PERSISTENCE in PRACTICE

A Review of the Evidence

PERSISTENCE

Recruiting + Retaining + Graduating = Persistence

Challenges to Persistence:

- **Personal**
  - Mental health, Relationship Conflict, Family Circumstances, Etc.
- **Systemic**
  - High School Preparation,Financial Challenges, Lack of Exposure to Academic Culture, Inequity, Etc.

WHY?

- Guiding research question:

What persistence programming would benefit ONU?

- Focus on:
  - Small to moderate sized universities
  - Christian, liberal arts institutions
  - United States schools in the Midwest (or geographically similar)

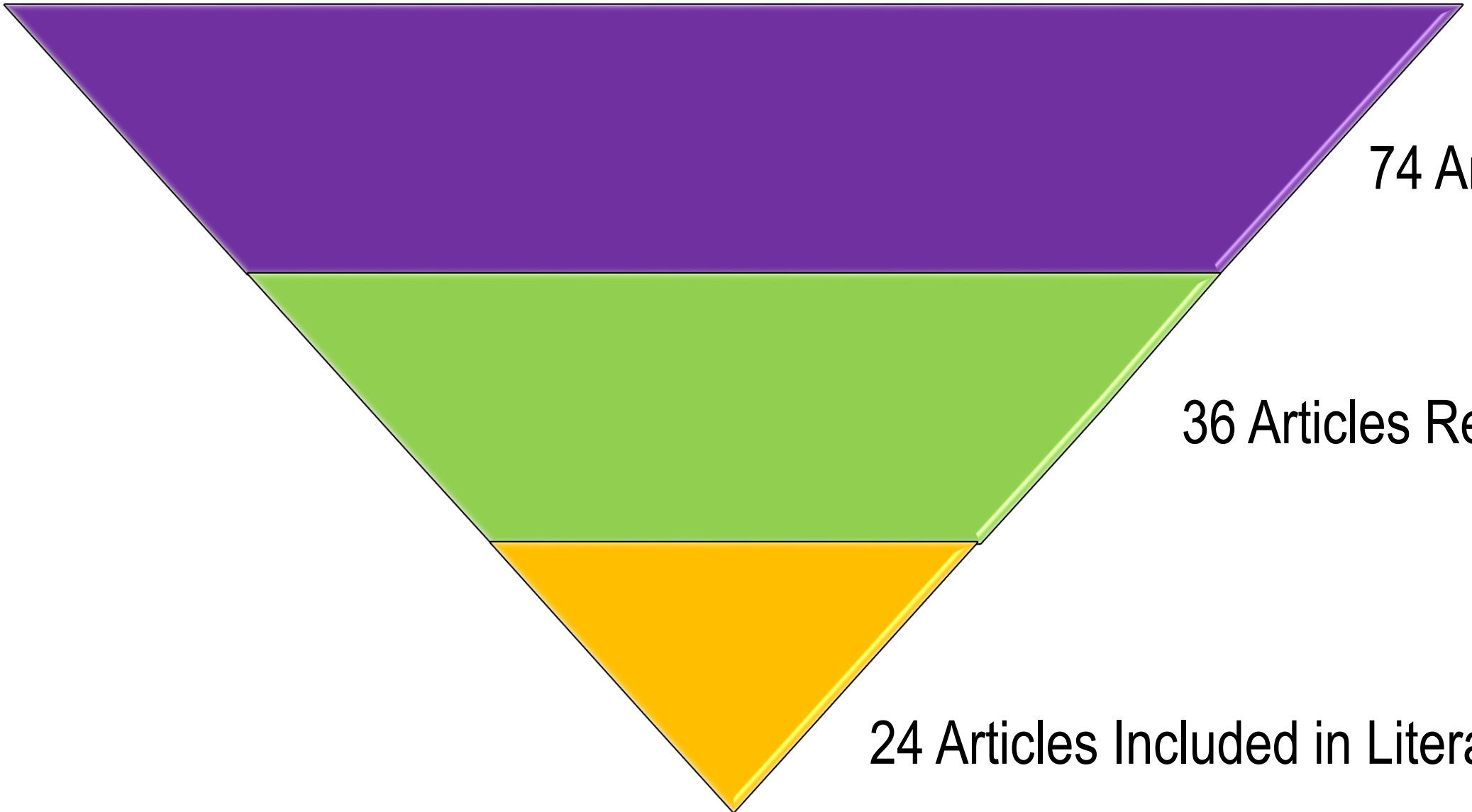
SEARCH PROCESS

- Search Terms:
  - “Education”
  - “High* Education”
  - “Persistence”
  - “Retention”
  - “Program”
  - “Intervention”

- Exclusion Criteria:

1) Over 10 years old
2) Major or Degree-specific programs
3) Research on Master’s and Doctoral students
4) Initiatives at community colleges
5) Initiatives for online-only students
6) Research conducted outside of North America

SEARCH PROCESS



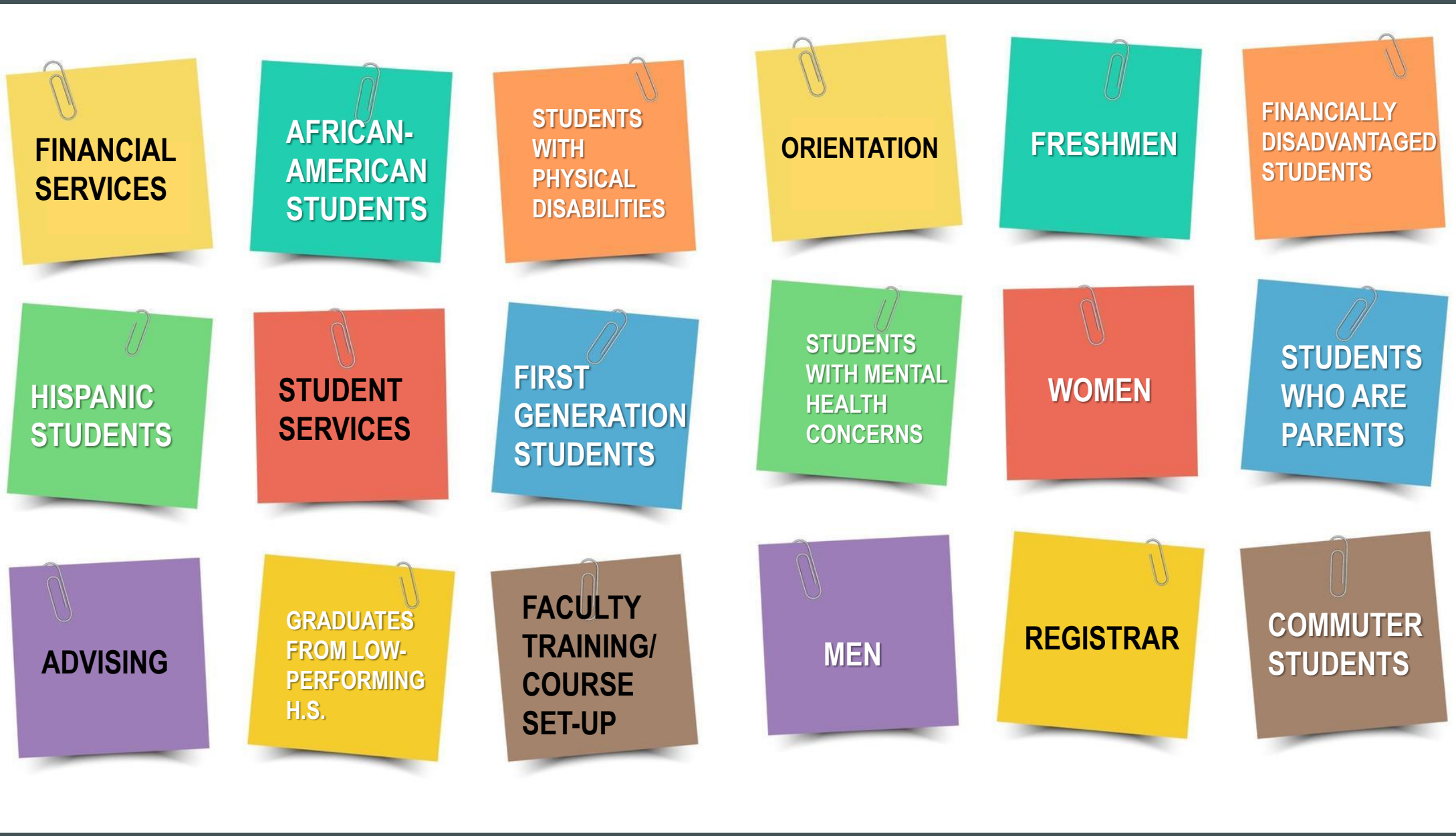
74 Articles Pulled

36 Articles Reviewed

24 Articles Included in Literature Review

THE FINDINGS...

AFRICAN-AMERICAN STUDENTS
STUDENTS WITH PHYSICAL DISABILITIES
FRESHMEN
FINANCIALLY DISADVANTAGED STUDENTS
HISPANIC STUDENTS
FIRST GENERATION STUDENTS
STUDENTS WITH MENTAL HEALTH CONCERNS
WOMEN
STUDENTS WHO ARE PARENTS
GRADUATES FROM LOW-PERFORMING H.S.
MEN
COMMUTER STUDENTS


FINANCIAL SERVICES
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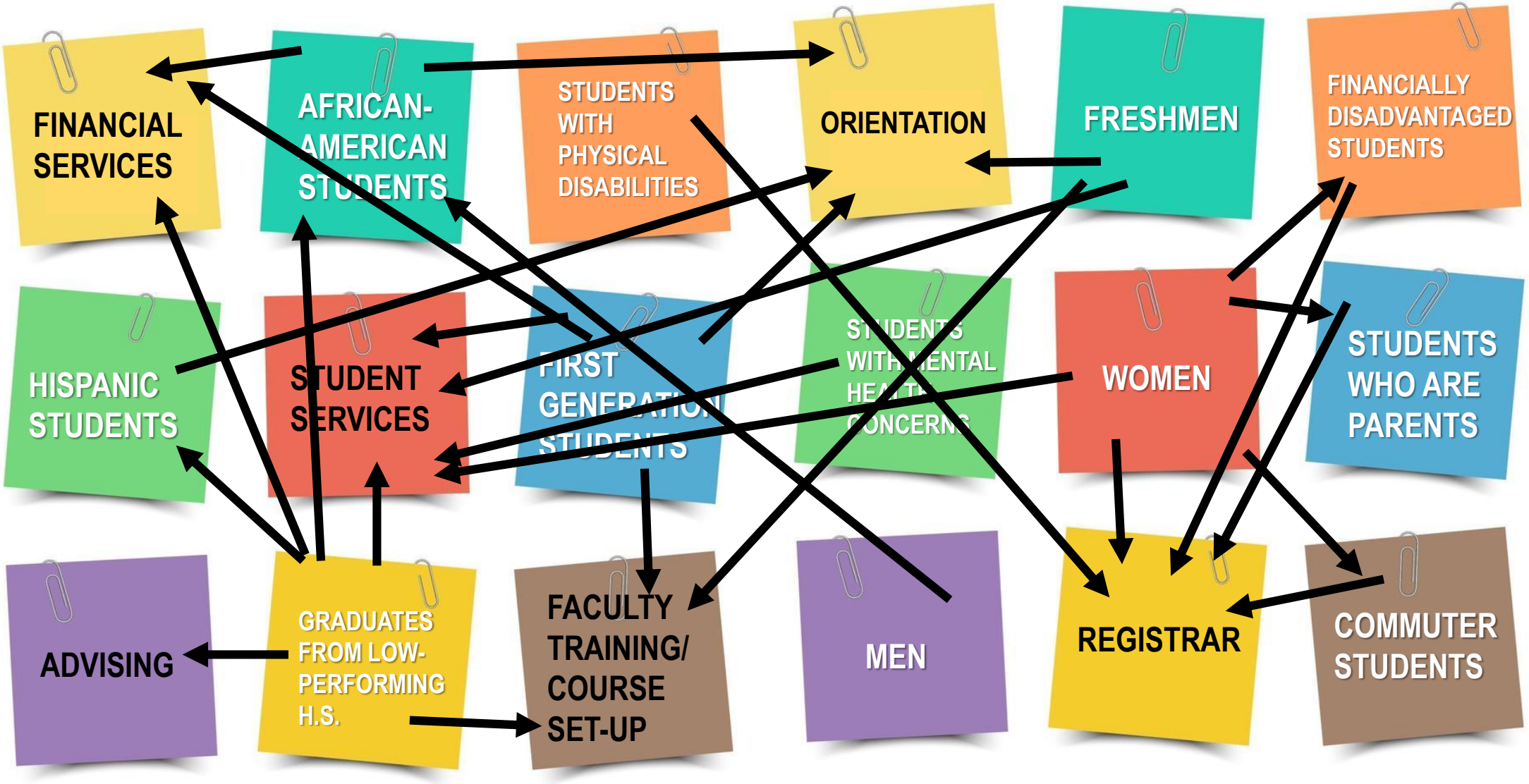
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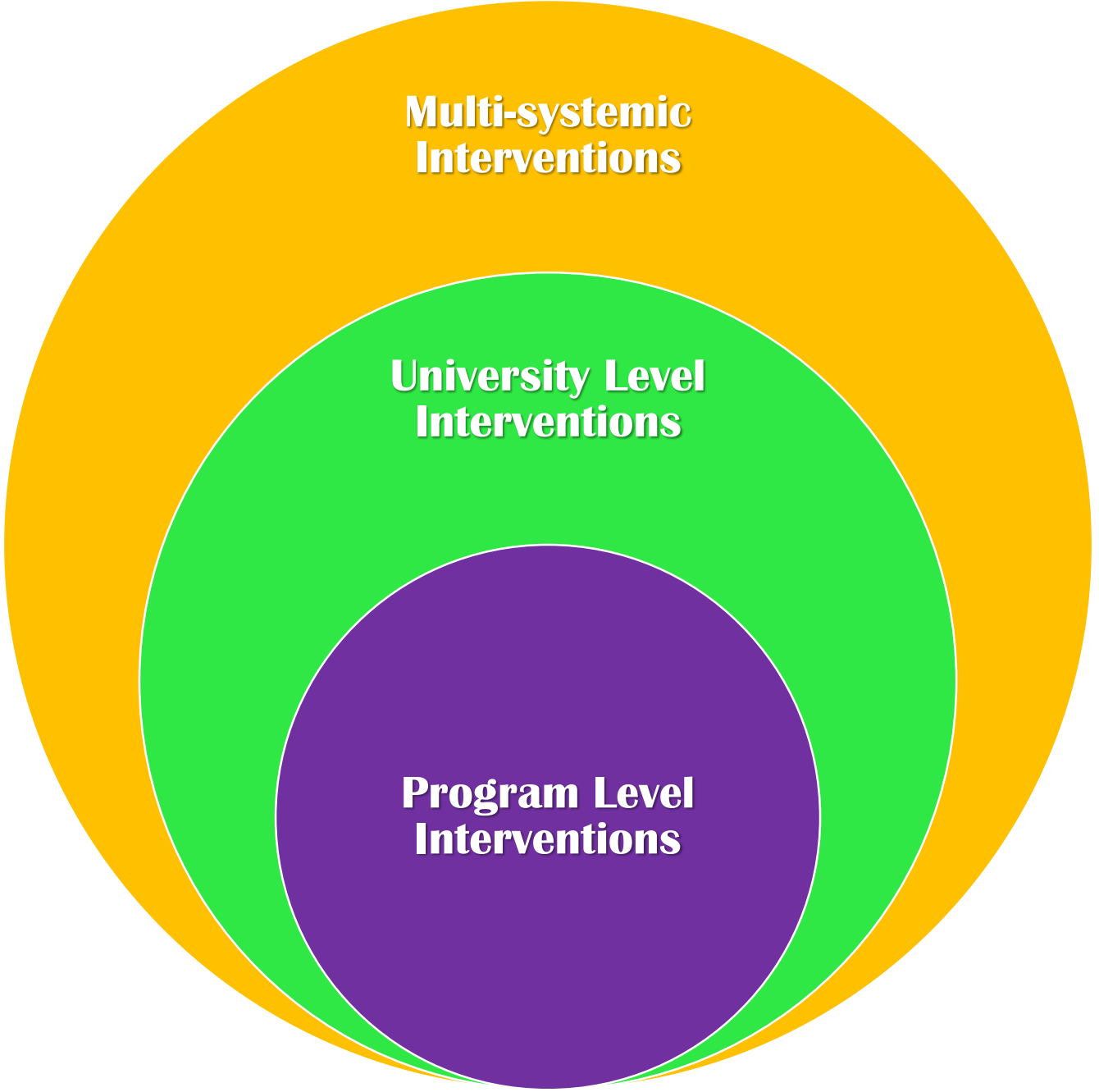

Multi-systemic Interventions
University Level Interventions
Program Level Interventions

PROGRAM-LEVEL
INTERVENTIONS

STUDENTS ON ACADEMIC PROBATION

- **Program that offers a blend of Coaching, Advising, and Counseling**
  - Coaches had background in social work, psychology and education with a minimum of a bachelor's degree
  - Coaches trained by university in intrusive advising
  - Strong results:
    - Average GPA increase of .3 for those who started
    - Average GPA increase of .5 for those who finished
    - 10-15% increase in enrollment

(Alzen, et. al, 2021)

FIRST GENERATION STUDENTS

- **First Generation students manage multiple challenges:**
  - Adapting to college culture
  - Maintaining cultural identity with family of origin
  - Financial challenges
- **First Generation students benefit from programs in multiple areas**
  - Training on the “unwritten rules” of academia
  - Financial aid policies that allow for easy leaving and returning for semester-long breaks without being removed from communication or financial penalty
- **Church-College partnerships may help family support first generation students**
  - Parental training and mentoring within the church community

(Ecklund, 2012), (Ecklund, 2013)

AFRICAN-AMERICAN STUDENTS

- **Common Themes in the literature for intervention**
  - Overt messages on adapting to white culture
  - Help locating spiritual support
  - Space to build connection with other African-American students
- **Counterspaces**
  - Places to feel accepted within home culture with reduced need to prove fitness for college
  - Relief from hyper-surveillaince
  - Types:
    - Black Student Organizations
    - Black Male Initiative Programs (retreats, workshops, mentoring)

(Brooms, 2018), (Brooms, et. al, 2021), (Simmons & Smith, 2020)

LATINX STUDENTS

- **Common Themes: school/family demands, familismo, collectivism**

- **Student Intervention - Training Program**
  - 8 hour support and psychoeducational group
  - Discussed balance of family and school demands
  - Leaders were members of Latinx community

(Cerezo & McWhirter, 2012)

- **Parent Intervention – Latinx Specific Freshman Orientation**
  - Provided in Spanish by employees of the university
  - Focus on appropriate involvement of parents (instead of launching)
  - Discussion of how students can create a family environment at school

(Witkowsky, et. al, 2018)

BLENDED INTERVENTIONS FOR ETHNICALLY AT-RISK STUDENTS

- **Ethnically-specific Peer Coaching**
  - Students connects to peer coaches from similar backgrounds
  - Faculty trained the Peer Coaches using a solutions-focused approach

  (Simmons & Smith, 2020)
- **Access to Research Projects**
  - Students engage in long-term research projects with faculty, based on opening (not on academic background)
  - Offered 1-2 credits for up to 4 semesters
  - Students train and on-board new students

  (Sonnenberg-Klein, et. al, 2018)

FRESHMEN

2 Main Strategies in Addressing Incoming Freshmen:

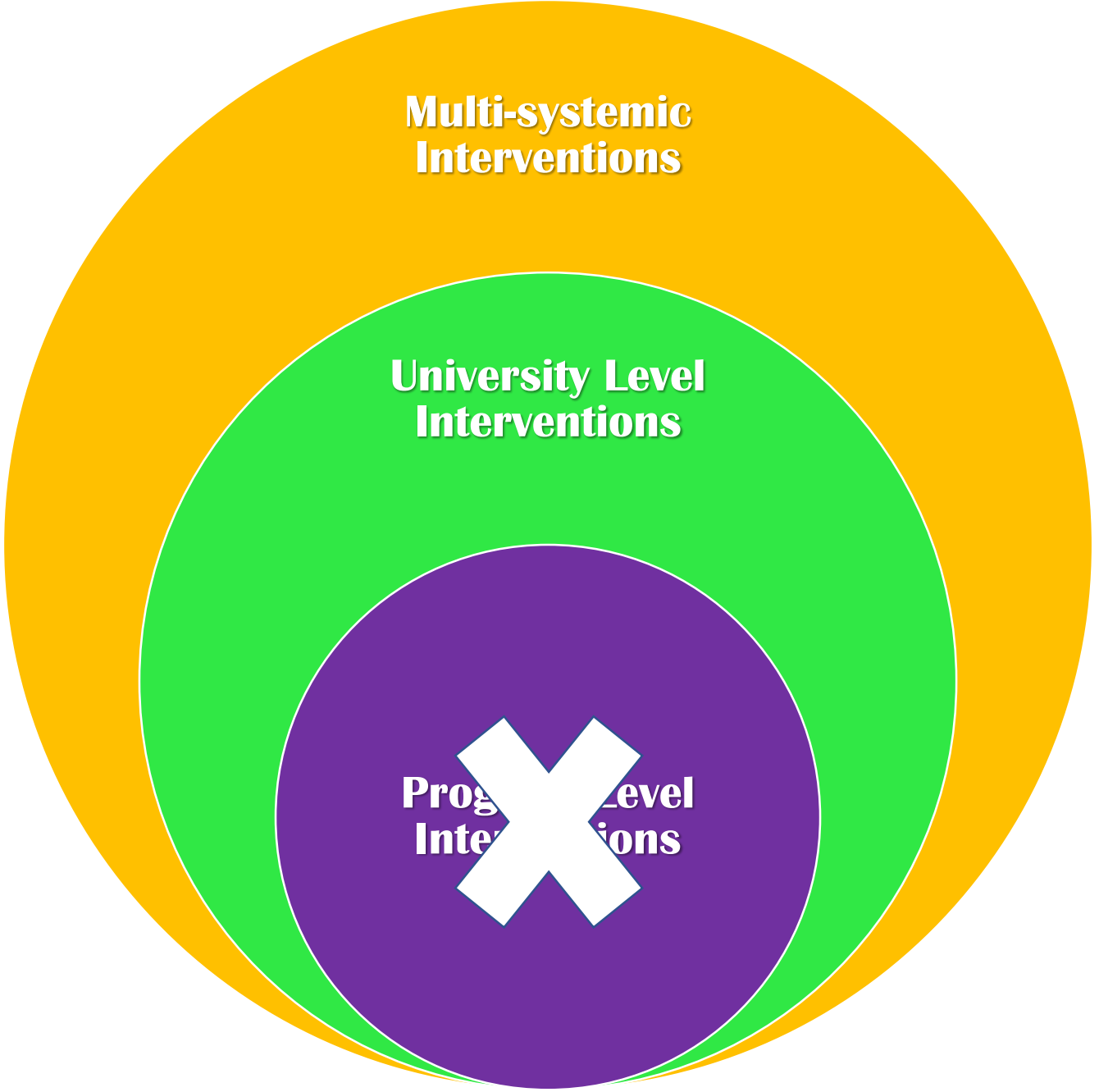
- **Freshmen Bridge Programs**
  - Many different approaches and class combinations
  - Designed to give freshman additional time to adjust to campus life
  - Guided workshops about issues related to academia
  - Early start to gen. ed. classes to allow for slower pace of learning
  - Mixed results

  (Frischmann & Moor, 2017; Wathington, et. al, 2016; Slade, et.al, 2015; Cabrera, et. al, 2013)

- **First Year Programs**
  - Many different approaches and class combinations
  - Most focus on teaching academic skills
  - Students appear to maintain the academic skills used in high school with very modest changes
  - Results on online first year programs pending

  (Jairam, 2020; Kwan, et. al, 2021)

FINDINGS…


Multi-systemic Interventions
University Level Interventions
Prog Level
Inte ions

UNIVERSITY-LEVEL
INTERVENTIONS

FACULTY INTERVENTIONS

2 Areas of Focus for Faculty Training:

- **Hidden Curriculum**
  - Faculty taught to identify expectations of college culture that are not overtly taught in classes
  - Led discussions among faculty about unspoken expectations of college students around issues of connecting socially, practicing self-reflection and using resources

  (Tevis & Britton, 2020)

- **Effective Classroom Instruction**
  - Faculty trained in creating exam questions at the synthesis and analysis level of Bloom's Taxonomy

  (Braxton & Francis, 2018)

FINANCIAL AID POLICIES

- Strong negative correlation between loans and persistence for both:
  - Students with documented financial need (Pell Grant recipients)
  - Students who receive aid but show no remaining need.

  (Herzog, 2017)

- Strong positive correlation between grants and persistence
  - Students receiving grants showed 2-3% greater persistence to degree completion
  - $1000 in grant aid improve year to year persistence by 1.5-1.9% for on-time graduates and 1.8-2.5% for delayed graduation.
  - The same effect NOT shown for merit-based grants.

  (Nguyen, et. al, 2019)

TEXTING PROGRAMS

- Texting has been tried in several different ways for different purposes:

- **Academic Reminders**
  - Messages throughout the semesters to all students for reminders of common expectations (FAFSA deadlines, study tips, midterms, registration, etc.)
  - Messages began with prospective high school students
  - Included personalized birthday messages as well

  (Yeung & Nguyen-Hoang, 2020)
- **Improving Mental Health & Emotional Connection to the University**
  - Messages sent out at stressful times of year (pre-finals, holidays, etc.)
  - Messages designed to improve emotional intelligence
  - Included hyperlinks to student services

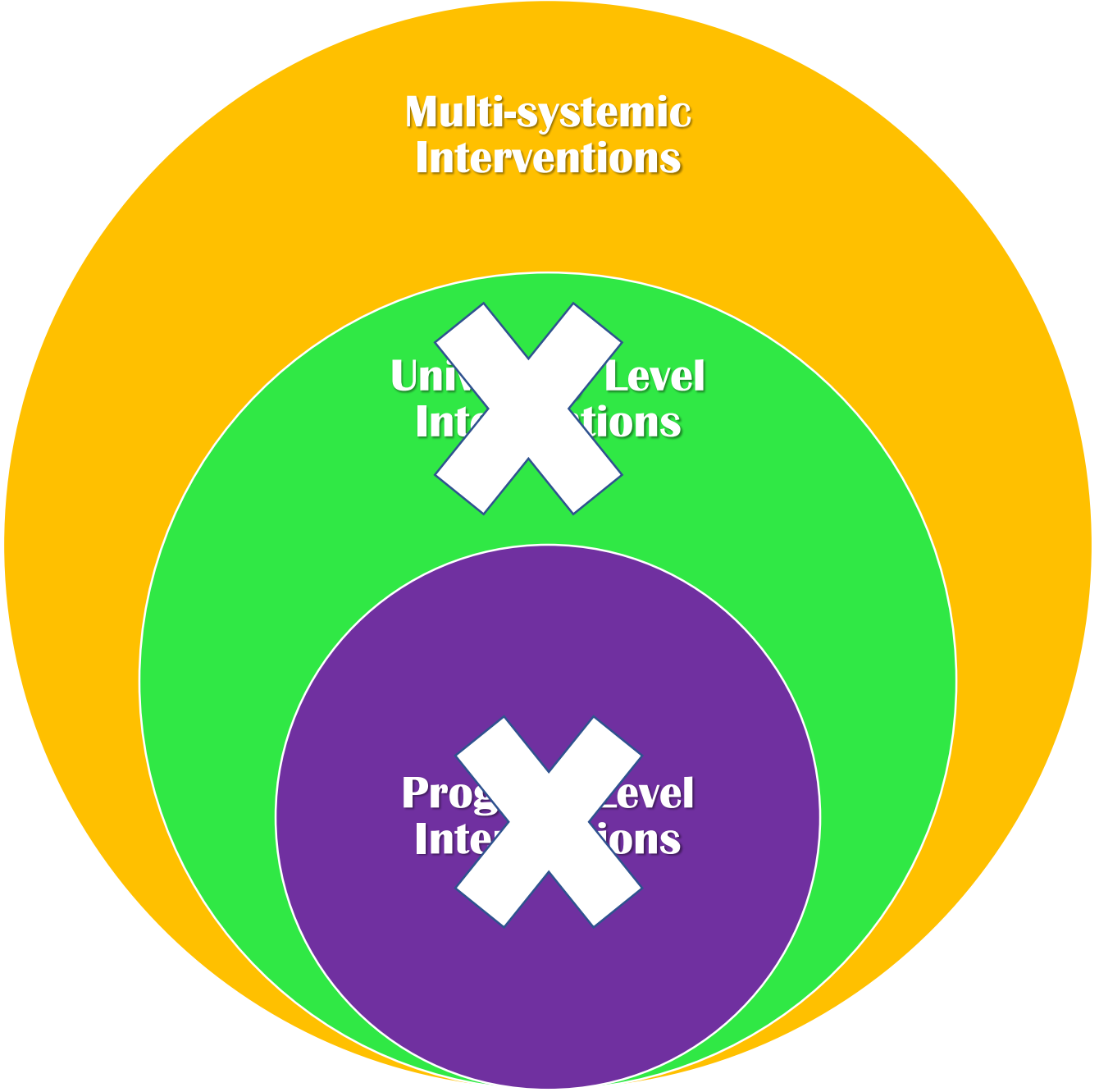
  (Deighton, et. al, 2019)

MENTAL HEALTH PROGRAMS

- **12 Week Program Counseling-Advising Program**
  - Counseling for depression and anxiety
  - Advising for help in addressing the effects of mental health on functioning in the classroom and on campus
  - Strong results:
    - Average 14 pt. reduction on a psychometric scale of depression
    - Average .5 increase in GPA
    - 90% of involved students remained in their program of study

(Antunes-Alves & Langmuir, 2020)

FINDINGS…



MULTISYSTEMIC
INTERVENTIONS

COMBINATION OF ACADEMIC + STUDENT SUPPORT

- **Scholar Program**
  - At-risk students were placed in a cohort for classes in English, Math, and College Reading
  - Embedded lab sessions
  - Bi-weekly meetings with faculty
  - Intrusive advising
  - Courses built on group work

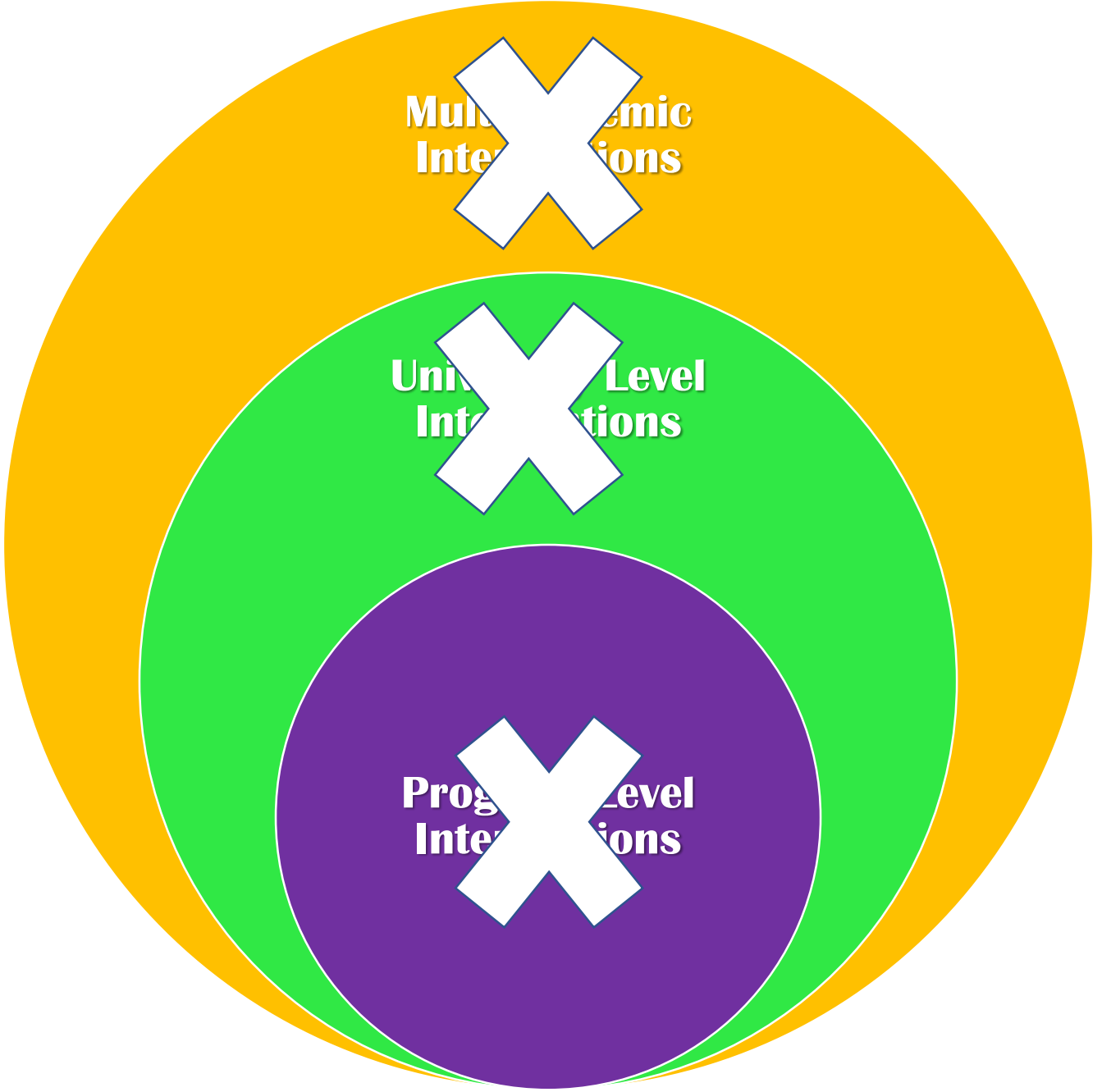
    (Williams, et. al, 2020)

COMBINATION OF ACADEMIC + FINANCIAL SUPPORT

- **Different approaches:**
  - Embed financial literacy into courses
  - Specific first-year course
  - Financial coaching and mentoring

(Kezar & Kitchen, 2020)

FINDINGS…



TAKE-AWAY RECOMMENDATIONS

TAKE AWAY RECOMMENDATIONS

1.) Gather More Information

- Focus group to determine ONU's hidden curriculum and confusing jargon
- Explore cost of texting software for enhanced communication
- Assess campus to determine if counterspaces are currently offered for students of color
- Assess institutional structures of support services
  - Where do students get lost who want services?
  - What keeps at-risk students from using services?
  - How well known are support services across campus?
- Explore evidence-based practices within specific disciplines

TAKE AWAY RECOMMENDATIONS

1.) Gather More Information

2.) Review Financial Services & Policies

- Evaluate grant resources with an emphasis on need-based grants over merit-based grants
- Establish more “break-friendly policies. Consider removing financial penalties for withdrawal and removing the need to reapply to return.

TAKE AWAY RECOMMENDATIONS

1.) Gather More Information

2.) Review Financial Services & Policies

- Evaluate grant resources with an emphasis on need-based grants over merit-based grants
- Establish more “break-friendly policies. Consider removing financial penalties for withdrawal and removing the need to reapply to return.

3.) Modify Student Support Services

- Add pairing feature to peer coaching
- Emphasize high-impact study skills in First Year course (AKA – Freshman Connections)
- Hire qualified staff to provide advanced counselling in addition to intrusive advising

TAKE AWAY RECOMMENDATIONS

1.) Gather More Information

2.) Review Financial Services & Policies

3.) Modify Student Support Services

4.) Modify Academic Programs

- Offer incentives to faculty using exam questions focused on analysis and synthesis
- Emphasize high-impact study skills in sophomore level classes
- Enhance Department Honors to include larger research projects for a broader set of students.

TAKE AWAY RECOMMENDATIONS

1.) Gather More Information
2.) Review Financial Services & Policies
3.) Modify Student Support Services
4.) Modify Academic Programs
5.) Consider University- Level Initiatives

- Collaboration with local churches to support parents of first generation students
- Offer separate parent sessions during Freshman Orientation for Latinx families
- Systemic “wrap around” services for at-risk students (financial, academic, social, and departmental interventions)
- Concentrated cohort program for at-risk students
- Enhance investment in groups addressing students of color

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Any Questions?