

December 2023

Career Development & Learning at Jesuit Colleges & Universities During the COVID-19 Pandemic & Beyond

Christine P. Li-Grining

Loyola University Chicago, cligrining@luc.edu

Maria Radulescu

Daniela Ugalde

Joyce Knight

Follow this and additional works at: <https://epublications.regis.edu/jhe>



Part of the [Academic Advising Commons](#), and the [Higher Education Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Li-Grining, Christine P.; Radulescu, Maria; Ugalde, Daniela; and Knight, Joyce (2023) "Career Development & Learning at Jesuit Colleges & Universities During the COVID-19 Pandemic & Beyond," *Jesuit Higher Education: A Journal*: Vol. 12: No. 2, Article 17.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.53309/2164-7666.1456>

Available at: <https://epublications.regis.edu/jhe/vol12/iss2/17>

This Praxis is brought to you for free and open access by the Scholarly and Peer-Reviewed Journals at ePublications at Regis University. It has been accepted for inclusion in Jesuit Higher Education: A Journal by an authorized administrator of ePublications at Regis University. For more information, please contact epublications@regis.edu.

Career Development & Learning at Jesuit Colleges & Universities During the COVID-19 Pandemic & Beyond

Cover Page Footnote

We thank the following individuals who made this study possible. This includes Zahra Naqi, Amanda Roy, Sabine Fiore, and Maya Lorenz. Most importantly, we thank the students who participated in this project. This study was supported by a Loyola University Provost Fellowship awarded to the third author.

Career Development & Learning at Jesuit Colleges & Universities During the COVID-19 Pandemic & Beyond

Christine Pajunar Li-Grining
Loyola University Chicago
Department of Psychology
cligrining@luc.edu

Maria Radulescu
Loyola University Chicago
Department of Psychology
mradulescu1@luc.edu

Daniela Ugalde
Loyola University Chicago
Department of Psychology
dugalde@luc.edu

Joyce D. Knight
Loyola University Chicago
College of Arts & Sciences
jknight@luc.edu

Abstract

Today's youth are often interested in how they can work toward social justice, not just in their spare time, but also as part of their educations and careers. This includes students who are drawn to the social justice missions of Jesuit colleges and universities. In 2020, the COVID-19 public health crisis disrupted education and career plans, placing major obstacles along young adults' pathways. Guided by the Engagement of Hope theoretical model, the current study examines student supports and how they may facilitate hope and learning.¹ In 2021, an online survey study was conducted with 169 students from a Jesuit university in a Midwestern city. Of the original participants who completed the online survey, five students completed in-depth interviews. The findings revealed the students' hopes for later careers, described learning numerous skills, used a wide array of college supports, and discussed the role of families in their education and career path. The authors reflect on adaptations made to student supports during the pandemic and on how student service programs at Jesuit institutions might continue to evolve in the post-pandemic era.

Introduction

...let us not have too limited an understanding of what...education is. It should not be simply the updating of technical or professional knowledge, or even the re-education necessary to meet the challenges of a rapidly changing world. It should rather be what...will prepare us for witnessing to justice as God gives us to see it from the signs of our times.²

Today's youth are often interested in how they can work toward social, economic, environmental, and

racial justice, not just in their spare time, but also as part of their education and career. This includes students who are drawn to the social justice missions of Jesuit colleges and universities, where students are encouraged to imagine a more just society and their role in making a positive impact on the world. In 2020, the COVID-19 public health crisis disrupted education and career plans, placing major obstacles along young adults' path. Many in-person classes, for instance, suddenly shifted online around the globe. Variations of this "new normal" carried over into 2021, and it is expected that "ripple effects" on students will continue for years, particularly in terms of their

disengagement and negative effects on their mental health, especially for students from vulnerable backgrounds, including students from racially and ethnically minoritized backgrounds.³ Nevertheless, in the context of this unprecedented catastrophe, some students remained hopeful about their future careers.

Hope for Future Careers in a Jesuit Context

This manuscript explores how student services at a Jesuit university helped students maintain their career goals during the pandemic. In particular, this paper focuses on students' hopes and imagination in regard to their career development and learning, which often involves justice-oriented career pathways at Jesuit colleges and universities. A case study of five students of color provided an opportunity to reflect on how existing student services supported hope and imagination regarding students' career goals and interests, how student service programs adapted during the pandemic, and how might student service programs at Jesuit colleges and universities continue to evolve after the pandemic. More specifically, this manuscript addresses the following line of inquiry: In regard to students' career development, what is the role of student supports in facilitating hope and learning?

Theoretical Frameworks

The current study is guided by two frameworks. First, the Culturally Engaging Campus Environments (CECE) model. This framework is a relatively new theory of student success that has received support from NASPA, Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education (NAPSA) which is a leading organization for student affairs administrators in higher education.⁴ The CECE model was built on a substantial foundation of research regarding factors that foster the success of racially and ethnically diverse college students. Notably, past research has demonstrated benefits of the CECE model for a greater sense of belonging among students in general, as well as for sub-groups of young adults, including students who identify with racially and ethnically minoritized groups and those who identify as white.⁵ Within the comprehensive CECE model, student success and the factors that shape their adjustment are both broadly defined. Students'

well-being involves their sense of belonging, academic performance, and college success outcomes (e.g., graduation). Factors that play a role in students' development include external influences (e.g., finances), pre-college inputs (e.g., demographic background), and how colleges can serve as culturally engaging campus environments. More specifically, the CECE model describes ways that colleges can be culturally relevant and culturally responsive (e.g., offer cultural validation, provide humanized environments [such as faculty involvement], holistic support).

This model is aligned with both classic theoretical frameworks on student development and newer approaches to student development theory, both of which undergird current student service programs in higher education. Older frameworks include person-environment interactive theories, such as Tinto's Theory of Student Departure.⁶ According to Tinto, in order to increase student retention, colleges must deliberately integrate students into college life by promoting opportunities to engage in extracurricular activities, informal social interaction among students, and interactions among faculty and students. More recently, Strayhorn has incorporated Snyder's hope theory (e.g., believing that it is possible to find ways toward your goals and to be motivated to follow those pathways) into student development frameworks in higher education (e.g., understanding "how parents, peers, mentors, or spiritual figures influence one's hope for better or more").⁷ Particularly relevant to the current study is that Strayhorn discusses the connection between faith and hope, which was important for students during the pandemic, especially if they faced risks even before the pandemic began.

As such, the current study is also anchored by the Engagement of Hope theoretical model, which centers on equity and focuses on active community engagement (Figure 1).⁸ Key to this model are the voices and lived experiences of community members as well as relationships among them. It is a faith-based framework that sees *God in all things* and views the universe as holding grace for everyone. Importantly, within this model, "a passion for the possible" serves as motivation to meet the challenges of carrying out equity-centered community engagement.

Emerging adults' pursuit of career goals at Jesuit institutions can be viewed in terms of the five components that make up the Engagement of Hope framework: (1) challenging unjust structures, (2) aspiring toward the common good, (3) recognizing individual goodness, (4) being community centered, and (5) having collaborative courage.

Many students attending Jesuit institutions are interested in processes related to broader societal factors, such as "challenging unjust structures" and "working toward the common good." Encountering multiple societal catastrophes across their lives, Gen Z has been presented with multiple opportunities to observe systemic inequities. Such observations have sparked interest in aspiring toward the common good. Within the Engagement of Hope model, grassroots efforts draw on communities' strengths to work against injustice and toward the betterment of society.

At the student level, there is "individual goodness," which acknowledges the "inherent belief of the goodness of people, their experiences, knowledge, skills, and gifts." One expression of such goodness is students' willingness to help others. Service is highly valued at Jesuit institutions, where young adults often arrive already having a record of volunteer work, and they tend to become more engaged in volunteer service during college. Within the context of community engagement, "individual goodness" and "the common good" co-exist in the sense that the individual experience is central while striving toward the public good. For example, when supporting the career development of students with social justice interests, it is important to acknowledge that they each have their own unique characteristics and experiences. This approach was especially important during the pandemic, which tended to have a greater impact on vulnerable students.

Within the Jesuit context of teaching and learning, "being community-centered" and "having collaborative courage" are key. Although community engagement often refers to universities engaging with communities external to them (e.g., the neighborhood in which a college is located), this concept might also refer to the community within an institution of higher

education. Like emerging adults looking for the right college to attend, staff and faculty may seek alignment between their personal values and workplaces. As such, at Jesuit colleges and universities, there can be similar values across different community members – students, staff, and faculty. Standing on common ground, students, staff, and faculty can engage in "collaborative courage," which speaks to building relationships with one another, remaining hopeful and persistent as a group while facing the difficulties of equity work, and emerging resilient together.

Method

Participants

Students in the present investigation attended a Jesuit, Midwestern, urban-based university, with a vision statement that sees itself as a place for students who have a passion for learning that is driven by the greater purpose of serving others. An online survey was distributed to a participant pool of students enrolled in introductory psychology courses in the Spring 2021 and Fall 2021 semesters. Of the 169 who completed the quantitative survey, only 5 students opted to complete a follow-up, in-depth interview. Table 1 provides descriptive statistics for the whole sample ($n = 169$), and Table 2 provides a description of the five student sub-sample, who all identified as female and completed a follow-up, qualitative interview. The rest of this study focuses on these five students. The sub-sample of participants were mostly age 18 and worked while attending college. Most of them had at least one parent who was born outside of the U.S. These students were diverse in terms of their race and ethnic background, language(s) spoken, and countries of origin. Four of the five students were bilingual in English and another language, and the students' families came from five different areas across two continents. The young women were either in their first or second year in college at the time of the study. The pandemic hit either while they attended high school or during their first year of college. Notably, the sub-group described in Table 2 is generally similar to the larger sample (e.g., over half of survey respondents were students of color and from immigrant families,

and most students in the larger sample were female and first-year students).

Procedure

The aforementioned online survey and in-depth interviews were part of a study called the “Anchor Project.” The present investigation centers on the five undergraduate students who completed the in-depth interviews.

Recruitment for the Anchor Project was based on a participant pool of students enrolled in introductory psychology courses in the Spring 2021 and Fall 2021 semesters, which occurred during the first full calendar year of the pandemic. The research methods used in the current project were approved by the university’s Institutional Review Board. Informed consent was obtained from all participants and confidentiality was maintained for all of them. In a description of the Anchor Project, students were told, “Climbers use anchors to help with their ascent up mountains. We are interested in learning about different types of ‘anchors,’ or supports available to students as they make their way through college (e.g., financial, academic, social, professional).”⁹ Given the pandemic, the in-depth interviews were conducted online, rather than in person.

The students were first invited to complete an online survey that lasted about 30–45 minutes. After completing the survey, they were given the option of completing a follow-up interview. Trained research assistants (RA) conducted the open-ended, in-depth interview, either by Zoom or phone for approximately 30–45 minutes. The RAs included a graduate student and two undergraduate students in their senior year. Students who completed the online survey received one credit toward course-required laboratory participation, and if students also completed an in-depth interview, they received a \$25 Uber Eats gift card.

Measures

In terms of the online survey, there were eight questions on the students’ background information and six questions on their use of college supports. Students reported on their use of supports in the following six areas: academic (e.g.,

advising for first- and second-year students), financial (e.g., financial aid office), sociocultural (e.g., student diversity and multicultural affairs office), career (e.g., career services department), informal (e.g., talked to a professor/teaching assistant outside of class time), and health and wellness (e.g., wellness center). Notably, these categories overlap with components of the CECE model and many of NAFSA focus areas, such as career and workforce development; student financial wellness; justice, equity, inclusion, and diversity; health, safety, and well-being; and student success.

The in-depth interviews for the five students began by explaining that interviews were being conducted “...to help us better understand the experiences of college students. We believe this information is important because it will help us learn how to better support people like you. Today, I want to get to know you and your story.”¹⁰ The prompts in the interview were open-ended and included topics such as education and career aspirations, as well as what factors facilitate and hinder ones’ ability to reach their education and career goals, including processes such as focusing attention, managing stress, and making good choices. Additionally, there were open-ended questions about types of student support (from classmates, advisors, faculty, staff, family, friends, neighborhood, community). These were semi-structured interviews, where follow up questions depended on students’ responses.

The interviews were conducted and recorded via Zoom, which provided a transcription. An open-coding analytic process was used to code data from the in-depth interviews.¹¹ Data saturation was achieved by the first author (faculty member), second author (graduate research assistant), and the undergraduate research assistants, where the same themes emerged for each coder when thematically categorizing the qualitative data. We took both a deductive and inductive approach. On one hand, we examined whether themes related to hope, imagination, and learning were reflected in the qualitative data. On the other hand, we observed themes that emerged from the data on their own. In addition, based on the online survey, we tallied the different types of supports that the young adults reported using. To improve

readability of the quotes below, words such as “um” and “like” and repeated words were excluded.

Results

The bottom of Table 1 provides descriptive statistics for the larger sample who completed the online survey. Tables 1 and 2 show that the characteristics of the qualitative sub-sample are generally similar to those of the whole sample.

Furthermore, college support usage by the sub-sample was consistent with the pattern of college support usage by the whole sample. As indicated in Table 1, almost 90% of students reported using at least one type of college support, despite most services being offered virtually during 2021 and a slow return to campus during the pandemic. In addition, the most commonly used student services for the whole sample and the sub-sample were the same. Academic, financial, social and cultural, and informal support had the highest percentages, as shown in Table 1.

In terms of the sub-sample, the five participants who completed the in-depth interview used the following wide variety of student support types. One student used four kinds, two students utilized five types, and the remaining two participants reported using all six kinds of student supports (i.e., academic; financial; social and cultural; career; informal; health and wellness). Four types were used by all young adults in the study: academic, financial, sociocultural, and informal support. More specifically, the academic supports taken up by participants included advising, mentoring, success coaching, writing, and tutoring programs as well as technology resources, student accessibility, and new student programs (e.g., orientation). All students relied on the financial aid office. For social and cultural supports, participants were involved in student government, the student center, the student diversity and multicultural affairs office, and other student organizations. Participants utilized an online platform to access information about student activities, and depending on where they lived, they took advantage of supports offered to students residing in dorms and to those commuting. The students also made connections with faculty and teaching assistants, where informal support

included asking a question in class, talking to faculty and teaching assistants outside of class time, attending office hours, emailing faculty and teaching assistants with a question or concern, and taking a class with a professor who shared their racial/ethnic background.

Career support was utilized by four out of five students. When services related to careers were used, this included turning to the career development center, an online platform for students to find jobs, and the federal work study program. Health and wellness supports were used by two students, and it involved accessing a wellness center and the campus safety office.

Students' interview responses in relation to *hope* and *imagination* were examined. Those responses are revealed anonymously throughout the rest of this paper. Two themes emerged in those responses. First, their hopes included a range of careers, such as working in the field of environmental science and in health care (i.e., as a nurse, surgeon), and they saw a connection between education and their future careers. One student, for example, told us, “Obviously college is a lot of money and that wasn't a decision that I took lightly, and I still don't take lightly today and then also...you know, since good grades are kind of important to getting a good job and good...internship work experiences....”

Second, their desires for the future involved wanting to help others and the broader world. Some of the students hoped to continue their education after college, such as attending medical school and entering a Master in Business Administration (MBA) program. For instance, an environmental science major said, “I want to leave something better than how I found it,” and the student planning to earn an MBA said, “what I would want in life is kind of just...happiness and knowing that I can help other people.” Another student envisioned a career where they could be “an effective activist for the environment...[and] not...giving up [their] passions, which are...theater and psychology, while managing to combine these two.” They continued to tell us, “That might sound ambiguous, but a performance is something I do truly enjoy and psychology is also something I enjoy as well and helping people is also a great part of that.”

Two students who planned to enter the health care field shared:

...if I'm...ever feeling like...nursing is too hard...I don't want to do this anymore, I...rewind and I'm like, oh, but...this can be helpful for me in the future like the money I will get. And just...me being able to help others...it's going to be rewarding in the future so I definitely think of how it can affect me in the future...for myself and for the people around me.

Right now, my career goal's to be a surgeon...I want to be competent in my career, I don't want to just be a surgeon, I want to be a competent surgeon who knows what they're doing and as well as her job because...I really do want to help people.

Furthermore, students hoped to enjoy their future jobs (e.g., "I'd like to...have a career...that I don't hate, you know, somewhere I enjoy actually working at") and to be able to apply what they are learning in classes to their future careers (e.g., "the ideal would be absorbing everything I learned in my classes and be able to apply it in future situations and circumstances").

In addition, it appears that envisioning exact steps and pathways may be challenging. For example, the student who was interested in pursuing an MBA told us: "Having a career and just like putting my degree towards something... seems...very far away...I don't see myself doing it because it still feels like so unreal..." Picturing concrete career steps can even be difficult along well-worn paths to the health professions. For example, the student aspiring to become a surgeon shared with us that a faculty member told them:

...you should go to the pre-health committee and or...advising...and then I went on the website and search them up and [there are]...quick appointments and stuff so I've been to...two of them by now and I've asked them questions about...different aspects of the pathway to med school because there's so many different things you have to do, it's really confusing, so...you have to ask a lot of questions.

In instances where the students addressed issues related to *learning*, three sub-themes emerged. First, they described challenges to learning (e.g., "I'm not that great at...planning ahead...I have pretty bad time blindness...I don't have a good sense of how time passes"). Additionally, students expressed desires to improve their skills. For example, one student told us:

...nursing requires a lot of memorization. So, it's...been pretty difficult for me, but I'm... trying my best to...memorize over and over and just... improve on my memorization. But not only...academic wise. I'm also super forgetful...if we have tests...homework, stuff like that and I do write it down but then I...end up forgetting where I wrote it down so it's... kind of hard for me. So I am the type of person to ask my classmates...do we have this due today or...a test today. So I just kind of want to work on myself just like, you know, like being able to be more organized 'cause I'm kind of like all over the place right now. So I just want to be more organized... especially where I write down like my assignments, I want to have one specific place because I'm just the type of person...out of habit I just write it anywhere or take a picture with my phone and then I end up...not even using it and end up just asking [someone]. So, I just want to work on being that person who gets asked rather than being that person who asks.

Some challenges were specific to starting college during the pandemic. For example, one student told us:

I definitely...learned to get over a lot, like my first semester of college...just like the ability to...overcome things...self-control, I think that's really important because first semester, [procrastination] definitely affected my grades and second semester, I kind of just like had to wake myself up and realize that this isn't high school anymore and it's not a joke kind of.

For this student “self-control,” meant to:

...have a set time for things...for example, if I have an asynchronous class it's so difficult for me to like watch the lectures on time, whereas...with...a synchronous class it's so much easier for me to...just show up to a zoom meeting and...take notes...self-control...would...be needed for an asynchronous class so just...knowing...I have to do this, I have to hold myself accountable for doing this at this time, so just the accountability, being very responsible with your tasks, I guess.

More generally, the pandemic was a challenging time to be a student. One student shared with us:

When we had a switch online with biology, it was kind of very different because we were just looking at pictures of things...on a Word document, whereas before...I was...cutting things open with a scalpel so it was a lot more hands off, like [a] detached learning experience, online school and staying in my room at home, all day. It's kind of just like my brain is kind of clocked out like everything's the same, I can't learn.

At the same time, students mentioned examples of faculty offering help during the pandemic. One student, for instance, talked about reaching out and talking to a faculty member when they were behind in class.

Despite facing such challenges, students mentioned learning in a variety of ways. This included academic content in a range of subjects (e.g., chemistry, math, history, environmental science) and career-specific steps (e.g., what is needed to become a physician). The young adults also discussed learning numerous skills (e.g., balancing time, decision making, studying, focusing attention) that were not particular to certain subjects or careers, but are helpful for both academic and career success. Sometimes students learned lessons on their own. One student told us:

You have to spend a lot of time... study[ing]...you can't just...go out and have fun, you kind of have to...after class

maybe...go back and study and look over the material you learn because definitely you will forget it...once you just leave and...go out and...hang...out with your friends. So definitely just spend a little time...reviewing what you went over in class.

And I would say after this semester I kind of learned...it's okay to go out and have fun a little bit, rather than just focusing so much...it's okay to...go out with your friends and have fun, but I definitely did not do that as much, I just kind of [spent] my like my whole semester just...being on my own and studying and just because I was so scared that I wouldn't pass...but definitely like that's part of college life...going out...so, maybe have a good balance between study[ing] and just...going out and...relaxing basically, but it's like definitely hard to get used to.

At other times, students developed skills with the help of student support programs. For example, one student told us about experiences with her advisor and tutors:

Yeah, my advisor...reassured me...it's okay you can always take this [course]...another time. So, um, yeah, it was helpful...I don't usually ask...adults or...staff...many questions yeah maybe because I'm...scared or nervous, but he was like, it's easy for me to talk to him because he is my academic advisor so I am supposed to ask him. So yeah, he's helped me too. And then tutors...they've been helpful to just go over the material we went over in Kahoots or...like their own tests they made that we can do, so they gave us a lot of resources as well.

When describing their experience with a success coach, another student conveyed:

I always saw the same person...regularly so one thing that was just helpful in itself was having someone to check into regularly. Not all of her...strategies...necessarily worked for me and...I didn't expect them to, nothing's a magic fix but just...having someone to...check in and then...tell me, maybe a new strategy or two. Like sort of I guess...keep me accountable, but not in terms of

actually...doing things, but like...studying habits and like stuff like that...to help me better understand how I can...focus better.

Notably, one student highlighted the importance of receiving emotional support alongside other types of support. They told us: “I value [mentoring program name] so highly because my mentor was...super important in providing... academic advice...and also emotional support as well...I value that relationship and I think very highly of them.” Similarly, another student said, “I feel the...mentorship [program] has been pretty supportive...offered their help. I talked to them about situations I had and it seemed like quite a welcoming community.”

Lastly, when taking an inductive approach, we observed that a theme related to family emerged from the data. All five participants mentioned family when discussing their education and career plans, where family members offered different degrees and types of support.

Two participants talked more about families’ views of their education and career interests. One young adult said, “medicine has been...integrated into us,” and at the same time, their parents wanted them “...to pick a major that can be an alternate to the...medical field...if [they] don’t get into med school.” When asked about family support, another student conveyed that their family has trouble “...understanding why I’m doing what I’m doing and how it will be beneficial to me in the future.”

Three students shared the specific role of their sisters in their career paths. When answering a question about college support, a student answered:

Definitely my sister. I’d say she’s...one of my biggest role models...she’s always...helping me out...kind of just...waking me up in a way, like saying...what are you doing...you shouldn’t be doing this...just helping me...with how I make my decisions and probably my parents, too. They’re always...trying to help out in some way make these decisions...I’m glad, because I have immigrant parents and...there’s...stereotypes around them, but they’re always...there

and...very supportive...for some reason growing up, I was like I have to be a doctor, it’s the only way, I’m going to please my parents, and...as soon as I told them that I changed my major...they were...100% okay with that... I don’t know why I thought they wouldn’t be.

Another student answered a question about college support by telling us about how their sister provided career-specific support:

Definitely my older sister. She’s actually been someone...I’ve looked up to like my whole life and she’s still living with us so it’s...easier for me to return and talk to her and stuff. But she’s actually right now a CNA [Certified Nursing Assistant] ...she’s...told me...kind of her experience as a CNA and kind of what I might have to go through as I’m first starting to be a nurse. So, yeah, she’s also supported me a lot. I’ve told her I’ve been struggling with some classes and she’s...understood because she’s been through that as well...she’s been very helpful and supportive...

One student shared that their sister provided subject-specific support:

I was failing chemistry my first semester, so I think that kind of also impacted ...my...relationships with...my classmates and...my dormmates and everything because I kind of just...hunker[ed] down and...studied, like all the time... It was really difficult...I couldn’t let myself like fail. Like a general education class...my first semester of college...I couldn’t let that happen...I called my sister all the time because she’s pretty good at chemistry so she was basically...my tutor. I called her...almost every day, cried a lot of times, had a breakdown [a] few times. But I passed so that was good, but yeah...I never really...went out a lot because of that and...I was just at home social distancing.

Despite the helpfulness of family, students would also rely on advisors at school. One told us, that their sister was “...constantly like don’t ask me anything about...pre-business because I don’t know much about it, so I definitely asked my

advisor a lot of questions about that, like how my schedule would look next semester.”

Discussion

As we reflected on our findings and the broader landscape of Jesuit higher education, we turned to the Engagement of Hope model to frame our thinking on the ways that Jesuit university communities remained collectively hopeful during the pandemic (Figure 2). For instance, student service programs made modifications as students’ needs changed. What adaptations to student service programs may have helped students maintain hope about their future careers during the pandemic? At Loyola University Chicago, Dr. Joyce Knight, who has led advising in its largest college, observed that the pandemic:

...caused a shift in what our students expect and need from our advising team. Many of our current students experienced their first years of college in a remote setting, which didn’t lend itself to helping students build connections and resiliency. They need more time, support, and TLC than ever, beyond just academic advising. In response, we shifted our approach to help connect students with the resources and care they might need, particularly when it comes to mental health. This is especially true with juniors and seniors, who are starting to think about their lives beyond Loyola. That’s why I’m so grateful that our advising team...includes sociologists, psychologists, and social workers, because our students need those extra skillsets right now.¹²

Results from the current study illustrate many of Knight’s points above. In line with Knight, while students in the present investigation were working toward their education and career plans, they accessed a wide range of services, including academic, financial, sociocultural, career, and health and wellness supports, as well as informal support from faculty. The students turned to tutors, advisors, and success coaches for help with focusing better, studying more effectively, and making decisions about their career pathways and classes. In addition, mentors provided both academic and emotional support.

Interestingly, Knight mentions the need for “extra skillsets” and a shift in students’ expectations.¹³ Congruent with this observation, the young adults in the current investigation demonstrated an awareness of and desire to improve skills important for both school and work, such as being organized, maintaining self-control, and balancing time, which were especially needed during the pandemic. Knight goes on to explain that:

Honestly, the pandemic was a giant kick in the head. I think that the whole world has some level of post-traumatic stress from experiencing the pandemic, but it’s been especially challenging for our students. It’s left a lot of scarring and I don’t think it’s over yet. In many ways, my team and I are responsible for trying to help put those pieces together for our students while dealing with our own trauma and struggles, too. We all made it through the horrors of the initial stages, but lately, there has been a societal shift back to “normal” when it isn’t normal yet. We’ve all been encouraged to move on and forget, but how can we forget? Eventually, I think we will all come away better for it, but it’s going to take a lot of work.¹⁴

This underscores the need to uphold the Jesuit value *cura personalis* (i.e., care for the whole person) not only for students but for staff and faculty as well.

Having a sense of the experiences of students, staff, and faculty at Jesuit universities during the pandemic, we next turn to how student service programs at Jesuit institutions might continue to evolve after the pandemic. First, it appears that Jesuit institutions should consider developing, maintaining, and strengthening comprehensive systems of student support that consider the diverse needs of students, as well as needs of the staff and faculty who provide supports to students, during times of public health crises. Such a focus is aligned with the Engagement of Hope model’s foci on the individual experience and community.¹⁵ With each student’s unique needs, a comprehensive system is more likely to have at least one component that resonates with each student. Furthermore, staff and faculty whose needs are met are better positioned to serve

students. Future research should examine the extent to which current systems can sustain high levels of service and what financial investment and technical support are needed to remain nimble should another catastrophe strike. In the field of disaster science, scholars study both preparedness and recovery, where they are not only concerned with the aftermath of a public crisis, but also with readiness and the capacity to withstand the next calamity.¹⁶ Now that we are in the post-pandemic era, colleges and universities might create guidance for dealing with the next disaster by documenting and reflecting upon changes made during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Second, given the significant role of families in the current study, student support systems should consider how they might be expanded with components devoted to family involvement, especially during public health crises such as the pandemic. Key findings from the present investigation highlight both students' strengths and those of their families, which is also congruent with the Engagement of Hope model.¹⁷ As we reflect on shared values across students, staff, and faculty within Jesuit colleges and universities, we should keep in mind that there is likely overlap among the values of students and their families, who may continue to be closely involved in students' lives during emerging adulthood. Moreover, families and students may share similar hopes for their academic and career success. In existing research with first generation college students, Capannola and Johnson highlight the strengths of students and their families.¹⁸ To better serve students, they assert that higher education institutions should utilize these strengths, and they suggest that universities might create formal and informal networking support systems for students and their families. In making this suggestion, Capannola and Johnson feature a long-standing program at Tribal Colleges and Universities that includes families in cultural and social activities.¹⁹

Third, Jesuit colleges and universities might take more precise steps to help students connect the dots between broad social justice interests and career aspirations. Interestingly, the young adults in the present investigation were already discussing career plans even though they were just in the first- and second-year of college. As such,

college support systems might play an earlier and larger role in helping students make more explicit ties between courses, life skills, and professions that help others and the broader world.

Pedagogies that might fill this gap include experiential learning programs with service-learning components that intend for students to learn lessons from community service.²⁰ For instance, Gonzaga University has a Solidarity and Social Justice minor, which prepares students for justice-focused careers across public, non-profit, private, and academic institutions.²¹ Coursework in this minor draws from multiple disciplines, includes experiential learning opportunities, features guest speakers from various fields, and provides students with opportunities to develop writing, public speaking, and dialogue skills. The capstone course for this minor consists of an internship at a justice-centered organization from a network of community partners. As part of that course, students engage in practice, integrate theoretical frameworks and empirical information, and reflect on these processes. At the graduate level, there is an example at Loyola, where students can earn a Master of Arts degree in Social Justice.²² In that Master's program, students develop leadership and practical skills, and they get experience with community-based collaborative work. This occurs in the context of mentoring, supervision, and weekly meetings where they engage in reflections with peers and faculty. Within Jesuit higher education settings, staff as well as faculty and students may share interests in social justice. For instance, when asked about the ways Knight has been involved in service and advocacy at Loyola, she said, "One example that's really important to me is my work on the Dreamer Committee, which meets to see how we can support Loyola's undocumented students. We've done some activism, such as letter writing, asking our legislators to support students impacted by DACA."²³ Adaptations of such courses at Loyola and Gonzaga might somehow involve partnerships among students, staff, and faculty who have overlapping interests in justice-oriented careers. In turn, such modifications could create contexts where students, staff, and faculty can cultivate "collaborative courage" around specific social justice topics.²⁴

As with any piece of scholarship, limitations must be considered. Despite its diversity, the group of participants was very small, and the investigation occurred during a unique period of time. For example, the take-up rates of career services may have been low due to the absence of students in the junior and senior years. Also, there may be experiences during the pandemic that are not generalizable to the post-pandemic era. In the context of the pandemic, perhaps the interest in helping others, use of college supports, and involvement of family were especially high. Studies in the future should include students who varied in levels of hope, learning, and engagement during the pandemic. Such variance is more likely to be captured by a larger sample and by one that contains students of different gender identities, in later years of school, and from a wider spectrum of sociocultural backgrounds. Furthermore, the present investigation relied mostly on qualitative data and focused on counts of the types of college supports that students used. In the future, studies should employ quantitative data that captures more dimensions of college support use, such as frequency and intensity, and the quality of support services.

Conclusion

Broadly speaking, Jesuit colleges and universities have been recently discussing issues related to

college supports. With the goal of forming community and fostering student support in the spirit of *cura personalis*, Dr. Mary Ann Tietjen of Creighton University has led the newly created Student Success and Retention Conference of the Association of Jesuit Colleges and Universities.²⁵ The present investigation sought to deepen such discussions. Our findings suggest that comprehensive college support systems may have helped students maintain their hope for future careers during an unprecedented public health crisis that disrupted everyday life, including their ability to learn and to engage in coursework. Moreover, student support systems that were responsive to young adults' changing needs and expectations during the pandemic may have been especially poised to provide students with "strategies to increase hope."²⁶ In turn, such strategies may have facilitated the learning of skills needed for both education and career success. Furthermore, during the pandemic, college supports may have helped students continue envisioning future careers particularly in areas related to social justice at institutions driven by the Jesuit mission. With shared values guiding short- and long-term efforts to create a more just society, students, families, staff, and faculty in Jesuit contexts might continue to turn their collective hopes into reality in the post-pandemic era. HJE

Table 1

Demographic Characteristics and College Support Usage During the COVID-19 Pandemic in 2021

Variable	<i>M</i> (or %)	<i>SD</i>	<i>n</i>
School Year in College			
First (Freshman)	73%		122
Second (Sophomore)	27%		46
Age (years)	19.29	.71	158
Gender			
Male	15%		23
Female	84%		132
Non-binary	2%		3
Race/Ethnicity			
White/Non-Hispanic	47%		74
African American/Black	4%		6
Latino/a/x/e	22%		35
Asian/Pacific Islander	21%		33
Middle Eastern	2%		3
Biracial or Multiracial	4%		7
Immigrant Generation			
1 st or 2 nd Generation	54%		81
3 rd , 4 th , or 5 th Generation	46%		70
Employment Status			
Employed	39%		61
Not Employed	61%		96
Use of College Supports (<i>n</i> = 169)			
Any Type of Academic Support	81%		137
Any Type of Financial Support	71%		120
Any Type of Social & Cultural Support	75%		127
Any Type of Health & Wellness Support	53%		90
Any Type of Career Support	60%		101
Any Type of Informal Support	88%		148
Any Type of College Support	89%		150

Note. There were 169 students who completed the online survey, but not all questions were answered by all students.

Table 2

Demographic Characteristics for Students Interviewed In-Depth During the COVID-19 Pandemic in 2021
(n = 5)

Participant	Age	Year in College	Race/Ethnicity	Immigrant Generation	Employment Status
P1	18	1	Asian/Pacific Islander	2	Employed
P2	18	1	Middle Eastern	2	Not employed
P3	18	1	Asian/Pacific Islander	2	Employed
P4	19	1	Latino/a/x/e	2	Employed
P5	20	2	Asian/Pacific Islander	1	Not employed

Note. All participants in the sample identified as female. Students' families were from the United States, Puerto Rico, South Korea, Palestine, and China. Languages spoken among the participants included English, Spanish, Korean, Arabic, and Hindi.

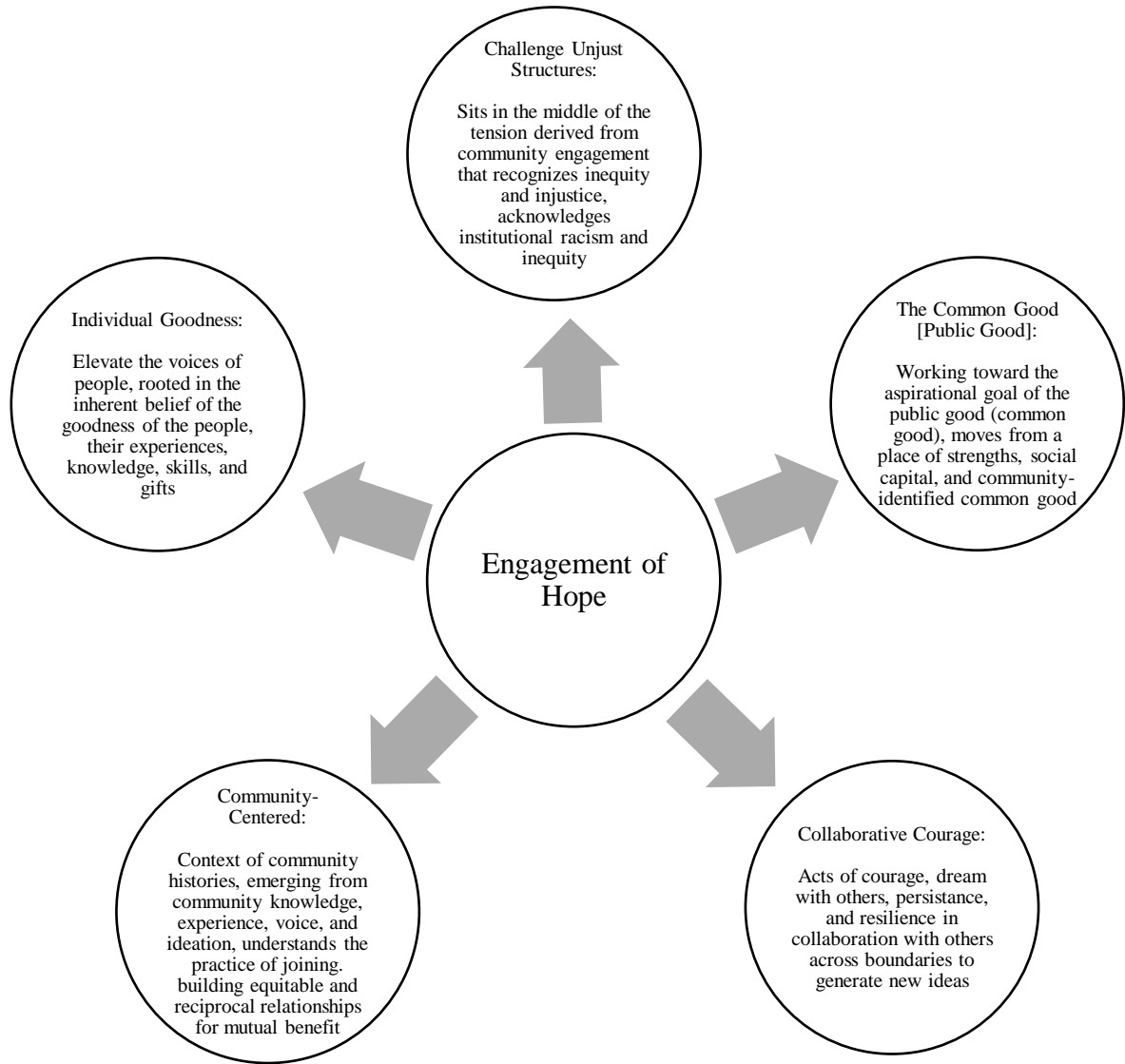


Figure 1. The Engagement of Hope Conceptual Framework and Equity-Focused Theory of Change²⁷

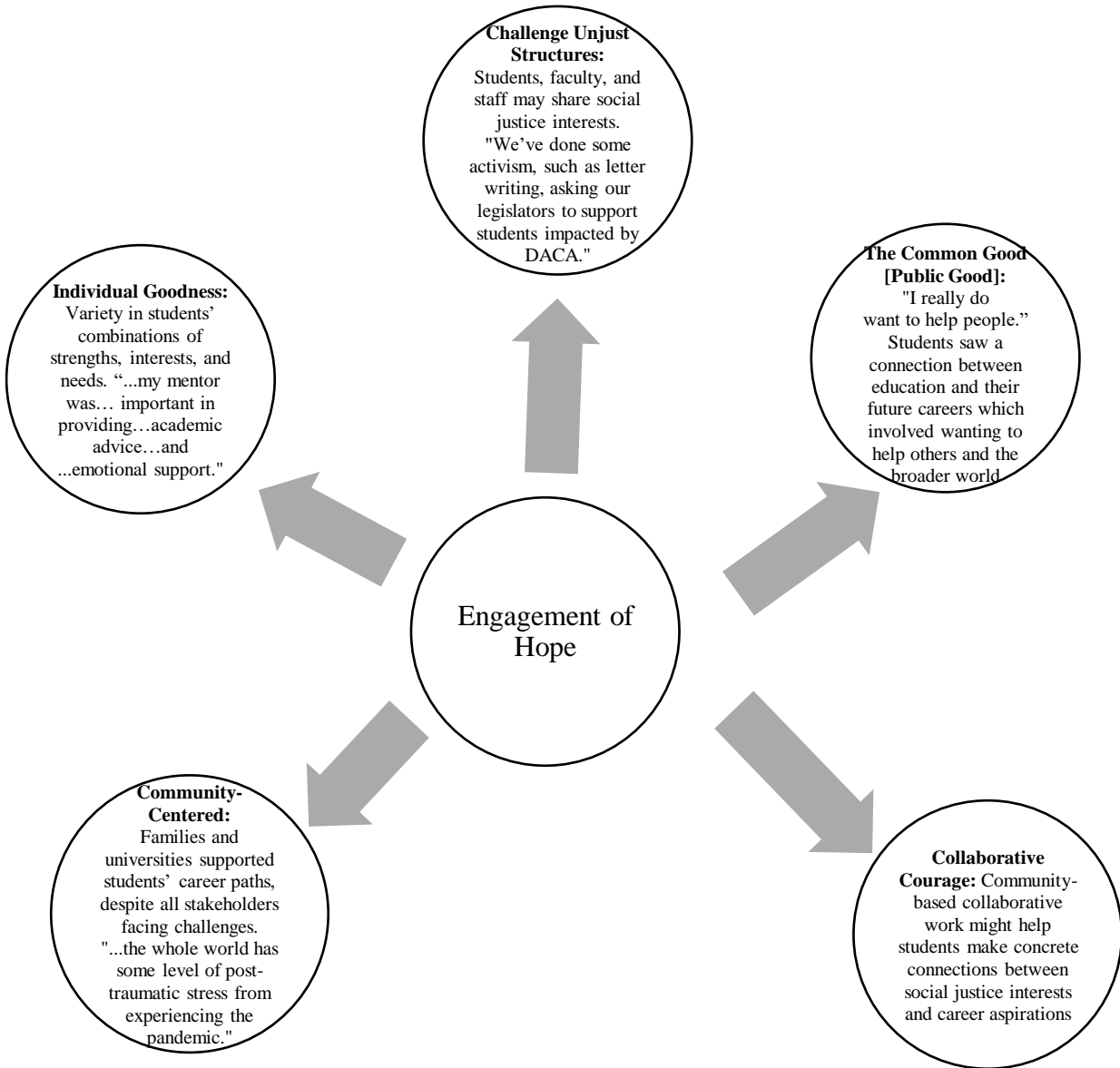


Figure 2. Examples of the Engagement of Hope Model in Jesuit Higher Education Contexts²⁸

Note. DACA refers to the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) policy.

Acknowledgements

We thank the following individuals who made this study possible. This includes Zahra Naqi, Amanda Roy, Sabine Fiore, Kareem Touleimat, and Maya Lorenz. Most importantly, we thank the students

who participated in this project. This study was supported by a Loyola University Provost Fellowship awarded to the third author.

Endnotes

¹ Patrick Green et al., "An Engagement of Hope: A Framework and Equity-Centered Theory of Action for

Community Engagement," *Metropolitan Universities* 32, no. 2 (2021): 129-157, <https://doi.org/10.18060/25527>.

² Fr. Pedro Arrupe, S.J., "Men and Women for Others," (address, Valencia, Spain, 1973),

<https://ignatiansolidarity.net/men-and-women-for-others-fr-pedro-arrupe-s-j/>.

³ Ed Venit, “The Pandemic Ripple Effect: Four Long-Term Implications for Student Success – and What Steps You Can Take Now to Prepare,” (Washington, DC: Education Advisory Board, 2022).

⁴ Originally, NASPA stood for the National Association of Student Personnel Administrators, but they later changed their name to NASPA, Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education; Samuel D. Museus and E.J. Smith, *The Culturally Engaging Campus Environments Model and Survey: A Report on New Tools for Assessing Campus Environments and Diverse College Student Outcomes* (The National Association of Student Personnel Administrators, 2016), 1-8.

⁵ Samuel D. Museus, Varaxy Yi, and Natasha Saelua, “How Culturally Engaging Campus Environments Influence Sense of Belonging in College: An Examination of Differences Between White Students and Students of Color,” *Journal of Diversity in Higher Education* 11, no. 4 (2018): 467–83, <http://doi.org/10.1037/dhe0000069>.

⁶ Dallas Long, “Theories and Models of Student Development,” in *Environments for Student Growth and Development: Libraries and Student Affairs in Collaboration*, eds. Lisa Janicke Hinchliffe and Melissa Autumn Wong (Chicago: Association of College and Research Libraries, 2012), 41–55.

⁷ Terrell L. Strayhorn, *Student Development Theory in Higher Education: A Social Psychological Approach* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2015).

⁸ Patrick Green et al., “An Engagement of Hope.”

⁹ Li-Grining, C.P., Roy, A.L., & Radulescu, M. (2021). *Anchor Project Protocol*. Chicago, IL: Loyola University Chicago.

¹⁰ Li-Grining, C.P., et al. *Anchor Project Protocol*.

¹¹ Johnny Saldaña, *The Coding Manual for Qualitative Researchers* (London: Sage Publications, 2021).

¹² Joyce Knight, “Staff Spotlight: Joyce Knight, Associate Dean of Student Academic Affairs & Advising, Reflects on 41 years of Service at Loyola and Beyond,” Loyola University Chicago, College of Arts and Sciences, 2022.

¹³ Knight, “Staff Spotlight.”

¹⁴ Knight, “Staff Spotlight.”

¹⁵ Green et al., “An Engagement of Hope,” 129-157.

¹⁶ David Abramson et al., “Measuring Individual Disaster Recovery: A Socio-Ecological Framework,” *Disaster Medicine and Public Health Preparedness* 4 (2010): S46-S54, <https://doi.org/10.1001/dmp.2010.14>.

¹⁷ Green et al., “An Engagement of Hope,” 129-157; Amanda Capannola and Elizabeth Johnson, “On Being the First: The Role of Family in the Experiences of First-Generation College Students,” *Journal of Adolescent Research* 37, no. 1 (2022): 29-58, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0743558420979144>.

¹⁸ Iris HeavyRunner and Richard DeCelles, “Family Education Model: Meeting the Student Retention Challenge,” *Journal of American Indian Education* 41 (2002): 29-37, <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ661686>.

¹⁹ Barbara Jacoby, ed. *Service-Learning in Higher Education: Concepts and Practices* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1996).

²⁰ Jacoby, ed. *Service-Learning in Higher Education*.

²¹ Gonzaga University, “Career Development,” College of Arts and Sciences, August 13, 2023, <https://www.gonzaga.edu/college-of-arts-sciences/departments/solidarity-social-justice/about-the-department/career-development>.

²² Knight, “Staff Spotlight.”

²³ Knight, “Staff Spotlight.”

²⁴ Ashley Mowreader, “Jesuit Success Network Provides Support, Community in Retention Efforts,” *Inside Higher Ed*, May 4, 2023, <https://www.insidehighered.com/news/student-success/college-experience/2023/05/04/jesuit-success-network-provides-support>.

²⁵ Ashley Mowreader, “Jesuit Success Network Provides Support, Community in Retention Efforts.”

²⁶ Casey Gwinn and Chan Hellman, *Hope Rising: How the Science of Hope Can Change Your Life* (New York: Morgan James Publishing, 2019).

²⁷ Green et al., “An Engagement of Hope,” 129-157.

²⁸ Green et al., “An Engagement of Hope,” 129-157.