ACADEMICALLY UNDER-PREPARED AFRICAN AMERICAN COMMUNITY COLLEGE STUDENTS’ PERCEPTIONS OF SUPPORTS FOR AND BARRIERS TO PROGRAM COMPLETION

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by
John R. Harrell II
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ACADEMICALLY UNDER-PREPARED AFRICAN AMERICAN COMMUNITY
COLLEGE STUDENTS’ PERCEPTIONS OF SUPPORTS FOR AND BARRIERS TO
PROGRAM COMPLETION

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This dissertation follows the format and style of the Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association, Sixth Edition except where superseded by directions from the Director of the Doctor of Education in Executive Educational Leadership Program at Houston Baptist University.
DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my parents John R. Harrell and Deloise Harrell. I also dedicate this dissertation to my grandparents; Josephine McMath Small, Willie James Small, Flora Harrell, and Edward Roosevelt Harrell Sr. Throughout the years you all have shared your experience of fighting through inequality for the hope of a better life for your children and grandchildren. I’ll never forget the nights watching my grandmother clean a bank that at one point she was not able to deposit her money in or the many summers I spent watching my grandfather working the fields of Mississippi to provide for his family. Let this milestone in my life be a testament to all the lessons you have taught me about perseverance. Your hopes for equality may not have been realized during your life, but through your sacrifices and hard work, I have been afforded opportunities that many young black men deem as unattainable. I thank-you for teaching me to have the internal fortitude and helping me develop into a young man who is relentless and presses forward in the face of adversity.

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ABSTRACT

John H., Academically under-prepared African American community college students’ perceptions of supports for and barriers to program completion. Doctor of Education (Executive Educational Leadership), May, 2019, Houston Baptist University, Houston, Texas.

Purpose

The purpose of this study is to describe the perceptions of academically under-prepared African American community college students regarding supports for and barriers to program completion. For the purpose of this study, program completion will be defined as satisfying all the academic requirements needed to attain a certificate, degree, or credits required for transfer to a four-year institution within two years. The institution that is the focus of this study has programs in place for student success. However, the effectiveness of these programs has not been evaluated through students’ feedback.

Methodology

In this mixed-method study, I utilized elements of phenomenological research. In addition, frequencies and percentages were used to address Likert-scaled items on the questionnaire that was used in this study.

Findings

The findings of research questions one and two indicated that at Houston Community College’s Central Campus academically under-prepared students of any race identified similar supports for and barriers to on-time program completion. The primary supports for on-time community college program completion identified by the students included engaged faculty and robust, holistic wrap-around services. Conversely, the
primary barriers to on-time community college program completion identified by the students included financial burden, complex processes, and disengaged staff. Additionally, students identified time management and faculty with little pedagogical knowledge as barriers to on-time program completion.

**Conclusions**

The economics and demographic make-up of the state continue to shift, but the primary mission for community colleges remains consistent and remains important. Community College ultimately exists to meet the diverse needs of students as they work towards attaining a post-secondary credential. As our country continues to become more diverse and more minority students enter the doors of our nation’s community colleges in hopes of attaining a credential that supports their professional growth, it becomes vital that we work to remove the barriers that limit access, persistence, and attainment.

**KEY WORDS:** African American students, Community College, Student persistence, Enrollment intensity, Graduation rates
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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

Summary

The future economic status of our state is intertwined with the success of individuals from all ethnic and socioeconomic backgrounds seeking higher education (Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB), 2015). Social mobility and education are inextricably linked. According to data from the United States Census Bureau (2016), persons leaving community colleges with two-year associate degrees earned a median salary of more than $6,500 over the median salary of high school graduates and about $15,700 more than the median salary of high school dropouts. Also, opportunities for job advancement are much more available to community college graduates. Education, training, and retraining of the current workforce maintain the employability of workers in changing business and industry environments (THECB, 2015). According to Carnevale and Desrochers (2004), community colleges will continue to be the primary providers of this training, whether it is in short courses, adult vocational education, or certificate and degree programs (THECB, 2015). This study is focused on the success and completion rates of academically under-prepared African American students at a selected community college in southeast Texas.

Background of the Study

Research supports that for high school graduates to live an economically self-sufficient life and to deal with the increasingly complex social, political, and cultural issues they will face they need some form of postsecondary education (Carnevale, Smith,
& Strohl, 2010; Jerald, 2009). According to Pennington (2004), college graduates on average earn almost a million dollars more throughout their working lives than those with only a high school diploma. The U.S. Census Bureau (2012), documented that 21.2% of African American students earned a bachelor’s degree compared to 34.5% of White students. If current trends continue in the production of bachelor’s degrees, a shortfall of 14 million college-educated working adults is predicted by the year 2020 (Bidwell, 2013). The economic future of our nation is connected to community college’s ability to increase the number of students that are recruited and retained (Cabrera, Burkum, & La Nasa, 2005; Handel & Montoya, 2012).

**Texans’ Efforts to Increase College Completion for Under-Represented Groups**

Texas has become increasingly engaged in a global economy dependent on skilled and knowledgeable workers; most of those workers must have a higher education credential (Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, 2015). Although Texas is improving at increasing college completion for students from under-represented groups (i.e., African American and Latino) who traditionally have not earned certificates or degrees in large numbers; the state has not improved quickly or broadly enough to keep up with changes in demographics (THECB, 2015).

The importance of higher education has led Texans to unite around the goals of the previous statewide higher education plan, Closing the Gaps by 2015 (THECB, 2015). During a 15-year period, beginning in 2000, the legislature established and funded new higher education institutions. The Texas legislature also appropriated $3.3 billion for Texas grants to help low-income students attend college and increased funding for programs for critical fields. Institutions of higher education in the state responded by
increasing access and improving completions. In 2014, they enrolled more than 1.6 million students, an increase of almost 600,000 since 2000. The institutions also awarded nearly 250,000 bachelor’s degrees, associate’s degrees, and certificates, 130,000 more than in 2000 (THECB, 2015, p. iv).

The success of the previous programs prompted the THECB to implement another bold new higher education plan, 60x30TX (THECB, 2015). The 60x30TX plan focuses on striving for 60% of the 25-34 year old Texas population to hold a certificate or degree by 2030. The plan seeks to increase student success through the combined expertise and resources of many stakeholders. The 60x30TX higher education strategic plan consists of four broad goals (THECB, 2015).

The first goal in the plan is designed to increase the percentage of 25-34 year olds in Texas who hold a certificate or degree (THECB, 2015). The goal focuses on 25-34 year olds as an indicator of the economic future of the state and its ability to remain globally competitive, the state’s large population makes the Texas economy similar in size to that of many countries. Within this global context, the state has seen a relative decline in educational completion among this population (THECB, 2015). The second goal in the plan aims to have at least 550,000 students complete a certificate, associate’s, bachelor’s, or master’s degree from a Texas higher education institution by 2030 (THECB, 2015). The third goal in the plan is to have all Texas graduates of higher education institutions complete an academic program with marketable skills. Students need to be aware of the marketable skills embedded in their educational programs, and institutions must make sure that students graduate with marketable skills (THECB, 2015). The fourth goal addresses student debt. By the year 2030 undergraduate student loan
debt will not exceed 60% of first-year wages for graduates of Texas public institutions (THECB, 2015).

The graduation reports for Texas fiscal years from 2004-2014 show that only about 10% of the most impoverished eighth-grade students in Texas attain a postsecondary credential when tracked for 11 years (THECB, 2015). Economic disadvantage is the best indicator in determining an individual’s likelihood of achieving education past high school. For the state to remain competitive in the future, the state’s two and four-year colleges will need to make substantial efforts to reach out to students from all backgrounds (THECB, 2015). Anthony Carnevale (2013) stated that most future jobs in the nation and in the state will require a postsecondary credential. Carnevale, (2013) asserted that as early as 2020, “fewer jobs will be available to people with less than a high school or only a high school diploma” (p. 19).

Inadequate preparation and lack of adequate academic support for under-prepared college students contribute to low percentages of college graduates (Abele, 2014). According to Abele (2014), only 18% of Texas high school graduates are prepared to do rigorous college work across all disciplines. Carnevale et al., (2013) predicted by the year 2020, two-thirds of jobs will require college experience, with at least 30% of those jobs requiring a bachelor’s degree. Another contributing factor to the low percentages of students graduating from college is the rising cost of higher education (Faulkner, 2015). Only 38% of economically disadvantaged high school students enroll in college compared to 55% of students from families with more resources (Faulkner, 2015).

Historically, Texas has been a low-cost state, but with increases in tuition and fees of over 50% since 2000, higher education costs in Texas are close to the national average.
What is challenging for Texas is that family income is well below the national average, and state financial aid lags well behind that of other large states (Faulkner, 2015).

Dr. Raymund Paredes, Commissioner of Higher Education stated that, “To improve "The Number," “Texas must become a national center of innovation in higher education, with the primary goals of improving student success and employability and holding down costs to both students and the state” (Texas Higher Education Almanac, 2014, p. 5). To do this, Dr. Paredes suggested that, “expansion in both online and blended instruction and competency-based programs that advance students toward credentials based on mastery of subject matter, not time in class must occur” (Texas Higher Education Almanac, 2014, p. 5). Dr. Paredes believes that “colleges and universities should work more closely with the business sector to increase the availability of paid internships that not only provide relevant workforce experience but carry academic credit” (Texas Higher Education Almanac, 2014, p. 6). Also, Dr. Paredes recommended a statewide, cross-curricular, marketable skills initiative that ensures all college and university graduates will have skills that employers seek, whether they major in business or philosophy (Texas Higher Education Almanac, 2014). Finally, Dr. Paredes challenged university presidents to “encourage college and university faculty to lead the way toward innovation by rewarding them through the tenure and promotion system for distinguished-and measurable-achievement not only in research but in teaching and service” (Texas Higher Education Almanac, 2014, p. 6).
African American Population and Community College Enrollment Growth

Historically two demographics have been under-represented in Texas’s institutions of higher education, Hispanics and African Americans (THECB, 2015). In recent years, demographics within the state of Texas have shifted. According to the THECB, by 2030 71% of the Texas population will be Hispanic, African American, or an ethnicity other than white (Asian or Native American) (2015). This represents a 10% increase over the next 15 years, and this shift in demographics makes it imperative that leaders of institutions of higher education in Texas address the needs of these historically under-represented demographics (THECB, 2015). Over the last 45 years, post-secondary enrollment of African American high school graduates in the United States has consistently increased (United States Census Bureau, 2016). According to the United States Census Bureau, the average number of high school graduates between the ages of 14-24 who have enrolled or completed some college has increased from 45.2% in 1969-1984, to 52.3% in 1985-1998, and most recently 63.2% in 1999-2014 (United States Census Bureau, 2016). With more and more historically under-represented student groups entering the doors of institutions of higher education in Texas, institutions must be responsive to the needs of these students to maintain a stable economy and continue to expand the Texas workforce.

Statement of the Problem

The problem that this study intends to address is the low program completion rates of academically under-prepared African American students in community colleges. Student success and retention has become a growing concern nationwide due to the epidemic of increased enrollment and dwindling degree attainment of this under-
represented population (Complete College America, 2014). While this problem is evident in data collected from the institution that is the focus of this study, Houston Community College System, the institution has been recognized for its strides in increasing the number of under-represented students that complete academic programs. Twenty-six percent of all students who enroll in courses at the Houston Community College each fall semester from 2014 to 2016 were of African American descent. However, only 14% of those students earned degrees, certificates, or other marketable skills awards within two years (Houston Community College, 2016).

**Statement of the Purpose and Significance**

The purpose of this study is to describe the perceptions of academically under-prepared African American community college students regarding supports for and barriers to program completion. For the purpose of this study, program completion will be defined as satisfying all the academic requirements needed to attain a certificate, degree, or credits required for transfer to a four-year institution within two years. The institution that is the focus of this study has programs in place for student success. However, the effectiveness of these programs has not been evaluated through students’ feedback.

Failure to complete programs impact students’ earning potential and career attainment. Also, students’ failure to complete programs in the community college impacts federal and state government funding and accreditation status for the community college. According to research performed by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD, 2014), Texas was one of several states that experienced skills deficits that limited the employability of Texans within their own state. This has led to a
large in-migration of workers, but this in-migration has not been enough to close the gap in workforce demand (OECD, 2014). This has its own unique set of consequences one being a loss in state revenue. Research supports these claims as well as the discovery that Texas students completing a bachelor’s degree on average have lifetime earnings of $3,130,118. Individuals who only complete high school on average have lifetime earnings of $1,612,562 (United States Census Bureau, 2014). The difference between these two groups represents a 524.9 billion loss in potential lifetime earnings statewide. While this loss has a profound impact on potential state revenue, the greatest impact is felt in the homes of each student that doesn’t complete a degree (Greenstone & Looney, 2011). The Brookings Institution’s Hamilton Project (Greenstone & Looney, 2011) found that “On average, the benefits of a four-year degree are equivalent to an investment that returns 15.2% per year (2011, para. 3)”.

This study is an extension of the studies conducted by Edwards (2007) and Davila (2011). Edwards’ study explored the perceptions of African American students attending Historically Black colleges and universities (HBCU) in comparison to historically White colleges and universities (HWCU). Edwards included 48 African American undergraduate students from four institutions of higher education (Edwards, 2007). Davila’s (2011) study explored the perceptions of Hispanic students at a single community college campus and included 67 students.

Findings of Edwards’ 2007 Study and Davila’s 2011 Study

Edwards’ study examined supports for and barriers to on-time graduation from college and categorized them into four domains academic, financial, family/relationships, and social (Edwards, 2007). According to Edwards (2007), these categories have areas
that overlap depending on experiences. Edwards’ first category, academic, referred to experiences with professors and other areas traditionally related to instruction. Edwards’ second category, financial, examined the impact of costs associated with tuition, fees, and textbooks; this category also examined the impact of working while in college. Edwards’ category, family/relationships, examined the involvement of the family in the student’s degree attainment. Edwards’ final category, student involvement, examined membership in organizations and other forms of social involvement. (Edwards, 2007)

An analysis of the participants’ responses in Davila’s (2011) study revealed the primary barriers to on-time community college program completion identified by the students included: (a) time management, (b) taking responsibility for their added tasks, (c) professors’ teaching styles, and (d) scheduling of classes. The primary supports for on-time community college program completion as identified by Davila (2011) included: (a) involvement of teachers, family, friends, and campus counselors in their education and (b) financial aid resources such as scholarships as support.

To understand the lived experiences of academically under-prepared African American community college students regarding the supports for and barriers to student success, one must see it, hear about it, and make meaning of it from the perspectives of those who know it well (Smyth & Hattam, 2001). The voices of students regarding their lived experiences will provide institution administration with valuable information that will impact program planning for student success and graduation. Further, it is important to continue evaluating the effectiveness of programs already in place that are designed to increase the student success rates for African American community college students. This empowers institutional leadership teams to make informed decisions around programs
that will contribute to student success as well as ensure that institutions receive the maximum amount of state funding that they are eligible to receive.

**Research Questions**

Three research questions were developed to explore the perceptions of academically under-prepared African American community college students regarding supports for and barriers to program completion.

1. What are the perceptions of academically under-prepared African American community college students regarding supports for program completion?
2. What are the perceptions of academically under-prepared African American community college students regarding barriers to program completion?
3. What are the perceptions of academically under-prepared African American community college students’ recommendations for actions that could be implemented to improve students’ program completion rates?

**Definition of Terms**

60x30TX

The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Boards strategic plan for 2015-2030

**Academically Under-Prepared Students**

Students who enroll in college, but have not completed readiness requirements in math, reading, and writing according to standards set by the THECB.
Barriers

Institutional characteristics associated negatively with students’ access and success in postsecondary education

Completion

Satisfying all the academic requirements needed to attain a certificate, degree, or other academic credential offered by a community college within two years.

Retention

The continued enrollment of a student from one term to the next also known as student persistence.

Student Success

Any academic achievement of a student that leads to the completion of a success point.

Success Points

Points along the continuum from successful completion of college readiness courses to completion of a certificate or degree that are recognized by the THECB for state funding.

Supports

Institutional characteristics associated positively with students’ access and success in postsecondary education
Term

Sixteen weeks of the academic study also known as a semester. Terms can be divided into shorter sessions within which a course can be completed.

Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB)

The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board provides leadership and coordination for the Texas higher education system. Since being created by the Texas Legislature in 1965, the Board has worked to achieve excellence for the college education of Texas students.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework is based on the Framework for College Student Experiences (Edwards, 2007). This framework includes the following components: “(a) incoming first-year students, (b) supports for on-time graduation, (c) barriers to on-time graduation, (d) academic, financial, and student involvement, (e) departure decision, and (f) on-time graduation/delay graduation/failure to graduate” (Edwards, 2007, p. 7). Edwards’s framework was based on the work of Tinto (1993) and Anderson (1985).

Tinto’s research (1975) examined how undergraduates integrate into institutions of higher education. One of Tinto’s significant findings was that African American undergraduate students that fully integrated into the college environment outperformed students who did not actively engage in various collegiate activities (Tinto, 1975). Tinto’s research focused on students integrating into the university environment both socially and academically. Tinto’s summarizes the stages of integration as follows:

Stage 1: Pre-Entry attributes: family background, skills and abilities, prior schooling, and financial preparation.
Stage 2: Goals and commitments: intentions, goals, and institutional commitments.

Stage 3: Institutional experiences: academic performance, faculty/staff interactions, extracurricular activities, and peer group interactions.

Stage 4: Personal/normative integration: academic interactions, financial integration, and social integration.

Stage 5: Outcomes: the departure decision of students

African American students experience events outside of the classroom and college environment that may significantly impact their academic experience. Anderson’s Force Field Analysis of College Persistence (1985) examines the impact of these outside forces and asserts that students entering college need a greater magnitude of the force that motivates them to persist than the forces pushing them to an early departure.

According to Crosta, there is a positive association between enrollment intensity and the likelihood of attainment and transfer (2014). Crosta used data from two cohorts of students to evaluate the enrollment patterns of community college students, and the characteristics of these patterns that are related to postsecondary credential attainment and transfer to a four-year institution. Student-level data was used to determine that students who enroll full-time and accumulate at least 30 hours in their first year of enrollment were more likely to persist than those that accumulate fewer credits (Crosta, 2014). These findings were also supported by the research done by Complete College America surrounding their “15 to Finish” enrollment strategy (Complete College America, 2014).
Building on the model of Edwards, the researcher created the Framework for Academically Under-Prepared Community College Students’ Persistence and Success for this study to organize the descriptions of under-prepared African American community college students’ experiences. The Framework for Under-Prepared Community College Student Persistence and Success, coupled with the work of Edwards, Tinto, Anderson, Crosta, and Complete College America provides a structure that will validate my study and its subsequent findings.
Figure 1. Framework for Under-Prepared Community College Student Persistence and Success. Adapted from “Supports for and Barriers to On-time Graduation as Perceived by African American Students at Historically Black Colleges and Universities and Historically White Colleges and Universities,” by J. T. Edwards, 2007, Doctoral dissertation, p. 6. Copyright 2008 by ProQuest Information and Learning Company.
Limitations

Limitations in research are matters and occurrences that arise in the study which are out of the researcher’s control (Lunenburg & Irby, 2008). The limitation of this study included the following:

The survey used for self-reporting may not determine conclusively the perceptions of academically under-prepared African American community college students. This limitation may be a factor because the participants are enrolled in a community college in a single geographic location. African American students in other regions of the nation may have different perceptions of student success based on their individual circumstances, life experiences, and academic interactions with faculty and institutional staff.

Delimitations

Delimitations in research are those characteristics that arise from the limitations in the scope of the study (boundaries are defined by the researcher) by conscious exclusionary and inclusionary decisions made during the development of the study (Lunenburg & Irby, 2008). Delimitations of this study will include the following.

1. The participants in this study will be selected from campuses within one community college system.

2. Only academically under-prepared African American community college students will be chosen for the study.

3. The survey that will be used in this study will be a self-report measure, and no observable practices will be discussed.

Assumptions
Three general assumptions of this study include the following.

1. The survey used in this study will be valid for the purpose intended.
2. The participants will understand the survey and responded objectively and honestly.
3. Interpretation of the data collected reflected what participants meant.

**Organization of the Study**

This study will be organized into five chapters. Chapter I includes (a) introduction, (b) background of the study, (c) statement of the problem, (d) statement of the purpose and significance of the study, (e) definitions of terms, (f) theoretical framework, (g) research questions, (h) limitations, (i) delimitations, and (j) assumptions for the study. In Chapter II, the researcher will provide a review of the literature including (a) introduction; (b) historical overview of the experiences of African Americans in Higher Education; (c) the role of community colleges in Texas; (d) Texas Higher Education Strategic Plan: 2015-2030; (e) Trends in College Readiness of African American Students in the United States; (f) Theories Regarding College Students’ Retention; (g) Supports for Students’ Program Completion; (h) Impact of Classroom Interaction Provided by Faculty on Student Retention; and (i) Effective Higher Education Initiatives in Texas. In Chapter III, the researcher will describe the methodology used in this study, which will include (a) purpose, (b) research design, (c) participants, (d) context and setting, (e) instrumentation, (f) data collection, and (g) data analysis. In Chapter IV, the researcher will provide the findings of the study. In Chapter V, the researcher will provide (a) discussions, (b) implications, (c) recommendations for future research, and (d) conclusions.
CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Summary

As discussed in Chapter I, the purpose of this study is to explore the perceptions of academically under-prepared African American community college students regarding supports for and barriers to program completion. The institution that is the focus of this study has programs in place for student success. However, the effectiveness of these programs has not been evaluated through students’ feedback.

While enrollment of African American students in Texas has increased, a large attainment gap remains between African American and White students (Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, 2014). A vast amount of quantitative research has been performed by various agencies including the American Association of Community Colleges (2007) and the National Center for Education Statistics (2014) to analyze how African Americans have matriculated through the country’s education system. Both agencies have evaluated household income, successful completion of high school and/or college, and future enrollment trends, while their findings portray a bleak image of the success of the African American community these statistics do not speak to the lived experiences of these individuals.

Throughout this chapter, the researcher discusses research that gives evidence to the existence of barriers to and supports for under-prepared students’ program completion. The topics that will be discussed include (a) a historical overview of African American students’ experiences in higher education; (b) the role of community colleges in Texas; (c) defining college readiness; (d) theories regarding college students’
Historical Overview of Experiences of African Americans in Higher Education

Throughout most of American history, the clear majority of African Americans in our country were prevented from receiving an education. The first black person ever recorded as attending an American college was John Chavis in 1799 (The Journal of Blacks in Higher Education, 2016). Chavis attended what is now known as Washington and Lee University located in Lexington, Virginia and there is no documented evidence of Chavis receiving a degree. According to The Journal of Blacks in Higher Education (2016), the first known African American to graduate from a college in the United States was Alexander Lucius Twilight. Twilight received his Bachelor’s from Middlebury College in 1823. Advancement of African American students continued to expand throughout the northern United States over the next 30 years, and the first interracial and coeducational institution in the south wasn’t established until 1855 (The Journal of Blacks in Higher Education, 2016).

During this 30-year period the oldest historically black college or university in the United States, Cheyney University of Pennsylvania, was founded. According to the institution’s website, Cheyney was initially founded under the name The African Institute, and the name was changed to the Institute for Colored Youth shortly after the institution was established. The institute was initially funded by a $10,000 donation made by Richard Humphreys, and from the inception of the institution, its mission has been to design and establish a school to educate the descendants of the African race (Cheyney University of Pennsylvania, 2016). While the opening of Cheyney marked the
beginning of strides towards educating African Americans in the United States, according to Duster (2009), it was not until the latter part of the 20th century before major progress towards diversity in higher education was made.

Before this point, educational leaders held fast to the idea that institutions should be separated by gender and race. Directly after the civil war, historically black colleges began to be established in the south. These institutions served over 97% of African American students over the next nine decades (Duster, 2009). According to Duster (2009), this trend continued until about seven years after the shooting death of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., and by 1975 most African American college students were enrolled in traditionally White universities (2009). This shift in trend was made possible by the 1954 decision in the U.S. Supreme Court case Brown v. Board of Education; this decision made by the Supreme Court struck down the idea of separate but equal (Duster, 2009).

According to Yates (1993), another driver of this shift in enrollment patterns of African American students was the concept of affirmative action. In 1941, President Franklin D. Roosevelt developed affirmative action to encourage minority employment in the United States. Over seven decades later, affirmative action and its use in college admissions has remained one of the most controversial education practices within our country, and it has made its way back before the United State Supreme Court (Nguyen, 2014).

Supports of affirmative action insist that these programs ensure that qualified minorities have access to institutions of higher education while those that are opposed to these programs portray them as a quota system that admits unqualified applicants (Affirmative Action, 1996).
According to Musu-Gillette, Robinson, McFarland, Kewal Ramani, Zhang, and Wilkinson-Flicker (2016), between 1990 and 2013 the largest racial groups to see enrollment growth were African Americans and Hispanics. While African Americans had the highest level of enrollment growth in 2013, this ethnic group also had the lowest three-year graduation rate for first-time, full-time students at public 2-year institutions. Only 11% of first-time, full-time African American students that had been enrolled three years had completed a two-year degree (Musu-Gillette et al., 2016).

**The Role of Community Colleges in Texas**

In 1991, a bill was passed that directed state agencies to develop a strategic plan; the Texas legislature later amended the bill to exclude community/junior colleges within the state but directed the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) to develop one consolidated strategic plan for all two-year institutions within the state (THECB, 2008). This plan made the role that community colleges would play in closing the completion gap evident. In Texas, community colleges enroll more than one-half of individuals seeking higher education in Texas (THECB, 2008). In 1964, there were only 34 public community college districts in the state of Texas, and by 2007 Texas had 50 community college districts statewide. The development of these new community college districts is also underscored by rapid enrollment growth in Texas community colleges; in 1964, unduplicated credit headcount at community colleges was near 38,000 students and by fall of 2007 unduplicated credit headcount had grown to about 569,000 students (THECB, 2008). The fundamental role of community colleges was to be an open admission college that offered academic course work that leads to an associate of arts degree that was transferable to a university where a student would complete the final
two years of a baccalaureate degree (American Association Community Colleges, 2007). The role of community colleges has expanded, and now community colleges offer courses for academic transfer, but they also offer workforce and technical degree programs that are intended to lead to employment and professional advancement (THECB, 2008).

The Mission and Philosophy of Texas Community Colleges

The primary mission of Texas community colleges is to serve their local taxing district and service areas by offering technical, workforce, and academic courses for certification or associate’s degrees. These institutions also provide developmental, continuing education programs, counseling, and career guidance that are consistent with open-admission institution practices (THECB, 2008). The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board has charged community colleges with ensuring excellence in instruction, research, and public service. Within the scope of this mission, community colleges must do the following:

1. technical programs up to two years in length leading to associate’s degrees or certificates;
2. vocational programs leading directly to employment in semi-skilled and skilled occupations;
3. freshman and sophomore courses in arts and sciences, including the new core and field of study curricula leading to associates and baccalaureate degrees;
4. continuing adult education programs for occupational upgrading or personal enrichment;
5. compensatory education programs designed to fulfill the commitment of an admissions policy allowing the enrollment of disadvantaged students;

6. a continuing program of counseling and guidance designed to assist students in achieving their individual educational goals;

7. workforce development programs designed to meet local and statewide needs;

8. adult literacy and other basic skills programs for adults; and

9. such other purposes as may be prescribed by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board or local governing boards in the best interest of post-secondary education in Texas (THECB, 2008, p. 4).

Texas community colleges’ structure, philosophy, and mission to meet the educational needs of the citizens in their taxing district positions them differently than 4-year institutions. Community colleges are more student-centered institutions driven by the needs of their local communities and should share these common values:

1. belief in the worth and dignity of the individual;

2. address the extraordinary diversity of Texas;

3. a vision of community as a place to be served and a climate to be created;

4. excellence in teaching and learning;

5. open-door policies for meeting the needs of individuals with a wide range of educational and training goals;

6. implementation of the highest standards of ethical professional practice; and

7. effective stewardship of public trust and resources (THECB, 2008, p. 4).

The intent of THECB’s strategic plan for Texas Public community colleges was to drive the leaders of these institutions to prioritize closing the achievement gap and
prepare individuals for a changing economy and workforce, and charge these institutions to provide affordable, accessible, and high-quality post-secondary education (THECB, 2008).

**60x30 TX: Texas Higher Education Strategic Plan: 2015-2030**

In July of 2015, THECB published its new strategic plan for the next fifteen years. This plan consisted of the following four goals:

1. By 2030, at least 60 percent of Texans ages 25-34 will have a certificate or degree.

2. By 2030, at least 550,000 students in that year will complete a certificate, associate, bachelor’s or master’s from an institution of higher education in Texas.

3. By 2030, all graduates from Texas public institutions of higher education will have completed programs with identified marketable skills.

4. By 2030, undergraduate student loan debt will not exceed 60 percent of first-year wages for graduates of Texas public institutions (THECB, 2015, p.12).

According to THECB (2015), the four goals in the 60x30TX Plan are essential to the future prosperity of Texas. The THECB (2015) identified that the demographics of the state are shifting; historically Hispanics and African Americans have been underrepresented in the state’s higher education institutions but are critical to the success of the 60x30TX Plan. With this plan, the Coordinating Board charges post-secondary institutions to take a critical look at the primary reason most students attend college and encourages these institutions to produce students that are competitive in the global marketplace. In 2012, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (ODEC) identified Texas as a state that experienced many skills deficits. The ODEC
found that some sectors of the state’s economy could not hire workers with the skill set to meet the demands of their jobs (2014). Under the previous education strategic plan, the goal was to award 210,000 postsecondary awards annually; Texas met this goal in 2011, and by 2014, statewide undergraduate awards were about 251,000 (THECB, 2015). Although this was a great success for the state there remains an unmet demand for skilled and knowledgeable workers, and for Texas to stay a competitive force in the global economy the state needs 60% of its 25-34 year old population to hold a quality certificate or degree that is aligned with the demands of the workforce (Carnevale, 2013).

**Trends in College Readiness of African American Students in the United States**

Recognizing the significance and future implications that degree attainment for African American students would have on the nation in 2012 former, President Barack Obama made the following statement, “Significantly improving the educational outcomes of African-Americans will provide substantial benefits for our country by, among other things, increasing college completion rates, productivity, employment rates, and the number of African-American teachers. Enhanced educational outcomes lead to more productive careers, improved economic opportunity, and greater social well-being for all Americans (Obama, 2012).” The executive order signed by President Obama addressed many of the factors that contribute to the readiness gap between African Americans and other ethnic groups; the factors discussed in this order include attending substandard segregated schools; lack of challenging college-preparatory classes; and lower academic achievement (Cokley, Obaseki, Moran-Jackson, Jones, & Vohra-Gupta, 2016).

According to a study by ACT and the United Negro College Fund, historically African American high school graduates are less prepared to perform college-level work
than any other ethnic group (2014). According to Sparks and Malkus, a staggering 30 percent of all African American college students are enrolled in remedial coursework (2013). Cokle et al.,(2016) cites a lack of rigorous college preparatory curriculum, such as Advanced Placement (AP) courses, being available for students attending predominantly African American and Hispanic high schools, and when these courses are offered African American students are disproportionately less likely to be placed in them in comparison to students of other ethnic groups. Presumably, African American students are less likely to take these courses because they are not academically prepared for them, but according to a study by the CollegeBoard (2013), even high performing African American students are rarely encouraged to take more rigorous college preparatory courses. The College Board found that only 30% of African American students with strong math skills took AP math, compared to 60% of Asian and white students (2013).

**College Readiness Framework in Texas**

How do you define college readiness? Michael Kirst, a Stanford University professor, believe that there are many definitions of college readiness but no consensus on which one is most appropriate (Olson, 2006). According to Olson (2006), for a secondary education system to be redesigned to promote college readiness, it must determine the appropriate definition of “college ready.” The common themes throughout all college readiness definitions are academic rigor, alignment between post-secondary and secondary education, and stronger outreach efforts before post-secondary admissions (Olson, 2006).

The efforts of the THECB last two strategic plans have been widely focused on shaping the definition of college readiness and success within the state and
provide guidance to support both within Texas public schools. In the 2000-2015 plan, the THECB identified various supports for student success. These supports were divided into two segments: active institutional participation and implementation of supports for academic success. THECB suggests that a “college-going” culture is needed in public schools state-wide and that extracurricular activities should be encouraged (2000). A need for improvements in academic rigor in secondary education was also identified by the THECB; they recommended that graduation requirements should be established that challenge students to meet and/or exceed the academic expectations of college-level courses. The THECB’s final recommendation was that exit standards, and college readiness standards should be aligned. Also, accountability systems should be put in place for both K-12 and post-secondary education. When it comes to student success in college THECB (2000) suggests that institutions of higher education should focus on improving graduation rates, time to degree completion, strengthening developmental education, reevaluate retention strategies, and evaluate the core curriculum to ensure that there was alignment between secondary and post-secondary education. The final key component to the THECB (2000) finding was highlighting the vital work of community colleges in closing the attainment gap that exists within the state.

According to Kirst (2006), when there is a disconnect between the primary, secondary and post-secondary sectors of education, college readiness is impacted. Kirst (2006) asserts that decision-makers at every level of education must have a stake in the conversations surrounding college readiness process; and that this becomes cumbersome when K-12 and higher education operate in separate professional worlds. In his work Kirst (2006) outlines, how at both the state and federal level a historical division exists;
this division permeates from that idea that K-12 schools and post-secondary institutions are guided by mutually exclusive policies. Consequently, each sector of education utilizes strategic missions, resources, tools, and key performance indicators have very little in common. Kirst (2006) also finds that these rifts within our educational system provide a bleak and confusing message about college readiness; he concludes that for us as a nation to improve college readiness, success, and completion we must work to connect the K-12 and post-secondary educational systems and these systems must work closely with one another to ensure alignment of curriculum.

Southern Regional Education Board (SREB) (2002), is a nonpartisan collaborative with representation from 16 different states, including Texas. In 2002, SREB developed a strategic plan for education policymakers that identified best practices, policies, and procedures on how to prepare students for college. The goal of SREB was to connect state policies and evaluate education systems from early primary through post-secondary. The focus of the policies that there developed was to produce on-going academic achievement throughout a student’s journey to and through college (SREB, 2002). The SREB study, identified a framework to answer the following questions: Are students entering high school lacking the necessary skills to obtain an education that will prepare them for the future? Are high schools not providing the education that higher education institutions require? The SREB came to findings that were like those of Kirst; the SREB found that education reforms that failed were due to poor organizational structure and a lack of communication to align local, state, and federal educational efforts (2002).
In 2008, THECB released a document that identified statewide standards for college readiness and outlined the necessary skills for students to be successful in college-level English, Math, Science, and Social Studies (Wiley et al., 2010). THECB (2008) developed these standards to inform K-12 administrators of the expectations that institutions of higher education had for high school graduates that plan on enrolling in post-secondary education. In 2012, the Texas Education Agency (TEA) and THECB took these standards and implemented them as Texas’ college readiness standard. The adoption of these standards made Texas the first state to adopt a comprehensive set of college readiness standards, and Texas was recognized by SREB as the first state to pass such standards (THECB, 2014).

Theories Regarding College Students’ Retention

Institutions of higher education have implemented many programs, strategies, and practices that support the retention of at-risk students in community college academic programs. Undergirding these programs, strategies, and practices are various theories related to the topic of student retention. In the following paragraphs, the work of multiple researchers is discussed in detail.

Tinto’s Theories

Tinto performed a national longitudinal study that yielded a commonly cited theoretical model of student attrition and persistence (Edwards, 2007). Tinto’s study included characteristics of students such as instruction received before college entry, family, background, motivation, social integration, and academic integration. Tinto focused on how these attributes impacted student outcomes, such as dropout, graduation, or transfer (Edwards, 2007). Tinto concluded that “students arrive at college with certain
expectations and aspirations; the integration or lack thereof, into the college environment, affected students’ outcomes” (Edwards, 2007).

In one of his later works, Tinto (1987) examined the experiences of students that enroll in community colleges. This work discussed how community college students were often commuters who worked full-time. These characteristics reduced the ability of these students to be involved in activities that were typically available in four-year institutions. Tinto also examined the need for emphasis being placed on the needs of “high-risk” students, including minorities, students from low performing high schools, and students from low socioeconomic backgrounds (Tinto, 1987). Tinto found that institutions can implement activities, such as small learning communities, first-year success courses, orientations, and transition programs that help to prevent these students from departing the institution before completing a program. African American students fall into more than one of the criteria above and may be classified as high-risk; they are an underserved population and often begin their postsecondary education at the community college level (Davila, 2011).

Astin’s Theory

In 1993 Astin performed an extensive national longitudinal study analyzing quantitative data that provided evidence that certain features of academic institutions, as well as the students themselves, support student retention. One of Astin’s key findings that provide support for the retention of African American students is diversity orientation. Astin (1993) asserts, “the fact that campus diversity orientation is negatively associated with leaving school or transferring suggests that enhancing the institutional emphasis on diversity may be one further way of increasing retention rates” (p. 300).
Kuh, Kinzie, Schuh, Whit, and Associates Theory

George Kuh (2000) focused his work on researching the role of student engagement in student success. In his book, Student Success in College: Creating Conditions that Matter, Kuh discusses institutional policies and practices derived from a two-year called the Documenting Effective Educational Practices (DEEP) project. This study examined the practices of 20 high-performing colleges and universities with high student engagement as measured by the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE); these institutions also had high graduation rates (Kuh et al., 2005). The findings of the DEEP study suggest that these institutions make their expectations of success known and work to show students how to utilize institutional resources to their advantage. These institutions also frequently hosted events that are meant to build a bond between students, faculty, and staff. The study also found that these institutions strongly aligned resources and procedures to the institution’s mission and purpose, and these colleges have developed a culture of innovation and an “ethic of positive restlessness” or “improvement-oriented ethos” (Kuh et al. 2005). Based on this study Kuh theorized that an innovation-oriented environment coupled with inclusive academic practices help under-prepared students to be retained in educational programs.

Rendon’s Theory

In 1994, Rendon developed a theory related to the persistence of African American students. Rendon’s Validation Theory asserted that personal quality interactions, alliances, attitudes, and personal attributes have to be in place for African American students to persist in college. This was especially true for first-generation college students. According to Terenzini, Rendon, Upcraft, Millar, Allison, and Gregg
(1994), the levels of self-doubt among non-traditional students creates a need for validation. This validation can occur with family, peers, faculty, or staff. Terenzini et al. (1994) also found that non-traditional students also fostered “a sense of obligation to succeed” (Terenzini et al., 1994, p.67) when they affirm themselves, when instructors express an interest in the students’ life experiences prior to education, and when instructors have an energizing and engaging lectures.

Nora’s & Crisp’s Theory

Nora and Crisp (2012) argued that to understand what drives the success of minority students diverse perspectives are needed. A great deal of research has been done that demonstrates that all students do not have the same college experiences and that these experiences often impact students differently (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). Nora and Crisp (2012) were strong proponents of the need for researchers to allow minority students to tell their own stories about their college experiences. They believed that by doing this research would provide a rich description of students’ experiences and their perceptions specific to their college experience. According to Nora and Crisp (2012), these descriptions would incorporate non-cognitive measures into the research that support the quantitative findings of research surrounding cognitive success outcomes. Nora and Crisp (2012) conclude that to define student success researchers must include psychological and behavioral outcomes.

Anderson’s Force Field Analysis of College Persistence

In 1985, Anderson studied what assisted high school students successfully transition to college. The results of this research were Anderson’s Force Field Analysis of College Persistence. This analysis indicated that for college students to successfully
persist, they must experience a greater magnitude of forces that push them in a positive
direction versus the forces that drive them in a negative direction (Anderson, 1985).
Anderson used the example of a student encountering problems on campus and feeling
disconnected from friends and family, or an undergraduate student who has less contact
with a mentor that supported them in high school. Anderson found that these students
experience feelings of discouragement, vulnerability, disorientation, and self-doubt;
Anderson states that these emotions can cause undergraduate students to experience
academic and social problems that may contribute to a low level of student success.

Supports for Students’ Program Completion

In the following section, I discuss supports for community college program
completion for under-prepared African American students. The supports include
institutional variables that impact program completion, successful initiatives for
recruitment and retention of African American students enrolled in community colleges
and effective initiatives in higher education.

Institutional Variables that Impact Academic Program Completion

Racially Specific Support

Institutions of higher education can provide the support that reduces the levels of
stress that student’s experience and combat the feelings of alienation as students adjust to
campus life. According to Walker & Satterwhite (2002), a useful example of institutional
support is providing opportunities for students to participate in culturally diverse
activities; institutions are also able to provide counseling and academic support for
struggling students. For these supports to have maximum success, they must be
implemented across the entire campus (Hikes, 2004). A campus-wide implementation of
support initiatives empowers the institution to maximize the utilization of its resources and reach students holistically, and historically institutions of higher education that take this holistic approach have found success in retaining African American undergraduate students (Hikes, 2004).

According to Harris (1994), an African American undergraduate student’s experience and academic success are impacted by social and cultural problems as much as they are affected by academic issues that may arise. The academic success of African American students is connected to more than study skills and in-class performance; the success of these students is intertwined with the learning that these students experience inside and outside of the classroom (Walker & Satterwhite, 2002). The impact that an institution’s environment can have on the success of minority students becomes the impetus for institutions of higher education to evaluate the values and cultural norms that characterize their institution and ensure that they are representative of the institution’s entire student body.

Sanders and Burton (1996), conducted a study that found that African American students felt like the institutional policies and procedures were written in favor of White students and were not representative of the needs of African American students. The perception of these students was that the administrators at their various institutions did not take their needs into consideration. Sanders and Burton (1996) found that to foster the success of all students college and university administrators needed to seek out feedback that was inclusive of all ethnic groups represented on their campuses.

According to Hikes (2005), institutions that pursue initiatives that are related to the institution's mission and purpose are the most effective; Faculty, staff, and students
have to be provided with a point of reference to work from when an institution can connect an initiative to the mission of that institution. Most institutions center their strategic efforts around traditional approaches to student success, but these approaches are geared mainly towards the Caucasian-dominated population demographics of the past. For institutions of higher education to remain relevant, they must build a paradigm that is supportive of the shift towards a minority dominated populations (Hikes, 2005). Steele (2003) points out that the effectiveness of the progressive steps that are taken by institutions of higher education also serves as an indicator of the success of racial integration in the United States.

**Leadership Behaviors of College Administrators**

In 2005, Gallien & Peterson developed a list of actions that successful administrators could take to cultivate the best environment for African American undergraduate students to be successful. Gallien and Peterson found that these administrators had a personal and professional commitment to the advancement of minority students, and these administrators hired faculty and professional staff that had the same commitments. Another critical characteristic of these administrators was that they promoted programs and policies that addressed systemic barriers that minority students would encounter while on campus.

**Impact of Classroom Interaction Provided by Faculty on Student Retention**

The environment inside of the classroom has a significant effect on the academic success of African American student, and it is imperative that faculty create a learning environment that is inclusive and welcoming (Allen, 1992). According to Gossett et al. (1996), the academic progress of African American students is increased when faculty
acknowledge and value the rich culture and background that these students bring to the classroom. Faculty members being engaged is also critical to the academic success of African American students; according to Phillips, (2005), one of the best ways to build the faculty to student relationship is through mentoring programs. Phillips finds that these relationships should involve the faculty actively working to integrate the student into academia by allowing them to assist with research projects, conference presentations, and other interactive activities. This type of engagement allows the faculty or staff mentor to serve as the student's guide and walk them through the process of completing their degree.

According to Rovai & Gallien (2005), few professors possess the background, cultural awareness, or pedagogical skills that are needed to address the predominant learning style of most African American students. This becomes a critical risk factor for African American students that come from high schools in urban areas; the vast majority of these students have not been taught by White teachers or been in classes with White students. While research supports the need for African American students to have the support of faculty members, this the lack of cultural awareness in faculty has not been addressed because some faculty members feel like there is no need for them to accommodate the learning styles of these students (Rovai & Gallien, 2005).

According to Rovai & Gallien (2005), Most instructors at institutions of higher education around the country are White, middle-aged men, who feel like they cannot effectively mentor students from underrepresented backgrounds. Consequently, African American students and faculty may experience grave instances of miscommunication in the classroom. Among the most common communication problems that have been
reported are cases of racial stereotyping that are based on inaccurate portrayals of minority cultures in the media (Rovai & Gallien, 2005). Rovai and Gallien suggest that diversity training may help in producing more cultural sensitivity and empowering faculty to be able to provide African American students with the support that they need.

A recurring assertion in research is that African American undergraduate students’ success and persistence is dependent on faculty and professional staff that show concern for the well-being of these students (Gallien & Peterson, 2005). This is a critical component of institutions of higher education being able to develop an academic environment that will drive the achievement of minority students. An underlying factor in educational settings that contribute to the success and persistence of African American students is the concept of a leveling culture (Perry, Steele, & Hilliard 2003). According to Perry, Steele, and Hilliard (2003), African American students are most successful in a culture where the norm is all students succeed regardless of an ethnic or social group. A leveling culture creates an environment when African American students will achieve irrespective of socioeconomic status, prior academic preparation, or the receptiveness of people around them to African American culture (Perry, Steele, & Hilliard, 2003).

Similar to the list of attributes that Gallien & Peterson developed for administrators that want to promote the academic success of African American students, these researchers developed a list of required qualities for faculty who wish to support the academic success of African American students. These qualities included taking responsibility for the success of their students, possessing a caring attitude, culturally relevant teaching practices, passion and enthusiasm for the subject, and mastery of course content.
Effective Higher Education Initiatives in Texas

The University of Texas at Austin is the home of the Emerging Scholars Program (ESP); this is a program where undergraduate students from underrepresented ethnic grounds participate in extended group discussions outside of class (Whitla, Howard, Tuit, Reddick, & Flanagan, 2005). Throughout these meetings, students are subdivided into groups, and they are presented with a variety of problem-solving activities. A ten-year study of this program was conducted, and the findings indicated that over 70% of the students that participated in the program received grades of B or above. The study also found that students who participated in the ESP program received grades that were one-half to one full grade point higher than students who didn’t participate in the ESP program. Another substantial finding of this study was that ESP participants were more likely to enroll in an additional semester of calculus in comparison to non-ESP participants.

Spend a Summer with a Scientist is a program in place at Rice University. The overarching goal of this program is to increase the number of students from underrepresented ethnic groups in science, technology, engineering, and math fields (Whitla et al., 2005). Other goals of the program are to develop community, connect students to the research community, and provide students with and experience with the professional environment in these fields. In 1998 the success of this program was formally evaluated, and it had great results for the undergraduate students that it served. 62% of the students who participated in the Summer with a Scientist program had enrolled in graduate school, and only one student that had participated in the program was unemployed. (Alexander, Foertsch, & Daffinrud, 1998).
San Jacinto College has two programs that are meant to increase the retention of under-represented student populations; these programs are Camp San Jac and High Trek. Camp San Jac is a two-day retreat where prospective students are introduced to college life, and High Trek is a similar one-day event for 10th and 11th-grade high school students (Houston, Eugeni, & Waxman, 2006).

Staff at Lone Star Community College began a bridge partnership with local independent school districts. Through this partnership, students at area high schools were allowed to complete required college readiness testing and be advised regarding any areas of deficiency before completing high school. The students that participated in this program were invited to the college to participate in remediation activities and retesting as needed. This program was later expanded to provide any required college developmental coursework through a summer bridge. This model allowed under-prepared students the opportunity to complete their required developmental coursework before their first semester of full-time enrollment (Houston, Eugeni, & Waxman, 2006).

**Barriers to Students’ Program Completion**

Barriers experienced by African American students enrolled in institutions of higher education vary and may include but are not limited to factors regarding socioeconomic status, race including racial identity, and gender and cultural issues. The topics above are discussed in depth through a thorough review of the literature on these topics in the following sections.

**Socioeconomic Status Impact on Program Completion**

In 2003, Walpole conducted a longitudinal study that intended to determine whether there was a difference in the college experience between students from high and
low socioeconomic backgrounds. Walpole evaluated the “long history of effects of social class origins on educational achievement and attainment” (Walpole, 2003, p. 47)

Research suggests that students from low socioeconomic backgrounds have lower educational expectations and do not persist in throughout their educational career in comparison to students from high socioeconomic backgrounds (Astin, 1993; DiMaggio & Mohr, 1985; Lareau, 1993; McDonough, 1997; MacLeod, 1987; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991; Tinto, 1987, 1993; as cited in Walpole, 2003). These differences between socioeconomic groups are shaped by many factors. Walpole identifies parental interaction style and expectations, school structure, school experiences and aspirations, college costs, and financial aid as major factors that impact the expectations of students from different socioeconomic groups (2003). Walpole asserts that low socioeconomic parents are inclined to view a high school diploma as the norm; while parents from a high socioeconomic background consider a bachelor’s or advanced degree as the norm (2003).

Walpole also found that how individuals from these groups define success also differs. A student from a low socioeconomic background would consider themselves successful if they secure a full-time job after graduating from high school; while individuals from a high socioeconomic background perceive success as attending a 4-year institution of higher education (2003).

Walpole goes on to state that the students that seek post-secondary education, who are from low socioeconomic backgrounds, perceive success as overcoming many obstacles that impact their ability to attain a credential not the attainment of the credential itself. Walpole felt there was a further need to investigate the experiences of students from low socioeconomic backgrounds and the outcomes may provide insight into how
educational opportunity structures promote social mobility (2003). To further investigate
Wohn et al., examined how several types of social capital associated with parents,
friends, and social media were related to students’ confidence about their knowledge on
the college application process and their expectations about being successful in college.
According to Coleman, many scholars commonly use social capital as a theoretical
framework to understand why students from different socioeconomic backgrounds are
more knowledgeable when it comes to college entry, persistence, and completion
processes. Social capital is used to explain educational outcome data because it provides
insight that factors in resources that the student possesses in and of themselves and those
available through their social relationships (Coleman, 1988).

**Racial Identities Impact on Student Success**

Sellers et al., define racial identity as the attitudes and beliefs regarding the
significance and meaning of race that African Americans use to describe themselves
(1997). Racial identification impacts student success because it is a factor that can either
bring students together or separate them; racial identifications can affect the overall
development of African American students (Sanders-Thompson, 2001). There have been
many theoretical models that have attempted to define racial identity (Sellers et al.,
1997). These models include the Multidimensional Model of Racial Identity (Sellers et
al., 1997), Nigrescence Model (Cross, 1971), Phinney’s Model of Ethnic Identity
(Phinney, 1992), the Adult Racial Identity Development (Parham, 1989), and the
Developmental Inventory of Black Consciousness (Milliones, 1976, 1980). These
models either define racial identity in terms of status or stages. A widely-accepted stage
model is the Nigrescence Model; this model was developed by William Cross in 1971.
The Nigrescence Model is based on the idea that the development of an individual’s racial identity occurs in a step-wise progression (Chavez & Guido-Dibrito, 1999). These steps or stages represent an individual’s journey in becoming Black by embracing a Black identity driven by oppressive conditions (DeCuir-Gunby, 2009). This theory takes eight identity types and divides them into the stages pre-encounter, Immersion-emersion, and Internalization. The first stage pre-encounter is comprised of miseducation, racial self-hatred, and assimilation. This stage is characterized by diminishing the impact of race in an individual’s life. Individuals in this stage do not let their race define who they are as a person. The next step Immersion-emersion is where an individual immerses themselves in their blackness, and it includes two identity types anti-white and intense black involvement. Most individuals in this stage identify white as being bad and black as being good and these individuals find themselves rooted in black culture but have not attained a complete Black identity (Grantham & Ford, 2003). The last stage is internalization, and this stage is made up of three identity types nationalist, biculturalist, and multiculturalist. This is the stage in which an individual entirely takes on Black identity. Grantham and Ford identified that at any time an individual can become stuck in a step or fall back into a stage that they have progressed from due to personality, support systems, resources, and experiences (2003).

Research suggests that racial identity can impact academic achievement. For example, research by Robinson and Biran (2006) found a positive relationship between high levels of African self-consciousness and SAT scores; they also found that students that felt like they had significant responsibility for their community were more driven to persist and be high achievers in school. In another study, two groups of African
American male high school seniors were sampled (Gayles, 2006). These students were from two different home school communities; the first was a well to do community and the second was a traditional struggling community. The researcher examined how stereotype threat impacted academic achievement. Gayles found that although a student may be from a low-end school and they may be aware of the negative stereotypes associated with these origins they were not deterred from their academic pursuits.

On the contrary, many students from this background saw a need to disprove these negative stereotypes. Students from the school of higher socioeconomic status did not experience the same negative stereotyping, and these students did not see themselves as members of any racial group. They felt that any negative stereotypes referred to other Blacks and not them (Gayles, 2006).

**Summary**

The review of literature in this chapter documents the multitude of issues that under-prepared African American students experience on the road to attainment. According to Hennessy and Evans (2006) community colleges are “institutions that serve disproportionate numbers of poor, working class, first-generation, non-traditional, and minority students…they are uniquely positioned to provide liberating educational experiences to a diverse spectrum of society” (p.93). For many of these students, the road to degree attainment go through a community college and retaining these students is critical and the responsibility of educational leaders (McClenny, 2004).

According to McClenny, Community colleges are building a culture of evidence, an environment where, as educational leaders: …[we] tell ourselves the truth about what happens with our students…decide what questions need to be answered, about student
progress, student attainment, and student success…identify the critical performance indicators that will tell us how we’re doing…collect clear and credible evidence of instructional performance on those indicators…break down the data by race and ethnicity, income, gender, and age so that we will have a genuine understanding of how student groups may differentially perform in our colleges…then we will use the data and our understandings of it to target improvements in the work we do with students. (p.14)

In Chapter III, I describe the methodology used in this study. The sections in the methodology include research design, participants, context and setting, instrumentation, data collection, and data analysis.
CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Purpose

The purpose of this study is to describe the perceptions of academically under-prepared African American community college students regarding supports for and barriers to program completion. Program completion will be defined as satisfying all the academic requirements needed to attain a certificate, degree, or credits required for transfer to a four-year institution within two years. The institution that is the focus of this study has programs in place for student success. However, the effectiveness of these programs has not been evaluated through students’ feedback.

This chapter describes the methodology that was used in the study, including research design, selection of participants, context and setting, instrumentation, data collection, and data analysis.

Research Design

According to Lichtman (1996), phenomenological research approaches study how individuals experience a specific phenomenon. The researcher utilized these approaches along with quantitative data analysis (frequencies and percentages) to describe how under-prepared African American community college students, interpret, process, and experience supports for and barriers to program completion. As these students shared their experiences, the researcher was able to describe what these students perceived to be barriers and supports.
The reality wherein a phenomena occur is ever-changing, and a phenomenological researcher must be open-minded regarding these changes and be prepared to give explanations for the observed phenomena (Lancy, 1993). According to Lancy (1993), phenomenology instructs the researcher to allow the phenomenon to reveal itself in its fullness. Through the students’ descriptions of their experiences, the researcher will explore the impact of these experiences on program completion; African American students come from varying backgrounds and cultures that they bring to institutions of higher education once they enroll. In spite of these cultural differences, these students still experience common phenomena, and it is imperative for a researcher to understand the diversity among African American students while conducting research.

According to Boeree (2002), phenomena speak for themselves and researchers must be prepared to listen. In this study, the researcher will attempt to describe the perceptions of under-prepared African American community college students regarding supports for and barriers to credential attainment as they actually appear to the students, without being influenced by any of my own biases and beliefs (Gall, Gall, and Borg, 2006). The researcher remained open-minded to the students’ experiences as he sought responses to the following research questions:

1. What are the perceptions of academically under-prepared African American community college students regarding supports for program completion?
2. What are the perceptions of academically under-prepared African American community college students regarding barriers to program completion?
3. What are the perceptions of academically under-prepared African American community college students’ recommendations for actions that could be implemented to improve students’ program completion rates?

**Context and Setting**

The research was conducted at the Houston Community College System (HCCS). I have chosen HCCS as the setting for this study for the following reasons, (a) it is the fourth largest community college in the country with more than 70,000 students each semester; (b) it is recognized as a minority-serving institution by the federal government; and (c) it has a diverse population of Hispanic, African American, and Caucasian students including more international students (nearly 8%) more than any community college in the country. HCCS is composed of six major colleges (Northwest College, Northeast College, Southwest College, Southeast College, Central College, and Coleman College for Health Sciences). Between the six major colleges, HCCS has over 24 campus locations throughout the greater Houston area. These campuses offer a wide variety of programs including academic and workforce credit programs, continuing education programs, and adult education programs. HCCS enrollment by credit type at each college is illustrated in Table 1.
Table 1

*Fall 2016 Total Enrollment by Credit Type at the Six Colleges in the Houston Community College System*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location and Unduplicated Headcount</th>
<th>Semester Hr. Credit (SCH)</th>
<th>Workforce Cont. Ed. (CEU)</th>
<th>Non-Credit</th>
<th>Adult Education</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Northeast College</td>
<td>10,272</td>
<td>2,426</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>1,537</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central College</td>
<td>16,286</td>
<td>2,603</td>
<td>848</td>
<td>500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coleman College</td>
<td>2,264</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>364</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northwest College</td>
<td>19,385</td>
<td>1,530</td>
<td>136</td>
<td>295</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southeast College</td>
<td>12,689</td>
<td>2,34</td>
<td>504</td>
<td>1,282</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southwest College</td>
<td>19,408</td>
<td>1,091</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>1,407</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HCCS Total Enrollment</td>
<td>80,304</td>
<td>7,945</td>
<td>2,034</td>
<td>5,021</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The researcher selected the Houston Community College System - Central College’s two comprehensive campuses as the setting for this study; students at these campuses are enrolled in SCH, CEU, non-credit, and adult education courses. These campuses are located in an urban area of Houston and have diverse student populations. Table 2 illustrates the fall 2016 semester enrollment at these campuses by ethnicity.
Table 2
*Fall 2016 Total Enrollment at HCCS Central College’s Comprehensive Campuses by Ethnicity*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>African American</th>
<th>Asian</th>
<th>Hispanic</th>
<th>White</th>
<th>Other</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Main Campus</td>
<td>3,665</td>
<td>1595</td>
<td>3254</td>
<td>1401</td>
<td>344</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Campus</td>
<td>410</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>234</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Enrollment</td>
<td>4075</td>
<td>1656</td>
<td>3488</td>
<td>1457</td>
<td>368</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

According to reported enrollment numbers at these two campuses, African Americans were the largest ethnic group enrolled at both campuses. Hispanic students made up the second largest ethnic group, and Asian students were the third largest.

The context and setting provide an overview of the Houston Community College System. The following section describes the participants selected for my study.

**Participants**

The participants in this study were selected from the population of community college students that are enrolled in exit-level developmental courses at either the Central – Midtown or Central – South campus. Permission to survey all students enrolled in three Integrated Reading & Writing (INRW) 0420 courses and three Math 0312 courses was be given by the Houston Community College Internal Review Board. This yielded a minimum population of 60 students and a maximum of 150 students; this variation was derived from the actual number of students who were enrolled in these courses at the time the survey was administered. Students will be asked open-ended questions to gain
additional insight into their perceptions of supports and barriers to program completion.

Purposeful sampling is a technique widely used in qualitative research for the identification and selection of information-rich cases for the most effective use of limited resources (Patton, 2002). This involves identifying and selecting individuals or groups of individuals that are exceptionally knowledgeable about or experienced with a phenomenon of interest (Cresswell & Plano Clark, 2011). Lancy (1993) stated that a phenomenological study is likely to require 10 to 50 descriptions of a target experience to reach the research goal of the study. All students will be invited to participate in a survey, but the findings will be based on the responses of the African American students that participate. Demographic data will be collected and analyzed from each participant to understand further the themes and patterns that evolved from the responses to both closed and open-ended questions on the questionnaire. The instrument developed for the study is further described in the next section.

**Instrumentation**

The researcher identified and compared questionnaires that are currently being used to research the experiences of students enrolled at institutions of higher education. Davila (2011) utilizes an instrument that is aligned with the purpose of my study. Davila’s study focused on Hispanic participants, and my study will focus on African American participants; both groups experience barriers and supports during their journey to credential attainment. Davila’s instrument, Supports for and Barriers to Program Completion for Hispanic Students Enrolled in Community College Questionnaire, was based on literature regarding student engagement, student on-time graduation, and student’s views of effective college faculty. This instrument was adapted to meet the
needs of this study; it was divided into two parts demographic data and concepts of supports for and barriers to credential attainment.

Part two will include Likert scaled question that addresses the concept of supports for and barriers to credential attainment about the use and importance of various services. The students will respond to each item on a Likert scale of one to five, with one representing strongly disagree and five representing strongly agree. The services will include academic advising, career services, peer-tutoring, skills labs, child care, financial aid, computer labs, and student activities. The survey will also address time commitment to work and family, students’ perceptions of cognitive and personal traits of community college faculty, and students’ perceptions of the degree to which faculty challenged them. The survey instrument will also include open-ended questions where students will be able to share their perceptions related to the areas above. The survey is meant to prompt the students’ thoughts around the barriers and supports that they experience, and provide the students with an opportunity to share their lived experiences while being enrolled at a community college. This will provide the researcher with more knowledge about the distinct feelings and beliefs of students through open-ended response.

**Reliability and Validity**

After modifying the Supports for and Barriers to Program Completion for Hispanic Students Enrolled in Community College Questionnaire (Davila, 2011) for use with African American students, I developed content validity for my instrument by having a community college professor review the content for accuracy and completion. Also, the survey was reviewed by my dissertation chair and two committee members who are experts in instrument design and community college research. The open-ended
questions meet the criteria for validity according to Guba and Lincoln (1989) and Erlandson, Harris, Skipper, and Allen (1993), who explained that qualitative research must have the following: truth, applicability, value, consistency, and neutrality to be considered valid. The criterion of truth will be met by the researcher reporting the participants’ unaltered responses. Applicability will be achieved because the results may apply to under-prepared African American students enrolled in other community colleges. The criterion of value will be met by examining the descriptions and perceptions of these students and their recommendations for additional supports. Consistency will be achieved by ensuring that all participants are asked the same questions. Neutrality will be achieved by reducing my own bias when gathering students’ responses, and I will not give participants any positive or negative responses about my personal experiences during my enrollment at an institution of higher education or my personal and family background.

Additionally, the following criteria were used to address rigor and trustworthiness (Guba & Lincoln, 1989; Erlandson et al., 1993) required of qualitative research: credibility, transferability, and confirmability (Trochim, 2002). Credibility entails establishing that the results of qualitative research are credible or believable from the perspective of the participants in the research. The purpose of qualitative research is to describe or understand the phenomena of interest from the students’ eyes (Trochim, 2002). The participants will be the only ones who could legitimately judge the credibility of the result. Credibility will be addressed in my study by asking the students to describe their own experiences at their respective campuses. The students’ abilities to write and
review their responses and add any additional comments will increase the credibility of their responses.

Transferability in qualitative research refers to the degree to which the results of the study can be generalized or transferred to other contexts or settings. Transferability is primarily the responsibility of the researcher who must clearly describe the setting or context of his or her study (Guba & Lincoln, 1989; Erlandson et al., 1993). In my research, I will attempt to increase transferability by including detailed descriptions of the students’ demographic information, including race, gender, age, years of community college attendance, citizenship status, name of program completed or studied, and level of education achieved by parents. Enrollment data for the campuses, colleges, and the community college system will be provided to describe the context of my study better, as recommended by Guba and Lincoln (1989) and Erlandson et al. (1993). Others can better determine the transferability of my results by analyzing the differences and similarities between their context and mine. The person who transfers the results to a different context is responsible for making the judgment of how sensible the transfer might be (Trochim, 2002).

Confirmability refers to the degree to which the results could be confirmed or corroborated by others. Qualitative research tends to assume that each researcher brings a unique perspective to the study. There are several strategies for enhancing confirmability. The researcher can document the procedures for checking and rechecking the data throughout the study (Trochim, 2002). Confirmability will be addressed in my research by examining the common emerging themes from the students’ responses to the open-
ended questions. The students’ verbatim responses will be transcribed in a word
processing program, thereby ensuring that none of the data was changed or altered.

The students’ responses to the open-ended questions are direct quotes and serve as
a primary source of raw data in the qualitative evaluation. These questions may reveal the
students’ levels of emotion, their thoughts, their experiences, and their basic perceptions
of barriers to and supports for completion of community college programs and
recommendations for supports that may increase the level of program completion.

**Data Collection**

The participants of this study were enrolled at two selected HCCS Central College
campuses. Approval will be received from the Executive Director of Institutional
Research before the collection of the data. The appropriate completed Internal Review
Board Forms were submitted to Houston Baptist University and Houston Community
College System to obtain approval to conduct the study.

Identities of the students that consent to participate in the study will be concealed,
and the consent form will be included with the survey so that each student understands
the expectations and ethical considerations before responding to the questions.

The researcher minimized any potential bias in the study by refraining from
intervening in the student's communication unless they have a question. The participants
were told that their responses will be preserved for five years after completion of this
research project, and then they will be destroyed.

The researcher collected data through a questionnaire containing demographic
questions, open-ended questions, and Likert scaled items. A modified questionnaire will
be distributed to between 60 and 150 students, and the purpose of open-ended survey
questions will be to allow students to give more insight to their responses to questions related to supports for and barriers to program completion.

**Researcher Bias**

Researchers must be clear about their biases, presuppositions, and interpretations for stakeholders to be allowed to decide what they think about all of the data that are presented (Heath, 1997). Researcher bias is a critical factor in qualitative research; therefore, I will use reflexivity to minimize bias. With the use of reflexivity, the researcher performs a self-reflection on his/her personal biases and predispositions (Milinki, 1999). This self-reflection was implemented using Brown and Irby’s (1997) reflection process, which includes the following steps: describe, analyze, appraise, and transform.

My reflection goal will reduce personal bias when gathering the responses from the students who will share their perceptions of barriers to and supports for program completion that they have experienced while enrolled at HCCS, as well as their perceptions of recommendations for supports that may lead to increased student retention and credential attainment.

To analyze the qualitative data, I will review the students’ responses. These responses provided insight into their perceptions. To appraise the situation, I will put aside my personal biases and remain open-minded when gathering data for this study. Only through this level of understanding can a researcher proceed effectively with a low level of bias and influence on the participants in a study.
Data Analysis

This section describes the data analysis procedures the researcher used to analyze the following: questionnaires containing demographic questions, open-ended questions, and Likert scaled items.

Demographic and Likert scaled items were analyzed using descriptive statistics including frequencies (number and percentages), distributions, and averages (mean, median, and mode). Data was uploaded in statistical measures applied using IBM SPSS. The open-ended responses to the questionnaire were downloaded using Microsoft Office Word 2007, printed, and reviewed by the researcher. The researcher sorted the data, analyzed, organized and reorganized searching for patterns and themes. The researcher compared data themes and categorizations and look at common themes into which data was re-categorized. The data was further analyzed by gender and ethnic background. This information will then put into a word processing program printed and analyzed for any additional emerging themes or patterns. The researcher will code the text to determine the type of support students deemed necessary and then code the text to show patterns (Research Questions 1 and 3). The same process was used to analyze student perceptions of barriers to academic success (Research Question 2).

According to Bogdan and Biklen (2006, p. 157), “Analysis involves working with data, organizing them, breaking them into manageable units, synthesizing, searching for patterns, discovering what is important and what is to be learned, and deciding what you will tell others.”
Summary

In this chapter, I presented the specific methodology for this study. The participants were selected based on specific criteria and concluded with a follow-up interview based on the need to clarify responses further. The instrumentation section of this chapter described the questionnaire which included demographic information; Likert scaled items; and open-ended questions. Data collection and analysis procedures were discussed for all means of data collection. The results of the data analysis are presented in Chapter IV.
CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

Introduction

In this chapter, I provide findings of my phenomenological mixed-method study. This study described academically under-prepared African American students’ perceptions regarding supports for and barriers to program completion and recommendations for supports that may increase student retention and program completion. The study was based on 58 community college students’ responses to the questionnaire and open-ended questions that addressed supports for and barriers to on-time program completion. Survey questions fell into one of four categories: support for learners, competing priorities, traits of community college faculty, and academic challenge. Responses to Likert scaled questions in each area were quantified, and an aggregate score was calculated for each category. 30 of the 58 students that participated in the study self-identified as African American, but after statistical analysis on each aggregate score, the race did not statistically impact the variance among aggregate scores; based on this finding the data from all respondents were included.

The findings of my study addressed three research questions:

1. What are the perceptions of academically under-prepared African American community college students regarding supports for program completion?

2. What are the perceptions of academically under-prepared African American community college students regarding barriers to program completion?
3. What are the perceptions of academically under-prepared African American community college students’ recommendations for actions that could be implemented to improve students’ program completion rates?

Students’ responses to open-ended questions throughout the survey gave additional insight on their individual experiences regarding the barriers they faced and the support they received as a student. Demographic data was collected to (a) provide screening for narrowing the selection of this population to the selection of African American students; (b) allowed for generalization regarding gender-specific experiences; (c) provided information regarding how age impacts students’ experiences; and (d) contributed information regarding students’ goals for attending college. The following sections describe the data.

**Research Question One and Two: Student Engagement**

To address research questions one and two and investigate the target populations perceptions regarding barriers to and supports for post-secondary credential attainment, their responses to questions related to student engagement were evaluated. The instrument used by Davila (2011) identifies and divides services or concepts that students identified as either support for or barrier to the attainment of a post-secondary credential in four categories. Davila (2011) defines these categories are as follows:

1. Support for Learners- engagement efforts that capture students from the moment of their first interactions with campus personnel.

2. Competing Priorities- the commitment to work and family which limits time spent on campus.
3. Community College Faculty- students’ perceptions of cognitive and personal traits of community college faculty.

4. Academic Challenge- Student’s ability to respond to high academic expectations for them.

**Category 1: Support for Learners**

Support for learners is described as engagement efforts that capture students from the moment of their first interactions with campus personnel. These interactions may include, but are not limited to the following services:

a. academic advising/planning services  
b. career counseling services  
c. job placement assistance  
d. peer tutoring services  
e. skill lab (writing, math, etc.) services  
f. childcare services  
g. financial aid advising services  
h. computer lab services  
i. student organization services

The findings based on student’s responses to whether these services are perceived as support or barrier are discussed in the following sections. Respondents were required to respond to questions indicating how often they use the services provided; respondents were also required to respond to their perceptions of the importance of the service. Responses to these items were recorded on a Likert scaled instrument with responses in
categories of strongly disagree, disagree, agree, and strongly agree. These responses were then quantified, and a score was calculated for each service where the higher a respondent’s calculated score was, the more the service was utilized by the student, and the more the student perceived the service to be necessary.

**Support for Learners-Academic Advising**

Respondents’ answered five questions related to academic advising. This service had a total possible aggregated score of 20. 93.1% of respondents had an Academic Advising score higher than 12 (60%) of the possible academic advising score. 98.3% of respondents believe that academic advisement services are valuable (Table 3).

**Table 3**

*Frequencies and Percentages of Responses Regarding Support for Learners-Academic Advising (N=58)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I use academic advising/planning services often.</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>12.1</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>46.6</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>27.6</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>13.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I use academic advising/planning services occasionally</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>8.6</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>29.3</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>51.7</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>10.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I use academic advising/planning services rarely.</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>27.6</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>27.6</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>36.2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>8.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic advising/planning services are very important.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>48.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic advising/planning services are not important.</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>29.3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Support for Learners-Career Counseling Services & Job Placement Services

Respondents’ answered ten questions related to career counseling services and job placement services. For the purposes of this study, the two services were combined. At Houston Community College both services are performed by the department of College to Career Services. This service had a total possible score of 40. 77.4% of respondents had a Career, and Job Placement Services score higher than 24 or 60% of the possible Career and Job Placement Services score. 93.1% of respondents believe that career counseling services are essential, and 87.9% of respondents believe that job placement services are essential (Table 4).
Table 4
*Frequencies and Percentages of Responses Regarding Support for Learners- Career Counseling & Job Placement Services (N=58)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I use career counseling services often.</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>22.4</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>56.9</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>19.0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I use career counseling services occasionally.</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>25.9</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>44.8</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>25.9</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I use career counseling services rarely.</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>22.4</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>20.7</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>43.1</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>13.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Career counseling services are important.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>48.3</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>44.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Career counseling services are not important.</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>62.1</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>27.6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I use job placement assistance services often.</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>50.0</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>37.9</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6.9</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I use job placement assistance services occasionally.</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>60.3</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>32.8</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6.9</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I use job placement assistance services rarely.</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>32.8</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>24.1</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>20.7</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>22.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job placement services are important.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>12.1</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>56.9</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>31.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job placement services are not important.</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>39.7</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>58.6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Support for Learners- Tutoring and Skills Labs (Academic Support Services)

Respondents’ answered ten questions related to tutoring services and skills labs. For the purposes of this study, the two services were combined. At Houston Community College both services are performed by the learning emporiums throughout the college system. This service had a total possible score of 40. 89.5% of respondents had an Academic Support Services score higher than 24 or 60% of the possible Academic Support Services score. 91.4% of respondents believe that tutoring services are essential, and 94.8% of respondents believe that skills labs are essential (Table 5).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I use peer or other tutoring services often.</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>31.0</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>32.8</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>27.6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>8.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I use peer or other tutoring services occasionally.</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>27.6</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>41.4</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>24.1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I use peer or other tutoring services rarely.</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>27.6</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>41.4</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>15.5</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>15.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peer or other tutoring services are important.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6.9</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>32.8</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>58.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peer or other tutoring services are not important.</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>67.2</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>29.3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I use skill labs (writing, math, etc.) services often.</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>12.1</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>22.4</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>46.6</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>19.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I use skill labs (writing, math, etc.) services</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>15.5</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>31.0</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>44.8</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>8.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I use skill labs (writing, math, etc.) services</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>34.5</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>44.8</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>17.2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skill labs (writing, math, etc.) services are</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>41.4</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>53.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skill labs (writing, math, etc.) services are not</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>70.7</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>25.9</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Support for Learners- Child Care Services

Respondents’ answered five questions related to child care services. This service had a total possible score of 20. 74.1% of respondents had a child care services score higher than 12 or 60% of the possible child care score. 89.7% of respondents believe that child care services are valuable (Table 6).

Table 6
Frequencies and Percentages of Responses Regarding Support for Learners-Child Care Services (N=58)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I use child care services often.</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>70.7</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>22.4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I use child care services occasionally.</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>75.9</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>19.0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I use child care services rarely.</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>56.9</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>17.2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>10.3</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>15.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child care services are important.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6.9</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>43.1</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>46.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child care services are not important.</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>72.4</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>24.1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Support for Learners- Financial Aid Advising Services

Respondents’ answered five questions related to financial aid advising services. This service had a total possible score of 20. 96.4% of respondents had a financial aid services score higher than 12 or 60% of the possible financial aid services score. 94.9% of respondents believe that financial aid advising services are valuable (Table 7).
### Table 7
*Frequencies and Percentages of Responses Regarding Support for Learners—Financial Aid Advising Services (N=58)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I use financial aid advising services often.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>8.6</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>24.1</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>36.2</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I use financial aid advising services occasionally.</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>13.8</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>29.3</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>41.4</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>15.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I use financial aid advising services rarely.</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>44.8</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>32.8</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>20.7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial aid advising services are important.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>19.0</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>75.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial aid advising services are not important.</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>72.4</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>24.1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Support for Learners—Open Computer Labs**

Respondents’ answered five questions related to the availability of open computer labs. This service had a total possible score of 20. 98.2% of respondents had a computer lab score higher than 12 or 60% of the possible computer lab score. 96.6% of respondents believe that computer labs are essential (Table 8).
Table 8
*Frequencies and Percentages of Responses Regarding Support for Learners-Open Computer Labs (N=58)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I use computer lab services often.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>20.7</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I use computer lab services occasionally.</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>32.8</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I use computer lab services rarely.</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>37.9</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Computer lab services are important.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Computer lab services are not important.</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>27.6</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Support for Learners- Student Organization Services**

Respondents’ answered five questions related to Student Organization Services.

This service had a total possible score of 20. 98.2% of respondents had a student organization services score higher than 12 or 60% of the possible student organizations services score. 96.6% of respondents believe that student organization services are valuable (Table 9).
Table 9

Frequencies and Percentages of Responses Regarding Support for Learners-Student Organization Services (N=58)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I use student organization services often.</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>13</td>
<td>22.4</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>51.7</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>17.2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>8.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I use student organization services occasionally.</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>20</td>
<td>34.5</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>44.8</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>17.2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I use student organization services rarely. Student organization services are important.</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>20</td>
<td>34.5</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>36.2</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>22.4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student organization services are not important.</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>36</td>
<td>62.1</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>29.3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>8.6</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Category 2: Competing Priorities

This category examines the commitment to work and family that limits the time that students can spend on campus. These priorities may include, but are not limited to:

a. amount of time students are enrolled in community college

b. number of hours at work while attending classes

c. number of hours spent caring for dependents
In this section, respondents answered questions indicating the amount of time they engaged in activities related to the previously mentioned concepts. Responses were recorded on Likert scaled items with responses in categories of strongly disagree, disagree, agree, and strongly agree. Less than half (46%) of the respondents indicated that they were enrolled part-time and many respondents (64%) work more than 20 hours per week. Additionally, less than half (22%) of respondents indicated that they spend 11 or more hours caring for a dependent.

Table 10
Frequencies and Percentages of Responses Regarding Competing Priorities-Time in Class, Work Schedule, and Dependent Care (N=58)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response Description</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I am enrolled in community college classes fulltime.</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>12.1</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>29.3</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>20.7</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>37.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am enrolled in community college classes part-time.</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>32.8</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>20.7</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>29.3</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>17.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I work less than 20 hours per week.</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>44.8</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>25.9</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>20.7</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>8.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I work more than 20 hours per week.</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>19.0</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>17.2</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>27.6</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>36.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I work 40 hours per week.</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>39.7</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>22.4</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>15.5</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>22.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I spend less than 11 hours per week caring for dependents while attending classes.</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>44.8</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>24.1</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>22.4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>8.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I spend 11 or more hours per week caring for dependents while attending classes.</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>48.3</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>29.3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>10.3</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>12.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Category 3: Traits of Community College Faculty

For the purpose of this study, community college faculty traits are defined as students’ perceptions of cognitive and personal characteristics of community college faculty. These traits may include but are not limited to the following characteristics:

a. Knowledge of subject  
b. Instructional strategies  
c. Communication Skills  
d. Flexibility  
e. Organizational skills  
f. Positive Attitude  
g. Fairness  
h. Respectfulness  
i. Mentorship

Respondents answered questions regarding their perceptions related to the traits above. Their responses were recorded on a Likert scale with responses in categories of strongly disagree, disagree, agree, and strongly agree. In most cases, respondents indicated that their instructor displayed positive traits (table 11).
Table 11
*Frequencies and Percentages of Responses Regarding Traits of Community College Faculty (N=58)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th></th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th></th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Professors of my classes are knowledgeable.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>44.8</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>51.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professors of my classes employ instructional strategies which match my learning style.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>8.6</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>15.5</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>56.9</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>19.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professors of my classes are sympathetic regarding students’ academic and personal needs.</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6.9</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>17.2</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>51.7</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>24.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professors of my classes exhibit strong communication skills.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>10.3</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>36.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professors of my classes are flexible.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>15.5</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>55.2</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>25.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professors of my classes are organized.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>65.5</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>25.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professors of my classes exhibit strong communication skills.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6.9</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>56.9</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>32.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professors of my classes exhibit positive attitudes.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>51.7</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>39.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professors of my classes are fair.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>10.3</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>60.3</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>27.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professors of my classes are respectful.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>53.4</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>43.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professors of my classes mentor students.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>25.9</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>53.4</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>17.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Category 4: Academic Challenge

For the purpose of this study, the academic challenge is described as high academic expectations for students and may include but is not limited to the following areas of encouragement for students:

a. Encouragement to integrate concepts from different courses, including different perspectives regarding race, religion, gender, political beliefs, etc.

b. Encouragement to self-examine personal strengths and weaknesses on views

c. Encouragement to form and express new ideas, analyze problems, make judgments and assessments.

More than 75% of respondents indicated that agreed that they are encouraged to:

a. Integrate concepts from different courses, including diverse perspectives regarding race, religion, gender, political beliefs, etc.

b. Examine personal strengths and weaknesses on views

Additionally, a vast majority of respondents indicated that they learned something that changed their point of view and that they were encouraged to form and express new ideas, analyze problems, make judgments, and assessments (Table 12).
Table 12  
Frequencies and Percentages of Responses Regarding Traits of Community College Faculty (N=58)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I am encouraged to put together ideas or concepts from different courses when completing assignments or during class discussion.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>13.8</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>55.2</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>29.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am encouraged to include diverse perspectives (different, races, religions, genders, political beliefs, etc.) in class discussion or assignments.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>13.8</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>43.1</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>41.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am encouraged to examine the strengths and weaknesses of my own views on a topic or issue.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>10.3</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>53.4</td>
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<td>I learned something that changed my viewpoint about an issue or concept.</td>
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<td>I am encouraged to analyze the basic elements of an idea, theory, or experience.</td>
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organize ideas,
information, or
experiences in new
ways.
I am encouraged to
make judgments
about the value or
soundness of
information,
arguments, or
methods.
I am encouraged to
apply theories or
concepts to
practical problems
or in new
situations.
I am encouraged to
use information I
have read or heard
to perform a new
skill.

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**Research Questions One, Two, and Three: Open-Ended Responses**

To further address research questions one, two and three, respondents answered questions in which they were asked to share their perceptions on the importance of items listed in the four categories: support for learners, competing priorities, traits of community college faculty, and academic challenge. The responses yielded the following findings.

**Research Question One**

Respondents indicated that the primary supports of program completion are

a. Holistic support services and programming

b. Strong academic advising

c. Sense of community for learners (social engagement)

d. Self- advocacy and determination
e. Prioritizing education

f. Understanding instructors with a willingness to mentor

The following examples illustrate these supports for students:


Respondent 15: “I believe childcare would be very beneficial to students”

Respondent 16: “They don’t encourage us to use them, which is good, one is supposed to take actions for thyself.”

Respondent 17: “They are all important”

Respondent 18: “Tutoring program is really important because it helps you a lot with your doubts or questions you might have. Also counseling program is important because it your guide through academic processes more if you are a freshmen in college.”

Respondent 19: “Tutoring center, extra clubs, sports, student organizations, friend building organizations”

Respondent 20: “Advising, you want to keep track of your classes you need to take and make sure you’re in the right class.”

Respondent 21: “Financial aid helps ease your mind”

Respondent 22: “Distractions shouldn’t be implemented if there is goals at such age.”

Respondent 23: “I feel very important because I get to work around my class schedule. It is important to balance out work and school.”

Respondent 24: “I feel that many of the professors here are good at meeting student needs and going out of their way to help.”
Respondent 25: “Professors having a connection with their students helps the student have better learning skills”

Respondent 26: “The professors are motivating me to succeed in the degree program that I am trying to achieve.”

Respondent 27: “I’m sure there are capable of being mentors; some students may not approach teacher/faculty with that idea in mind.”

Respondent 28: “One is encouraged if they want to be somebody.”

**Research Question Two**

Respondents indicated that the primary barriers to program completion are

a. Time management

b. Poor Interactions with Faculty

c. Complexity of processes

d. Lack of concern for students’ need

The following examples illustrate these barriers for students:

Respondent 1: “To me personally financial aid and computer services are more important than other because that’s what I need assistance in the most in my daily school life.”

Respondent 2: “I feel that financial aid/loan assistance is very important. I wouldn’t be able to pay for classes/textbooks w/out it.”

Respondent 3: “Financial aid is a big one, it’s quite confusing and time consuming so that is a big of help on HCC staff.”

Respondent 4: “Academic counseling and that it’s done right. Stuff isn’t taken serious here when you try dealing with classes and issues. Counselors/people make it hard.”
Respondent 5: “I think all professors should be pretty versed in all around areas. I’ve had some bad teachers here at HCC.”

Respondent 6: “I am part-time because I have a disabled family member to take care of.”

Respondent 7: “Providing for my children is important”

Respondent 8: “I work and attend school so it could get stressful.”

Respondent 9: “Most of my professors don’t match my learning style which is a major struggle because I feel as if I have to put in twice as much work in understanding than I have to”

Respondent 10: “I believe some professors just give work without thoroughly explaining”

Respondent 11: “Some professors lack on some of the personal traits mentioned in statements 67-77”

Respondent 12: “Same as some students, some professors speak foreign languages and English isn’t their first language.”

Respondent 13 “Not all teachers encourage you to these ideas. Some just do their job and nothing more or nothing less.”

**Research Question Three**

Program completion across all demographic groups is vital to the future economic success of the state (Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, 2015). According to Nora and Rendon (1990), student retention and recruitment is a phenomenon affected by intrinsic, extrinsic, and institutional influences. A key significant influencer to credential attainment is time. According to Complete College America (2014), the longer a student spends enrolled in a community college program without amassing the requisite credits to attain a credential the less likely they are to complete program. I was pleased to find that
59.6% of respondents had been enrolled at the community college less than a year, and an additional 24.6% had been enrolled less than two years. Only 15.9% of respondents were enrolled at the community college for more than two years and had not attained a credential. It may be reasonable to assume that these findings can be attributed to a recent enrollment policy change which requires academically under-prepared students to enroll in the remedial course early in their academic career. Responses also indicated that being a first generation student did not have a statistically significant impact on student engagement.

In addition to the length of time enrolled in a community college program, respondents’ survey responses indicated that stronger financial aid programs, advising services, tutoring centers, and mentoring programs provide support for their program completion. These findings align with the responses above. Additionally, these responses were aligned with areas of student need that the institution is currently implementing processes to address. According to Houston, Eugeni, and Waxman, (2006a) the broad mission of Texas community colleges is to address the learning needs of the “whole student.” Community Colleges in Texas should provide services that meet the cognitive and non-cognitive developmental needs of traditional and non-traditional students.

**Summary**

The findings of research questions one and two indicated that at Houston Community College’s Central Campus academically under-prepared students of any race identified similar supports for and barriers to on-time program completion. The primary supports for on-time community college program completion identified by the students
included engaged faculty and robust, holistic wrap-around services. Conversely, the primary barriers to on-time community college program completion identified by the students included financial burden, complex processes, and disengaged staff. Additionally, students identified time management and faculty with little pedagogical knowledge as barriers to on-time program completion.

To further investigate respondents’ perceptions regarding supports for and barriers to on-time community college program completion, responses to Likert scaled questions focusing on student engagement were analyzed.

The concepts of student engagement were divided into four categories:

1. Support for Learners- engagement efforts that capture students from the moment of their first interactions with campus personnel.
2. Competing Priorities- the commitment to work and family which limits time spent on campus.
3. Community College Faculty- students’ perceptions of cognitive and personal traits of community college faculty.
4. Academic Challenge- Student’s ability to respond to high academic expectations for them.

Category 1, support for learners, addressed all student services that are offered at the community college campus. Respondents at Houston Community College’s Central Campus typically had high aggregated scores in each area.

In category 2, competing priorities, less than half (46%) of the respondents indicated that they were enrolled part-time and many respondents (64%) work more than 20 hours per week.
Category 3, community college faculty, gave insight to respondents’ perceptions of cognitive and personal traits of community college faculty. Responses indicated that most of the students, more than 75% in most cases believed that the professors at their community college possess subject matter expertise, sympathy for student’s needs, strong communication skills, flexibility, organizational skills, positive attitudes, and willingness to mentor students.

The vast majority of students reported experiences a high degree of academic challenge as well, in category 4. More than half of the respondents indicated that they were encouraged to integrate concepts from different courses, including diverse perspectives regarding race, religion, gender, political beliefs, etc. and self-examine personal strengths and weaknesses on views.

Responses to questions about the length of time enrolled in a community college program, and open-ended questions relating to student engagement were evaluated to address research question three. The findings indicated that over half of the respondents were completing developmental course work in their first year of enrollment. Additionally, less than 25% of the respondents had been enrolled in a community college program for more than two years and being a first-generation student did not have a statistically significant impact on student engagement at Houston Community College’s Central Campus.

In Chapter V, I provide discussion, recommendations, and conclusion for the findings of my study. This includes but is not limited to discussion of the relationship between the students’ responses to barriers to and supports for on-time program completion and the review of the literature.
CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS, AND CONCLUSIONS

Discussion

The purpose of this study will be to describe the perceptions of academically under-prepared African American community college students regarding supports for and barriers to on-time program completion. Additionally, I described their perceptions regarding their recommendations for supports that may increase student persistence and program completion. The findings of this study addressed three research questions:

1. What are the perceptions of academically under-prepared African American community college students regarding supports for program completion?

2. What are the perceptions of academically under-prepared African American community college students regarding barriers to program completion?

3. What are the perceptions of academically under-prepared African American community college students’ recommendations for actions that could be implemented to improve students’ program completion rates?

Respondents answered both Likert scaled items and open-ended questions on a questionnaire. These responses were analyzed to provide additional background information to address research questions one, two, and three. Responses to open-ended questions allowed respondents to share their perceptions and views on supports for and barriers to on-time community college program completion. The Likert scaled items included responses to the length of time students were enrolled in community college
programs, student engagement, first-generation college student status, and demographic questions.

The participants in this study were selected from the population of full-time community college students that were enrolled in select developmental courses at Houston Community College’s Central Campus. Surveys were distributed to each student enrolled in randomly selected sections of these developmental courses by selecting every other section listed in the college’s course schedule. 106 surveys were distributed, and 58 respondents returned the survey.

Of the 58 participants, 30 self-identified as African American; these students were the primary focus of my study. The criteria for selection included enrollment in developmental coursework and self-identification as African American. Students responded to a questionnaire titled, *Supports for and Barriers to Program Completion for Underprepared African American Students Enrolled in Community College Questionnaire*. This questionnaire was adapted from a similar survey used by Davilla (2011) in his study related to supports for and barriers to program completion for Hispanic students. The survey served to prompt the respondents’ thoughts regarding supports for and barriers to on-time program completion that they experienced during their time in community college. Also, the questionnaire allowed respondents to make recommendations for additional supports that may lead to increased student persistence and program completion. Information from students at this campus may be beneficial to administrators at community college as they develop programs to meet the needs of students.
Research Question One

The first research question focused on the perceptions of academically under-prepared African American students regarding supports for on-time community college program completion. In 2007, Shulock and Moore found that full-time attendance, unbroken enrollment, attendance at an orientation, and avoidance of late registration were characteristics that lead to on-time program completion at a community college. Additional research by Tinto (1987), Astin (1993), and Kuh, Kinzie, Schuh, Whitt, and Associates (2005) asserts that procedures, programs, institutional climate and culture, and consistent positive interactions with others are essential to student retention.

Students that participated in this study responded to open-ended questions and Likert scaled questions where they had the opportunity to share their experiences related to supports for on-time community college program completion. The primary supports for on-time community college program completion identified by the respondents describe a need for holistic support services and developing a sense of community for learners (social engagement). The supports for on-time community college program completion aligned with the finding of Davilla’s 2011 study on Hispanic community college students’ perceptions of barriers to and supports for on-time program completion.

Holistic Support Services

African American culture is different than that of the majority; many African American students have familial responsibilities and expectations that they are obligated to fulfill (Rendon, 1992). Community College administrators must develop support programs and services that promote the completion agenda and meet the needs of the whole student (Ornelas and Solorzano, 2004). According to Ornelas and Solorzano,
community college administrators, staff, and faculty must actively commit to creating a “college transfer culture” (p. 244). These researchers indicate that this culture is created through bridge programs and other services that the college may offer. Based on the findings of this study, one of the vital support services that students perceived to be supportive was financial aid resources. Traditionally in the community college setting financial aid services for attaining a post-secondary credential came in the form of scholarships or grants. These financial resources are critical to African American students’ ability to afford college (Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, 2015). Houston Community College has undertaken efforts to expand its financial assistance efforts a step farther than traditional means of financial aid and grants. The institution also has a food scholarship program and food pantries. These additional resources assist in helping students meet their basic needs and free up a portion of students’ financial resources to be used in other areas. This undertaking supports the idea of establishing a culture of for college transfer, by assisting students in meeting their lowest level of need so that students can focus their efforts on the higher domains of need (Ornelas and Solorzano, 2004).

The family orientation of African American culture places responsibility for supporting the household on college students when their parents are not able to fully make ends meet. This cultural norm often times can conflict with a student’s ability to be successful in college but based on the findings of this study the vast majority of students are enrolled full-time while also having competing priorities. Houston Community College has multiple sessions within a sixteen-week semester. These shorter sessions allow students to enroll in four-week, eight-week, ten-week, and sixteen-week courses.
These varying and subsequent sessions enable students to attain more credits in one semester than they would be able to attain if they were enrolled in a traditional sixteen-week course.

**Community for Learners (Social Engagement)**

According to Winfield (1994), to ensure the academic success of underserved student populations institutions must provide social support. Zuniga and Nagda (1993) recommended students from different ethnic groups should engage in an open dialog to work through preconceived feelings and misperceptions. Institutions must provide opportunities for students to develop a sense of community among others who desire to learn; according to Tinto (1987), activities such as orientation and transition programs, small learning communities, and structured first-year core course scheduling may help inhibit early departure from community colleges. These findings held true for non-traditional and underserved students who have non-academic responsibilities that typically keep them away from traditional student activities programming in college (Tinto, 1987).

**Research Question Two**

The second research question focused on the perceptions of academically under-prepared community college students regarding barriers to on-time program completion. Respondents identified these primary barriers to program completion are time management and weak faculty interactions. Other barriers that were identified were financial burdens and complex institutional processes, lack of concern for students’ need.
Time Management

To answer this research question students’ responses to questions related to their competing priorities and demands on their time. Responses to these questions indicated a need to address time management issues that may arise during a student’s academic career. Responses indicated that for students to successfully manage the demands on them in the classroom, they had to prioritize their education and take responsibility for completing their assignments. These findings also aligned with Davilla (2011) but differed as it relates to the number and timing of courses. As mentioned earlier the institution has implemented structured scheduled and multiple shorter sessions which allows for students to have more flexibility in course scheduling.

Similarly, to Davila (2011), students responses were related to Stage 1 (skills and abilities), and Stage 2 (institutional commitment) of Tinto’s Student Integration Model.

Additionally, students’ responses indicated that a lack of adequate academic advising presented itself as a barrier to time management. Students who do not receive adequate academic advising regarding the combination of course workload and competing priorities may find it more difficult to complete their academic program on time. These findings also align with the work of Edwards (2007). In Edwards’ *Framework for College Student Experiences*, inadequate academic advising that integrates both course advising and workload advising were described as a barrier.

Poor Faculty Interactions

Students’ responses to Likert scaled questions on the survey instrument addressed traits of professors; additionally, students’ responses to open-ended questions were evaluated to identify poor faculty interactions as a potential barrier to on-time program
completion. A couple of respondents made the following remarks about professors at
their campuses:

Respondent 5: “I think all professors should be pretty versed in all around areas. I’ve had
some bad teachers here at HCC.”

Respondent 9: “Most of my professors don’t match my learning style which is a major
struggle because I feel as if I have to put in twice as much work in understanding than I
have to”

Respondent 10: “I believe some professors just give work without thoroughly explaining”

Respondent 11: “Some professors lack on some of the personal traits mentioned in
statements 67-77”

Respondent 12: “Same as some students, some professors speak foreign languages and
English isn’t their first language.”

Respondent 13 “Not all teachers encourage you to these ideas. Some just do their job and
nothing more or nothing less.”

Based on these students’ responses, there are various traits or qualities that
professors possess that may impact students’ ability to complete academic programs on-
time. According to Phillips (2005), there are traits and qualities that professors possess
that impact the classroom climate and student success. Maintaining a positive classroom
environment is key in supporting students through their academic programs and feeling
ensuring that students feel included in the class. Quality faculty interactions are
beneficial to the learning experience of students (Phillips, 2005); this research supports
the idea that faculty mentoring opportunities are a means in which faculty and students
may develop meaningful relationships. These interactions have the potential to involve
the collaboration between faculty and students in research projects, presentations, or summer internship programs as many times faculty at the community college level in workforce programs have extensive backgrounds in the industry related to the area that they teach. Additional supporting research was completed by Gallien and Peterson (2005). These researchers created a list of qualities that professors must possess to create the ideal learning environment:

1. caring attitude;
2. possessing a feeling of responsibility for student success
3. relating course material to students’ cultural backgrounds
4. possessing a passion, enthusiasm, and mastering of course content.

Additionally, Slate, LaPrairie, Schulte, and Onwuegbuzie (2011) conducted research that identified the following characteristics of effective college faculty members:

1. knowledgeable
2. understanding
3. communication
4. teaches well
5. caring
6. organized
7. flexibility
8. positive attitude
9. patience
10. experience in the classroom
11. fair
12. helping
13. respectful
14. open-minded
15. builds relationships
16. passion for the job
17. service
18. makes learning interesting
19. uses different modalities
20. fun
21. motivating
22. intelligent
23. involving students
24. being available
25. friendly
26. connects with real world
27. listening
28. creativity
29. challenges students

Based on the findings of this research, professors who lack these characteristics and who have poor interactions with the students in the classroom may be perceived as a barrier to students on-time program completion.
Other Barriers to Community College On-time Program Completion

Many other barriers that students may face exist that may not have been mentioned by students that participated in this study. Cultural barriers such as social conflict with the majority culture in the United States (Carter, 2005). Additionally, Carter (2005) states that there are gender issues that may arise from the cultural difference of African American students. Carter (2005) posed that females tend to be risk-averse and mature quicker than men, but men are subject to cultural, financial, educational, familial, social, physiological, and emotional stressors that may adversely impact their academic achievement.

Additional research supports that gender expectations may have a negative influence on academic success for males. In summary, the concepts surrounding student retention phenomena are complex but can be impacted by individual characteristics, institutional characteristics, and external influencers (Astin, 1984; Nora & Rendon, 1990; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005; Tinto, 1993).

Research Question Three

Community Colleges across the country have engaged in a wide variety of efforts to retain students from all demographics. Some of these efforts include implementing policy changes, facilitating access to courses at non-traditional times, and partnering with the marketplace (Dougherty, Reid, & Neinhusser, 2006). In this study, respondents answered questions gave their perceptions on recommendations for supports for on-time community college program completion. Their responses indicated that institutions could take the following actions to support their success further:

1. stronger financial aid programs
2. stronger advising services
3. stronger tutoring centers
4. stronger mentoring programs

The college has engaged in practices that are consistent with the aforementioned research. The responses related to this research question suggest that the institution may consider focusing its efforts on scaling the services currently available and ensuring that students are aware of all the services that are available to support them. Additionally, based on the findings of this research the institution may consider expanding opportunities for faculty to increase their pedagogical knowledge and training around how to actively engage students in their learning. According to Dougherty (2001), a renewed focus in these areas may support students in on-time program completion.

**Recommendations for Future Research**

The findings of this study gave a voice to the lived experiences of academically under-prepared African American students at Houston Community College’s Central Campus, and this study revealed factors that may be barriers to and supports for community college program completion for these students. Community colleges are organizations that play a vital role in the future success and economic sustainability of our state. They have a powerful economic impact in Texas and across the United States. With this in mind, the following recommendations for future research are made:

1. Explore the perceptions of barriers to and supports for the on-time community college program completion of a larger population of African American community college graduates
2. Explore the differences in perceptions of barriers to and supports for the on-time community college program completion of African American students enrolled at a campus where minority students outnumber the traditional minority against those of a campus where the traditional majority outnumber the minority.

3. Explore the difference in perceptions among genders regarding supports for and barriers to on-time program completion.

4. Conduct a longitudinal study so that the relationship between student and faculty engagement and attainment of students’ educational goals can be better understood.

**Conclusions**

The economics and demographic make-up of the state continue to shift, but the primary mission for community colleges remains consistent and remains important. Community College ultimately exists to meet the diverse needs of students as they work towards attaining a post-secondary credential. Community Colleges have been characterized as the institution of choice for a disproportionate number of poor, working class, first generation, non-traditional, and minority students (Hennessy and Evans, 2006). At the heart of the mission of these institutions is a belief that they are equipped to provide a liberating educational experience to a community of learners as diverse as the spectrum of our society. As our country continues to become more diverse and more minority students enter the doors of our nation’s community colleges in hopes of attaining a credential that supports their professional growth, it becomes vital that we work to remove the barriers that lime access, persistence, and attainment.
Based on responses from students in my study, Houston Community College’s Central Campus has done great work to take steps towards removing barriers and maximizing opportunities for the success of minority students. This work has addressed the needs of many individual students and the complexities of being situated in one of the most diverse cities in the country. I hope that the findings of this study provide evidence of the work that has already been done and a benchmark for opportunities for continued improvement and additional services that can be put in place to support the under-served. Additionally, it is imperative that community college faculty members and professional staff be afforded ongoing professional development opportunities to understand how to serve better the under-skilled students that dare to engage the campus. This training must include cultural competency and effective teaching practices. If community college practitioners can hold fast to the mission that guides these institutions community colleges and their graduates will be a driving force in expanding our local and global economy.
REFERENCES


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APPENDIX A

June 25, 2017

To Whom It May Concern,

I give permission for John R. Harrell II, a doctoral student in the Educational Leadership Department at Houston Baptist University, Texas to modify and use my survey instrument published in my dissertation titled, “Supports for and Barriers to On-Time Graduation as Perceived African American Undergraduate Students at Historically Black Colleges and Universities and Historically White Colleges and Universities”.

Sincerely,

Dr. Jennifer T. Edwards,
Assistant Vice-President for Student Success and Multicultural Initiatives
Associate Professor of Communication Studies
Tarleton State University
APPENDIX B

7/6/2017

Re: Permission to Use and Modify Instrument and Model/figure

From: davila a <pharmacy1226@yahoo.com>
To: John R. Harrell II, MBA <jharrellii@aol.com>
Subject: Re: Permission to Use and Modify Instrument and Model/figure
Date: Wed, Jun 28, 2017 9:21 am

Dr. Harrell

I grant you permission to use and modify instrument and model/figure for your dissertation.

Thanks
Abel Davila, RPh, Ed.D

Sent from my iPhone

On Jun 27, 2017, at 4:47 PM, John R. Harrell II, MBA <jharrellii@aol.com> wrote:

Greetings Dr. Edwards,

My name is John R. Harrell II, and I am a doctoral student at Houston Baptist University under the supervision of Dr. Dianne Reed. I am writing you to receive permission to use and modify your survey instrument as well as one of your models in your dissertation titled, “Hispanic Community College Students’ Perceptions of Barriers to and Supports for On-time Program Completion.”

I will use your model and instrument to derive my theoretical framework and my survey instrument for my dissertation “Academically Under-Prepared African American Community College Students’ Perceptions of Supports for and Barriers to Success and Completion.” If you are willing to allow me to use and modify your resources, please respond with a letter stating such. If you need any additional information, please feel free to contact me using the contact information below.

John R. Harrell II, MBA - (337) 424-1355
Houston Baptist University Class of 2016
B.B.A. - Stephen F. Austin State University Class of 2011
“If you can Change the way you Think, you can Change Your Life”
APPENDIX C

Supports for and Barriers to Program Completion for Underprepared African American Students Enrolled in Community College Questionnaire

I am requesting your participation in my study, *Under-prepared African American Community College Students’ Perceptions of Supports for and Barriers to Program Completion*, which is the topic of my dissertation for the Doctor of Education Degree in Executive Educational Leadership from Houston Baptist University.

Your participation in completing this questionnaire is voluntary. The purpose of my study is to describe Hispanic community college students’ perceptions regarding supports for and barriers to on-time program completion. In addition, I will describe African American community college students’ perceptions regarding recommendations for supports that may increase student retention and program completion.

The information collected will be held strictly confidential and no identifiers will be linked to you. The data collected may be published or presented as a compilation of data from several respondents. No specific identifiers of participants will appear on any report. Your participation is greatly appreciated.

John R. Harrell II, MBA,
Doctoral Student, Cohort 1, Executive Educational Leadership, Houston Baptist University

Part I - Demographic Data

Please mark an X for the answers that best describe you:

1. **Gender:** ____Male ____Female

2. **Age:** ____ 18-24 ____ 25-30 ____ 31-35
   ____ 36-40 ____ 41-45 ____ 46-50
   ____ 51-55 ____ older than 55

3. **Race:** ____ African American (Non-Hispanic) ____ Caucasian
   ____ Hispanic ____ Asian ____ Pacific Islander
   ____ American Indian (People of the First Nations)
   ____ Bi-racial/Multi-racial ____________________________

5. **Years of Community College Attendance:**
   ____ 1 ____ 2 ____ 3 ____ 4 ____ 5 ____ more than 5
6. Name of program that you are currently enrolled
______________________________________.

7. Are you the first in your family to attend college:
   _____Yes       _____No
Part III - Concepts of Supports for and Barriers to Program Completion

Using a Likert Scale (1-4), please circle the number that represents how the concepts of *supports for and barriers to program completion* best describe your experiences at your community college.

**SUPPORT FOR LEARNERS**- engagement efforts that capture students from the moment of their first interactions with campus personnel.

8. I use academic advising/planning services often.
   1 2 3 4
   strongly disagree disagree agree strongly agree

9. I use academic advising/planning services occasionally.
   1 2 3 4
   strongly disagree disagree agree strongly agree

10. I use academic advising/planning services rarely.
    1 2 3 4
    strongly disagree disagree agree strongly agree

11. Academic advising/planning services are very important.
    1 2 3 4
    strongly disagree disagree agree strongly agree

17. Academic advising/planning services are not important.
    1 2 3 4
    strongly disagree disagree agree strongly agree

18. I use career counseling services often.
    1 2 3 4
    strongly disagree disagree agree strongly agree

19. I use career counseling services occasionally.
    1 2 3 4
    strongly disagree disagree agree strongly agree

20. I use career counseling services rarely.
    1 2 3 4
    strongly disagree disagree agree strongly agree

21. Career counseling services are important.
    1 2 3 4
    strongly disagree disagree agree strongly agree
22. **Career counseling services are not important.**
   1 2 3 4
   strongly disagree disagree agree strongly agree

23. **I use job placement assistance services often.**
   1 2 3 4
   strongly disagree disagree agree strongly agree

24. **I use job placement assistance services occasionally.**
   1 2 3 4
   strongly disagree disagree agree strongly agree

25. **I use job placement assistance services rarely.**
   1 2 3 4
   strongly disagree disagree agree strongly agree

26. **Job placement services are important.**
   1 2 3 4
   strongly disagree disagree agree strongly agree

27. **Job placement services are not important.**
   1 2 3 4
   strongly disagree disagree agree strongly agree

28. **I use peer or other tutoring services often.**
   1 2 3 4
   strongly disagree disagree agree strongly agree

29. **I use peer or other tutoring services occasionally.**
   1 2 3 4
   strongly disagree disagree agree strongly agree

30. **I use peer or other tutoring services rarely.**
   1 2 3 4
   strongly disagree disagree agree strongly agree

31. **Peer or other tutoring services are important.**
   1 2 3 4
   strongly disagree disagree agree strongly agree

32. **Peer or other tutoring services are not important.**
   1 2 3 4
   strongly disagree disagree agree strongly agree
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Scale</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I use skill labs (writing, math, etc.) services often.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4</td>
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<tr>
<td>strongly disagree disagree agree strongly agree</td>
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<tr>
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<td>strongly disagree disagree agree strongly agree</td>
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<td>strongly disagree disagree agree strongly agree</td>
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<tr>
<td>Skill labs (writing, math, etc.) services are important.</td>
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<td>strongly disagree disagree agree strongly agree</td>
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<tr>
<td>Skill labs (writing, math, etc.) services are not important.</td>
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<td>strongly disagree disagree agree strongly agree</td>
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<tr>
<td>I use child care services often.</td>
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<tr>
<td>strongly disagree disagree agree strongly agree</td>
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<tr>
<td>I use child care services occasionally.</td>
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<td>strongly disagree disagree agree strongly agree</td>
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<td>Child care services are not important.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4</td>
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<tr>
<td>strongly disagree disagree agree strongly agree</td>
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<tr>
<td>I use financial aid advising services often.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4</td>
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<tr>
<td>strongly disagree disagree agree strongly agree</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Question</td>
<td>Scale</td>
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<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
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<tr>
<td>44. I use financial aid advising services occasionally.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>strongly disagree disagree agree strongly agree</td>
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<tr>
<td>45. I use financial aid advising services rarely.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4</td>
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<tr>
<td>strongly disagree disagree agree strongly agree</td>
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<tr>
<td>46. Financial aid advising services are important.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4</td>
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<tr>
<td>strongly disagree disagree agree strongly agree</td>
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<tr>
<td>47. Financial aid advising services are not important.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4</td>
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<tr>
<td>strongly disagree disagree agree strongly agree</td>
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<tr>
<td>48. I use computer lab services often.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4</td>
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<tr>
<td>strongly disagree disagree agree strongly agree</td>
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<tr>
<td>49. I use computer lab services occasionally.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4</td>
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<tr>
<td>strongly disagree disagree agree strongly agree</td>
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<tr>
<td>50. I use computer lab services rarely.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>strongly disagree disagree agree strongly agree</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>51. Computer lab services are important.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4</td>
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<tr>
<td>strongly disagree disagree agree strongly agree</td>
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<tr>
<td>52. Computer lab services are not important.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4</td>
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<tr>
<td>strongly disagree disagree agree strongly agree</td>
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<tr>
<td>53. I use student organization services often.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4</td>
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<tr>
<td>strongly disagree disagree agree strongly agree</td>
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<tr>
<td>54. I use student organization services occasionally.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4</td>
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<tr>
<td>strongly disagree disagree agree strongly agree</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
55. I use student organization services rarely.
1 2 3 4
strongly disagree disagree agree strongly agree

56. Student organization services are important.
1 2 3 4
strongly disagree disagree agree strongly agree

57. Student organization services are not important.
1 2 3 4
strongly disagree disagree agree strongly agree

58. Use this space to explain any of the responses in this section that you feel are very important.

________________________________________________________________________
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59. I am enrolled in community college classes fulltime.
1 2 3 4
strongly disagree disagree agree strongly agree

60. I am enrolled in community college classes part-time.
1 2 3 4
strongly disagree disagree agree strongly agree

61. I work less than 20 hours per week while attending classes.
1 2 3 4
strongly disagree disagree agree strongly agree

62. I work more than 20 hours per week while attending classes.
1 2 3 4
strongly disagree disagree agree strongly agree
63. I work 40 hours per week while attending classes.
1 2 3 4
strongly disagree disagree agree strongly agree

64. I spend less than 11 hours per week caring for dependents while attending classes.
1 2 3 4
strongly disagree disagree agree strongly agree

65. I spend 11 or more hours per week caring for dependents while attending classes.
1 2 3 4
strongly disagree disagree agree strongly agree

66. Use this space to explain any of the responses in this section that you feel are very important.

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COMMUNITY COLLEGE FACULTY - students’ perceptions of cognitive and personal traits of community college faculty.

67. Professors of my classes are knowledgeable.
1 2 3 4
strongly disagree disagree agree strongly agree

68. Professors of my classes employ instructional strategies which match my learning style.
1 2 3 4
strongly disagree disagree agree strongly agree

69. Professors of my classes are sympathetic regarding students’ academic and personal needs.
1 2 3 4
strongly disagree disagree agree strongly agree
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Rating</th>
<th>1: Strongly disagree</th>
<th>2: Disagree</th>
<th>3: Agree</th>
<th>4: Strongly agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>70. Professors of my classes exhibit strong communication skills.</td>
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<tr>
<td>71. Professors of my classes are flexible.</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>72. Professors of my classes are organized.</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>73. Professors of my classes exhibit strong communication skills.</td>
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<tr>
<td>74. Professors of my classes exhibit positive attitudes.</td>
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<tr>
<td>75. Professors of my classes are fair.</td>
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<tr>
<td>76. Professors of my classes are respectful.</td>
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<tr>
<td>77. Professors of my classes mentor students.</td>
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<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

78. Use this space to explain any of the responses in this section that you feel are very important.

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ACADEMIC CHALLENGE- high academic expectations for students.

79. I am encouraged to put together ideas or concepts from different courses when completing assignments or during class discussion.
   1 strongly disagree 2 disagree 3 agree 4 strongly agree

80. I am encouraged to include diverse perspectives (different, races, religions, genders, political beliefs, etc.) in class discussion or assignments.
   1 strongly disagree 2 disagree 3 agree 4 strongly agree

81. I am encouraged to examine the strengths and weaknesses of my own views on a topic or issue.
   1 strongly disagree 2 disagree 3 agree 4 strongly agree

82. I am encouraged to try to better understand someone else’s views by imagining how an issue looks from others’ perspectives.
   1 strongly disagree 2 disagree 3 agree 4 strongly agree

83. I learned something that changed my viewpoint about an issue or concept.
   1 strongly disagree 2 disagree 3 agree 4 strongly agree

84. I am encouraged to analyze the basic elements of an idea, theory, or experience.
   1 strongly disagree 2 disagree 3 agree 4 strongly agree

85. I am encouraged to synthesize and organize ideas, information, or experiences in new ways.
   1 strongly disagree 2 disagree 3 agree 4 strongly agree

86. I am encouraged to make judgments about the value or soundness of information, arguments, or methods.
   1 strongly disagree 2 disagree 3 agree 4 strongly agree
| I am encouraged to apply theories or concepts to practical problems or in new situations. |
|---------------------------------------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|
| 1 strongly disagree                        | 2 disagree           | 3 agree              | 4 strongly agree     |

| I am encouraged to use information I have read or heard to perform a new skill. |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|
| 1 strongly disagree                        | 2 disagree           | 3 agree              | 4 strongly agree     |

89. Use this space to explain any of the responses in this section that you feel are very important.

________________________________________________________________________
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Thank you for participating in this study. Please return the survey to John R. Harrell II at 4040 Synott Rd., 1203, Houston, TX 77082. Please note that the return of this survey signifies informed consent on the part of the respondent.
Date: July 20, 2017
To: John Harrell
From: Institutional Review Board Committee
RE: Notification of IRB Action

Protocol Title: Academically Under-Prepared African American Community College Students’ Perceptions of Supports for and Barriers to Program Completion

This memorandum is notification that the project referenced above has been reviewed and APPROVED as indicated in Federal regulatory statutes 45CFR46.

PLEASE NOTE:
Upon Approval, the research team is responsible for conducting the research as stated in the exempt application reviewed by the IRB which shall include using the most recently submitted Informed Consent/Assent Forms (Information Sheet) and recruitment materials.

Any changes to the application may cause this project to require a different level of committee review.
Should any changes need to be made, please submit a Modification Form.

Taiya Fabre
Dr. Taiya Fabre
Chair, Institutional Review Board Committee
John R. Harrell II, MBA
Dallas, TX | jharrellii@aol.com | (337) 424-1355

Curriculum Vitae

Professional Profile & Areas of Expertise

A decade of experience in higher education yielding expertise in enrollment management, student services, advising, student information systems implementation and management (PeopleSoft, Banner, and Colleague), productivity suites (MS Office, QuickBooks, Adobe), classroom/online instruction, data-based decision making, and program assessment

Passionate education advocate with a track record for driving regulatory and standards compliance, directing enrollment management programs, and guiding initiatives to promote student growth, academic guided pathways, and program completion

Promotes coalitions across department and division lines to build top-performing teams, drive systemic change, and cultivate a transparent focus on eliminating barriers to educational equity and student success

- Transformational Leadership & Business Management
- Enrollment Management & Guided Pathways
- Strategic Planning Integration
- Facilitation of Learning Styles
- Process/Program Development
- Organization & Collaboration

Education

May 2019  Ed.D, Executive Educational Leadership  Houston Baptist University
August 2016  MBA, Business Management  Houston Baptist University
December 2011  BBA, Business Management with a Minor Corporate Communication  Stephen F. Austin State University

Teaching Experience

Adjunct Instructor – Business Administration  January 2017 - Present
Houston Community College - Business Center of Excellence  Houston, TX

Primarily responsible for teaching Business Management and Human Resources Management undergraduate courses. Plan, organize, teach, and provide feedback to promote and direct student learning in keeping with the college’s learning-centered values and in a manner that meets the essential competencies of a successful educator.

Selected Accomplishments & Responsibilities:

- Adeptly builds positive, proactive, and professional relationships with students in order to promote retention and foster educational community networks and provides one-on-one advising and feedback sessions
- Develops and manages the class syllabus and ensuring that the syllabus meets objectives and standards
- Creates an effective learning environment through the use of a variety of instructional methods
- Moderates classroom discussions on subjects such as four key functions of management, effective leadership, and communication
- Assists students in development of research and critical thinking skills and advise them on the diverse ways to approach content
- Successfully completed HCC's Online Instructor Training Certification (16 clock hour continuing education program for faculty)
- Successfully completed HCC’s Adjunct Teaching Academy (32 clock hour continuing education program for adjunct faculty)

Courses Taught

Supervision- (3 SCH) A study of the role of the supervisor. Managerial functions as applied to leadership, counseling, motivation, and human skills are examined.

Principles of Management- (3 SCH) Concepts, terminology, principles, theories, and issues in the field of management.

Human Resources Training and Development- (3 SCH). An overview of the human resource development function specifically concentrating on the training and development component. Topics include training as related to organizational mission and goals; budgeting; assessment; design, delivery, evaluation, and justification of training. Included are new trends in training, including distance and virtual education.

Human Relations- (3 SCH). Practical application of the principles and concepts of the behavioral sciences to interpersonal relationships in the business and industrial environment.

Human Resources Management- (3 SCH). Behavioral and legal approaches to the management of human resources in organizations.

Organizational Behavior- (3 SCH). The analysis and application of organizational theory, group dynamics, motivation theory, leadership concepts and the integration of interdisciplinary concepts from the behavioral sciences.
Professional Experience

Assistant Director of Academic Testing  
University of North Texas as Dallas  
April 2019 - Present  
Dallas, TX

The Assistant Director of Testing is responsible for leading the staff, budget, activities and initiatives of the testing center, and the Texas Success Initiative in order to meet student assessment and placement needs and to track relevant data. The Assistant Director strives to maintain a testing environment that is supportive of all students, faculty, and staff, and ensures that tests are administered fairly and consistently. In addition, the Assistant Director functions as a TSI advisor, and is responsible to stay abreast of Texas laws and policies regarding developmental education courses and placement.

Selected Accomplishments & Responsibilities:
- Serves as day-to-day supervisor for professional and student testing center staff regarding training, professional development and performance related matters.
- Overall administration of university testing including TSI, Accuplacer, CLEP, classroom testing, placement exams, and non-UNT proctored testing.
- Coordinates with English and Math faculty on changes to TSI courses, and ensures proper administration of TSI courses.
- Submits annual DEPS report detailing institution’s developmental education program.
- Coordinates with Office of Strategic Analysis and Reporting on completion of CBM002 report.
- Reviews TSI scores and assessment information with students to determine course placement and plan for success in meeting TSI requirements.
- Engages in pro-active outreach to students enrolled in remediation, to help ensure accomplishment of Academic Success Plan.
- Provides ongoing diagnostic reports to Director of Academic Advising & Student Success on the status of the TSI program and participating students.
- Plans and develops new and relevant testing programs and opportunities.
- Determines testing appointment schedule for academic and proctored exams.

University Testing Services Coordinator  
University of Houston – Central  
August 2018 – March 2019  
Houston, TX

In collaboration with the Director of Educational Testing Services oversees the day to day operations of the Educational Testing Services (ETS) department; ETS is a large university department providing various testing and assessment services for 43,000 FTE students.

Selected Accomplishments & Responsibilities:
- Coordinates the daily operations of University Testing Services, including supervision of staff.
- Recruits and trains proctors to administer tests for examinees with special accommodations.
- Coordinates scheduling of facilities and personnel of all tests.
- Assists with program evaluation, grant writing, and the research and design of test validations.
- Assists Director with reviewing and evaluating contracts to provide testing services.
- Consults with faculty regarding credit by exam, placement and institutional admissions test programs.

President  
Texas Association of Collegiate Testing Personnel  
November 2016 – November 2018  
Houston, TX

Serves as the chair of the Board of Directors and oversees the development and execution of the organization’s strategic plan.

Selected Accomplishments & Responsibilities:
- Procured branded materials for resale (Generated $6000+ in revenue and balanced the organization’s annual conference budget).
- Serves as committee chair on an ad hoc committee to revise the association’s bylaws and strategic plan.
- Serves as liaison with the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board regarding changes to college readiness policies that will impact the enrollment and advising of students across the state.
- Serves as liaison with the Texas Education Agency regarding updates to the national GED student information tracking system.
- Makes recommendations on policy changes to test vendors, government agencies, colleges, and universities state-wide.
- Serves as chair of the financial oversight committee and conducts an annual certification of income and expenditures.
- Increased vendor and constituent involvement in the annual state assessment conference.
Manager responsible for overseeing the day to day operations of a multi-faceted academic testing center serving 19,000 students.

Selected Accomplishments & Responsibilities:

- Provided oversight of all day-to-day operations of the testing center, and worked with other enrollment management department supervisors to develop and update services, policies, and procedures in response to changing demands and student data
- Investigated incidents of student misconduct or irregularities while testing and attempted to provide a resolution; filed formal reports of student misconduct or violations to the student code of conduct through Maxient software
- Advised students of testing requirements, center policies, required testing materials, and preparation materials that promote successful test taking
- Developed and made recommendations for programs which support the retention and enrollment of students in college level coursework; negotiated contracts for four 3rd party testing programs generating $100,000+ annually in additional revenue
- Trained, mentored, scheduled and directed the work of other Testing Center staff (11 staff), including hiring and supervising full-time, part-time, and work-study personnel
- Through a collaborative budgeting process, assisted student service leadership in managing a division budget totaling over $3 Million with direct oversight of testing departmental budgets totally over $250,000 annually
- Originator of an Intercollateral Agreement between HCC and the Harris County Sheriff’s Office for the delivery of GED exams in the Harris County Jail
- Partnered with ADA counselors and Instructional Services to develop a new business process and workflow for administering classroom exams with ADA accommodations which minimized the institution’s susceptibility to formal complaints under the American’s with Disabilities Act and increased student awareness
- Coordinated updates to the student information system with the district office and information technology department
- Served as the designated GED and TSI administrator, followed federal and state regulations, and ensured compliance with regulations and test security at the college level
- Served as an enrollment management representative on an Open Educational Resources & Z Degree committee ($300,000 grant)
- Observed college, state/federal, and test agency policies and procedures for security/confidentiality of testing records; adhered to FERPA as it relates to testing services
- Maintained security of tests and materials by routinely inventorying materials, reviewing procedures for security, ensuring secure storage and returning all test booklets and related materials to appropriate testing companies
- Maintained testing center statistics including number of people tested, number of tests given, and type of tests. Prepared monthly and annual reports and makes recommendations to the supervisor concerning staffing and programming implications
- Prepared reports related to college readiness and student placement for review by the college and student services leadership
- Provided special proctor services for other departments, outside certification agencies or other colleges

Enrollment Services Associate (Admissions Office Manager) March 2013 – November 2014
Houston Community College – Northwest College
Houston, TX

Primarily responsible for working closely with college officials in managing college enrollment services at a college satellite campus (10,000 FTE students) to include registration, admissions, student records, testing referrals, and compliance of state reporting.

Selected Accomplishments & Responsibilities:

- Worked with campus leads of advising, financial aid, counseling, and student activities to develop business processes that ensure a smooth enrollment process for all students
- Evaluated student’s test scores for placement and advised students on the enrollment process (admissions, advising, FA, etc.)
- Developed a process to streamline application completion and enrollment of dual credit students in workforce certificate and associate degree programs
- Developed, implemented, and communicated revisions to programs/projects for enhancements to the enrollment life cycle
- Worked with deans and faculty to ensure that all class rosters were certified prior to certification deadline for state reporting
- Evaluated students’ applications; approved enrollment related decisions based on application information, counsel students, may grant exceptions to make decisions related to a student’s admissions and/or enrollment status
- Oversaw staff providing in-take services (3 staff): respond to direct requests from individual applicants
- Presented at recruitment and/or student aid and/or enrollment services events for prospective and current students
- Identified and implemented strategic planning of recruitment activities and new outreach initiatives for the college
Executive Administrator
PenteFaith Biblical Studies Institute
Houston, TX

Primarily responsible for the oversight of operations of the Biblical Institute and provide executive level administrative support to CEO/Chancellor.

Selected Accomplishments & Responsibilities:
- Developed and oversaw the enrollment growth plan for the biblical college, advised prospective students on programs offered
- Oversaw departmental budgets for various ministry functional areas and monitored revenue and expenditures of the biblical college
- Oversaw the procurement and management of the biblical college’s student information and billing system
- Managed registration, enrollment, fee payment, and graduation of all students
- Developed and oversaw the execution of the biblical school's strategic plan under the direction of the CEO/Chancellor
- Developed and oversaw the implementation of the biblical schools reporting structure
- Negotiated new business contracts as well as facilitated the expansion of new ministry opportunities
- Oversaw the daily operations of the ministry’s functional areas and provided oversight for 30 employed and volunteer staff

Testing Assistant
Stephen F. Austin State University
Nacogdoches, TX

Reports to the Assistant Director of Testing Services and is responsible for overseeing the administration of high stakes computer based examinations, and assisting in the management of the day to day operations of a multi-faceted university testing center.

Selected Accomplishments & Responsibilities:
- Provided a quality experience to each candidate including providing appropriate accommodations for test takers with disabilities
- Advised students of testing requirements and passing test scores
- Recommended changes to testing business processes that promoted the successful enrollment and retention of incoming students
- Worked with Assistant Director of Testing Services and other departmental colleagues to develop and complete the Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education (CAS) self-assessment guide for successful SACS reaccreditation
- Assisted in developing, maintaining, and evaluating departmental benchmarks and student learning development outcomes
- Assisted the Assistant Director of Testing Services in maintaining departmental funding levels and monitoring operational budgets totaling over $350,000 annually
- Trained and supervised the work of student Testing Assistants and ensured that student Testing Assistants maintained valid proctor certification needed to proctor exams for various test vendors
- Worked with IT to generate new query-based reports that assisted in streamlining New Student Orientation Testing
- Extensively communicated with examinees, university personnel, testing companies, and the general public
- Maintained and ensured the secure storage of sensitive information and testing material

Workshop/Conference Proceedings


Harrell II, J. (2018). Moving the Needle: Driving the Success of African American Students in Community College. Presented at the 2018 Houston Baptist University Teaching and Learning Symposium. Houston, TX


Harrell II, J., & Harris, O. (2016). I'm a New College Test Center Manager, What do I do?. Presented at the 2016 Texas Assessment Conference. Austin, TX
Professional Memberships

- NASPA- Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education
- TACTP- Texas Association of Collegiate Testing Personnel
- NCTA- National College Testing Association
- SERA- Southwest Education Research Association