

*Table T - 6*

Academic Year	Total Members	Ethnicity				Age		
		Black	White	Latino	Other	18-19	20-21	21+
2018-2019	12	11	1	0	0	5	6	1
2019-2020	11	10	0	1	0	3	8	1

Demographic information for the respondents who volunteered to be interviewed is as follows:

*Table T - 7*

Academic Year	Total Members	Ethnicity				Age		
		Black	White	Latino	Other	18-19	20-21	21+
2018-2019	8	7	1	0	0	4	2	1
2019-2020	7	10	0	1	0	2	4	1

To address the first research question, the DAA used qualitative data gathered through a short questionnaire that was given to the members of the men’s basketball team who volunteered to be a part of this study. The questions were designed to elicit further discussion if the respondent volunteered to be interviewed. The questions are as follows:

**True/False**

- My coach is available when I need her/him
- My athletic director is available when I need her/him
- I meet with my academic advisor once a semester
- Tutoring services are available to me when I need them
- Southtown College cares about student-athletes

**Rate Your Experience**

Based on your experience as a student-athlete at Southtown College, how helpful were the following Offices

	Not Helpful	Somewhat Helpful			Very Helpful
Athletic Office	1	2	3	4	5
Student Services	1	2	3	4	5
Academic Affairs	1	2	3	4	5
Wellness Center	1	2	3	4	5

The responses to the initial survey by the 2018-2019 STC men’s basketball team are as follows:

Table T – 8

Section	Question/Statement	Response	
		True	False
True/False	My coach is available when I need her/him	8	0
True/False	My athletic director is available when I need her/him	0	8
True/False	I meet with my academic advisor once a semester	2	6
True/False	Tutoring services are available to me when I need them	3	5
True/False	Southtown College cares about student-athletes	0	8

Table T – 9

Section	Question:	Response				
		Not	Somewhat		Very	
	How helpful were the following offices	1	2	3	4	5
Rate Your Experience	Athletic Offices	5	3			
Rate Your Experience	Student Services	1	2	2	3	
Rate Your Experience	Academic Affairs	2	1	1	4	
Rate Your Experience	Wellness Center	6	1	1		

Eight of the twelve total members of the 2018-19 men’s basketball team volunteered to be interviewed as a follow-up to the survey. After reviewing the initial survey results, the DAA developed follow-up questions to elicit further discussion. The intent of the follow-up questions was not to get a short answer, but to receive further context to their individual answers and into the situation from their perspective. The follow-up questions were as follows:

1. Please describe your experience with the STC athletic office.
2. Do you feel supported by the athletic director?
3. What has been your experience with academic advising at STC?
4. Do you use STC’s tutoring services? Why or why not?
5. What has been your experience of the Wellness Center?
6. Do you feel that STC cares about student-athletes?

The following are responses to the aforementioned follow-up questions from the STC 2018-2019 men’s basketball team:

**1. Please describe your experience with the STC athletic office.**

*Respondent 1:* “I always feel like I’m bothering her (the athletic director). She always seems unhappy and never greets people. Well, I take that back... I noticed she treats females better than males. And she treats Black males worse...”

*Respondent 2:* “Horrible. Just horrible. I feel like I made a mistake coming to this college.”

*Respondent 3:* “She (athletic director) is never down there (office is located in the lower level of the main college building). I usually send her an email if I need her but she won’t respond. I usually have to catch her in the hall or something...”

*Respondent 4:* “I don’t think she (athletic director) takes her job seriously at all. I just feel like she’s here for a paycheck and that’s it. She don’t care about us...”

*Respondent 5:* “I avoid the office if I can. I just don’t feel welcomed there.”

*Respondent 6:* “She’s (athletic director) a racist! So I avoid her. If I need something from the office, I’ll ask coach (men’s basketball coach).”

*Respondent 7:* “They never have the answers I need. She (athletic director) or [associate dean] always have to ‘look into’ an answer for me and then they never get back to. When I ask them again, it’s the same stuff...”

*Respondent 8:* “I feel like Black males are not welcomed in the office... So, I don’t go”

## **2. Do you feel supported by the athletic director?**

*Respondent 1:* “No! She (athletic director) seems like she doesn’t want to help Black students. She’ll help the Mexicans, both girls and guys. She may help Black girls a little but she stays away from us. It’s very noticeable.”

*Respondent 2:* “Hell no! She (athletic director) don’t do shit for us! She is lazy and doesn’t care”

*Respondent 3:* “No, I don’t feel supported by her... at all!”

*Respondent 4:* “No! Not at all.”

*Respondent 5:* “No. She’s a racist who ain’t afraid to show she’s a racist. No!”

*Respondent 6:* “Like I said before, she’s a racist and I avoid people like her around here. There are a lot like her too...”

*Respondent 7:* “No. She never has answers or can help in any way.”

*Respondent 8:* “No. She’s racist and hates us (Black male student-athletes).”

## **3. What has been your experience with academic advising at STC?**

*Respondent 1:* “Not helpful. He’s (academic advisor for athletics) cool and all but he made a few mistakes with my schedule when I first started that he wouldn’t fix. So I go to another advisor now. I also go to faculty for help with picking out classes.”

*Respondent 2:* “He’s cool. He tries and I don’t want to make it seem like he doesn’t know what he’s doing. He’s made a few mistakes with my schedule. It’s so hard to see him though... I stop in the office to see him but he’s always busy.”

*Respondent 3:* “I don’t use [the academic advisor for athletics]. I try to stay away from that whole office. They got people at the front desk that act like we (students) are bothering them. I just feel like they don’t like what they do and take it out on students.”

*Respondent 4:* “He’s cool. I don’t need to see him all the time. When I need him, I email him for an appointment.”

*Respondent 5:* “I don’t really use that office. I saw him (academic advisor for athletics) when I first started here and I know what classes I need.”

*Respondent 6:* “I went there once and that was it. My teachers help me figure out what classes I need...”

*Respondent 7:* “I don’t really go there. I just follow my plan and register when we’re supposed to...”

*Respondent 8:* “He’s cool but I stay away from there. Just seems like there’s a lot of unhappy people in that office.”

#### **4. Do you use STC’s tutoring services? Why or why not?**

*Respondent 1:* “I’ve gone there a few times with help with writing. But I mostly go to my teachers for help. The place (tutoring center) is a little out of the way...”

*Respondent 2:* “Yes, for help with [science]. The [science] tutors are cool and know what they’re talking about..”

*Respondent 3:* “No because I’ve heard they don’t always have the help you need. I rather just go to my professor.”

*Respondent 4:* “I have gone there a few times and they were closed. I wish they were open longer so I could get help after practice.”

*Respondent 5:* “No because they’re always sending annoying emails...”

*Respondent 6:* “No – they’re closed when I need them.”

*Respondent 7:* “No but it’s hard for the guys on the team to get help depending on what time practice is. But a lot of guys need the extra help.”

*Respondent 8:* “I went there once and it felt like too much to go through for some help with my homework..”

#### **5. What has been your experience of the Wellness Center?**

*Respondent 1:* “The lady in charge of it talked to us about it at the beginning of the year. I haven’t been there but it’s cool to have a place to go if you’ve got problems.”

*Respondent 2:* “I’ve been there a few times. They got nice people down there.”

*Respondent 3:* “I have friends who go there for help. They say that the counselors really listen.”

*Respondent 4:* “No, haven’t been there. It always looks empty”

*Respondent 5:* “I don’t have any experience there because there’s only White people down there. How’s a White person gonna know what I’m going through?”

*Respondent 6:* “I haven’t seen any Black students there. That tells me that it may not welcome my kind there.”

*Respondent 7:* “My experience has been good there. Anytime I need help, there’s someone to listen.”

*Respondent 8:* “I haven’t been there and don’t plan on it. I go to people I feel comfortable with to talk about stuff that bothers me. Not here...”

#### **6. Do you feel that STC cares about student-athletes?**

*Respondent 1:* “No because when do you see staff at a game supporting students? I don’t ever see anyone there. Our athletic events are boring and seemed like they’re not planned well at all. Just shows people don’t care...”

*Respondent 2:* “Hell no! Seems like people here want to focus on what’s wrong with me or what I’m not doing right instead of helping me get better.”

*Respondent 3:* No... just no. Actions are loud as hell!”

*Respondent 4:* “No. Why isn’t the president at games supporting us? Or anyone else in administration. I’ve seen you at games but that’s about it. That’s crazy!”

*Respondent 5:* “No. That’s why a lot of us on the team don’t really care about the school because we know the school doesn’t care about us. It just feels like they have basketball for us because they have to not because they want to.”

*Respondent 6:* “No, the college doesn’t care, especially [athletic director] and [associate dean] – racist White women who are afraid of Black men...”

*Respondent 7:* “[STC] don’t care about us like the other colleges care about their teams. I’ve seen the other colleges (of the district) have pep rallies and buy gear for the teams. We don’t have any of that here – no school pride...”

*Respondent 8:* “Not at all, especially the Black men. Everything here is all about Mexicans.”

After analyzing the results of the survey responses and interview responses, the following overarching ideas were developed:

1. The participants in the survey and interviews are extremely dissatisfied with the athletic director with 50% of the respondents calling her racist.
2. The participants in the survey and interviews do not feel supported by STC, meaning administrators, staff and faculty are not supporting the student-athletes by being present at home games or seeming excited about the STC
3. The participants in the survey and interviews do not have favorable experiences or opinions about services that are supposed to help students succeed, specifically the Wellness Center, academic advising and academic support (tutoring).
4. Although not specifically mentioned in interviews, the responses to the survey question regarding academic affairs was not favorable.
5. The student-athletes want, expect and deserve more support, care, and understanding from STC.

The Academic Affairs team gathered to discuss the findings and conclusions. They agreed that we must take action; however, there was very little that could be done regarding the athletic director as the AD reports to the student affairs division. They did agree that there were other ways academic affairs could support the team to assure them that STC was an inclusive environment dedicated to the success of all students. More specific information regarding the action is discussed in the application section.

The same initial survey questions were presented to the members of the 2019-2020 STC men’s basketball team in late fall 2019. Of the eleven members, nine participated in the survey.

Their responses are as follows:

Table T – 10

Section	Question/Statement	Response	
		True	False
True/False	My coach is available when I need her/him	8	1
True/False	My athletic director is available when I need her/him	0	9
True/False	I meet with my academic advisor once a semester	4	5
True/False	Tutoring services are available to me when I need them	7	2
True/False	Southtown College cares about student-athletes	4	5

Table T – 11

Section	Question:	Response				
		Not	Somewhat			Very
		1	2	3	4	5
	How helpful were the following offices					
Rate Your Experience	Athletic Offices	6	2	1		
Rate Your Experience	Student Services	2	2	2	3	
Rate Your Experience	Academic Affairs		1	2	2	4
Rate Your Experience	Wellness Center		1	2	3	3

Of the nine members who participated in the survey, seven members volunteered to be interviewed. Because of an increasingly political and toxic environment created by the athletic director and associate dean of student services in Fall 2019, only 4 members of the seven who volunteered to be interviewed participated in the interview. Of those 4 members, two members were returning members from the 2018-2019 men’s basketball team. Because the interviews were not completed, those responses will not be shared. However, based on the survey results, the following can be concluded:

- The participants continue to have an unfavorable opinion of the athletic director
- 80% of the participants have met with an academic advisor (up from 33% the year before)
- 80% of the participants feel STC cares about student-athletes (up from 0 the year before)
- A substantial increase in the availability of tutoring for student-athletes from the previous year
- The participants felt the Academic Affairs office, Student Services, and the Wellness Center were helpful from the previous year’s results



## Application

It is important to note that action by the men's basketball team, specifically, meeting with the Dean of Academic Affairs (DAA) to request a study session, is what initiated the fact-finding surveys and interviews. Based on the survey and interview responses, the student services areas that needed to be included in a student-athlete support program were Wellness (mental and physical health), and academic advising. Academic support services (tutoring) would be further engaged as it falls under academic affairs. The academic affairs team met with members of these areas and faculty members to see what could be done. Based on the feedback and different perspectives, the group developed a guided study and support session for the student-athletes that would be mandatory for athletes participating in Winter sports at the time.

In mid-January 2019, the guided study sessions for the student-athletes began. These sessions included wellness (social/emotional health), mentoring (from faculty volunteers), tutoring (from the Academic Support Center), academic advising (from the athletic academic advisor), and technology made available for the students to engage in their course work (laptops for each student from the College's IT department). The study sessions had the following objectives:

- To provide academic support services and activities to enhance students' academic and personal development;
- To collaborate with academic and administrative departments to help students develop the necessary analytical and problem-solving skills to become independent learners;
- To provide the opportunity for student-athletes to pursue excellence in developing personal and academic skills in addition to athletic skills; and
- To provide the opportunity for student-athletes to address non-academic (wellness) related issues, particularly social and emotional issues, to further strengthen their personal development.

The guided study and support sessions continued to be offered to the student-athletes through the end of the Spring 2019 semester. Although participation dropped after the end of the basketball season, some members continued to come to the sessions that had been centralized back to the tutoring center. Another area highlighted by the student-athletes was a sometimes strained relationship with their instructors. Some of the team members perceived hostility from their instructors because they were athletes. As those cases were brought to light, the DAA would speak to the instructor with their department chairperson present about what the student articulated. The DAA would then set up meetings with the student and instructor in an effort to come to a better understanding of both perspectives. These meetings proved effective; the DAA led six such meetings in the Spring 2019 semester. In all cases, both the student and instructor came to an understanding that they could do more in order to be better. In all the cases, the relationship between student and instructor dramatically improved evidenced by the student's academic improvement and instructor's involvement in student-focused activities as a result of this interaction.

The results of the study/support sessions and intervention sessions for the participating student-athletes were impressive. Of the twelve members of the 2018-2019 men's basketball team,

- 2 members continued for the sophomore year
- 4 members participated in graduation and transferred to 4-year institutions

- 4 members completed their studies in the summer session and transferred to 4- year institutions
- 2 members did not continue at STC and transferred to other colleges

According to a district-level administrator, the aforementioned data represented the highest graduation/transfer data specific to the men's basketball program in STC's athletic history (the athletic program began in 2009). In short, this support program for student-athletes worked as it met all of the initial objectives. There was one aspect that was not addressed, however. Recall Derrick's situation from the beginning of the study. Derrick was a member of the 2018-2019 men's basketball team who had failed a course at the end of the fall 2018 semester. Derrick enrolled for the course in an intercessory session offered online from a college in New Mexico. Derrick successfully passed the course and was able to regain academic eligibility to participate in basketball in January 2019. The course he took was expensive and because of the price and online availability, was not available to all student-athletes across the district who were in the same situation and had limited financial resources.

In March 2019, conversations began between the Dean of Academic Affairs (DAA) and a student affairs administrator overseeing athletics regarding the idea of having an academic session between the fall and spring semesters for students who were credit-challenged or who wanted to get ahead. The DAA pitched the idea to the academic affairs team and the college registrar for their initial feedback. The feedback was positive but there was some concern because this had not been done before at STC. The DAA then reached out to the individual who oversees and manages the college finances as well as a representative from financial aid. If money was a factor for the student in taking such a course between the fall and spring semester, the group thought there had to be a way to classify it so that the course(s) could meet financial aid eligibility requirements. If the courses were financial aid eligible, more students could take advantage of such a program. While conversations were being had with district-level individuals overseeing financial aid and scheduling, the DAA pitched the idea to faculty. The initial response was very good; however, as the word spread about the real possibility of this course session happening, the faculty union became involved and voiced their very valid concerns. They stated that the timing of the session, between the fall and spring semester, constituted a possible violation of their contract as the courses could only be scheduled during articulated semester start and end dates. The course(s), for contractual and financial aid purposes, would be classified as Spring courses. Any faculty member who volunteered to teach during the session would receive credit toward their Spring teaching load. In a similar way, students could finance course taken during the intercessory session using Title IV funds (financial aid) because the session was classified as the Spring semester. After a lot of conversation back and forth between district-level financial aid administrators, faculty union officials, and other internal and external constituents, the program was approved and courses were offered between the fall and spring semester, called the Intercessory Session.

The Intercessory Session offered 4 courses for all students throughout the district in a hybrid model – an online and on-site class option. Three of the four courses met the minimum enrollment threshold and were active. The active courses and the enrollment data are as follows:

Table T – 12

Course Offering	Session	Enrollment Data
Psychology 101	Intercessory	12
Mathematics 118	Intercessory	9
Business 111	Intercessory	10
English 101	Intercessory	0

Course completion data for the aforementioned courses is as follows:

Table T – 13

Courses Offered	Number of Students Enrolled	Number of Students Who Completed	Course Completion Rate*	Course Success Rate**
Psychology 101	12	12	100%	100%
Mathematics 108	9	9	100%	56%
Business 101	10	10	100%	80%

\* Course Completion Rate is the percentage of enrolled students who satisfactorily completed the course.

\*\*Course Success Rate is defined as the percentage of enrolled students who received no less than a C as a final grade for the course.

Student-athletes represented 32% of the total enrollment in the Intercessory Session with a total success rate of 100% (all student-athletes completed the session with no lower than a C). In addition to providing an additional and affordable way to attain academic credit, students who enrolled in the Intercessory Session were provided with an open gym opportunity before classes started, tutoring services, and other student services including the food pantry and available assistance in the Wellness Center. Students were also provided a snack on on-site scheduled days at STC trying to ensure that students’ academic, social/emotional, and physiological needs were met.

The Intercessory Session planning, implementation, and successful execution represented the best in cross departmental collaboration where traditional adversaries united for the purpose of student success. This was also an exercise in higher education politics where a give and take took place between faculty union representatives and STC administration that resulted in a favorable outcome overall.

The approach to focus on the overall success of Black male students, particularly Black male student-athletes, at STC was intentional. This group, through anecdotal and district academic data, was determined to be STC’s most underserved population. This group, most of whom transferred in to STC, was part of the total Black student population with the lowest retention rate between Fall 2017 and Spring 2018 of 46%, down 9% from the previous year. And although this information was known by the end of the fall 2018 semester, little was being done by STC to

bridge the equity gap for this particular group of students. The supportive study sessions for student-athletes, intervention meetings with faculty, and the Intercessory Session represent STC's attempt to reshape itself as a student-centered college.

What does it mean to be a student-centered college? According to Dan Greenstein, director of the Postsecondary Success at the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, four key features of student-centered colleges are:

1. **It's about access AND success** – Greenstein writes that in a college's pursuit of higher persistence and completion rates, the institution must be careful that it does not become more selective, meaning only admitting or working with students who come to the college with a strong academic background. These students are more likely to persist and complete their academic programs. Greenstein highlights efforts by Georgia State University and other institutions who have formed the University Innovation Alliance (UIA). The UIA has made the commitment to “increase success rates and close graduation gaps by race and income without raising admissions standards.” (Greenstein, 2017)
2. **Take a hard look in the mirror, and then take action.** – Institutions must be willing to examine all evidence and data that it collects and be honest with itself on what it is saying about the college and its direction. Analyze the data and evidence to see what it uncovers, then use it to fix what the data and evidence is showing needs adjustment. This requires a focus on student success and not on ego. The analysis of data and evidence is not an indictment on any person or department.
3. **“Small things can make a big difference.”** – Greenstein mentions that Georgia State's examination of its data and evidence revealed their students were getting sidetracked by transactional items such as registering for courses, resulting in wasted credits and dollars. What was also revealed was that students were encountering unplanned personal expenses that created a gap in students' ability to pay tuition and consequently remain enrolled. As a result, the university created live and virtual advising improvements that reduced registration errors as well as creating a retention grant program that has helped more than 7,000 students in just four years. (Greenstein, 2017)
4. **Persistence is key** – Greenstein mentions that Georgia State did not accomplish what it did overnight. The work towards institutional improvement focused on student success requires patience and persistence.

Greenstein notes that institutions such as George State University are showing real progress on student success does not require a massive investment or enormous effort, but it requires commitment, humility, and a willingness to “experiment and challenge conventional wisdom” with an unwavering focus on today's college students and their needs. (Greenstein, 2017)

Being a student-centered college requires the institution to focus on the needs of the students. A willingness to understand the Black male student-athletes' life experience was crucial. When the Dean of Academic Affairs engaged in conversations with some administrators about members of the men's basketball team, they would often say comments like “they're not NBA material” or “they're not gonna graduate,” referring to their perceptions of the student-athletes' athletic ability and academic potential. What these individuals were failing to understand was the major life issues with which some members of the men's basketball team were dealing, such as

Derrick. Students, like Derrick, struggle in college not because of lower ability or poor preparation, but because they deal with life situations that deplete their cognitive resources that are needed for learning (Verschelden, 2017). Verschelden discusses the issue of bandwidth depletion and the effects it has on student learning. She writes about the high “costs” of poverty and racism to physical and mental health and to human capital in general. She further contends that the foundation of these costs are sociopsychological underminers that result “in serious impairment of mind, spirit, and cognitive resources” (Verschelden, 2017), that include microaggressions, stereotype threat, disidentification with academics, and belongingness uncertainty. Students experiencing the aforementioned are depleted of their cognitive resources as they devote so much energy and time (bandwidth) to dealing with that toxicity. When one examines the experience of the STC men’s basketball team from Fall 2018 through Spring 2020, one can see direct parallels to what the team experienced individually and as a group. In summer 2019, the relationship between the academic affairs team and student affairs team became extremely stressed because of increased tension between the Dean of Academic Affairs and the athletic director. Student affairs administrators created a hostile work and learning environment by telling the members of the men’s basketball team that they were to have no contact with the Dean of Academic Affairs. The members were troubled by this because they would seek the Dean’s assistance or counsel on a variety of issues as they knew they had that support. This became known by STC leadership when three members of the men’s basketball team had the courage to address this issue with a faculty member who articulated her concern to executive level leadership. The team members did not understand the political infighting that was taking place nor did they realize that they were being used as pawns in a struggle for power and control. This created so much internal stress for the team and was taxing on already heavily taxed bandwidths that one of the three members who reported the incident to an instructor eventually dropped out of STC and would not return. He later shared with a team mate that the environment at STC was “toxic” as he was being told not to trust or talk to people he trusted and on whom he relied for help. His bandwidth had been depleted and he removed himself from the situation. This student and the subsequent collapse of the cross departmental working relationships were the unfortunate casualties. Political allegiances within the college and to district office further exacerbated an already volatile and toxic environment.

As stated earlier, the Guided Pathways model aims to minimize the confusion many students feel when registering for classes by narrowing the set of programming options that include highly prescribed courses that do not allow deviation from the program plan. Coupled with this approach is an advising model that is more structured and hands-on (otherwise known as intrusive) (Bailey et al., 2015). In the traditional cafeteria-approach to community college student matriculation, the student’s approach to the college is either through an admissions office or registrar’s office. The student is then sent on a journey that takes her/him through a variety of transactions. The journey could look like the following illustration:

Figure F - 2



Admissions Office/Registration Office Visit.

- Application Completed
- Residency Verification
- Registration forms submitted
- Test scores and transcripts submitted
  - If 1<sup>st</sup> year, will need placement scores for English and Math

Testing Center

- If the student needs to be tested for English and Math placement, she/he will come here

Advising Office

- Student meets with an advisor
- Advisor uses information provided on application to gauge student interest on area of study
- Collectively develop student's schedule based on program of study and placement scores/transcripts
- Student is registered for classes

Financial Aid Office

- How will the student pay for classes?
- If using Federal Financial Aid, student fills out a FAFSA form. Based on the results of the FAFSA form, a student is appropriately awarded. Awards can be a combination of federal and state grants and/or federal student loan opportunities
- If student is paying out-of-pocket, they will then skip this office and head directly to the Bursar's/Business Office for payment.

The above illustration makes a few assumptions about the student and the college:

- The student is familiar with college processes and can independently navigate through the various stages of the registration/matriculation process
- The college has clearly articulated the steps in the registration/matriculation process, meaning that the student would know what steps to take without any guidance because the process is laid out well for the general public
- The college has planned for any anomalies in the registration/matriculation process

Prompted by growing attrition rates and lower graduation rates, some community colleges began asking if the way of doing business was hindering student success. The underlying philosophy driving student services departments in many community colleges at the time was that the student voluntarily comes in to the college to begin the admissions and registration process and can succeed because they want to. This philosophy was fed by the enrollment boom experienced after the 2008 U.S. economic downturn that saw an unprecedented increase in community college enrollment nationwide. Although the number of students increased, did student success rates increase? Were more students completing their programs of study? The answer, unfortunately, was no.

The realization that business-as-usual was not working at community colleges led to the development of the Guided Pathways (GP) model which aimed at simplifying programs to minimize confusion among students and assisted students in achieving completion in a timely manner. In order for the GP model to be effective, it requires active guidance on the part of the college to support students academically, socially, and emotionally.

In the 2010-2011 academic year, Amarillo College in Amarillo, Texas, participated in a community data study to determine why the city of Amarillo was experiencing a decrease in educational attainment and an increase in poverty rates (Amarillo College, 2019). From this, the No Limits No Excuses project was created. This project's purpose is to bring the city's school district, higher education institutions, business and industry, non-profit agencies, and community leaders to address the city's growing poverty trend. The project has an overarching goal of 10,000 more college degrees "with zero excuses" by 2025 (Amarillo College, 2019).

During this process, Amarillo College (AC) began reviewing its own institutional data to better understand its students – who they are, what they would like to achieve, and the reality of their academic performance. The data revealed that the college's student body was comprised of predominately of low-income, first-generation students. AC enrolled over 11,600 students – 43% were minority; 61% were female; 46% received financial aid assistance; 61% placed into developmental education; and 71% enrolled part-time. Nearly 80% declared a transfer major yet less than 10% transferred to a four-year institution for further study. It was also discovered that less than 40% of students were retained from one fall to the next. In October 2011, AC held a data summit for internal constituents. The summit revealed data that indicated that AC was falling very short of its student success goals with retention rates lower than originally thought and completion rates that were comparable. All participants realized that AC had to improve, but how? The existing data indicated that AC needed students needed more academic support and more effective academic interventions, but what else? AC began collecting more data through surveys and focus groups. Students were asked to identify the top 10 barriers to their completion. The interesting reveal with the additional data indicated that the barriers had nothing to do with academics, but rather were all life related. The five biggest educational barriers as identified by AC students are:

- Childcare
- Food
- Housing
- Mental healthcare
- Transportation

AC admits that while initially evaluating its student success data, they were so focused on academic success that it failed to realize the “more powerful and debilitating barrier” – poverty (Amarillo College, 2019). Its “No Excuses Poverty Initiative” evolved into what we know today as AC’s Culture of Caring. The theory of change behind the culture of caring is if AC removes poverty barriers for its students in an accelerated learning environment while providing a deep culture of caring, students will be successful and complete their educational goal. This tactic was aimed at being a systemic approach to poverty because as AC worked to remove such barriers, this positively impacted the lives of the students who in turn impacted neighborhoods in the surrounding community. By shifting their perspective in this way, AC saw a 60% growth rate increase in its student attainment/transfer rates over five years (2010 through 2015) (Amarillo College, 2019). The student success surge as a result of AC’s culture of caring demonstrates that by addressing student poverty barriers, students will complete and will graduate/transfer. In order to achieve this success, however, a shift in thinking and perspective had to occur that went from believing in what was best for the student was better than believing in what was best for the institution. As a result, what was best for the student was best for the institution.

In January 2021, Netflix released a documentary series entitled, *Last Chance U: Basketball*. The *Last Chance U* documentary series follow the lives of student-athletes, their families, and their teams as they navigate life as a result of life choices they have made. In many cases, these student-athletes have superb athletic ability and once were a part of Division I athletic programs. Because of life choices or circumstances, they ended up in another institution whose athletic programs may not have the notoriety of Division I athletic programs. In any case, these institutions have given the student-athletes another opportunity to flourish, or second chance. *Last Chance U: Basketball* follows the student-athletes, coaches and their stories from East Los Angeles College (ELAC), the second largest community college in the country. The team is led by Coach John Mosley who also attended and played on the basketball team at ELAC. *Last Chance U: Basketball* follows the team’s journey toward winning the state title. In this journey are many player’s experiences that are highlighted to illustrate the adversity that most overcome. These experiences range from dealing with the death of a parent, abandonment, the lack of resources, and coming to the realization of the consequences of one’s prior actions. One such player was the Los Angeles high school basketball player of the year in 2019, but his 2.2 GPA prohibited him from participating in a Division I athletic program. With no meal plans or dorms at ELAC, the struggles of the student-athletes at community colleges are magnified and highlighted. What makes the difference, in the ELAC case, is the wrap-around care for the student-athletes demonstrated by the coaching and athletic administration teams. Coach Mosley is from the neighborhood and achieved success because he too had a strong support system. This is what he successfully creates for his students – his own culture of care in a community college that goes beyond looking at their academic needs, but their social, emotional, and even spiritual needs. Coach Mosley infuses in his coaching and mentoring a spirituality that comes from his own experience of church. Strong elements of the Black Church can be identified in his approach and in his pastoral care of his students. He does



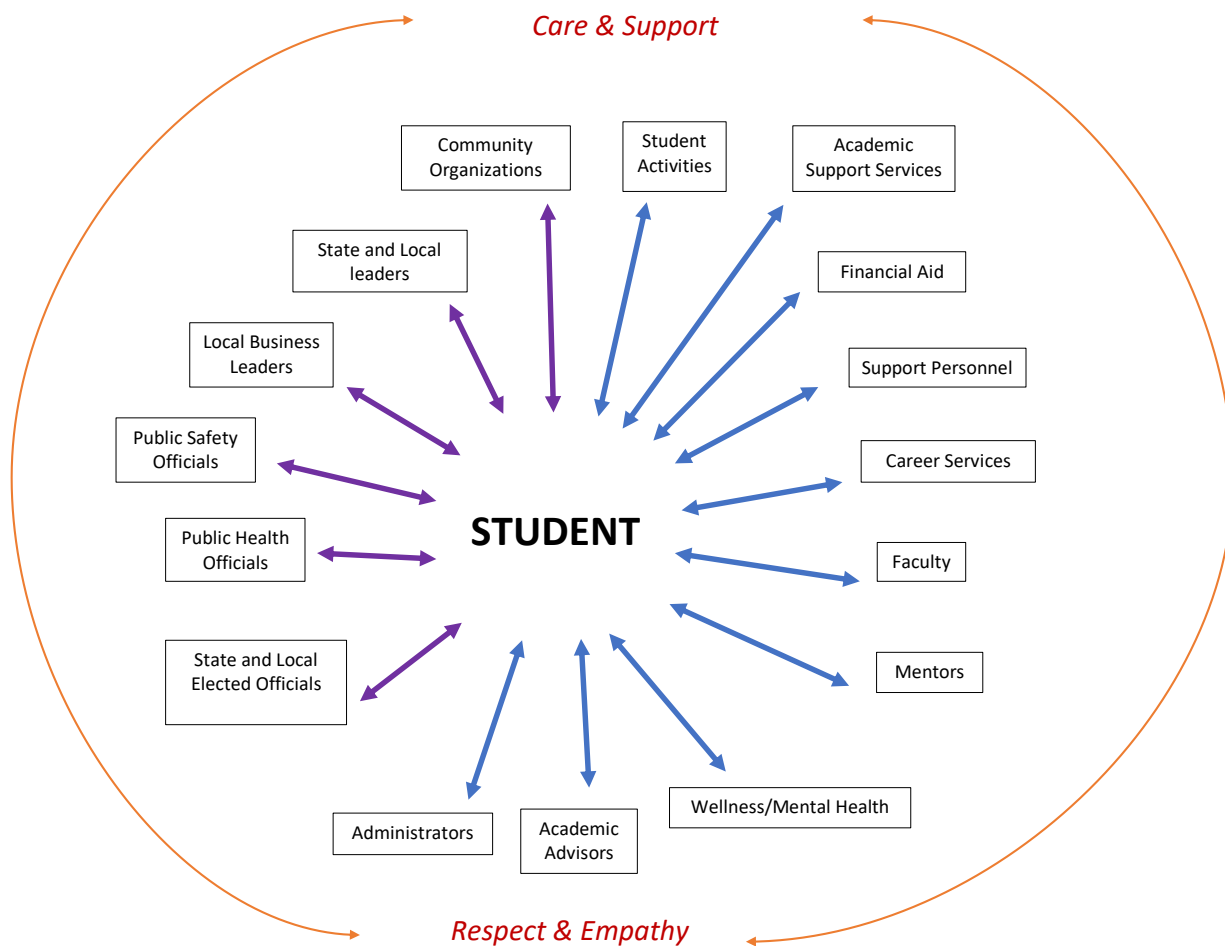
not just talk about the importance of God in his life, but shows it and thus, shows love, care, and compassion for those in need. His approach brings about healing for many of the student-athletes who have come to the program broken and hurt. When the team was experiencing some cohesion issues, the Coach led them on a retreat of sorts to refocus and align the team's purpose and strengthen the fraternal bonds. The coach's efforts had the support of the athletic administration and college administration. Ultimately, the support empowered him to be a great leader which empowered the team to be the best student-athletes they could be.

If we take the aforementioned situations at Amarillo College and at East Los Angeles College, the similarities are found in developing a culture of caring and support that goes beyond academics and student affairs. These are institutions whose community has decided that they are ready for students and not asking if students are college ready. There is big difference in this thinking. In *Becoming a Student-Ready College: A New Culture of Leadership for Student Success*, McNair, Albertine, et al. discuss the term "student ready" and how it comes from a belief that if "significant progress is to be made in the student success agenda, there must be a paradigm shift in how educators design and lead student success efforts" (McNair et al., 2016, p. 32). Instead of focusing on students being college ready and on students' perceived deficits, educators (faculty, staff, and administrators) must focus on what they can do to create educational environments that meet students where they are and eliminate barriers that hinder their success. This requires individual and collective action. This requires, often times, an institutional culture shift which includes stopping the student blame game culture. The student blame game culture highlights students as the cause for the college's challenges. For example,

- STATEMENT: The college's enrollment is down 10%
  - RESPONSE: The students do not want to register
- STATEMENT: The student-athletes are not attending the study session
  - RESPONSE: They do not care about their courses or school
- STATEMENT: Students are not attending New Student Orientation
  - RESPONSE: They don't care about succeeding at the college.

The above statements and responses illustrate how institutions can assign culpability for a challenge to students. Rather than asking questions about itself or if the lack of student interest or response to programming is a result of developing a program that does not appeal to students, the institution identifies students as the problem. This narrow perspective demonstrated in the aforementioned statements prevents institutions from transitioning to being a student ready institution. Institutions must be introspective and reflective on how they really serve students. Students must be at the center of our institutions' mission, vision, and actions. Student success, as demonstrated by ELAC and AC, is a holistic approach that includes not only the buy-in from internal constituents, but also from external constituents.

Figure F - 3



The illustration in Figure F – 3 (above) articulates a culture of care model shows the student at the center, as the focus. The constituents feeding into the model with the blue arrow shows internal college stakeholders that are important to the well-being and success of the student. The constituents with the purple arrow are external college stakeholders that are just as important to the well-being of the student. The double-headed arrow indicates a relationship that must be fostered by both the student and the constituent. What ultimately makes the model work is the care and support that must be reciprocal from both the student and the constituent. Respect and empathy are the foundation that allows the model to exist and flourish.

Developing and executing such a model and transforming institutional culture is a significant part of fostering a culture of care. In my experience, another significant part is how all these various constituents and their functions are led, coordinated, cultivated, and motivated. In institutions where significant gulfs exist between departments that are essential to student success—for example, academic affairs and student affairs—how does the institution ensure that both areas work together to benefit the student? Examining the situation with ELAC and AC, the change, coordination, cultivation, and motivation was led by individuals with a firm faith-foundation, strong leadership skills, and total dedication to student success. These individuals were also willing to take risks that would ultimately benefit the students and did so without fear.

Such individuals must have the self-confidence and internal strength to withstand the criticism from the wider community (internal and external) for doing what is best for the student. This criticism, depending on the local social and political situation, can become quite contentious. Lastly, these individuals MUST have the support from institutional leadership. This requires institutional leaders to approach leadership as a relationship, not a position. This requires leaders to be motivated by a higher purpose – the mission. These mission-driven leaders then drive action. This requires creative reimagining of leadership so that a leader can share power and spread leadership, authority and responsibility. This requires a leader to realize their role as an educator – one who has the responsibility to share knowledge and empower others to lead. These and other traits are what separates “leaders in balance” from “leaders in power” as discussed by Kucia and Gravett in *Leadership in Balance: New Habits of the Mind* (2014). They contend that the aforementioned leadership is crucial for “thinking beyond the hierarchy” and “as a technique for fostering creativity” (Kucia & Gravett, 2014).

These new change agents are supported and empowered to lead, coordinate, cultivate, and motivate. These new change agents are builders of consensus among the different entities at the institution. They are leaders who actively listen and who respect the opinion of all who have the courage to share. The change agents should have a good grasp of institutional history and be sensitive when addressing controversial issues. The change agents should have knowledge of the inner workings of academic affairs and student affairs to understand the complexity and richness both sides bring. The change agent should also be ready to demonstrate how both sides work together harmoniously for the student.

## Conclusion

Being a student-centered, student ready college that is focused on the total success of the student while understanding the social/emotional tugs on student bandwidth is imperative. Having and recruiting staff that understand their work is to support and encourage students to meet and exceed their personal and professional goals is essential for student persistence and completion. Toward this end, hiring staff and administrators with experience in working in communities of color who understand the nuances of the varied experiences of STC students and who approach these experiences with compassion, respect, and integrity is essential. The hiring and maintaining of great staff and administrators relies on the integrity and transparency of the hiring process. Political connections and the use of political capital to gain important strategic positions that oversee vital areas directly impacting student success with no real world experience in working in diverse community college settings cannot and should never be allowed in hiring. STC should adopt a transparent hiring process that includes various constituents in the hiring committee who are directly affected by the open position. STC should also adopt best practice hiring guidelines that help individuals on a given committee to assess a qualified candidate's ability to meet the expectation of the open position. STC should also look to diversify its staff and administration to be a more accurate representation of the communities it serves, specifically hiring people of color in administrative positions. This focus on diversity should also extend to the make-up of faculty.

It is important for the college to understand the impact of athletics in community colleges. The Netflix documentary, *Last Chance U: Basketball*, identifies the internal and external struggles faced by community college student-athletes and their coaches. Community college athletic programs often serve as the main motivation for many people who pursue post-secondary education, particularly for students of color and from low-income backgrounds interested in athletics (Boulard, 2008). Providing athletic programs offers students another opportunity to access higher education. The college and the community college district then have the responsibility and privilege to work with these students and provide them with a caring and supportive structure that recognizes the internal and external challenges they face and proactively seeks solutions to these problems. The community colleges and community college districts must understand, however, that just offering an athletic program with no embedded student academic and social support system will not offer the necessary impact needed to assist these students. These entities must consider a comprehensive program that involves collaboration from internal and external constituents who have a vested interest in student success (see Figure F – 3).

It is important to understand, for all individuals working in community colleges, that we cannot assume that students understand the various processes and procedures necessary to successfully navigate the college experience. This situation at STC highlighted a major assumption by staff members and administrators that just because a student is enrolled, they are fully acclimated to the climate and culture of the college where they understand where to go and to whom if they have questions or are in need. In this case, STC officials not only made this assumption, but in some cases did so with racial bias. All students should receive excellent service and guidance so that they meet success academically, socially, and emotionally. Understanding that many students come to college, especially the community colleges, with underlying issues should require college officials to approach students with compassion and care. This compassion and care must be the foundation of any comprehensive student support model.

A new president at STC was eventually able to “cleanse” the college of toxic agents and start fresh with new leaders in the key areas of academic and student affairs. Moved by the social

unrest prompted by the murder of George Floyd, the new president employed key components of CRT at STC. The president created a forum for Black administrators, staff and students to tell their experiences at STC to the larger community. This use of counter stories helped to expose the dominant ideology (White, female, heterosexual) that was present and prevalent at STC which helped to perpetuate racial stereotypes and fueled micro aggressive behavior.

Examining the situation at STC from the CRT lens is important because it helps one to understand how entrenched STC had been in racist tendencies and practices. The recounting of experiences of that racism helps to provide more understanding of how individuals were treated so that behavior can change. The treatment of the men's basketball team in this case is a perfect example – White women exerting their dominance and power over Black male student athletes (and their coach) through their behaviors and established discriminatory practices. These individuals wanted the title and position of power to establish dominance over others. Understanding the vulnerability of the men's basketball team and their coach, they were able to condition these individuals to accept the sub-par treatment with the misunderstanding that they were receiving a gift of some sort – the ability to play and the ability to coach respectively. These individuals would often claim to be “color blind” or would claim that they were treating all students, or in this case, all student-athletes, equal. Their color blindness was simply a mechanism that allowed them to ignore the individual richness that each student brought to the table. It allowed them to ignore or discount the students' stories, their experiences, particularly as Black men. More community colleges must make the attempt at examining their institutional practices and patterns of behavior through the CRT lens to better understand educational inequality and structural racism in an effort to find solutions that lead to greater justice on their campuses and in their communities.

In moving forward, STC needs to confront its racist past and acknowledge discriminatory practices that left some students, staff, and administrators feeling powerless and discouraged. STC needs to make a bold statement and declare publicly that racism, discrimination, and political influence has no place in the College, the district, or in higher education. STC leadership has an opportunity to transform the institution into one that embraces diversity and inclusion, specifically in gender, race, and sexual orientation. STC has an opportunity to be a leader among the colleges in its district in this regard so that it not only becomes an example of how a college should be led and nurtured, but how a community college would lead efforts in the community to eradicate poverty and all other barriers that inhibit and prohibit student learning and academic success – a NO EXCUSES policy of sorts. There is no doubt that continued professional formation must continue to be developed for all educators (faculty, staff, and administration) of STC to help individuals understand the college's new direction and efforts to serve ALL students within their given roles. Community colleges similar to STC in institutional patterns of behavior should seek to adopt a professional formation program that enhances the understanding of its members with regards to the issues of diversity, equity, and inclusion. These institutions should also offer a public apology for past practices of discrimination against members of its community and reconcile these issues as best possible.

This case highlights the importance of collaboration between Academic and Student Affairs. The Intercessory Session developed as a collaborative effort to support students in need by faculty and academic and student affairs team members was a perfect example of what could be done to make the college experience better for students. College administrators must find ways for the two areas to work together to not only implement Guided Pathways methods, but to improve student success. Collaborative initiatives that focus on student learning from a CRT perspective

that are centered on achieving justice and inclusion will ultimately improve situations like this case. This necessitates the need for faculty organizations within an institution or district to work collaboratively with its student affairs colleagues to streamline processes related to initial and continued enrollment and retention. The experience in the classroom is just as important for student retention as is the marketing, culture and climate of the college. How can these various internal constituencies collaborate to innovate to help all students achieve? The possibilities are endless and the results will be life-changing for all.

This case and research have brought to light the very important relationship between wellness, advising, and teaching. The Guided Pathways model demonstrates the need for a comprehensive approach to advising and how that is beneficial for both the student and the institution. The work at Amarillo College demonstrates how important factors outside of academics can affect student learning and outcomes. At this intersection of wellness, advising, and teaching, we will find campus mental health professionals, academic advisors and faculty. These three important groups must be able to collaborate in an effort to better serve students. While it is not expected for campus mental health professionals to share student medical information, they can share strategies and approaches with advisors and faculty members on how to best approach a situation where a student is overwhelmed by life issues. This is not trying to make advisors and faculty members counselors in any way, but simply a cross-training approach so that all college staff who come in contact with students frequently receive training in how to best initiate conversations with students that lead to healing and social/emotional improvement rather than escalation into another serious situation. This is a further reimagining of an already existing relationship empowered by the culture of care and support. Addressing the social/emotional barriers that can inhibit student success brought about by life factors can and will improve overall student success. Infusing the culture of care and support throughout every aspect of the institution will ensure the institution's lived mission, values, and commitment to student success.

## **Additional Research**

An area of additional research that should be examined related to this case is the situation in which the oppressed becomes the oppressor. Specifically, as mentioned earlier, STC has the designation as an HSI and had a significant number of Latinx leaders. However, most of the Latinx leaders did not identify nor attempt to remedy the maltreatment of the Black male-student athletes. Given the institution's difficult history of dealing with demographic change, their silence and lack of action presents a great irony of sorts. Paulo Freire, in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, writes, "Because it (dehumanization) is a distortion of being more fully human, sooner or later, being less human leads the oppressed to struggle against those who made them so. In order for this struggle to have meaning the oppressed must not, in seeking to regain their humanity (which is a way to create it) become in turn oppressors of the oppressors, but rather restorers of the humanity of both (Freire, 2011/1970, p. 44). Freire continues by saying that during the initial state of the struggle, the oppressed, instead of fighting and working for liberation, almost always tend to become the oppressors because they have become so conditioned to being in such an abused position. This position becomes their model of humanity (Freire, 2011/1970). Does this speak to the administrators and staff members of color at STC who did not speak up against the maltreatment of students of color? Does this treatment translate into how Black students are treated in general on the campus? How do STC's Latinx leaders find their voices of liberation?"

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# Appendices

## Appendix A: Student Quick Survey 1 – Sample 1

Quick Survey 1  
Student-Athlete Responses  
January 2019

### True/False

Please circle TRUE or FALSE for each statement based on your experience so far

My coach is available when I need her/him	TRUE	FALSE
My athletic director is available when I need her/him	TRUE	FALSE
I meet with my academic advisor once a semester	TRUE	FALSE
Tutoring services are available to me when I need them	TRUE	FALSE
Southtown College cares about student-athletes	TRUE	FALSE

### Rate Your Experience

Based on your experience as a student-athlete at Southtown College, how helpful were the following Offices. Please circle the number that best reflects your experience.

	Not Helpful	Somewhat helpful			Very Helpful
Athletic Office	1	2	3	4	5
Student Services	1	2	3	4	5
Academic Affairs	1	2	3	4	5
Wellness Center	1	2	3	4	5

If you would like to volunteer to participate in an interview to discuss your responses, please fill out the space below

\_\_\_\_\_

NAME

\_\_\_\_\_

PHONE NUMBER

\_\_\_\_\_

EMAIL ADDRESS

Appendix B: Student Quick Survey 2 – Sample 2

Quick Survey 2  
Student-Athlete Responses  
April 2019

**True/False**

**Please circle TRUE or FALSE for each statement based on your experience so far**

- |  |      |       |
|--|------|-------|
| My coach is available when I need her/him              | TRUE | FALSE |
| My athletic director is available when I need her/him  | TRUE | FALSE |
| I meet with my academic advisor once a semester        | TRUE | FALSE |
| Tutoring services are available to me when I need them | TRUE | FALSE |
| Southtown College cares about student-athletes         | TRUE | FALSE |

**Rate Your Experience**

Based on your experience as a student-athlete at Southtown College, how helpful were the following Offices. Please circle the number that best reflects your experience.

	Not Helpful	Somewhat helpful			Very Helpful
Athletic Office	1	2	3	4	5
Student Services	1	2	3	4	5
Academic Affairs	1	2	3	4	5
Wellness Center	1	2	3	4	5

Thank you for your responses!

Appendix C: Copy of Original Survey 1 – Sample 3

Quick Survey 1  
Student-Athlete Responses  
January 2019

**True/False**

Please circle TRUE or FALSE for each statement based on your experience so far

- |  |      |       |
|--|------|-------|
| My coach is available when I need her/him              | TRUE | FALSE |
| My athletic director is available when I need her/him  | TRUE | FALSE |
| I meet with my academic advisor once a semester        | TRUE | FALSE |
| Tutoring services are available to me when I need them | TRUE | FALSE |
| Southtown College cares about student-athletes         | TRUE | FALSE |

**Rate Your Experience**

Based on your experience as a student-athlete at ██████ College, how helpful were the following Offices. Please circle the number that best reflects your experience.

	Not Helpful	Somewhat helpful			Very Helpful
Athletic Office	1	2	3	4	5
Student Services	1	2	3	4	5
Academic Affairs	1	2	3	4	5
Wellness Center	1	2	3	4	5

If you would like to volunteer to participate in an interview to discuss your responses, please fill out the space below

\_\_\_\_\_  
NAME

\_\_\_\_\_  
PHONE NUMBER

\_\_\_\_\_  
EMAIL ADDRESS