Spring 2-2016

The Learning Needs of Community College Emerging Scholars

Janet K. Walsh
Lindenwood University

The Learning Needs of Community College Emerging Scholars

by

Janet K. Walsh

A Dissertation submitted to the Education Faculty of Lindenwood University

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the

degree of

Doctor of Education

School of Education

The Learning Needs of Community College Emerging Scholars

by

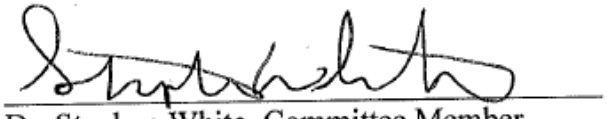
Janet K. Walsh

This dissertation has been approved in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

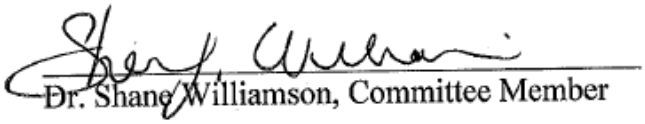
Doctor of Education

at Lindenwood University by the School of Education

Dr. Lynda Leavitt, Dissertation Chair — 2/19/2016 Date



Dr. Stephen White, Committee Member — 2/19/16 Date

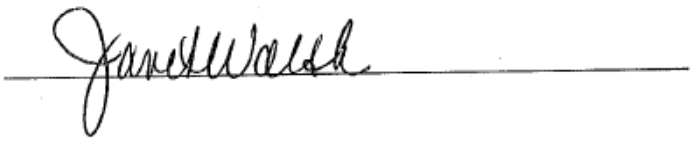


Dr. Shane Williamson, Committee Member — 2/19/16 Date

Declaration of Originality

I do hereby declare and attest to the fact that this is an original study based solely upon my own scholarly work here at Lindenwood University and that I have not submitted it for any other college or university course or degree here or elsewhere.

Full Legal Name: Janet Kay Walsh

Signature:  Date: 2/19/16

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank my dissertation committee chair, Dr. Lynda Leavitt, for her expertise, refreshing and infectious enthusiasm, and constant encouragement throughout this process. I would also like to thank my committee members Dr. Shane Williamson and Dr. Stephen White. Without each of them, the final document would not have been completed and submitted.

I would like to extend my sincere gratitude to the community college that hosted my study and allowed me to interview students. In addition, I am grateful that the study participants responded to the invitation to participate and volunteered for the interviews. Without each of them, this study would not have been possible.

Finally, a special thank you goes to my husband for supporting my education and for all the sacrifices, he made to see me reach my goal.

Abstract

The community college mission has always centered on providing higher education opportunities for all people (American Association of Community Colleges [AACC], 2015a; Bailey, Jaggars, & Jenkins, 2015; Dassance, 2011; Dotzler, 2003; Greenburg, 2008; Schuh, Jones, Harper, & Associates, 2011). However, many students who enrolled at the community college level were not college ready and often required developmental coursework to help bridge the knowledge gap prior to taking college level courses. Unfortunately, those students were unlikely to obtain higher education credentials (Bailey et al., 2015; Carnegie Foundation, 2014). On the other hand, the researcher observed a relatively small number of students who began their community college education at the developmental level, successfully completed the developmental course sequence, completed college level courses, and graduated with a degree while maintaining a high GPA.

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the experiences of those students, identified as Emerging Scholars, at a large Midwestern community college. Through interviews the researcher analyzed the perceptions of Emerging Scholars, specifically, factors perceived as beneficial to success and factors perceived as barriers to success while the student completed a minimum of two required developmental courses, completed a minimum of 24 credit hours of college level coursework, and maintained a 3.5 or higher GPA (on a 4.0 scale).

As expected, the researcher found the concept of success to be complex and multifaceted. However, two key factors emerged as contributing to success: the establishment of a personal goal and positive faculty-student interactions; participants

mentioned both as being a contributor to success. There were six additional factors identified as valuable to success: academic support services offered by the college, specific classes, support from others, motivation to persist, having an internal drive to be successful, and having the necessary skills to be successful. The only barrier to success identified was termed "uncontrollable events" in the lives of study participants.

The data analysis from this study could assist community college leaders as they search for ways to increase the success of students who begin their college at the developmental level and could shed light on the type of support to be offered to students who may be struggling and potentially helpful to all students.

Table of Contents

Acknowledgements i

Abstract ii

List of Tables vii

Chapter One: Introduction 1

Background of the Study 1

Definition of Terms 4

Significance of the Study 6

Purpose of the Study 6

Research Questions 7

Methodology ..... **Error! Bookmark not defined.**

Limitations of the Study 8

Summary 9

Chapter 2: Literature Review 11

Historical Overview of Community Colleges 11

Completion Agenda 15

Performance Funding 16

College Readiness 20

The Developmental Challenge 22

Placement Testing 23

Characteristics of Community College Students 28

Student Success 31

Factors Contributing to Student Success 31

Motivation 33

Support from family and friends 34
Social and academic engagement 34
Faculty-student interaction 36
Personal characteristics 38
High school experience 38
Student behaviors 39
National Initiatives to Support Student Success 40
College initiatives to support student success 43
Early alert systems. 43
New student orientation and student success courses 44
Summary 46
Chapter Three: Methodology 48
Research Study Overview 48
Research Questions 48
Research Setting 48
Study Population and Sample Size 50
Study Participants 51
Study Procedure 57
Interview questions 60
Data Analysis 60
Summary 61
Chapter Four: Presentation of Research Findings 62
Overview 62

Qualitative Data 63
Research question one 63
Research question two 73
Research question three 77
Research question four 85
Research Data Summary 92
Chapter Five: Discussion and Reflection 93
Summary of Findings 94
Discussion 95
Establishment of a goal 95
Positive student interactions with professors 97
Academic support 99
Specific classes 99
Motivation to persist 101
Necessary skills 102
Barriers to success: uncontrollable events 103
Implications 106
Future Research 107
Summary 108
References 110
Appendix A 127
Vitae 129

List of Tables

Table 1. Performance Funding Model Indicators for Five States 18

Table 2. ACT and Compass College Readiness Benchmark Scores and Corresponding College-level Course 26

Table 3. Community College Student Characteristics 29

Table 4. Number of Developmental Courses 50

Table 5. Study Participant Characteristics 52

Table 6. Additional Study Participant Characteristics 53

Table 7 Study Participant High School Experience 55

Table 8. Comparison of PCC Students and Study Participants 56

Table 9. Study Participant Study Time 91

Chapter One: Introduction

Background of the Study

The majority of students entering community colleges were not college ready. According to Melguizo, Koiewicz, Prather, and Bos (2014), 60% of all incoming freshmen at the community college and at the university level were required to take at least one developmental course (p. 691). Adams (2010) reported three out of five community college students need at least one developmental course, and fewer than 25% of students completed a degree within eight years (p. 8). In a study conducted by Kolajo (2010), the average length of time for community college students to complete a degree was 10 semesters when students were required to take one developmental course, and the average rose to eleven semesters when the students were required to take two or more developmental courses (p. 367). Yates (2010) compared graduation rates of students who were required to take at least one developmental education course to those students placed in college-level courses. The results of the study revealed a significant difference in the three-year graduation rate of the two groups; students in the college-level courses were nearly twice as likely to graduate within three years (Yates, 2010, p. 43). Based on this type of data students who tested into one or more developmental courses "face[d] an uphill battle" (Kozeracki, 2005, p. 83).

Many community colleges received an incentive to improve student completion rates and developmental course outcomes through performance funding. Twenty-four states adopted some version of a performance-funding model whereby a public college or university received a portion of state appropriations based on the school's performance on predetermined criteria (Missouri Department of Higher Education, 2014, p. 2). The

performance-funding models encouraged college leaders to be accountable for student outcomes (McKeown-Moak, 2012; Miao, 2012).

According to Martin, Galentino, and Townsend (2014), much of the literature regarding college student persistence focused on "traditional undergraduate students, students aged 18-24 who are enrolled full-time, at 4-year universities-students who are demonstrably different than the majority of students enrolled at community colleges" (p. 223). According to Hagedorn (2006), four-year university students leave their pre-college lives behind as they enter the university setting where as community college students tend to keep the same social circles, employment, and family. Community college students simply add school to their lives (Hagedorn, 2006, p. 9). Nevertheless, Nakajima, Dembo, and Mossler (2012) stated, "Several researchers have investigated community college student persistence. However, variables used in these studies were somewhat limited compared to the four-year institutions" (Nakajima, Dembo, & Mossler, 2012, p. 593). Much of the research concentrated on the student at a four-year university rather than the community college student.

Several qualitative studies focused on the underprepared student. Participants in a study conducted by Barbatis (2010) reported relying heavily on family support and the importance of education as a factor related to persistence. In addition, a "sense of responsibility, goal orientation, resourcefulness, determination, and faith" (Barbatis, 2010, p. 18) were also cited as factors predicting success. Clark (2012) described positive faculty-student interactions as being extremely beneficial to student persistence and indicated a sense of belonging contributed to student persistence.

This research is important for college administrators and professors, particularly those associated with developmental students. Various citations in the literature found strategies used by community college professors increased the success of students enrolled in developmental courses. For example, Fowler and Boylan (2010) found "student success and retention may be achieved if developmental educators also address nonacademic and personal factors related to student success [such as] clear student guidelines, integrating first-year transition coursework, intrusive academic advising…and traditional developmental education coursework and tutoring" (p. 2). Fowler and Boylan (2010) also reported community college students who participated in a pathway to success program, in which students were required to participate in an orientation program and sign a success contract agreeing to meet mandatory advising, tutoring, and attendance requirements, had a significantly better success rate (cumulative GPA, completion of developmental courses, and fall-to-fall retention) than those who did not participate in such a program.

Several studies attempted to explain reasons why some developmental students were successful. Van Ora's study (2012) revealed two main themes presented by students. These were an "intrinsic desire to learn . . . [and] serving as a role model" (Van Ora, 2012, pp. 28-29). Other authors found when students had clear goals they tended to be successful and persist (Martin, Galentino, & Townsend, 2014; Nakajima et al., 2012). Clark (2012) indicated developing confidence through attending classes played a role in helping students "visualize their success and [helped them to] develop the corresponding sense of validation, self-worth, and self-confidence to achieve their educational goal" (p. 516).

The community college mission always centered on providing higher education opportunities for all people. The American Association of Community Colleges (AACC, 2015a) reported, "community colleges have been inclusive institutions that welcome all who desire to learn, regardless of wealth, heritage or previous academic experience" (para. 1). However, the staggering statistics of poor student graduation rates forced community colleges across the nation to make an "attempt to crack the code for retaining and graduating more students" (Pratt, 2015, p. 9). This qualitative study enabled the researcher to listen to 17 student voices at a large Midwestern community college to determine factors beneficial to success and factors hindering success. The participants in this study completed a minimum of two developmental courses and 24 credit hours of college level coursework while maintaining a 3.5 or higher grade point average. These participants defied the odds, and the researcher wanted to find out why.

Definition of Terms

College readiness –"A student who is ready for college and career, can qualify for and succeed in entry-level, credit-bearing college courses leading to a baccalaureate or certificate, or career pathway-oriented training programs without the need for remedial or developmental coursework" (Conley, 2014, p. 1).

Developmental student – "Traditional and nontraditional students who have been assessed as needing to develop their skills in order to be successful in college" (National Center for Developmental Education [NCDE], 2014, para. 3). For purposes of this study the terms developmental and remedial student were used interchangeably.

DE, DR, DM – Abbreviations given to developmental English (DE), developmental reading (DR), and developmental mathematics (DM) courses,

respectively, at the participating institution. For example, DE1 was used to denote the first developmental English course. DE2 was used to denote the second developmental English course, etc.

Elsewhere University – The pseudo name given to any four-year university identified by study participants.

Emerging Scholar – "Students who begin college in two or more developmental courses and have since completed 24 hours of college-level work at a 3.5 GPA" (Public Community College [PCC], 2013, para. 2). In this study, the GPA scale was calculated using a 4.0 scale.

Nontraditional student – A student "aged 25 and above" (Wyatt, 2011, p. 10).

Persistence – "Individual-level goal attainment rather than the institution-level goal of keeping students" (Reason, 2009, p. 660).

Public Community College – The pseudo name given to the participating community college. The pseudo name was abbreviated as PCC. Citations from this institution within the research study document were also abbreviated as PCC.

Remedial student – "Traditional and nontraditional students who have been assessed as needing to develop their skills in order to be successful in college" (NCDE, 2014, para. 3). For purposes of this study, the terms developmental and remedial student were used interchangeably.

Success – "The ability to complete entry-level courses at a level of performance that is sufficient to enable students to continue to the next courses in their chosen field of study" (Conley, 2014, p. 15). For the purpose of this study success was further defined as completing a course with a grade of "C" or higher on a traditional A – F grading scale.

Traditional student – A student "aged 18-24" (Wyatt, 2011, p. 10).

Significance of the Study

The information garnered from this study identified what 17 Emerging Scholars at one Midwestern community college perceived as factors contributing to success and factors hindering success. This information could be helpful to administrators and educators as they examine methods to increase the success of students who begin their college education at a developmental level. In addition, the research could shed light on the type of supports offered to students who may be struggling.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to explore the experiences of Emerging Scholars at a large Midwestern community college. Through one face-to-face interview with each study participant, the researcher analyzed the perceptions of 17 Emerging Scholars, specifically, factors perceived as beneficial to success and factors perceived as barriers to success.

This study developed from the researcher's experience as an educator and administrator in a large community college setting. As the literature suggested, many students seemed to struggle with completing the developmental coursework sequence and succeeding in the first college-level course (Adams, 2010; Gonzalez, 2011; Kozeracki, 2005; Melguizo, Kosiewicz, Prather, & Bos, 2014; Yates, 2010). Unfortunately, research suggested those students were unlikely to obtain higher education credentials (NCDE, 2014). However, the researcher observed a relatively small number of students who were successful and completed developmental courses, college level coursework required for the completion of a degree or certificate, and graduated with a relatively high GPA. As

community college leaders developed initiatives to increase the numbers of students who made it through the developmental sequence, college-level courses, and obtain a degree or certificate, the researcher believed community college educators and administrators should also examine what factors played a role in the success of those students.

The researcher was unable to find recent studies focused on the student who was successful in developmental courses and college-level courses while maintaining a minimum 3.5 or higher GPA. Barbatis (2010) stated, "Developmental education can greatly benefit from continued studies that listen directly to students' voices and perceptions of their own college experiences" (p. 22). McClenney and Arnsparger (2012) argued community college leaders have not listened and "have not taken student voices seriously…as they plan programs and services intended to serve those very people" (p. 3). Arnsparger (2008) stated, "Student voices bring data to life" (p. 41). The intent of this study was to listen to the voices of successful community college students. Through interviews, the researcher listened to student voices, as demonstrated by the research questions, which focused on perceptions of the participants.

Research Questions.

There were four research questions (RQ) that guided the study:

RQ 1: How do Emerging Scholars perceive the community college experience?

RQ 2: How do Emerging Scholars perceive their previous academic experiences?

RQ 3: How do Emerging Scholars perceive the academic supports provided by the community college?

RQ 4: How do Emerging Scholars perceive themselves?

Limitations of the Study

The researcher identified several limitations of the study. First, the participant selection process may have presented a bias. All students who met the Emerging Scholar criteria in the fall 2015 semester at PCC had an equal opportunity to participate in the study by responding to an email invitation to participate. However, the initial number of participants did not meet the researcher's expected number of participants. Potential participants on the Southern campus, and students honored at the Emerging Scholars Banquet on the City campus received a second email. In addition, the researcher mentioned the study to several faculty and staff at the college who in turn may have talked to a few Emerging Scholars encouraging them to participate in the study.

The small number of research participants was a limitation. The total number of Emerging Scholars identified by the participating institution was 251 and 17 volunteered to participate in the study. Although the final sample size of the study was small, the total number fit into the definition of a qualitative study provided by Fraenkel, Wallen, and Hyun (2012) who suggested "in qualitative studies, the number of participants in a sample is usually somewhere between 1 and 20" (p. 103). Limiting the study participant pool to Emerging Scholars limited the opportunity to study all students who began their education with required developmental courses in mathematics, reading, and English.

The researcher's role at the participating institution was another potential limitation. During the time of data collection, the researcher originally served in the role of Dean and later served as the Vice President of Academic Affairs on one of the main campuses. The researcher did not have any direct supervision of research participants nor did the researcher have any teaching responsibilities in the classroom. One of the duties of the

researcher was to hear academic student appeals that rose to the level of the vice president on the campus. During the data collection period and during the entire research study period, there were no academic appeals filed by a student identified as an Emerging Scholar.

Another limitation was the various interview locations. In this study, the participant chose the interview location. The distance between campus locations at PCC varied, with the greatest distance between campuses being 32 miles. For this reason and for the convenience of the study participant, the researcher traveled to the campus location where the student attended classes during the fall 2015 semester.

The recall of personal experiences was also a limitation. Even though each participant was enrolled in at least one course during the fall 2015 interview, the nature of the interview questions relied on the participant's memory of their experiences at PCC during previous semesters.

Finally, the sample demographics were a limitation. Sixteen of the 17 participants were female, three participants identified themselves as international students, 14 participants were non-traditional, and three were traditional students. A sample population with different demographics could have revealed different results.

Summary

"No one formula ensures student success" (Baldwin, Bensimon, Dowd, & Kleiman, 2011, p. 86). Barbatis (2010) stated, "Developmental education can greatly benefit from continued studies that listen directly to students' voices and perceptions of their own college experiences" (p. 22). "Each institution must know the population it serves and develop strategies and plans that complement the political realities and

technical capacities of each state and school" (Baldwin et al., 2011, p. 86). This research study added to the existing body of knowledge through the use of a qualitative approach; listening to student voices to determine factors beneficial to student success as well as barriers to success. In the remaining chapters of the study, the researcher outlined selected research from the literature, described the methodology in greater detail, discussed the study participant responses, identified key factors perceived as contributing to success by study participants, identified key factors perceived as barriers to success, drew conclusions from the study results, and made recommendations for future studies.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

The purpose of this study was to explore the perceptions of community college students who met the Emerging Scholar criteria at a large Midwestern community college, specifically factors that contributed to success and factors that hindered success. McClenney and Arnsparger (2012) stated, "community colleges continue to struggle to improve the success rates of their students. That this is the case is not for lack of effort. Colleges have invested considerable energy and fiscal resources in programs to increase retention and completion" (p. 1). The intent of this study was to listen to the voices of successful community college students.

The review of literature explored various topics related to community college student success. Topics included a historical overview of community colleges, the mission that guided community colleges from their inception, completion and graduation rates, performance funding, college readiness, developmental education, community college student success, lack of success, and selected national initiatives as well as college initiatives designed to improve community colleges outcomes. In addition, the literature review briefly examined Tinto and Cullen's (1973) theoretical model of college student dropout and Locke and Latham's (2002) goal-setting theory. The literature review spanned the past five years; however, the researcher included several scholarly works published beyond the five-year mark as appropriate to the topics discussed.

Historical Overview of Community Colleges

According to Schuh et al. (2011) the colonists opened universities in America "because they believed in and wished to transplant and perfect the English idea of an undergraduate education as a civilizing experience that ensured a progression of

responsible leaders for both church and state" (p. 4). The first university to open their doors in the United States was Harvard University in 1636 (Harvard University, 2015, para. 1). Dotzler (2003) suggested one of the goals of Harvard University at its inception was to "teach remedial reading to adults" (p. 122). The need for remediation stemmed from the fact that most of the scholarly literature written at the time was in Latin, and the priority of many colonists was survival, not Latin (Boylan & White, 1987). Students who desired an education at Harvard often needed to learn Latin first (Boylan & White, 1987). The remedial assistance provided to these early students has been regarded as the "first remedial education effort in North America" (Boylan & White, 1987, p. 4).

The establishment of the first junior college, frequently referred to as community colleges, appeared in 1901 when Central High School in Joliet, Illinois added a fifth and sixth year to the high school curriculum (AACC, 2015b; Jurgens, 2010). The initial goal of the early community colleges was to assist students in transferring to four-year institutions by providing students with a broad general education (Dassance, 2011; Jurgens, 2010). During the Great Depression of the 1930s, community colleges began offering "job-training programs as a way of easing widespread unemployment" (AACC, 2015b, para. 2). As WWII came to an end, the Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944, also known as the GI Bill, was enacted as "a political response to legitimate fears about the sudden return of civilian life of nearly 16 million veterans" (Greenberg, 2008, para. 7). The majority of men drafted into the Military did not have a high-school diploma, in part due to the era of the Great Depression preceding the beginning of WWII (Greenberg, 2008). As the war ended and the GI Bill took effect, there were millions of Americans

who needed education and jobs; consequently, the country saw an increase in the number of community colleges (Greenberg, 2008; Phipps, 1998; Schuh et al., 2011).

The community college mission centered on providing higher education opportunities for all people. The American Association of Community Colleges (AACC) (2015a) reported, "community colleges have been inclusive institutions that welcome all who desire to learn, regardless of wealth, heritage or previous academic experience" (para. 1). In addition, Jurgens (2010) suggested community colleges traditionally provided an education to students who had been denied admission to four-year institutions.

The 1960s "were a period of great social change in America, and community colleges were well positioned to ride that wave of change" (Dassance, 2011, p. 32). The community college mission of open enrollment and catering to underserved populations "fit well with the social impetus to end poverty and racial and gender inequalities" (Dassance, 2011, p. 32). The Higher Education Act of 1965 brought increased enrollment to community colleges by providing various financial assistance programs (AACC, 2015b).

The community college system continued to flourish in the United States. AACC (2015a) reported the total number of community colleges in the United States was 1,132, of which 986 were public, 115 independent, and 31 tribal (para. 4). In addition, AACC (2015a) reported the community college headcount as 7.7 million credit students and 5 million non-credit students (para. 4). The Community College Research Center (2015) reported in the 2012-2013 academic year "45% of all undergraduates were enrolled in public two-year colleges" (para. 1).

Since their inception, community colleges have promoted an open door policy whereby students of all backgrounds could attend. This philosophy has opened the door to education "for students who never dreamed of going to college" (O'Banion, 2013, p. 1). The community college "open-door philosophy encourages any student who has graduated from high school, obtained a GED, or is 18 years or older to enter college" (O'Banion, 2013, p. 1). Community colleges "are a manifestation of our society's commitment to educational opportunity, and they reflect a common understanding of postsecondary education as the foundation for economic growth and upward mobility" (Bailey, Jaggars, & Jenkins, 2015, p. 1). The open door policy allowed many Americans to attend college (O'Banion, 2013; Schuh et al., 2011). However, the ease of admission to community college by underprepared students led to an easy departure (Schuh et al., 2011). This drop-in and drop-out system saw institutions with a low rate of persistence and a low rate of degree completion (Schuh et al., 2011).

President Obama established two national goals for community colleges: "by 2020, America will once again have the highest proportion of college graduates in the world, and community colleges will produce an additional five million graduates" (U.S. Government, 2014, para. 2). Korte (2015) reported a new plan proposed by President Obama that allowed "a free, two-year community college education for any American who wants it" (para. 1). *The Washington Post* cited a portion of President Obama's speech given at Pellissippi State Community College in Knoxville, Tennessee on January 9, 2015:

> America thrived in the 20th century in large part because we made a high school education the norm, and then we sent a generation to college on the GI Bill…But

> eventually, the world caught on. The world caught up. And that's why we need to lead the world in education again. (as cited in Jaffe, 2015, para. 4)

President Obama's National goals will be difficult to achieve unless community college administrators determine strategies to improve poor student outcomes and graduation rates (Bailey & Cho, 2010).

Completion Agenda

"The commitment to access is still very strong in the community college" (O'Banion, 2013, p. 2). However, Bailey et al. (2015) noted a shift from open access to a focus on the performance of colleges and universities. This shift has "morphed into the Completion Agenda [and has been] championed by legislators, foundations, policy analysts, business leaders, and educators" (O'Banion, 2013, p. 5). The shift from access to completion began with the passage of the Student Right-to-Know and Campus Security act of 1990. "Institutions eligible for Federal student aid (Title IV funding) are required to calculate and report completion or graduation rates for a cohort of students entering that institution and to disclose these rates to all students and prospective students" (Horn, 2010, p. 1). The cohort was "defined as first-time, full-time degree or certificate-seeking students, and the completion rate is calculated as the total number of completers within '150 percent of normal time' divided by the number of students in the cohort" (Horn, 2010, p. 1). The Right-to-Know and Campus Security Act publicized the performance of an institution and allowed performance outcomes to be compared among universities (Bailey et al., 2015).

Baily et al. (2015) stated, "The publication of graduation rates was eye opening" (p. 5). The graduation rate of many community college first-time, full-time students was

less than 20% (Baily et al., 2015). In 2010, AACC "joined with five other national organizations to express a shared commitment to student completion… that committed our organizations to assisting our members in producing 50% more students with high-quality degrees and certificates by 2020" (McPhail, 2011, p. 2). This commitment has been termed the "Completion Agenda" (McPhail, 2011).

Complete College America (CCA), a national nonprofit organization, was established in 2009 "with a single mission: to work with states to significantly increase the number of Americans with quality career certificates or college degrees and to close attainment gaps for traditionally underrepresented populations" (CCA, 2015, para. 1). Walters (2102) noted, "CCA…is the standard bearer of the completion agenda" (p. 34). Members of the CCA (2015) stated, "The need for this work is compelling. Between 1970 and 2009, undergraduate enrollment in the United States more than doubled, while the completion rate has been virtually unchanged" (para. 2). CCA (2015) also noted, "We've made progress in giving student's from all backgrounds access to college – but we haven't finished the all-important job of helping them achieve a degree" (para. 2).

Performance Funding

"Today's fiscal environment has forced states to carefully consider how limited dollars are spent on higher education" (Miao, 2012, para. 1). Miao (2012) noted, "States have commonly allocated funds on the basis of enrollment, a process that reinforces their commitment to college accessibility and ensures a relatively equitable distribution of per-student spending across institutions" (p. 1). However, in an effort to improve completion and graduation rates, many states turned to performance-based funding models for public institutions of higher education (Dougherty & Reddy, 2013; Hillman, Tandberg, & Gross,

2014; McKeown-Moak, 2013; Miao, 2012). Performance-based funding was a model for "allocating a portion of a state's higher education budget according to specific performance measures such as course completion, credit attainment, and degree completion, instead of allocating funding based entirely on enrollment" (Miao, 2012, para. 3). "The fundamental principle is to reward institutions for fulfilling their missions" (Jones, 2012, p. 3). Performance funding for higher education originated in 1979 with "Tennessee's pioneering program" (Dougherty & Reddy, 2013, p. 1). Since that time, additional states created their own version of performance based funding (Hillman et al., 2014).

In 2006, a Commission on the Future of Higher Education was formed (McKeown-Moak, 2013, p. 3) and focused on a number of problems including "the absence of accountability mechanisms to ensure that colleges succeed in educating students" (McKeown-Moak, 2013, p. 3). "Governors and legislators demanded that higher education provide some assurances that scarce dollars were not being wasted" (McKeown-Moak, 2013, p. 3). Thus, the number of states who adopted performance funding models increased (Sanford & Hunter, 2011, p. 3). Twenty-four states "have adopted performance metrics for the allocation of funding, the majority of which apply to both two-and four-year institutions . . . five additional states . . . are in the process of creating their own performance funding model" (Missouri Department of Higher Education, 2014, p. 2).

The measures included in performance funding varied from state to state (McKeown-Moak, 2013). Miao (2012) discussed the basic performance indicators of

several state models for community colleges and compared similarities and differences among states (see Table 1).

Table 1

Performance Funding Model Indicators for Five States

State	Performance Indicators
Ohio	Completion of developmental education courses Transition between developmental and college-level courses Completion of 15 credit hours and 30 credit hours of college level coursework The number of associate degrees awarded The transfer rates into a four-year university Additional funding reward for the achievements of "at-risk" students
Tennessee	Student retention Degree attainment Completion of remedial courses
Pennsylvania	Number of degrees awarded Graduation rates Reduction in achievement gaps Diversity of the faculty Private donations Colleges are also measured against national performance standards where appropriate Five measures specific to each institutions individual goals
Indiana	Number of degrees conferred Degree completion of low-income students Number of community college transfers Enrollment levels are determined at the end of the semester (to emphasize the importance of course completion) The institution receives $3,500 for each additional associate's degree produced over the previous year
Washington	Achievement points are accrued based on the number of student who: Improve their scores on basic skills tests Make progress in remedial courses Complete a college-level math course Earn 15 college credits and 30 college credits Receive a degree or certificate Complete an apprenticeship training program

Note. Adapted from "Performance-Based Funding of Higher Education "by K. Miao, 2012, Center for American Progress, Washington, DC, pp. 3-6.

In addition, each state determined the allocation and formula for awarding performance funds. For example, in Missouri "institutions could earn one-fifth of the increase in funding allocated to performance by demonstrating success on one of its five measures…success on two measures…would earn two-fifth of the money, etc." (Missouri Department of Higher Education, 2014, p. 3). Fiscal year 2013 was deemed a baseline year for data collection in Missouri, and each college determined how the performance measures would be defined (McKeown-Moek, 2013). Once the community colleges individually defined success, Missouri used a three-year rolling average and "improvement over that institution's performance from the previous year" (McKeown-Moek, 2013, p. 10).

There have been several studies conducted to determine if performance funding had an impact on performance outcomes. Hillman et al. (2014) examined the Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education's performance funding model to determine if the model "increased the number of students earning degrees within the system" (pp. 834-835). Hillman et al. (2014) reported the Pennsylvania system

> graduated 16.8 students per every 100 full-time equivalent undergraduates [in 1990]; this number rose to 18.7 by 2010. Interestingly… completions peaked at 20.4 degrees per 100 full time equivalents in 1994, six years prior to the new [performance based funding] policy, and did not return to that level even after the policy took effect. (p. 844)

The final conclusion of the Hillman et al. (2014) study was "the introduction of performance-based funding did not yield systematic improvements in college completions for the state" (p. 850). Likewise, Tandberg and Hillman (2014) studied

"various state-level data for the years 1990 through 2010" (p. 229) to determine if state funding models affected degree completion at the baccalaureate level. The outcome of the study revealed, "On average these programs do not produce significant increases in baccalaureate degree completions" (Tandberg & Hillman, 2014, p. 239). However, after seven years "positive and significant effects begin to emerge" (Tandberg & Hillman, 2014, p. 239). McKeown-Moak (2013) suggested "only time will tell if the new performance funding will be successful in meeting the needs of the state, the local economy, and simultaneously the needs of students. This will be a continuing challenge for the next ten years" (p. 12).

College Readiness

Many students were not prepared for college upon entering the community college system (Adams, 2010; Baily & Cho, 2010; Kolajo, 2010; Melguizo et al., 2014; Yates, 2010). The term college readiness has been used in the literature to define students who are ready for college level coursework as opposed to students who are underprepared and possess weak academic skills. Conley (2012) suggested a formal definition of college readiness as "a student who is ready for college and career, can qualify for and succeed in entry-level, credit-bearing college courses leading to a baccalaureate or certificate, or career pathway-oriented training programs without the need for remedial or developmental coursework" (p. 1). Kazis (2006) stated "to succeed in college, you need to be academically ready to do college level work. Just showing up isn't enough" (p. 13). Lopez (2009) offered the idea that "college readiness is not the belief that every student will go to college, it is the idea that every student deserves the opportunity to be educated in a way that prepares him or her for college" (p. 50). Allensworth, Gwynne, and Moore

(2014) noted "in order to graduate high school, students need to pass their classes, and they need to earn Bs or better in their classes to be ready for college" (p. 1).

Zientek, Schneider, and Onwuegbuzie (2014) suggested that in a perfect world all high school graduates would be ready for college level coursework. However, this is not the case based on the number of students who are required to take developmental coursework upon entering college (Barnes & Slate, 2010; Zientek et al., 2014). The Common Core State Standards were created and adopted voluntarily by 42 states to "provide clear and consistent learning goals to help prepare students for college, career, and life" (Common Core State Standards Initiative [CCSSI], 2015a, para. 1). The Common Core State Standards provided guidelines for student knowledge in the subjects of math and English from kindergarten through 12th grade (CCSSI, 2015c). Phillips and Wong (2010) suggested the Common Core Standards moved public education in the direction of being able to state, "Every high school graduate must be college ready" (p. 37). However, the outcomes of the Common Core State Standards Initiative remain to be seen. Starnes (2011) stated, "What children need to learn doesn't ensure that we know how to help them learn it. 'Knowing what' is really quite different from 'knowing how" (p. 72).

Regardless of a student's high school education, "students who enroll in higher education with academic skills that are substantially below college level face an uphill battle to progress to college-level classes, much less to obtain a degree" (Kozeracki, 2005, p. 39). When a student application is received by a community college, students "are categorized as 'college-ready' and can enroll in college-level classes in the relevant subjects, or they are considered 'developmental' or 'remedial' students and are referred

to academic services designed to raise their skills up to college standards" (Bailey & Cho, 2010, p. 1).

The Developmental Challenge

"Developmental education has been cited as one of the most difficult issues facing community colleges" (Crisp & Delgado, 2014, p. 99). The majority of students enrolled in the community college system were not college ready. Adams (2010) stated "three out of every five community college students need at least one remedial course, and fewer than 25% of those students successfully earn a degree within eight years" (p. 8). The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching (2014) reported similar statistics and suggested "over 60% of all students entering community colleges in the United States are required to complete developmental courses and a staggering 70% of these students never complete the required mathematics courses, blocking their way to higher education credentials" (para. 1). High school graduates were surprised when they learned that they must take developmental courses especially if they earned high grades while in high school (Bailey & Cho 2010; McClenney & Arnsparger, 2012). The misalignment between high school expectations and college level expectations resulted in several initiatives aimed at the alignment of educational programs and curriculum (McClenney & Arnsparger, 2012). These initiatives included emphasizing "dual-credit courses, increasing the number of Early College High Schools…strengthening partnerships between community colleges and their feeder high schools" (McClenney & Arnsparger, 2012, p. 29).

Additional authors noted the lack of prepared students entering the community college level. "Using student data from colleges participating in the nationwide

Achieving the Dream initiative…many students do not complete their sequences of developmental courses, and a sizable proportion of those referred [to developmental courses] never even enroll" (Bailey & Cho, 2010, p. 2). In a study conducted by Kolajo (2010) the average length of time for community college students to complete a degree was ten semesters when students were required to take one developmental course, and the average rose to eleven semesters when the students were required to take two or more developmental courses (p. 367). Yates (2010) compared graduation rates of students required to take at least one developmental education course to those students placed in college-level courses. The results of the study revealed a significant difference in the three-year graduation rate of the two groups. Students in the college-level courses were nearly twice as likely to graduate within three years (Yates, 2010, p. 43). McClenney (2009) stated "completion of credentials is good for everyone: the students themselves, their communities and states, and the country" (para 8). Bailey et al. (2015) suggested that when students fail to complete their college education there is a loss to the overall economy. "And it's simply not acceptable that low-income students graduate at lower rates than their high –income peers, and that African-American and Hispanic students graduate at lower rates than their white classmates" (McClenney, 2009, para. 8). The cost of developmental education is high. According to the Bailey and Cho (2010), the United States spends well over $ 1 billion a year on remedial services (p. 3). Successful developmental education remains a challenge (McClenney, 2009).

Placement Testing

Community colleges often used placement tests to determine if students were college ready. The most common subjects tested were math, reading, and writing (Bailey

& Cho, 2010). Students who met benchmark scores enrolled into college level courses, those who did not meet the benchmark score were required to enroll in developmental courses (Burdman, 2012). The cut-score usually determined the future of the student (Bradley, 2012). Bradley (2012) further explained the cut-scores on standardized tests:

> Score above the cut score on a standardized placement test and proceed to college level course work, greatly enhancing the chances of eventually earning a college degree. Earn a score below the cut line and get a ticket to one or more developmental courses, a place sometimes dubbed the Bermuda Triangle of higher education - the place where students go in, but never come out. Only a tiny percentage of students who take remedial courses ever finish college. (Bradley, 2012, p. 6)

Phipps (1998) suggested the use of placement tests would indicate college level faculty and administrators have agreed upon what knowledge is needed in order for students to be successful in college level courses, but stated, "this perception is far from accurate" (p. 6). Because of this misconception Phipps (1998) stated, "The line that separates those who need remediation from those who do not is fairly arbitrary" (p. 6). Zientek et al. (2014) stated, "The high enrollments in developmental education courses have been more problematic for open-access community colleges than for four-year universities" (p. 68).

The creators of standardized admission testing originally created these assessments to replace the system used by many prestigious institutions (Sternberg, 2012). Sternberg (2012) stated, "Although the founders of the testing movement had the best of intentions….scores on the standardized test they promoted would end up correlating highly with socioeconomic status" (p. 7). Sternberg (2012) further stated, "Children who

are given opportunities for more and better education tend to do better on the standardized tests that measure the learning that such education produces" (p. 7). Adams (2012) suggested community colleges used placement tests "to get a quick snapshot of incoming students' knowledge" (para. 4). However, "there is little evidence to suggest the tests even do what they're designed to do" (Adams, 2010, para. 1). Saxon and Morante (2014) suggested, "Commonly used placement tests are measures of achievement rather than aptitude" (p. 26). Bradley (2012) noted, "An emerging body of research indicates that standardized placement tests are poor predictors of college success" (p. 6).

The literature review revealed four tests common to assessing placement: ACT, ACT Compass, SAT, and Accuplacer. The ACT exam was a "tool that assesses students' academic readiness for college" (ACT, 2015b, para. 1). The benchmarks reported by ACT (2013) were "the minimum ACT scores required for students to have a high probability of success in credit-bearing college courses – English Composition, social sciences courses, College Algebra, or Biology" (para. 1). The high probability standard was defined by ACT (2015a) as having approximately a "50 percent chance of obtaining a B or higher or about a 75% chance of obtaining a C or higher in corresponding credit-bearing first-year college courses. These college courses include English composition, college algebra, introductory social science courses and biology" (para. 3). The ACT COMPASS test was "instrumental in helping educators to place students in college-level courses" (ACT Compass, 2015, para. 1). Both the ACT and Compass tests have college-readiness benchmark scores determined by the ACT testing company (See Table 2).

Table 2

ACT and COMPASS College Readiness Benchmark Scores and Corresponding College-Level Course

ACT Benchmark Score	ACT Subject Area	Corresponding College-level Course	COMPASS Benchmark Score
18	English	English Composition	77
22	Mathematics	College Algebra	52
18	Reading	Social Science	89
20	Science	Biology	NA

Note. Adopted from "What are the ACT College Readiness Benchmarks?" ACT, 2013.

The SAT exam was another assessment used to determine college readiness. The College Board (2014) published benchmarks for student success on the SAT exam. "The SAT Benchmark score of 1550 (critical reading, mathematics and writing sections combined) indicates a 65% likelihood of achieving a B-average or higher during the first year of college" (para. 2).

Several authors challenged the use of placement testing. Burdman (2012) stated, "Emerging information reveals the tests have little correlation to students' future success, casting doubt on their use" (p. 1). Morante (2012) stated, "Placement decisions should not be made solely on the basis of one score on one test" (p. 9). Morante (2012) further challenged the practice of using placement testing as a prediction of college success and stated, "Placement test[s] assess the skills or proficiencies of the students at the time of the testing" (p. 9). "Educators are rethinking whether the tests are fair and wondering if their traditional use constitutes a barrier to college completion" (Burdman, 2012, para. 1). Kiany, Shayestefar, Samar, and Akbari (2013) referred to placement tests as having a "gatekeeping function" (p. 326).

Community college students viewed placement tests as high stakes due to the potential of low scores on the exam and subsequent placement in non-credit developmental courses. Scott-Clayton (2012) noted even though community colleges were open-access institutions, "access to college-level courses at such institutions is far from guaranteed. Instead, many students' first stop on campus will be to an assessment center where they will take exams in math, reading, and/or writing" (p. 1). Adams (2010) suggested "when students fail those tests, they are put in developmental or remedial courses and often don't get out" (p. 9). Bailey and Cho (2010) suggested many students were placed into "multiple levels of remediation" (p. 1) and the levels of remediation required students to be able to "successfully navigate . . . [up to as many as] five semesters of pre-college instruction before being prepared for their first college-level course" (p. 1). Burdman (2012) noted, "Placement into a developmental course can affect a student's entire educational trajectory, putting additional barriers in the way of a college education" (p. 1). Placement into developmental courses can alter a student's plans and timeline for graduation (Dasinger, 2013).

Even though many institutions use placement testing, Burdman (2012) suggested, "the [placement] tests have little correlation to students' future success, casting doubt on their use" (p. 1). Even the ACT Compass program questioned the validity of their test. "A thorough analysis of customer feedback, empirical evidence and postsecondary trends led us to concluded that ACT Compass is not contributing as effectively to student placement and success as it had in the past" (ACT Compass, 2015, para. 1). In fact, the ACT Compass test creators stated, "we have made the difficult decision to phase out all the ACT Compass products…by December 31, 2016" (ACT Compass, 2015, para. 1).

Scott-Clayton (2012) found "placement test scores have much more predictive power in math than in English" (p. 32). In addition, "placement test scores are better at predicting who is likely to do well in the college-level course than predicting who is likely to fail" (Scott-Clayton, 2012, p. 32).

Characteristics of Community College Students

Students attending institutions of higher education were often described as traditional or non-traditional (Hagedorn, 2006; Jinkens, 2009; McIntosh & Rouse, 2009; Shepherd & Sheu, 2014; Wyatt, 2011). Wyatt (2011) defined the traditional student as a student "aged 18-24" (p. 10) and the non-traditional student as a student "aged 25 and above" (p. 10). Other authors added to the non-traditional student definition using characteristics other than age. Shepherd and Sheu (2014) described non-traditional students as being "constrained by work demands and family responsibilities" (p. 48).

The American Association of Community Colleges (2015a) reported the average age of a community college student was 29 (para. 2). In 2012, 71% of full-time students, attending two-year institutions, were under the age of 25 (National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 2014, para. 1). Furthermore, 48% of part-time students were 25 and older (NCES, 2014, para. 2). In 2014, the Center for Community College Student Engagement (CCCSE) quantified some of the community college student body characteristics as outlined in Table 3. McIntosh and Rouse (2009) reported students who attended two-year colleges were more likely to attend public institutions verses private institutions and tended to receive less financial aid than their four-year counterparts. McIntosh and Rouse (2009) also reported students who started at two-year institutions had lower ACT and SAT scores compared to students who began at four-year schools.

Moreover, 61% of two-year first time enrolled students were required to take remedial courses whereas only 30% of four-year students had to take remedial courses (McIntosh & Rouse, 2009, p. 5).

Table 3

Community College Student Characteristics

Characteristic	Percentage of Full-time students	Percentage of Part-time students
Community college students	40%	60%
Working more than 30 hours per week	19%	41%
Caring for dependents 11 or more hours per week	30%	37%
Taking evening and/or weekend classes	13%	38%

Note: Adapted from "Characteristics of Community College Students." CCCSE, 2014, p. 1.

Additionally, the literature described community college students according to typical patterns of enrollment. "While most universities expect, and even demand, continuous enrollment from one semester to the next, community college students often skip a semester or a year" (Hagedorn, 2006, p. 9) whereas students at a four-year university usually take a full load of classes (Hagedorn, 2006). Bahr (2010) identified one pattern of community college enrollment as "drop in" (p. 742). Drop-in enrollment was defined by Bahr (2011) as "students who remain in the system for a very short period of time (two semesters), [and] enroll in very few courses" (p. 34). An additional pattern of enrollment used to describe community college students had to do with adding and dropping courses. The community college student often dropped courses and this behavior "usually carries no significant repercussions other than lengthening the time to

degree or transfer" (Hagedorn, 2006, p. 10). Hagedorn (2006) also suggested it is "not uncommon for community college students to experience a full semester of non-success (dropping all courses, failing all courses, or a combination), and then to return the next semester to try again" (p. 10). McClenney (2009) stated, "Roughly 14% of community college students do not complete a single credit in their first academic term" (para. 4).

Hirsch and Goldberger (2010) suggested the traditional aged student seen at colleges were from "the generation who have had their play dates managed and have been fed a steady diet of 'you are special and extraordinary' since birth. As a result, today's student and their parents demand that college faculty and administration act as *in loco* helicopter parents" (p. 30). Taylor (2009) argued "today's parents can be more involved and in near-constant contact via the digital umbilici of cell phones and other electronic communication devices. No one needs the schools to serve in loco parentis when the parents can be virtually loco themselves" (p. 3). Taylor (2006) stated "the infamous helicopter parent, hovering and occasionally swooping in for the rescue, is now replaced by the 'snowplow' or 'bulldozer parent,' pushing anticipated obstacles out of their children's way before the children may even be aware of the challenge" (p. 14). Hirsch and Goldberger (2010) recommended colleges "educate students and their parents about appropriate roles and the path to becoming an independent and responsible adult" (p. 31). Hirsch and Goldberger (2010) also recommended, "Empower[ing] students to take responsibility for their education and to develop the skills they will need for their life after college" (p. 32).

Student Success

Conley (2014) defined student success as "the ability to complete entry-level courses at a level of performance that is sufficient to enable students to continue to the next courses in their chosen field of study" (p. 15). On the other hand, O'Banion (2013) stated, "there is no universal definition of student success for higher education because there are too many complicating factors in contemporary society" (p. 3). Kazis (2006) stated, "There is no question that academic preparedness for college is a major determinant of who succeeds and who doesn't" (p. 13).

Factors Contributing to Student Success

"In order for students to obtain the benefit of college education, students must be successful after they have enrolled" (Nakajima et al., 2012, p. 592). Despite the level of student preparedness, several authors identified various factors of successful students. These factors included motivation, personal characteristics, and student behaviors.

Clear goals. Several authors identified students who have clear goals as likely to be successful and persist to completion (Clery, 2011; Barbatis, 2010; Center for Community College Student Engagement [CCCSE], 2013; Martin et al., 2014; McClenny & Arnsparger, 2012; Nakajima et al., 2012; Tinto & Cullen, 1973). In 2014, Martin et al. suggested it does not matter what the goal is as long as there is a goal. The goal could be "to transfer to a 4-year college, earn a certificate, or start down a new career path after being laid off" (Martin et al., 2014, p. 1). "Students with a declared major in their first term were more likely to complete [the degree or certificate] or transfer than those who did not declare" (Clery, 2011, p. 2). One participant in a study conducted by Barbatis (2010) did not have a clear goal, but knew a college education was important. The

student stated, “I knew that stopping with just high school wouldn’t really help me in the long run…the higher in education I go, the better I’ll be” (Barbatis, 2010, p. 17). CCCSE (2012) indicated students who received assistance from academic advising with planning a path to educational goals helped “keep students focused because it shows how each course brings them closer to a key milestone and, ultimately, to the certificate or degree they seek” (p. 11).

Tinto researched student goal setting in the 1960s and 1970s (Tinto & Cullen, 1973). Tinto (1973) found “the higher the level of an individual's commitment to the goal of college completion, the lower the likelihood that an individual will dropout *[sic]* of college” (p. 41). Locke and Latham (2002) formulated a goal setting theory and found “specific, difficult goals consistently led to higher performance than urging people to do their best” (p. 706). Dishon-Berkovits (2014) explained “two factors affect the goal that one holds: the importance of the goal to the person and self-efficacy” (p. 329). Self-efficacy was defined by Locke and Latham (2002) as “task-specific confidence” (p. 706). Locke and Latham (2002) reported that “when goals are self-set, people with high self-efficacy set higher goals than do people with lower self-efficacy” (p. 706). Barry (2007) reported “students lacking intrinsic motivation …are unable to set reasonable goals for themselves (p. 26). However, a report by the Center on Education Policy (2012) noted if students “are helped to set goals, they may be able to establish motivation and boost their achievement” (p. 3). Dishon-Berkovitis (2014) found “a specific, challenging assigned learning goal led to higher academic achievement than a specific challenging assigned performance goal” (p. 338). Dishon-Berkovitis further suggested learning goals rather

than the "overemphasized…importance of high performance goals" (p. 338) as a recipe for increasing student achievement and success.

Motivation. Motivation was another key predictor of community college student success cited in the literature (Blackwell & Pinder, 2014; Martin et al., 2014; VanOra, 2012). Martin et al. (2014) found strong motivation was evident for every graduate participant in their study. The authors noted the successful student had an "intense motivation to succeed…against any odds" (Martin et al., 2014, p. 1), and this motivation came from "within" (p. 1). Blackwell and Pinder (2014) reported first-generation college students had an "overwhelming sense of determination to have a better life than the one they experienced as children" (para. 24) and a college education "was seen as a ticket out of the situation" (para. 4). Dumais (2013) found adult learners, both first-generation and continuing-generation students returned to college for "personal fulfillment" (p. 103).

Zumbrunn, McKim, Buhs, and Hawley (2014) found "student perceptions of belonging displayed linkages to their levels of motivation in [a] course" (p. 677). Additionally in the same study, the researchers found "students that felt more capable of succeeding in the course tended to be more involved class participants and, subsequently, higher achievers than their less efficacious classmates" (Zumbrunn et al., 2014, p. 677). Halawah (2011) found three categories of factors affecting student motivation in the classroom. The factors were "teachers feedback, enthusiasm, and knowledge of the subject matter, rewards, and professional attitude…methods of teaching, encouraging students in debate, using active learning, using a variety of teaching methods, creating curiosity and attracting students attention…[and an] open and positive atmosphere" (pp. 387-388).

Support from family and friends. The literature review revealed family and friends were another key factor influencing community college student success (Barbatis, 2010; David et al., 2012; Martin et al., 2014; VanOra, 2012). Martin et al. (2014) reported having a support system was crucial to student success. In a study conducted by Barbatis (2010) one student stated "I had to strive to do better in my life, you know, to get an education so they'd [my family would] be proud of me" (p. 17). David et al. (2015) found "lack of social support was negatively associated with persistence, such that students with the lowest levels of support were the least likely to re-enroll in their second fall semester" (p. 10). VanOra (2012) explained being a role model was highly motivating for students and gave "an opportunity to make friends and family members proud…and [allowed the student] to serve as a role model for those who were considering attending college in the future" (p. 29).

Social and academic engagement. Another factor contributing to student success and persistence described in the literature was social involvement or a sense of belonging to the community college community (Barbatis, 2010; Clark, 2012; Tinto & Cullen, 1973). In Tinto's theoretical model of dropout, Tinto (1973) described dropout as a "multidimensional process which results from the interaction between the individual and the institution and which is influenced by [*sic*] the characteristics of both elements" (p. 41). Tinto (1973) further described his theory and stated "individuals enter institutions of higher education with a variety of individual characteristics, family backgrounds, and prior educational experiences which influence the manner in which the individual interacts within the college setting (p. 41). To that end, Tinto and Cullen (1973) stated, "the higher the degree of integration of the individual into the college, the

greater will be his commitment to the specific institution and to the goal of college completion" (p. 43).

Barbatis (2010) reported a common theme of successful students was "being involved on campus in different clubs and organizations and their interaction with other students" (p. 17). Hu (2011) found students with "high-level engagement in social activities is positively related to student persistence in college" (p. 104). However, Wyatt (2011) noted, "The term 'engagement' itself means very different things to each student and is often left open to interpretation. This term may mean engaging in interactions with faculty, staff, or students or taking part in some event or activity on campus" (p. 16). Pruett and Absher (2014) suggested, "If students are not engaged within the first two weeks of a class, they may fall behind academically and may not be able to catch up" (p. 39). Nakajima et al. (2012) studied community college persistence and found "neither academic integration nor psychosocial variables predicted student persistence" (p. 602).

Pruett and Absher (2015) found "after cumulative GPA, the second most important factor that impacts the retention of developmental students is the extent of their academic engagement" (p. 39). "Students who persist in college ask questions in class and contribute to class discussions, make class presentations, and work with other students on projects during class or outside of class" (Pruett & Absher, 2015, p. 39). Participants in Clark's (2012) study reported fellow students contributed to their sense of belonging and ultimately persistence. One particular student commented on how much "she appreciated that her student peers noticed her when she was struggling" (Clark, 2012, p. 515). Pruett and Absher (2015) noted engaged students tend to tutor their classmates and have serious conversations about course content outside the classroom

with classmates and faculty. Saenz et al. (2011) found "the utilization of student services…most clearly demarcate levels of student engagement regardless of other characteristics, including ethnicity, parents' education, gender, or even enrollment status" (p. 256).

Hagedorn (2006) reported community college students "do not attend their current institutions because their friends are attending, nor do many have close friends on campus" (p. 42). Hagedorn (2006) further explained students cared more about what their friends thought of the community college they were attending rather than attending due to close friendships. Wyatt (2011) found students "had multiple obligations in their busy lives, and college was just one of them" (p. 16). "Consequently, research findings suggest that there is nothing that the institution could do to engage students in the collegiate environment and campus life due to their hectic lifestyle and personal preferences" (Wyatt, 2011, p. 16). Wyatt (2011) also found "some participants agreed that their college experience may have been better if they had been able to participate in activities and events that they found interesting" (p. 16). The difficulties in retaining students extend beyond the classroom; engagement on campus with students who are single parents, work full time or caring for an aging parent is challenging, to say the least.

Faculty-student interaction. Several authors found faculty-student interaction played a key role in student success (Barbatis, 2010; Clark 2012; Merrow, 2007; Shepherd & Sheu, 2014). Barbatis (2010) found students who persisted and graduated "appeared to have had good experiences and positive interactions with college faculty" (p. 18). The results of a study conducted by Shepherd and Sheu (2014) revealed, "Non-traditional students believed that the active informal interaction from faculty was helpful,

and that this informal faculty-student interaction had a positive influence on nontraditional students' educational outcomes" (p. 56). Merrow (2007) reported the most effective remedial teachers were professors "who involved themselves in the lives of their students" (p. 18). Merrow (2007) also reported these effective teachers phoned students when they missed classes and were actively involved in the classroom by moving around and helping students as needed. "[A]s educators, we cannot underestimate the life-changing importance of student and educator communications, no matter how seemingly simple" (Clark, 2012, p. 516). Westervelt (2015) shared the engagement tactics used at Valencia Community College in which data analytics were used to collect information about student engagement "online with course material, with discussion forums…the goal is to use data science to improve learning, boost completion rates and help teachers and counselors better target academic interventions fast, with a compelling nudge, counseling or other outreach" (paras. 14-15). The professors at Valencia Community College accessed the student engagement data and intervened with communication such as sending an email to the student (Westervelt, 2015).

Shepherd and Sheu (2014) indicated, "Non-traditional students believed that the active informal interaction from faculty was helpful and that this informal faculty-student interaction had a positive influence on nontraditional students' educational outcomes" (p. 56). Lundberg (2014) found "frequent student interaction with faculty was the strongest predictor of learning" (p. 88). Shepherd and Sheu (2014) recommended colleges have in place adequate technology "to facilitate the informal interaction between faculty and non-traditional students" (p. 56).

Personal characteristics. The literature revealed several personal student characteristics related to student success. Martin et al. (2014) reported a student's ability to manage external demands played a role in student success noting, "Successful students are empowered to do things for themselves. They seek academic and other support services when needed but first, try to solve problems on their own" (p. 1). Clark (2012) indicated developing confidence through attending classes played a role in helping students "visualize their success and [helped them to] develop the corresponding sense of validation, self-worth, and self-confidence to achieve their educational goal" (p. 516). Blackwell and Pinder (2014) described personal characteristics that helped motivate first generation minority students to attend college; specifically the "love of reading at an early age" (para. 20). One student in Blackwell and Pinder's (2014) study stated "I read all the time; I would escape my life through books" (para. 20). Harrell, Bower, and Arundel (2011) reported students who were auditory learners had a greater chance of withdrawing from on-line courses and attributed to the fact that "much of the online course environment is structured so that students receive information in a written format" (p. 187).

High school experience. Other authors reported high school experiences contributed to success (Farley, 2005; Pike, Hansen, & Childress, 2014). Farley (2005) stated, "Traditional measures of high school success may not translate automatically into the dazzling college achievement that we envision for our college-bound high schoolers" (p. 25). Rather, Farley (2005) suggested "coping with ambiguity and frustration, critical or analytical thinking, problem solving, an inquisitive nature and written and verbal expression" (p. 25) were more important than content knowledge. Pike et al. (2014)

reported "high school class percentile rank" (p. 15) positively resulted in later degree attainment. While Murray (2012) suggested, "whether students go to a four-year college or to other postsecondary training, they do indeed, need the same academic rigor" (p. 64). Murray (2012) also suggested all high school students need to take college-prep type courses to be prepared for post-secondary education. "All high school graduates deserve an opportunity to go to college if they choose" (p. 64).

Student behaviors. Utilization of student resources on campus had an impact on student success. CCCSE (2013) suggested participation in academic goal setting and planning with an advisor had a positive association with student engagement. Bailey et al. (2015) suggested academic advisors were the "most important resource to help new students clarify their goals and select courses that lead toward those goals" (p. 58). Unfortunately, "after the student's first (and often quite rushed) registration session with an advisor, follow-up visits are generally left to the student's discretion" (Bailey et al. 2015, p. 59).

According to CCCSE (2014), many community college students worked while taking classes. Reichlin and Gault (2014) stated "working is often critical to community college student's ability to pursue a post-secondary education, but holding a job while in school can threaten a student's success in college" (p. 1). Torres, Gross, and Dadashova (2010) identified the "optimum number of hours on the job is 10-15 a week" (p. 65). Students who "work more than 30 hours per week likely will have lower GPAs and will complete fewer attempted hours" (Torres et al., 2010, p. 65). However, Boswell and Passmore (2013) found "hours worked is not related to completion of a degree or certificate" (p. 15).

The literature identified notations of various other student behaviors. For example, researchers found regular class attendance did not guarantee student success (Golding, 2011; McDonald, 2013). McDonald (2013) studied the effects of in-class texting behavior on final course grades and found "the more a student participated in in-class texting behavior, the lower their final grade" (p. 39). On the other hand, Termos (2013) found involving students with technology, such as Classroom Performance System, sometimes known as clickers, improved attendance and success. In fact, there was a 10% increase in student attendance when an instructor used the technology compared to a similar class where the technology was not used (Termos, 2013, p. 71).

The literature also mentioned study habits as being a contributor to student success. Arnold, Lu, and Armstrong (2012) stated, "Study skills strongly influence college academic performance" (p. 23). Barbatis (2010) indicated students who were successful had "recognition of college expectations, and effective study habits" (p. 17). Student success is multifaceted. There were many factors discussed in the literature as contributing to student success.

National Initiatives to Support Student Success

There have been several national initiatives intended to support student success including Achieving the Dream (ATD) and the TRIO program. Achieving the Dream (ATD) was "conceived as an initiative in 2004 by Lumina Foundation and seven founding partner organizations . . . [and] now leads the most comprehensive non-governmental reform movement for student success in higher education history." (Achieving the Dream, 2015a, para. 6). The mission of ATD further defined the goal of the organization as being "dedicated to community college student success and

completion; focused primarily on helping low-income students and students of color complete their education and obtain market-value credentials" (Achieving the Dream, 2015a, para. 8). The goal was for the original 26 community colleges to "build a 'culture of evidence' by using data to track student performance over time and to identify barriers to academic progress" (Gonzalez, 2011, para. 4). These "community colleges were expected to develop strategies to improve student outcomes, conduct further research on student progress, and expand effective pilot programs" (Gonzalez, 2011, para. 5).

In 2011, Rutschow et al. reported on the first five years of the ATD initiative and indicated even though institutions introduced various strategies to improve student success the "trends in student outcomes remained relatively unchanged, with few exceptions" (p. iii). Rutschow et al. (2011) noted four out of five of the original participating colleges developed a more sophisticated method for data collection (p. iii). In addition, Rutschow et al. (2011) reported, "colleges saw modest improvements in the percentage of students completing gatekeeper college English courses" (p. iii). Gonzalez (2011) stated "Lumina, which has put $76-million into the project, has acknowledged meaningful change requires a longer-term effort" (para. 8). ATD built a network of over 200 community colleges since its inception in 2004 and announced a new mission statement and strategic priorities for 2014-2019 with continued focus on student achievement (Achieving the Dream, 2015b, para. 3).

A second national initiative was the TRIO program. In the 1960s three federal programs, Upward Bound, Talent Search, and Student Support Services "emerged out of the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964" (U. S. Department of Education, 2015, para. 1). The first, Upward Bound, began in 1964, followed by Talent Search in 1965, and Student

Support Services (SSS) in 1968 (U.S. Department of Education, 2015, para. 1). These beginning programs helped "disadvantaged students enroll and complete college" (Graham, 2011, p. 33). "Through a grant competition, funds are awarded to institutions of higher education to provide opportunities for academic development, assist students with basic college requirements and to motivate students toward…successful completion of their postsecondary education" (U.S. Department of Education, 2015, para. 1). "By the late 1960's, the term 'TRIO' was coined to describe these federal programs" (U. S. Department of Education, 2015, para. 1).

Community college students who enrolled in TRIO programs received academic tutoring, assistance with postsecondary course selection, information on financial aid programs, counseling services, and information about enrolling at four-year institutions (U.S. Department of Education, 2015, para. 2). The Pell Institute (2009) reported the Student Support Services branch of TRIO provided "tutoring, counseling, and remedial instruction to low-income, first-generation college students and students with disabilities" (p. 1). Reggie (2011) reported there have been "millions of successful participants" (para. 4) in the TRIO programs nationwide. In 2009, The Pell Institute quantified some of the SSS student outcomes compared to similarly qualified students who did not participate in SSS programs. SSS students at four-year universities were 12% more likely to progress to the second year and 23% more likely to progress to the third year (The Pell Institute, 2009, p. 1). SSS students earned 6% more credits in the first year, 4% more credits in the second year, and 4% more credits in the third year and the SSS student GPA's were 7% higher in the first year, 5% higher in the second year, and 4% higher over three years (cumulative) (The Pell Institute, 2009, p. 1). Graham (2011)

personally experienced TRIO programing as a student and reflected on the experience by stating, “I have found with TRIO programs I was given the resources, preparation, and support to succeed both professionally and personally for my academic pursuits” (p. 38).

These are just two of the national initiatives to support student success. Research is still inconclusive on their impact highlighting the complexity of the issue. There is no easy solution. Many community colleges have implemented local programs to accomplish the same goal: helping students succeed and meet their goals.

College Initiatives to Support Student Success

There are various college initiatives discussed in the literature used by community colleges in an effort to increase student success. CCCSE (2013) listed several best practice strategies for improving student engagement including “orientation, accelerated or fast-track developmental education, first year experience, student success course, learning community, experiential learning beyond the classroom, tutoring, supplemental instruction, assessment and placement, registration before classes begin, class attendance, and [early] alert and intervention” (p. 6). CCCSE (2013) indicated these best practices “are most likely to help more students complete college successfully” (p. 6).

Early alert systems. Early alert systems were identified as contributing to student success by several authors (Capps, 2012; CCCSE, 2012; Faulconer, Geissler, Majewski, & Trifilo, 2014; Tampke, 2013; Wood, 2011). Wood (2011) explained the purpose of early alert systems as a way to “prevent attrition by identifying students who are most at risk” (p. 24). CCCSE (2012) defined early alert systems as a “warning processes … triggered when faculty members identify students who are struggling and notify others in the college who step in to support the students” (p. 20). “Colleges might

follow up with students by e-mail, text, social media, or telephone and encourage them to access services, such as tutoring, peer mentoring, study groups, and student success skills workshops" (CCCSE, 2012, p. 20). Capps (2012) recommended implementing an early alert system and stated "faculty members are the key link between them [students] and the rest of the student support system" (p. 43-44). Tampke (2013) reported, "Higher levels of student success and persistence" (p. 529) with an early alert system and noted personal contact with faculty, as part of the early alert system, was positively associated with student success. In addition, contact with an early alert referral staff person had a positive effect on success; however, this contact was "not as significant as faculty contact" (Tampke, 2013, p. 530). Faulconer et al. (2014) implemented an early alert flag system whereby faculty could send students a notification via e-mail regarding their class performance. The students who received positive flags (for outstanding performance) and negative flags (for poor academic performance) "noted it was beneficial to receive an update on their academic performance, believed their professor was paying attention to their performance, and indicated they preferred that all of their professors utilize the program" (Faulconer et al., 2014, p. 47).

New student orientation and student success courses. Participation in new student orientation programs or first-year experiences was another college initiative mentioned in the literature. Several authors reported new student orientations increased student success (Fowler & Boylan, 2010; Linderman & Kolenovic, 2013; Mills, 2010; Pike et al., 2014; Vaughan, Zeidenberg, Jenkins, & Calcagno, 2007). Fowler and Boylan (2010) found community college students who participated in a pathways to success program had significantly better success rates (cumulative GPA, completion of

developmental courses, and fall-to-fall retention) than those who had not participated in such a program. Zeidenber, Davis, and Calcagno (2007) reported students who enrolled in an orientation course "were 8% more likely than their peers to earn a credential" (p. 3). The statistics reported by Linderman and Kolenovic (2013) were slightly higher. Students who took a success course had a "12 percentage point higher third-semester retention rate and earn[ed] an average of seven more credits than the comparison-group of students" (Linerman & Kolenovic, 2013, p. 48). Pike et al. (2014) found student participation in a first-year seminar positively affected graduation in five or six years, but did not affect graduating in four years (p. 15). In addition, students enrolled in developmental courses and enrolled in an orientation course had a "higher probability of completion than enrollment in remedial courses alone" (Zeidenberg et al., 2007, p. 4). On the other hand, Rutschow, Cullinan, and Welbeck (2012) found a success course "foster[ed] some changes in students' attitudes and perspectives. Unfortunately, however, these improvements did not translate into improved academic outcomes for the overall group of student to whom it was offered" (p. 4).

CCCSE (2012) reported, "first-year experience programs create a small community within the larger campus for first-year students, helping them build relationships with other students as well as faculty and staff" (p. 14). Bailey et al. (2015) noted another aspect of student success courses was to "build students' time-management and study skills, as well as to provide information about other college resources and support services" (p. 64). Reid, Reynolds, and Perkins-Auman (2014) suggested student success course content should include the "development of required skills and self-motivation while facilitating successful behavior in the college environment" (p. 91).

Mills (2010) found students who enrolled in a success course "saw the campus environment as more supportive and reported more frequent use of advising and career services than nonparticipants [in the orientation course]" (p. 24).

Karp et al. (2012) stated a student success course "helped students with their initial transition to college…[by] giving them study skills that might help in their first semester or giving them basic information for navigating the college campus" (p. 39). However, the authors contend that long-term results were positive only if the course included "pedagogies that promote applied learning, contextualization, reflection, and deliberate practice (Karp et al., 2012, p. 39). Linderman and Kolenovic (2013) suggested this type of class "fosters student's confidence, communication skills, and goal-setting" (p. 47). On the other hand, Ellis-O'Quinn (2012) suggested the format of the orientation program was not associated with student retention. Bailey et al. (2015) reported many colleges added topics to the student success course such as "diversity, ethics, or personal relationships…health issues including nutrition, stress management, healthy relationships, and drugs and alcohol" (p. 65). Bailey et al. (2015) suggested, "Covering so many topics in a meaningful way within the scope of a one-credit hour course seems unrealistic" (p. 65). "Most community Colleges have begun using a suite of expert-approved strategies to get more students to graduation. But those programs are often just a window dressing, as relatively few students participate in them" (Fain, 2013, p. 1).

Summary

There was a plethora of literature spanning the decades on student success. The literature review examined selected authors and research that highlighted the history and mission of community colleges as well as scholarly works centered on community

college students, completion and graduation rates, performance funding, college readiness, and factors contributing to and hindering student success. Finally, the literature review explored several initiatives intended to assist colleges and students with success and degree completion. While some strategies were correlated with positive outcomes, implementation may be difficult for a nontraditional student population.

Chapter Three provides a thorough description of the study methodology and presents a detailed description of the sample population. Chapter Four presents the qualitative data including specific student responses and outlines the common themes of responses. Chapter Five provides further discussion and draws conclusions from the study results as well as suggests recommendations for future research.

Chapter Three: Methodology

Research Study Overview

This chapter includes an overview of the methodology, research questions, research procedure, data collection, and data analysis methods used for this study. The purpose of the study was to explore the experiences of Emerging Scholars at a large Midwestern community college to analyze their perceptions specifically, factors beneficial to their success and factors that hindered their success while completing the required developmental course sequence and 24 credit hours of college level coursework, with a 3.5 GPA (on a traditional 4.0 scale). The researcher transcribed, coded, and analyzed participant responses into common themes for relevance to the study research questions (Maxwell, 2013).

Research Questions

There were four research questions (RQ) that guided the study:

RQ 1: How do Emerging Scholars perceive the community college experience?

RQ 2: How do Emerging Scholars perceive their previous academic experiences?

RQ 3: How do Emerging Scholars perceive the academic supports provided by the community college?

RQ 4: How do Emerging Scholars perceive themselves?

Research Setting

Public Community College (PCC) hosted the research study. PCC was located in a large Midwestern metropolitan community and offered classes at four main campuses and six centers with one main campus and two centers located within the city limits. The other campuses and centers were located within the large surrounding county and smaller

municipalities. One main campus was located in the northern portion of the county, one main campus in the western portion of the county, and one main campus in the southern portion of the county. The Higher Learning Commission (HLC) of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools accredited PCC (Higher Learning Commission [HLC], 2015, para. 2). The enrollment at PCC in the fall 2015 semester was 18,902 (PCC, 2015c, para. 3). Total enrollment including credit students, workforce development program students, and continuing education students totaled approximately 69,000 students (PCC, 2015b, paras. 4-6). The college employed over 400 full-time faculty members and over 3,400 full-time and part-time employees (PCC, 2015b, para. 5). A description of the PCC student body demographics included:

> The average age . . . is 27; the student is employed full time and attends . . . part time. Approximately 59% are women. About 55% of the student body is Caucasian, 33% is African-American. International students and new immigrants represent more than 100 countries. About 68% live in … [the] County and 21% live in . . . [the] city. About 59% attend part time, and 41% attend full time. (PCC, 2015a, para. 8)

PCC reported being the "region's largest resource for college transfer, career development and work force training" (PCC, 2015a, p. 1). PCC offered eight college transfer degree options and nearly 90 career and technical programs including "allied health, engineering, technology, and business (PCC, 2015a, p. 1). In addition, PCC offered a wide variety of developmental education courses to assist students who were underprepared for college level coursework (see Table 4).

Table 4

Number of Developmental Courses Offered at PCC

Subject	One Credit Hour	Two Credit Hours	Three Credit Hours	Four Credit Hours	Five Credit Hours	Six Credit Hours
English	7	1	4	0	0	4
English for Non-Native Speakers	5	0	5	0	0	4
Reading	9	3	5	0	0	0
Mathematics	1	0	5	0	1	0

Note: Adapted from PCC, 2015-2016 Catalog.

Study Population and Sample Size

The participant population for this study included students from the total population at PCC and a homogeneous, purposive sample was used. According to Fraenkel et al. (2012), this type of sample consists of participants who "possess a certain trait or characteristic" (p. 436). In this study, all participants met the Emerging Scholar criteria defined by PCC as students who began "college in two or more developmental courses and had completed 24 [credit] hours of college-level course work at a 3.5 GPA [on a traditional 4.0 scale]" (PCC, 2013, para. 2). A total of 251 students met the Emerging Scholar criteria. Although the final sample size of the study was small (n=17) the total number fit into the definition of a qualitative study provided by Fraenkel et al.

(2012) who suggested "in qualitative studies, the number of participants in a sample is usually somewhere between 1 and 20" (p. 103).

Study Participants

The final number of participants for this study was 17. Sixteen participants were female and one was male. The youngest participant was 20 years old and the oldest was age 42 (see Table 5). The researcher changed the participant names for anonymity.

One criterion for participant inclusion was placement into at least two developmental courses. One student enrolled in as many as ten developmental courses. Another criterion was a GPA of 3.5 or higher on a traditional 4.0 scale. The highest GPA was a 4.0. All 17 students identified a degree they were seeking and reported their plans after graduation. Of the students who reported a plan to transfer to a four-year university all but one identified a specific university for their future education (see Table 6).

Table 5

Study Participant Characteristics

Study Participant	Age	Marital Status	Children	Hours Worked per Week	Native Language	Race/ Ethnicity	Home Campus
Ava	40	Married	Two; One - 12 year old One - 16 year old	40	English	African American	C
Chloe	29	Single	None	6-9	English	Caucasian	S
Destiney	28	Married	Three; One in daycare, One in preschool, One in elementary school	0	English	African American	C
Elizabeth	42	Single	None	0	English	Caucasian	S
Ella	42	Single	None	40	English	Caucasian	S
Emily	42	Married	Two grown children	9	Arabic	International	C
Hailey	21	Married	One - 1.5 year old	40	English	Caucasian	S
Kayla	43	Domestic partner	One - 6 year old	0	English	Caucasian	S
Matthew	42	Single	One -12 year old	0	English	Caucasian	N
Megan	26	Single	None	25	Spanish	International	S
Morgan	33	Single	None	40	English	Caucasian	S
Rachel	20	Single	None	3	English	African American	C
Samantha	42	Single	None	0	Arabic	International	C
Savannah	29	Married	None	20	English	Caucasian	S
Sophia	44	Married	Two grown children	0	English	Caucasian	N
Sydney	30	Married	Three; One -2 year old One - 4 year old One - 6 year old	40	English	Caucasian	N
Taylor	20	Single	None	40	French, Tribal	Caucasian	C

Note. C = City Campus; N = Northern Campus; S = Southern Campus.

Table 6

Additional Participant Characteristics

Student Participant	Developmental Courses Taken (or will need to take for degree requirements)	Degree Sought	Future Plan	GPA at PCC
Ava	DE1, DE2 DR1, DR2, DR3, DR4 DM1, DM2, DM3, DM4	AAS Nursing	Work as a nurse	3.64
Chloe	DE1 DM1	GTS	Transfer to university; Engineering	3.95
Destiney	DE1 DR1, DR2, DM1, DM2, DM3	AAT	Transfer to university; Education, teaching	3.83
Elizabeth	DM1, DM2, DM3	GTS	Transfer to university; possible dietetics	3.64
Ella	DE1, DE2 DM1, DM2	AAS Nursing	Work as a nurse	3.59
Emily	DE1, DE2, DE3, DE4, DE5, DE6, DE7, DE8	AAT	Teach Arabic	3.72
Hailey	DE1 DR1, DR2 DM1, DM2, DM3	AAS Nursing	Work as a nurse	3.75
Kayla	DM1, DM2	GTS	Transfer to university; Nursing	3.78
Matthew	DE1, DE2 DR1, DR2, DR3, DR4 DM1, DM2, DM3	AA	Transfer to university; Psychology	3.52
Megan	DE1, DE2, DE3, DE4 DE5	AA Business Administration	Transfer to university; Business Administration	3.57
Morgan	DR1 DM1, DM2, DM3	AAS Nursing	Work as a nurse	3.52
Rachel	DE1, DE2 DR1, DR2 DM1, DM2, DM3, DM4	AAS Human Services	Transfer to university; Social work	3.5

Table 6 continued

Samantha	DE1, DE2, DE3, DE4 DM1	GTS	Transfer to university; Actuarial Science or Engineering	4.0
Savannah	DE1 DM1, DM2	AAS Occupational Therapy Assistant	Work as an OTA	3.87
Sophia	DE1 DM1, DM2, DM3	AA Human Services	Transfer to university	3.5
Sydney	DE1 DR1 DM1, DM2, DM3	AAT	Transfer to university; Education, teach students with disabilities	3.71
Taylor	DE1, DE2 DR1	GTS	Transfer to university; Medical school	3.92

Note. DE1 = First Developmental English course; DE2= Second Developmental English course; DE3=Third Developmental English course; DE4= Fourth Developmental English course; DE5= Fifth Developmental English course; DE6=Sixth Developmental English course; DE7= Seventh Developmental English course; DE8= Eighth Developmental English course
DR1=First Developmental Reading course; DR2=Second Developmental Reading course; DR3=Third Developmental Reading course; DR4=Fourth Developmental Reading course;
DM1=Frist Developmental Math course; DM2=Second Developmental Math course; DM3=Third Developmental Course; DM4= Fourth Developmental course
GTS = General Transfer Studies
AA = Associates of Arts; **AAS** =Associates of Applied Science; **AAT** = Associate of Arts in Teaching

The researcher asked study participants to provide their high school GPA. The three international students explained that GPA is different in their country and did not provide a number. The remaining fourteen participants had difficulty recalling an exact GPA number; instead, most of the study participants provided the researcher with a description about their high school experience. Table 7 provides the participant responses.

Table 7
Study Participant High School Experience

Student Participant	Description of High School GPA
Chloe	Home schooled. No GPA calculated
Destiney	3.2 until senior year. It fell to 2.7
Elizabeth	Dropped out of high school due to disinterest
Ella	1 point something. I didn't care
Emily	International student. Finished high school in native country
Hailey	Lower than 2.0. I think it was 1.7
Kayla	Graduated with honors. Barely made the cut-off
Matthew	I started off nice and strong, but flunked out
Megan	International student. No GPA reported. Good student in high school. I always pass
Morgan	I just passed. I was more interested in sports
Rachel	I was good at attendance
Samantha	International student. GPA not calculated in native country. Good student. Attended university in native country
Savannah	I was not motivated at all. I was more of a social butterfly
Sophia	Dropped out of high school
Sydney	Terrible GPA. 2 point something
Taylor	Graduated from high school in native country. Good student

Note. Data taken from personal interviews, fall, 2015.

Six of the 17 participants reported working full time while attending classes. Three participants reported working part time and seven reported being full time students and not working. Seven study participants identified themselves as full-time students

taking 12 or more credit hours per semester, and nine students reported taking classes on a part time basis (11 or fewer credit hours per semester). All 17 students identified one campus as their home campus, however, all 17 students reported taking at least one class on another campus or on-line. Table 8 compared the typical student body of PCC to the participant sample in this study.

Table 8

Comparison of PCC students and Study Participants

Characteristic	PCC	Study Participants
Average Age	27	34
Gender		
Female	59%	94%
Male	41%	6%
Ethnic Background		
Caucasian	56%	56%
African American	32%	19%
Other	12%	25%
Attendance		
Attends PT	59%	56%
Attends FT	41%	44%
Employment		
Full time	41%	37%
Part time	59%	19%
No employment		44%
Campus location		
City Campus	27%	31%
Northern Campus	24%	31%
Southern Campus	43%	38%
Western Campus	6%	0%

Note. Adapted from "PCC-Quick Facts," 2015b, para.8, and "PCC-Enrollment Reports," PCC, 2015c.

Study Procedure

The researcher obtained a list of students from PCC enrolled for credit classes in the fall 2015 semester and who met the Emerging Scholar criteria. There were 251 names on the list. Each of the students received an individual email from the researcher during the third week of class, via their college email address, inviting their participation in the study.

The researcher received an initial email response from 18 of the potential participants; two respondents shared the college employed them in a full time capacity. Of these, one respondent identified herself as a counselor, and one identified herself as an English professor. One additional student was only willing to participate via a telephone conversation. The researcher eliminated these three potential participants from the pool.

The researcher responded to the remaining 15 students via email to arrange a meeting time. Three students did not respond to the meeting setting email; therefore, the initial number of respondents was less than the minimum number of participants noted in the original research design; thus, the researcher reviewed the list of students and sent a second email to students on the southern campus. In addition, the researcher sent a follow-up email to students at the City Campus on the Emerging Scholar Honor Banquet invitation list. Four additional students agreed to participate for a final participant sample size of 17 students who met the Emerging Scholar criteria.

When the students responded to the email invitation to participate, the researcher arranged for a meeting. The researcher and study participant mutually agreed upon the location, date, and time of the interview. Fourteen participants chose the campus where they attended classes as a meeting location and two students chose an off campus

location. Six of the interviews were conducted in a quiet area of the student cafeteria, two were conducted outside on a campus park bench, two were conducted in the campus library, three were conducted in the student center, one was conducted in a conference room, one was conducted off campus at a local fast food restaurant, and one was conducted at a local community center.

Each interview began with the researcher reviewing the informed consent as well as answering and clarifying all questions from the participant regarding the study. All participants signed the informed consent and received a paper copy of the consent form before the interview commenced. Each interview was audio recorded for the sole purpose of accurately reporting participant responses. The interviewer deleted all participant responses from the recorder after being loaded onto the researcher's personal computer. All interviews began using the same opening script:

> Once again, thank you for agreeing to participate in this study. As you know, the purpose of my study is to explore Emerging Scholar experiences, specifically factors that contribute to your success and factors that have hindered your success. We have reviewed the informed consent together and you have signed it. Let's get started. My first question is: What brought you to Public Community College?

At the conclusion of each interview, the participant received a $10 gift card to a local merchant as a compensation for their time and participation in the study. The participant chose the gift card merchant during the initial email communication when the interview location was scheduled. Three participants chose Walmart, four chose Quick Trip, three chose Target, two chose Starbucks, one chose Walgreens, one chose Panera

Bread Company, one chose Subway, and one chose the pizzeria Pi. The researcher sent a formal follow-up thank you email to the participant's college e-mail address following the interview.

The researcher listened to the audio recording of each interview, transcribed the conversation into a Microsoft Word document, and later transferred portions of the transcription to an Excel document for ease of sorting the responses. The researcher added password protection to each electronic document to help ensure privacy and confidentiality of data. The researcher also excluded all identifying data from the typed transcription documents.

Each participant received a pseudo first name for the sole purpose of reporting responses. The researcher selected the pseudo names from a list of the most popular names found on the Social Security Administration (2015) website. The researcher compared the list of most popular names to the list of Emerging Scholars provided by PCC and eliminated duplicate names. The researcher then developed a final list of the most popular names. The first study participant interviewed received the first name on the modified most popular name list as their pseudo name. The second study participant interviewed received the second name on the modified name list. This process continued until all study participants had a pseudonym assigned.

The researcher reviewed and categorized study participant responses into common themes. After this process, the researcher analyzed the common themes for relevance to the study research questions (Maxwell, 2013). PCC administration received a formal written thank you for allowing the researcher to conduct the study. The

researcher shared the results of the study with the academic leadership team at PCC during a regularly scheduled monthly meeting.

Interview questions. The researcher created specific interview questions for this qualitative research study with open-ended questions (see Appendix A). Two experts in the field of education reviewed the questions. If the participant did not provide the information in their response to the initial questions they received a follow up question (see Appendix A). Three main questions determined the demographics of the participant pool. The remaining 11 questions elicited responses in an attempt to address the study research questions. Informal follow-up questions clarified and verified the participant response. In an effort to prevent using leading questions, the researcher asked open-ended follow-up questions such "define what that means to you" or used statements such as "tell me more." Statements such as "it sounds like…." verified a student's response.

Data Analysis

The interviews were audio recorded using a digital recorder for the sole purpose of accurately noting participant responses to the interview questions. The researcher listened to each interview audio recording, transcribed the responses into a Microsoft Word document using Express Scribe software, and transferred portions of the transcriptions into an Excel document for ease of sorting responses. During the interviews and during the transcription process the researcher generated tentative ideas about categories and relationships of responses to the research questions. When all interviews were completed, open coding was used to categorize responses into themes. The categories and responses where then analyzed for relevance to the research questions.

Summary

This research study provided an opportunity to listen to the voices of students who met the Emerging Scholar criteria at PCC. The study also provided an opportunity to explore and analyze participant perceptions of factors beneficial to their success and factors that hindered their success while completing required developmental courses, completing a minimum of 24 credit hours of college level coursework, and maintaining a 3.5 GPA (on a traditional 4.0 scale). The study involved a qualitative approach by interviewing the selected participants during the 2015 fall semester at PCC. Chapter Four presents the analysis of the data collected and Chapter Five provides further discussion and draws conclusions from the study results as well as suggests recommendations for future research.

Chapter Four: Presentation of Research Findings

Overview

This study developed from the researcher's experience as an educator and administrator in a large community college setting. In the experience of the researcher, many community college students were not college ready when they enrolled for classes and often required developmental coursework. This mandatory course placement lengthened the time to graduation and often resulted in lack of degree or certificate attainment (Bailey & Cho, 2010; The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, 2014). In addition, many states adopted performance funding models for public community colleges to improve student outcomes in developmental education and/or graduation rates in order to receive the state funding (McKeown-Moak, 2013; Miao, 2012). For these reasons, community college leaders were on the quest to discover methods useful to the student body to increase student success in developmental courses and increase graduation rates. The researcher believed community college leaders could benefit from listening to successful student experiences.

The purpose of this study was to explore the experiences of Emerging Scholars at a large Midwestern community college. The researcher interviewed 17 students who were successful in completing developmental coursework and subsequently completed college level coursework with a 3.5 or higher GPA at PCC. Through interviews the researcher analyzed perceptions of Emerging Scholars, specifically, factors beneficial to success, and factors hindering success while completing the required developmental course sequence, completing a minimum of 24 credit hours of college level coursework,

and maintaining a 3.5 GPA (on a 4.0 scale). The researcher conducted one-on-one interviews with study participants in a face-to-face setting.

Qualitative Data

The researcher interviewed 17 PCC students who met the Emerging Scholar criteria during the fall 2015 semester. Individual interviews resulted in a plethora of qualitative data. The researcher analyzed the data and categorized study participant responses into common themes.

Research question one. The first research question was "How do Emerging Scholars perceive the community college experience?" Interview questions one, three, four, five, and eight helped clarify and provided insight into student perceptions of the community college experience. The data revealed two major categories relative to this research question: 1) factors contributing to success and 2) barriers to success. Within the category of positive factors contributing to success there were four sub-categories identified: student goals, support from others, specific classes, and other factors. There was one major category identified as a barrier to success: uncontrollable events. There were three additional sub-categories identified within this category: professors, classes/schedules, and other factors.

RQ1 theme one: positive contributions to success. The researcher identified four main components that seemed to promote student success and provide the student with a positive community college experience. During the interviews it was quite evident the establishment of student goals, support from others, and particular classes contributed to the success of students and thus contributed to the positive college experience. There were additional factors mentioned during the interviews, however, each were singular

items not reported by more than one study participant. These factors were the free bus pass service provided by the college, private tutoring, and retaking the final year of high school.

Student goals. The first factor identified as contributing to student success and a positive community college experience was the establishment of a goal. All 17 students interviewed reported having a very specific goal and reason for attending PCC. The identified goals included needing a job to support their family, to support their own future, to begin a career, or to begin a career that was more satisfying than jobs held in the past. Additionally, eleven study participants reported attending PCC as a stepping-stone to a four-year university and eventually achieving the goal of obtaining a job or career as the first response to the question.

Three students reported attending PCC in order to get a job to support themselves or their family. Ava stated "I wanted to get a better job actually, and I needed the schooling in order to get that better job I only have a high school education…Education gives you more opportunities." Ella, who worked at a local hospital as a secretary, stated, "I have no other choice. I won't be able to live on my salary when I'm old. I need something for my future."

Three students reported a disability and the need to have an education in order to obtain gainful employment. Sophia stated:

> I struggled with finding a job . . . I was so frustrated. The job opportunities were menial jobs, like assembling ink pens…it was just not obviously challenging. So after much soul searching . . . I did some research and when I checked [into Public Community College] they have everything I wanted.

Another study participant, Elizabeth, shared a similar story:

> I'm floundering what to do, but determined to find a career that I can do. I need a job and I know I can find something that I'm qualified for. If I don't have a degree I won't be able to get a good job.

Matthew stated "I can't' see myself sitting around doing nothing . . . I can't do that" and referenced wanting to open his own business.

Kayla described her goal as wanting to find a satisfying career. She mentioned school was a preparation for returning to the workforce after raising her daughter. Kayla stated:

> Although I had a lot of experience…I knew I didn't want to do administrative stuff. I had been there, done that, and no thanks. I wanted to choose a career where I could start at the bottom and not feel like I had to climb a ladder.

Megan reported career aspirations as well. She stated the goal of attending PCC was to open her own business and an education will give her the tools to make her dream a reality. Samantha indicated she had a college degree from her native country and due to political issues fled to the United States. Samantha reported, "I was looking for a chance to continue…I want to find a new career."

Two students reported attending PCC to improve their English language skills. Ella stated, "I am studying English, to give me help [*sic*], because I am looking for job [*sic*] for first time [*sic*] with American company." Taylor stated her reason for attending PCC was "to improve my English before going to a four year college."

Two study participants shared the goal of transferring to a four-year university as part of their journey to a career. For example, Kayla stated, "I came to the community

college to get some prerequisites out of the way to go on to a four-year college." Megan gave a specific university as her motivation and stated, "I'm planning to transfer to Elsewhere University…for Business Administration…PCC and Elsewhere University work together so it's easier to transfer."

Finally, in addition to having a specific goal, four students mentioned the location and the price of PCC as another reason for choosing the community college. Savannah stated, "I decided to go back to school and PCC [southern campus] was the closest." Hailey stated "I wanted to get all of my gen ed's done for a very good price. I'm broke. I don't have a lot of money." Megan shared she attended PCC "because of the price and the location." Kayla discussed her financial aid situation and reported taking as many classes as she could at PCC until her financial aid was fully expended and planned to transfer to a four-year university and apply for different aid.

Support from others. Study participants identified various people as contributors to a successful community college experience. Study participants mentioned professors, family and friends, and other students as being supportive and understanding in their pursuit of an education. In addition, two students mentioned their faith as being a part of their success.

Study participants mentioned a positive interaction with professors as a key factor in their success at the community college. The main categories of professor contributions to success included answering questions, explaining content more in depth, caring about the success of students, being understanding when life events occur, encouraging students, acting as an advisor about college plans, and just being generally helpful. Several students mentioned specific professors by name and gave very detailed responses

as to how the professors contributed to their personal success. Many comments were phrases regarding professors being wonderful, very helpful, and encouraging.

Eleven study participants relayed stories about the helpfulness of professors. For example, Sophia stated, "the teachers work with me. I mean, whenever there is a bump in the road…they are ready and willing to do whatever they need to do to [help you] figure it out." Hailey stated "my professors, they would set time for me to come into their office and chat with them about what I am doing, of course, I wasn't really doing bad, I was just like always on top of my grades and asking what I can do to do better." Morgan stated "My chemistry teacher, he's awesome! . . . he makes extra hours before class starts….they always provide their phone numbers or email, so they are always there." Kayla mentioned how one particular professor "never makes you feel like you can't have her undivided attention for however long you need it." Sydney stated, "They seem to understand that you have outside obligations. They don't make you do less, but they understand." Megan stated "I am international student [*sic*], so they [my professors] always ask me: Do you understand?" and Emily shared she recently wanted to drop a math class but her professor "said no. Give yourself more chance [*sic*]… She said try and I will help you." Sophia made a general comment about the professors at PCC and echoed what many students reported by saying, "I can't say enough about the teachers and staff. Everybody has gone above and beyond to help me. I couldn't ask for more in my situation."

Ten study participants mentioned family and friends as a big factor that contributed to their success and a positive community college experience. Students reported success comes in the form of support from others by making comments such as

"[my husband] supports me. He's a big support" (Ava, September 28, 2015), "I have people to back me up and guide me when I need it and help me out" (Megan, October 22, 2015), "my daughter helped me through everything" (Sophia, September 28, 2015), and "my friends and family and my finance [support me]" (Matthew, October 23, 2015).

Other students shared stories about how their friends and family contributed to their success. Chloe identified her parents as being a big support system; "definitely support from my parents. They are very good about encouraging me and helping me when I need help or taking over something for me if I need to focus on something for school. That really helps." Savannah shared she is "going through the program with one of my very close friends and she has been a tremendous social support. It has helped to have someone to study with and bounce ideas back and forth." Sophia shared her guide dog has been a big part of her success and stated, "That's what gave me the confidence to go back to school. I was a little intimidated about trying it with a cane…Now that I have her [guide dog], I don't' even think about that red cane. I have the freedom now." In addition to her dog, Sophia also mentioned her husband as a support. "He supports me 150%. He goes above and beyond to make sure I have what I need, or the quiet, or whatever it is. He's 100% behind me in this decision…he's on board and supports me." Emily, an international student, shared that her daughter encourages her; "when my daughter get high grade [*sic*] she said 'look mom!' and when I get high grade [*sic*] she said 'good mom.' This encouraged me." Destiny also shared an example of how her husband supported her; "when they [my kids] don't have school or on the weekend and I have to get studying in, he will take the kids out and I'll be at home studying."

One student mentioned a fellow student at PCC as contributing to success. Ava shared a story about how a student "just out of high school taught me an easier way to do math." Many of the study participants mentioned staff such as the counseling department, advisors, and other academic services as being a factor in success. Further discussion regarding these services is included in the research question three discussion.

Finally, two students mentioned their faith as playing a role in their success. Chloe stated "God! Definitely God! Definitely God! I couldn't do it without Him." Destiny said "my bible and my communication with God. I pray often, I go to church often…and my faith has kept me going and that's where I get my strength from."

Specific courses. The third theme of positive contributions to student success was specific classes. Two students mentioned the freshman student success course as having a positive effect on their education. Destiny described a time management exercise she completed in the student success course. This helped her to be successful in future courses. Ava stated "this [student success] class really encouraged me…that class helped you lay it out…map out how you are gonna [*sic*] plan your courses. It teaches you even if you fail, doesn't matter…have a plan 'B' for success. That's success."

Another student mentioned the developmental courses as being part of her success. Hailey stated, "I was mad that I got tested into them, but I figured out that they actually helped me…Those developmental classes they teach you how to find the answers. How to learn basically." One international student, Emily, reported taking a typing class. This helped her be successful by assisting with English language skills. She stated "the computer correct me [*sic*] when I make mistake [*sic*]. If I write L-I-T-L-E, the computer correct me [*sic*] with two t's." Another student reported taking honors

classes helped her be successful. Chloe stated, "If I took honors classes I would be more surrounded [*sic*] by likeminded students." Chloe also mentioned a one credit hour paragraph writing class helped with all her classes and shared "I took English Comp I and I didn't get the grade that I wanted, so I went ahead and signed up for that class…just to learn how to write a better paragraph and therefore essays. So that helped me."

Other factors (Services, private tutor, high school). Study participants perceived three additional factors as contributors to their success. However, study participants only mentioned these items once. One student mentioned the free bus pass service recently introduced by PCC. Chloe reported being able to take the bus increased the amount of time she could devote to studying. Chloe stated, "Well, this is something I have worked into my study time. If I take the bus, I can read on the bus. If I drive I can't read."

Two students mentioned partaking in activities to assist with their success. One study participant reported that when she took the first developmental math course she was behind from the beginning due to lack of mastery of basic math skills. Rachel had to drop the math course because:

> I had to go back on my own personal time…to learn multiplication, division, addition. My mom hired a tutor outside [of class] for me …'cause [*sic*] I have always struggled with division. Then, when I came back to go into my math lab, I was going through it with no problem [*sic*].

Taylor finished high school in her native country, but under the guidance of her father, repeated the final year of high school at an American high school; "it helped me improve…how I speak the language."

RQ1 theme two: barriers to success. The second major category identified was student perceptions of barriers to success. There was one major theme identified: uncontrollable events. Included in the uncontrollable events theme were family events, development of a disability, professors, inconvenient course offerings, and other factors. All categories were determined to be distinct barriers to a successful community college experience.

Uncontrollable events. The first sub theme identified was a lack of control of either life events or situations at PCC. Life events identified included family members, specifically sick kids, as presenting challenges to their experience. This situation required students to miss class due to having to care for their children. Additional uncontrollable factors mentioned by study participants as being a hindrance in the community college experience were fellow students not being as serious about their education as the study participant, lack of technology support offered by PCC, class schedules, teaching styles of professors, and full-time work. Although working can be a controllable factor, students identified a necessity to work in order to provide for their families. Study participants viewed work as an uncontrollable factor.

Family events. Three students briefly shared their story of family members and/or running a household as interfering with their education. Destiny shared:

> My only struggle that I have had within my collegiate career is my family. That's been a struggle because if they are sick they can't go to school and someone has to be at home with them. And if everyone that you trust with your children is working too then you have no other choice but to be at home. And then when I miss class I miss information, it's been a struggle.

Sydney also mentioned her family as a hindrance to success and stated "when one kid gets sick it's just the end of it…general life stuff." Ella mentioned "running a household…you have to be organized to fit it all in."

Development of a disability. The development a disability was another life event described by two students as presenting a challenge. Two students developed blindness during their adult lives. These legally blind students expressed difficulties with learning how to study and absorb information without seeing the words on chalkboards, in their notes, or in textbooks. Sophia shared:

> I'm new, very new to this world of being unsighted and going to school. My scores [on the COMPASS test] weren't really reflective of my ability because we were struggling and trying to do it with a person, especially like the math and stuff like that. She was trying to explain it to me auditorially [*sic*], and it could have been better…it's very hard without knowing what's on the paper.

Matthew reported a similar hindrance. He shared "I have to relearn how to reabsorb everything. I can't see everything on the board the instructors write. So I have to figure out another way to learn, to absorb. I think that's one of my biggest hurdles." A third student reported being in a car accident prior to attending PCC. Her physical challenges presented barriers on campus such as maneuvering the snow and ice and having limited resources such as transportation. Elizabeth stated "it's mentally taxing to keep up sometimes."

Professors. Two students mentioned their professors as being a hurdle to success. Chloe reported having "teachers where their teaching style is not quite your learning style and that's something that you have to overcome." Taylor reported not being able to

understand the way the professor was teaching and noted a portion of this problem was the language (English was not her native language) but also stated "he was not an international teacher. He was English, but I couldn't follow with the way he was teaching." Rachel also mentioned the teaching style of one professor; "it was just that one instructor that didn't really understand how I worked. I needed a certain type of learning environment and they couldn't get it."

Inconvenient course offerings. Four students mentioned specific classes as hurdles. Three study participants noted specific math classes and one student mentioned kinesiology as a difficult course. On the other hand, a couple of students mentioned times and/or methods of delivery as obstacles. For example, Morgan mentioned the nursing program only offers courses during the daytime. This is a potential barrier; "with my schedule I see this causing a little bit of a road block." Sydney reported PCC only offered many of her required courses during the daytime and expressed the wish for more on-line, evening, and weekend classes.

Other factors. There were other isolated circumstances presented by study participants as barriers to success. For instance, Chloe stated "fellow students aren't as serious as I am about things…if I lived in a perfect land, I think all students should be dedicated and I would be surrounded by academic excellence." Ella expressed her full-time job responsibilities was sometimes a struggle. Kayla mentioned the lack of student technology support at PCC. Kayla stated "When I first started, I tried to find a help desk and they said 'we don't have one'…I spent a lot of time having to figure that stuff out."

Research question two. The second research question studied was "How do Emerging Scholars perceive their previous academic experiences?" Interview questions

one, two, and four addressed this question. Two basic themes emerged from the data. The first theme was study participants experienced a generally positive previous academic experience. The second theme was study participants did not have a generally positive experience.

RQ2 theme one: positive previous academic experience. The first theme identified in the data was a positive previous academic experience. Three students shared a positive high school experience. Chloe reported being homeschooled and stated, "We were supposed to do our work. We were always expected to do our best…being a homeschooler, I learned a lot from my textbooks." Samantha reported being a good student in high school; "I like to study." Taylor stated she was a good student in high school and shared "the learning system is not the same back home. I think it's like rugged here. Back home we have to do basically on your own [*sic*]. But here you get help."

Three students reported being average students in high school. Kayla stated she was "OK in high school…I graduated with honors, but I just made the cut off. I just like skated by. I didn't apply myself." Megan reported she was a good student "kind of, but not really. I never lose any class [*sic*]. I always pass [*sic*]. I not greatest student [*sic*] like right now…I went to university [in my native country] it was not the same…I come her to find dream [*sic*]…I have enjoyed more now [*sic*]". When Rachel was asked about high school she stated "I was good at attendance! . . . My GPA was average. I was a good student, respectful, yeah." Emily reported finishing high school and shared her international grades "I took 99 from 100."

RQ2: theme two: negative previous academic experience. Eleven of the study participants shared a more negative high school experience. Sophia reported dropping out of high school and stated "I didn't even know if I was a good student or not. I had a rough life and circumstances. Education was not viable all the time." Ava stated:

> I was in the top ten percentile for the graduates and my grade point average was, don't laugh, one point something and I was in the top ten percentile…I barely made it….I started to turn myself around in 12th grade, but it was too late because I had wasted three years.

Ella stated, "My grade point average was one point something. I didn't care back then. I wanted out." Hailey shared her experience and stated "when I was in high school I went through a rough patch. I was like kinda [*sic*] mad about divorce and all that…my grade point average was lower than 2.0. I think it was like 1.7." Elizabeth stated:

> I did not graduate from high school. I dropped out due to disinterest, school politics, the curriculum, whatever. I got my GED. I sought it out on my own. It was something I wanted to do. I wasn't going back to high school. No way José.

Savannah stated "Oh gees! I missed a lot of days in high school, so….I was not motivated at all. I was more of a social butterfly." Morgan reported she was not a good student in high school:

> I don't blame my parents for anything, but I didn't have that support or that push to do good in school. I was like, just pass. So I just passed. I was more interested in playing sports. I passed but, definitely not what I'm doing now.

Emily discussed her previous experience with education and shared that after high school she did not enroll in a university but "entered measure for my language. For example,

here, if you want to take measure for English, you want to study more for English, I want to study more for Arabic." Emily also shared she was "required to memorize six pages without mistakes; one was 84 pages…This class changed my personality. I liked to play so much. I like to dance. But when I took this class measure, I need more quiet. It changed me." Matthew reported, "In high school I kind of got hosed, like screwed over" and shared how he finally did graduate, but because of his learning disability he was shuffled between schools and the special school district.

Several study participants explained how high school did not prepare them for the college experience. For example, Hailey said, "high school was horrible. They would not teach you how to learn. They were like, this is what you have to learn, and that's how to get there, but they didn't really show the process of how to get through it." Sophia shared her personal experience and views on lack of high school preparation:

> I really feel like high school is failing our kids. I listen to these kids and I think [high school] teachers give extensions that a professor wouldn't normally do…I really feel that they come in here really not understanding the basics to get through. You've got to pay attention to the schedule; you've got to take good notes…I know we expect kids to graduate and be adults but being an adult doesn't tell them how to take good notes or how to organize things a little bit better…I just feel the struggle of young kids in my classes…I don't think they all know how to get to that bridge from high school to community college or the university level…I feel like these kids need a bridge to say look this is the best way to do this and this. I know you didn't get this in high school, but these are the things you need to be successful in the university or community college. The student

> success course is on the right direction, but I think the focus needs to be a little more adjusted to what the real need is…the success class would have been better in high school. Better preparation for the next step.

Research question three. The third research question was "How do Emerging Scholars perceive the academic supports provided by the community college?" Interview questions three, four, five, six, seven, eight, and nine contributed data to this research question. Generally, students shared positive comments about the support services and how the services contributed to success.

RQ3 theme one: positive academic services. All 17 study participants discussed the academic support services provided by the college in a positive light, although not all study participants viewed all services as positively contributing to success. The services mentioned were the writing center, tutoring, math lab, library, the Access office, advisors, counselors, and the TRIO program. In addition, study participants shared experiences about their professors with respect to receiving assistance outside of class. Kayla mentioned every service at PCC contributed to success. Kayla commented:

> I access every bit of resource available to me. I go to the tutor. I go to supplemental instruction, and I go to my teachers…my classmates…counseling…writing lab, math lab, all that stuff. It helps you be successful in school…Even if you don't think you need it.

Writing center. Seven students reported using the writing center at some point during their enrollment at PCC. The majority of these students said they used the writing center only when enrolled in English classes. Chloe reported using the writing center "just to learn how to write a better paragraph and therefore essays." Rachel shared she

used the writing center for two major projects and quickly added, "I haven't needed them this semester, but if I did I would go." Sydney stated, "I did use the writing center occasionally. They were really awesome." Samantha indicated use of the writing center and stated, "They were very helpful. I couldn't get through classes without help."

Four students reported never using the writing center. For instance, Emily reported never using the writing center but found other sources to assist with writing; "I ask my teacher and she correct me [*sic*], or sometimes my daughter or son correct me [*sic*] too." Megan also reported using the professors instead of the writing center services; "I do not use the writing center. I just talk to the teachers. I know friends who use it, and they say it's actually really good. I just use my teachers." Matthew on the other hand reported not needing the writing center services; "I seem to have a niche for writing…that's kind of easy for me to do."

Tutoring and math lab. Nine students reported using tutoring and academic support services to assist with their studying and course work. Morgan reported using the math lab and math tutors initially because one of her professors gave extra credit points and shared when she took chemistry she went back for assistance on her own and without the benefit of extra credit points. Kayla reported using the anatomy and physiology as well as chemistry tutors three days a week when she took those classes; "it helps you be successful in school."

Three students reported it was not necessary to use the tutoring services. Savanah shared she preferred "independent study." Taylor reported a similar story; "I'm not really good with other people, so I'm the kind of person who likes to do stuff on my own."

Sydney shared she did not need tutoring and instead hosted tutoring sessions with her classmates.

Library. Study participants mentioned the library four times as being a resource for success. Savannah stated "I use the library a lot…for resources… for models for kinesiology…I get the models and take them to a quiet room. That was helpful." Chloe stated, "I definitely used the library. The study space there is really nice…It's just a really nice place for me to go and study." Hailey also shared her use of the library as important; "I go to the library a lot. It's a nice atmosphere. It's easier to study with other people who are studying. You can ask them questions."

Access office. Three students mentioned the disability access office as a support service integral to their success. Sophia reported working through the access office "because they know my needs, what systems or technology I may or may not need. [For example,] I wasn't aware I could have note takers at first. I was writing blindly and trying to read chicken scratch…that was a phenomenal improvement." Sophia further explained the access office was able to eventually provide adaptive equipment to assist with her ability to be successful and stated:

> They got me a computer with the JAWS [Job Access with Speech] and ZoomText [magnification and screen reading software for the visually impaired] programs and got it going….now they have a talking calculator. They have a portable closed circuit TV so I take all my tests in the assessment office and they blow it up really big for me.

Matthew mentioned a specific access office staff member as someone who helped him the most by providing many forms of adaptive equipment for his disability. Sydney

mentioned she could use the access office services for her dyslexia but has chosen not to; "I just use the writing center if I need help."

The TRIO program. One student mentioned the TRIO program as being extremely beneficial to her success. Elizabeth could not say enough about the benefits of the TRIO services; "I use the TRIO lab a lot. Tutors come and go, but the TRIO staff stays. They have many resources." Elizabeth also mentioned her experience with advising services compared to the TRIO services:

> When I first started, TRIO didn't exist on campus. I talked with advisors about picking classes and it was all willy nilly. When TRIO started I was in the first cohort of students. These advisors recommended taking easier classes when I was taking math. Things like that. Much more helpful.

Academic Advising. Study participants had mixed responses to using advising services to assist with their success. Three students reported using advising services regularly. Ava stated "I check [with advisors] for my curiosity every other semester because I gotta know. I don't want to be taking classes I don't really need." Rachel stated, "I'm pretty well known up there…making sure I'm taking the right courses and I can graduate on time and I'm not wasting money on some course that don't need. They've helped me a lot." Taylor reported meeting with an advisor for the first time because it was mandatory for that class [freshman student success course]." Taylor also reported she was required to talk to an advisor for a class assignment, but found the meeting beneficial and made a second appointment "regarding the classes to take next and transfer classes."

Three study participants reported never using any advising services. Ella stated, "I never talked to them. I used the Recommended Academic Plan posted on the website to take the classes I need." However, Ella also recognized the need to meet with an advisor "to get on the nursing waiting list." Morgan reported a similar situation and stated, "I've got the sheet that shows what I need and I'm marking off the classes as I go. When I get to a point, I will meet with an advisor." Hailey stated, "I don't like the advisors" and explained, "They basically say these are the classes you need to take. You gotta [*sic*] get this grade and that's how you get there." Hailey reported she talks to her professors instead. One student reported having a negative experience with advising and therefore did not utilize the services at all. Sophia stated, "The first person I worked with wasn't really sure how to do everything or handle everything. Not on their game."

Other students reported meeting with an advisor at least once. For example, Chloe stated "usually I have always pretty much figured out what I needed and what I wanted, and only talked to an advisor if I had a question or something like that." However, Chloe also shared she had recently talked to an advisor about transferring to a four year university; "I talked to her about the different kinds of engineering out there. She helped me with that and just helped me with the order of classes to make sure you get it all done. She was very helpful."

Professors. The study participants presented a wide variety of answers to the interview question about meeting with professors. Reponses ranged from never meeting with professors to talking to them after every class period. However, all 17 study participants mentioned professors as assisting with their individual success to some degree.

Only one study participant reported never meeting with professors. Ava stated "I really don't [talk to my professors]." Several students reported not meeting with professors during office hours, but would chat with them before or after class or communicate with them via email. For example, Morgan stated:

> I have not met [with any of my professors] as of yet, but they have always been available…there have been a few occasions where I have reached out by email just to get clarification on something…I haven't really reached out a ton because they have all been helpful and clear in what they are looking for.

Sophia stated, "I haven't really needed too much. I mostly communicate through email if I'm not quite clear on something." Chloe stated, "I usually just approach them after class. Sometimes it's more frequent than others." Elizabeth stated "professors and office hour usage varies. Depends on how hard I'm struggling. Many of the professors are limited with their time. Sometimes they have time to give you and other times a quick question is all. Before and after class works best." Taylor reported talking to professors "sometimes after class if I didn't understand the lecture. After class I would ask questions about the lecture." While Hailey stated "I didn't go in very often because I would talk to them right after class let out, and then I would run to my next class."

Other students reported meeting and talking to professors on a regular basis. Destiny stated, "I try to go once a week to see how I'm doing in classes. And I will communicate with them after class if they have some time available and through email and phone if I have to." Kayla reported talking to her professors "probably once a week, maybe." Rachel stated, "It just depends on the instructor. The one I did like, I was seeking out her assistance every day. Even when class was not in, I was going to her

other class and working there." Samantha stated (referring to ESL instructors), "I met with them three days per week. After every class. Sometimes by email. But mostly after class…They were very helpful."

During the interviews, several study participants mentioned their professors and provided the researcher with a statement about the faculty in general at PCC. For example, Ella stated, "professors at the Southern Campus are top notch." Kayla provided her perspective about professors by stating "there's some really fabulous teachers…I have teachers from two or three semesters ago that I can stop and talk to about either some things going on in my class or professional advice. I really like that. It's nice. None of them make you feel like I'm done with you, get out of here." Other students gave comments such as "the teachers are good" (Chloe, September 30, 2015), "teachers are very good" (Emily, September 27, 2015), "basically, my teachers were very helpful" (Hailey, October 6, 2015), "the instructors are all helpful" (Matthew, October 23, 2015), and "the teachers work with me" (Sophia, September 28, 2015).

Counseling services. One student mentioned the counseling staff as a positive experience at PCC. Sydney relayed a story about how the counseling staff assisted with her stress level during local events related to race relations

> I live in [the town where the events occurred], my husband is black, my kids are biracial, and my dad is a white cop…So when everything went down in Ferguson, I was very overwhelmed and stressed. But, they had free counseling for students. I was able to talk to someone to go through stuff.

Extracurricular activities. Barbatis (2010) found student engagement in clubs and organizations was an important factor in student persistence. In addition, Hu (2011)

found student with "high-level engagement in social activities is positively related to student persistence in college" (p. 104). Therefore, researcher asked study participants about their involvement in clubs and college sponsored activities even though community colleges do not always consider these activities as an academic support service.

Only two study participants reported engaging in extracurricular activities. Chloe stated "in the past, I've been so focused on academics in school, I never really took time to do extracurricular things or be part of clubs, or do volunteer work. So I'm gonna try this time around." Chloe mentioned joining four clubs and the Phi Theta Kappa Honor Society. Chloe also interjected:

> I joined the engineering club, and I really feel like that's going to be really helpful to me to have a whole bunch of people with a whole bunch of backgrounds, different interests in engineering fields so I might get a taste of what kind of engineering I would be interested in. I think that's going to help me a lot.

Sophia reported participating in several events through the access office, organizing a clothing drive for the homeless at the Northern Campus community, and working with the society for the blind. Sophia also reported being able to tie her community work to honors class projects. Two students reported joining Phi Theta Kappa, the honor society at PCC. However, both of them said they have not been active members to date.

The remaining fifteen students reported lack of participation in clubs or organizations due to lack of time, inconvenient meeting times that conflicted with the student schedule, and being active outside of PCC. Student comments included "I would like to but I feel tapped out already with working full time and my son. I want to do good and I want to keep my straight A's" (Morgan, October 22, 2015), "I would like to be

involved, I just don't have the time" (Destiny, October 27, 2015), "no because I have a job…I don't have time for that" (Emily, September 21, 2015).

Research question four. The fourth research question was **"**How do Emerging Scholars perceive themselves?" Interview questions two, three, four, five, and eight were geared toward eliciting responses for this research question. The researcher categorized study participant responses into three themes. The researcher determined students see themselves as being motivated, having an internal drive to be successful, and having the necessary skills to be successful.

RQ4 theme one: Motivation. One of the interview questions was "Some students who find out they have to take developmental courses never register and never start college for various reasons. What motivated you to continue despite being required to start in courses that don't count towards your degree/certificate?" Study participant answers provided five basic themes for their motivation: having a goal, providing for their family, serving as a role model for others, personal or internal motivation, and being motivated for other people.

Having a goal. The first major theme to emerge was the strong desire to accomplish the goal of obtaining a degree, career or job, or transfer to a four-year university. In fact, 10 study participants mentioned their goal as part of their motivation. Sophia shared after losing her sight her motivation came from the fact that she wanted to work; "I want a job. I want to be able to work again. I want to be to feel viable, but I also want to do something that is benefitting other people." Morgan reported a similar motivation; "I am thankful for my office job, but I want to do something that I love and not just have a job… "I'm at a point in my life I just want to get a degree and a career

that I love. That's kind of where I'm at. That's what motivates me." Destiny stated "I have a passion for children so that's my motivation…when I finish my reward will be greater. I will be doing what I want to do. My passion. That's what's motivating me to keep going." While Ava stated "My thing is, I'm 40. I don't wanna [*sic*] be 60 years old and doing what I'm doing now. That's my motivation." Hailey mentioned her motivation related to her goal of admittance to a nursing program at a four-year university. In order to pursue this goal she would need to do well; "they go off your grades. The better grades that you have the higher the scores you get, the faster you can get in there."

Being able to provide for others. The second major theme surrounding motivation centered on the student's ability to provide for their families and the desire have a better life. Ella stated her motivation was "knowing that I had to for a better future." Hailey reported her motivation comes from her son; "I guess [my motivation is] my son. He pushes me. If I do bad then I won't' be able to provide. He's a big part [of my motivation]."

Internal motivation. Five students discussed internal motivation as part of their persistence. Elizabeth stated her motivation was "to prove to myself that I could do it." Sophia shared her personal journey:

> My dad was dying of cancer. I had made a promise to him earlier in the year that I would go to college and pursue my dreams…at first I was doing it more for him. And then as things started going better for me and we started figuring things out [with my disability], it was more about what I was really wanting to do.

Matthew discussed is disability and reported his motivation came from "my willingness to keep improving and not give up…and stubbornness."

Being a role model. Two students mentioned their motivation came from the desire to be a role model for others. Morgan shared part of her motivation was for her son:

> I want him to see me get my degree since I haven't done that yet. You know, I want him to go to college too. I hope by having seen me do it, even though it's later on in life, it will motivate him to do good in school and go to college one day.

Ava shared a story about her two children:

> When those papers come in the mail [Dean's List letter] and I get stuff like that I show it to them and I post it on my refrigerator. It kinda [*sic*] motivates them also. They're like, mama you gotta [*sic*] study. I say yeah [*sic*]. I'm like this is what you gotta [*sic*] do to get good grades, you gotta [*sic*] study. I'm kinda [*sic*] like mentoring them.

Role of other people. Several students mentioned the role of others as part of their motivation. Savannah mentioned a professor she had for one of the first developmental courses she took; "My English teacher was wonderful. He really showed me I could do it and gave me a lot of confidence. Because I did so well in his class, I just wanted to continue." Sydney mentioned a high school teacher who "believed in me and shared her experience and stated this particular teacher said "you are not stupid…I believe in you." Ava mentioned the nurses that took care of her when she was critically ill in the hospital and from that experience she was motivated to return to school to study nursing. Taylor

mentioned the life lesson her parents taught her; "my parents taught me that education is like the basis to become successful in life." Finally, one student reported watching inspirational videos on YouTube to keep her motivated.

RQ4 theme two: Internal drive. The researcher viewed a student's internal drive as second main theme contributing to a successful community college experience. There were several words used by study participants to describe their internal drive including perseverance, confidence, having a good attitude, and stubbornness. Morgan commented, "I finally reached that point where I have that drive finally…I want to do well." Matthew shared his story about his disability. He stated:

> I look at it as a challenge, with my eyes the way they are. I just keep going. I know I'm going to have some hard times, I may flunk some classes, and my GPA is to going to go down a little bit. That's fine, but that doesn't mean I have to stop and give up because of that.

Savannah stated, "I think my age has something to do with it too. I'm not just out of high school. I'm more focused on what I want…just working my butt off." Ella stated "having a good attitude and having the confidence to do it" played a big role in her success. Ava stated, "I saw other people do it, so I thought if they can do it, so could I."

RQ4 theme three: Skills to be successful. The third theme identified by the study participants was their self-perception of possessing the skills necessary to be successful. These skills included time management, being organized, and having good study habits.

Megan reported prior to enrolling at the community college she lacked organizational skills and developing these skills was a tremendous help; "being organized. That's my life…before I arrived here [in the United States] I didn't use a

calendar. Now it is my best friend…it is the way I keep organized." Sophia reported using her calendar to stay organized:

> I really used the syllabuses [*sic*] and calendar so I could make a calendar for myself. I used the calendar in google, and I put all that stuff in there so it's constantly telling me on my phone, or tablet, so I'm not forgetting things….being organized and finding a system that worked.

Savannah reported being structured; "I just set aside two to three hours every day dedicated to studying, and make sure I'm structured. I have a set schedule at school, so I work around that."

Several students shared their specific study habits. Emily stated "I do my homework immediately when I get back in my home…I not study [*sic*] both of them same day [*sic*]. I feel boring [*sic*]...on Saturday I do my math lab, on Sunday I write." Chloe stated:

> I like to be prepared for classes. I make an effort to read the material before going to lecture because then the lecture is a repetition of what I already know and I am able to make the connection from what I've read verses hearing it for the first time. The textbook is my best friend…for my personal learning style, the teacher is a little bit of an added bonus, because when I see the words in the textbook and see the diagrams that's when I understand things.

Megan reported studying all day on the days she was not in class and on class days "I go to my home and study again. All the teachers have notes, PowerPoint presentations. I review all the material. Then I do homework, so I understand." Megan also reported she tried to find answers to her questions herself before going to her professors:

> I always try to understand myself first. I go to YouTube and watch videos and try to understand myself. Then if I don't get it, I ask. I think it better [*sic*] if you try to find it, then you are not waiting for someone to explain it. Then if you are going to ask something, you already have an idea. I love that. And actually, it help [*sic*] me a lot. For example, I am applying to Elsewhere University. I did that. I look at all the information before I go there [*sic*] to ask questions.

Sydney conveyed one strategy as "being able to work ahead on assignments as time permits" and reported tutoring other students as being extremely beneficial to learning the material. Sydney stated "I host free tutoring with my classes…I usually have time set aside for my classmates to meet…it helps me practice [the content]." Finally, Sydney reported she home schools her daughter; "I've learned so much from teaching her…[if] I did outstanding on the test, I'd be like oh, I just went over that with her."

Several students reported the study location as being very important in their success. For example, Taylor reported "I use the library to keep up with my homework and write my papers…I don't have a computer." Rachel reported the reading lab as her study location; "I'm in the reading lab for hours. That's where I like to study and do all my work…the tutors are down there." Kayla reported doing her homework in the academic center; "I basically do my homework there, and if I have a question, I can ask."

Interview question 10 asked study participants "How many hours per week on average do you study?" There was a wide variety of responses to this question ranging from "not much" (Ella, October, 27, 2015) to "morning until night" (Samantha, September 28, 2015). Study participants seemed to have a difficult time expressing an

average number of hours spent studying per week. The participants often gave an explanation as opposed to a number (See Table 9).

Table 9

Study Participant Study Time

Study Participant	Reported Study Time
Ava	I try to study every day
Chloe	I just do what I need to do and don't really pay attention to the time that I do it in. Maybe 4-5 hours on a good week
Destiny	20 hours
Elizabeth	Varies by subject and how much I am struggling
Ella	Not much. I study the night before my tests and I do homework. Other than that I don't put in too much extra study time. I would say I don't study
Emily	Each day
Hailey	15 minutes each day
Kayla	As much as I need to
Matthew	3-4 hours per day
Megan	All day on Monday and Wednesdays. Maybe 20-25 hours per week
Morgan	1 ½ hours each day at least
Rachel	3 hours per week at most
Samantha	Every day. Morning until night
Savannah	Depends on the class. 2 -3 hours per day
Sophia	As much time as I need to learn the material
Sydney	9 pm to 4 am weekdays
Taylor	3 hours every day

Note. Data taken from personal interviews with study participants, fall 2015.

Research Data Summary

The purpose of this study was to explore the experiences of Emerging Scholars. The data gathered from the study participant interviews provided a plethora of specific factors perceived as contributing to success and factors perceived as hindering success. Data findings showed there was not a single, straight forward component to student success. Rather, the researcher determined success was as a complex phenomenon. Chapter Five provides further discussion and draws conclusions from the study results as well as suggests recommendations for future research.

Chapter Five: Discussion and Reflection

McClenney and Arnsparger (2012) argued community college leaders "have not developed the habit of listening to their students" (p. 3). This qualitative research study listened to student voices. The study results highlighted factors perceived by Emerging Scholars beneficial to success and factors perceived as barriers to success while attending a community college. The study topic developed from the researcher's experience as an educator and administrator at a large community college. Many students struggled to complete developmental coursework and succeed in the first college-level course (Adams, 2010; Gonzalez, 2011; Kozeracki, 2005; Melguizo et al., 2014; Yates, 2010). Unfortunately, those students were unlikely to obtain higher education credentials (Bailey & Cho, 2010; Carnegie Foundation, 2014). On the other hand, the researcher observed a relatively small number of students who completed the required sequence of developmental coursework and college level coursework with a 3.5 or higher GPA.

The specific purpose of this study was to explore the experiences of Emerging Scholars, particularly factors perceived as beneficial to success, and factors perceived as a barrier to success while completing the required developmental course sequence, completing a minimum of 24 credit hours of college level coursework, and maintaining a 3.5 or higher GPA (on a 4.0 scale). The researcher interviewed 17 students and collected a plethora of qualitative data. After analyzing the study participant responses, the researcher determined there was not a single, straight forward component to student success. Rather, success was determined to be a multifaceted phenomenon.

Summary of Findings

The study interview questions elicited responses to address four research questions:

RQ 1: How do Emerging Scholars perceive the community college experience?

RQ 2: How do Emerging Scholars perceive their previous academic experiences?

RQ 3: How do Emerging Scholars perceive the academic supports provided by the community college?

RQ 4: How do Emerging Scholars perceive themselves?

The data revealed two main themes relative to all four research questions: factors contributing to success and barriers to success. The researcher found two key factors contributing to success. The first key factor discovered was the establishment of a goal. The second key factor was positive faculty-student interactions. Six additional factors emerged as beneficial to success. These factors were academic support services offered by the college, specific classes, support from others, motivation to persist, having an internal drive to be successful, and having the necessary skills to be successful. Study participant responses revealed only one main factor perceived as being a barrier to success. The researcher labeled this category as "uncontrollable events." The researcher identified events in this category as family events, development of a disability, professor teaching style, and lack of course offerings convenient for the student schedule.

The researcher noted three limitations of the study. First, the sample population was homogeneous and purposive. According to Fraenkel et al. (2012) this type of sample consists of participants who "possess a certain trait or characteristic" (p. 436). In this study, all participants met the Emerging Scholar criteria defined by PCC as students

who began "college in two or more developmental courses and have since completed 24 [credit] hours of college-level course work at a 3.5 GPA [on a traditional 4.0 scale]" (PCC, 2013, para. 2). Secondly, only 17 students participated in the study. Frankel et al. (2012) defined the sample size for qualitative studies as "somewhere between one and 20" (p. 103). Due to the small sample size, the researcher recognized the inability to generalize the results to all community college students. Finally, the role of the researcher at the participating institution (PCC) could have played a role in student responses to interview questions. Study participants were all aware of the job title of the researcher and could have provided answers to interview questions they thought the researcher wanted to hear, or provided an answer in a more positive light than was actually truthful.

Discussion

Establishment of a goal. The 'establishment of goals' emerged as an important theme to student success in this study. All 17 study participants had a very specific goal for attending PCC, and all 17 participants determined what the goal was prior to enrolling for classes at PCC. This finding mirrored the conclusions of previous research. Martin et al. (2012) suggested it does not matter what the goal is as long as there is a goal. Martin et al. (2012) also found students who had a declared major were more likely to complete their course of study or transfer to a four-year institution than students who did not have a declared major. Although this study explored students who enrolled in classes and had not yet graduated, it was clear each participant was on the path to completion and graduation as determined by the successful completion of the required developmental courses, college level courses, and a 3.5 or higher GPA. In addition, study participants

commented on their planned graduation date. For example, Megan stated, "this is my last semester, Yeah!" Destiny planned to be finished "by the fall of 2016" and Rachel noted spring of 2017 as her goal for transferring to Elsewhere University.

Study participant goals ranged from needing the education to obtain a job in order to support their family, to support their own future, to begin a career, or to change careers. Eleven participants reported attending PCC as the beginning step on the educational journey to a job or career. The 11 study participants mentioned transferring to a four-year university as their ultimate goal in order to secure the desired job and/or career.

Martin et al. (2014) stated, "Successful students have clear goals" (p. 229). Having a goal was a key factor for the Emerging Scholars in this study. Each student interviewed seemed eager to talk about their educational goals and how the goal fit into their dream or vision for their future. For instance, Emily stated, "I figured out that I need school in order to do well in life." Taylor stated, "My parents taught me that education is like the basis to become successful in life. With my goal [of wanting to be a neurosurgeon] I have to have good grades to get accepted into a good college." Morgan stated, "I don't want to be in my office job for the rest of my life. I want to do something that I love and enjoy doing every day."

Martin et al. (2014) stated, "With well-defined visions for their futures, and the understanding of how success in college can lead to the realization of those visions, successful students follow distinct academic tracks, as opposed to just experimenting with different course offerings" (p. 230). Study participants expressed shorter-term goals and a plan to achieve those goals. For example, Destiny reported starting with nine

credit hours the first semester, however she stated I "want to finish earlier" therefore she took a full credit load each semester after the first. Rachel expressed the need to make sure "I'm taking the right courses and I can graduate on time" and expressed visiting the advising office frequently to ensure the course selection was correct. Ava stated, "I guess it's just baby steps. I've gotta keep at it."

Positive student interactions with professors. Positive interactions between faculty and students emerged as a second major theme. Study participants mentioned positive interactions with professors as a factor for success and reported professors were available for informal conversations before and after class as well as during scheduled office hours. In addition, some professors shared email addresses and personal cell phone numbers with students to allow students a connection when needed. Students also mentioned professors cared about their success and were generally helpful to students. This finding was consistent with previous study conclusions. Studies conducted by Barbatis (2010), Clark (2012), Merrow (2007), and Shepherd and Sheu (2014) found faculty and student interactions had a positive influence on student success.

In addition, the researcher saw the engagement with professors as a form of engagement similar to the academic engagement described by Pruett and Absher (2015). Pruett and Absher (2015) described academically engaged students as students who "ask questions in class…work with other students on projects during class or outside the class…tutor other students…and discuss ideas from their readings or classes with instructors and other students outside of class" (p. 39). The vast majority of students in this study engaged with professors. Several students mentioned connecting with a specific professor during the class and continued to stay connected even after the class

was completed. For example, Kayla stated, "I have teachers from two or three semesters ago that I can stop and talk to about either some things going on in my class or professional advice."

Study participants discussed additional engagement opportunities during the interviews. Several study participants mentioned engagement with fellow students as helpful. For example, Sydney mentioned "hosting free tutoring sessions" with classmates and Savannah reported having a friend to study with; "it has helped to have someone to study with, and bounce ideas back and forth." The majority of study participants accessed academic services such as tutoring, math lab, writing center, and the access office. Although these interactions were not with professors, they were interactions with professional staff that assisted the student and provided engagement opportunities.

On the other hand, Barbatis (2010) found student engagement in clubs and organizations was an important factor in student persistence. One interview question in this study asked students about involvement in college sponsored clubs and organizations to determine school engagement from the social involvement aspect. Fifteen students reported a lack of participation in campus clubs and organizations. The study participants mentioned lack of time, inconvenient meeting times that conflicted with the student schedule, and being active outside of PCC as an explanation for lack of participation. This finding opposed conclusions from prior qualitative research conducted by Barbatis (2010) and Hu (2011). This contradiction to the findings of Barbatis (2010) and Hu could be due to PCC student engagement and connection with faculty as well as academic support personnel.

Academic support. Engagement with college support services was a third theme. All 17 students mentioned using at least one academic support service and suggested the service was beneficial to success. The services discussed in the interviews were the writing center, tutoring, math lab, library, Access office, advisors, counselors, and the TRIO program services. In addition, students mentioned their professors as being a resource and quasi service. Pruett and Absher (2015) reported developmental students must be aware of the support services available to help them succeed academically. Kayla was a perfect example; "I access every bit of resource available…I go to the tutor. I go to supplemental instruction, and I go to my teachers…my classmates…counseling…writing lab, math lab…it helps you be successful in school…even if you don't think you need it."

Specific classes. Another success factor identified by students was specific courses taken at PCC. The four courses mentioned were the freshman student success course, developmental courses in general, honors classes, and a typing class. The freshman student success course helped students learn time management and organizational skills necessary for community college success. Destiny described a time management exercise completed in the freshman success course as beneficial. Ava discussed how the class "teaches you even if you fail, doesn't matter…have a plan 'B' for success." This finding was consistent with CCCSE (2013) research which indicated "gains in persistence rates for developmental and non-developmental students taking the freshman success courses have been documented" (p. 17).

The study participants mentioned the developmental courses as a success factor as well. These courses helped students bridge their knowledge gap, helped them engage at

the institution, and assisted with how to be a college student. Hailey stated "I figured out that they [the developmental courses] actually helped me…they teach you how to find the answers. How to learn basically." Chloe also suggested a developmental course was beneficial to success; "I took English Comp I and I didn't get the grade that I wanted, so I went ahead and signed up for that [developmental writing] class just to learn how to write a better paragraph and therefore essays. So that helped me." This finding opposed one finding in a study conducted by Barbatis (2010) who found students "regarded the preparatory classes as punitive because the courses did not generate college credit" (p. 22). Participants in this study did not mention the lack of college credit. Rather, the study participant comments were about how the developmental courses provided a benefit to success.

The final two classes mentioned as contributing to success were honors classes and a typing class. One student reported taking honors classes helped her be successful because these courses allowed her to be "surrounded by likeminded students" (Chloe, September 30, 2015) who were academically focused. One international student reported taking a typing class assisted with learning the English language that in turn helped her be successful in all classes.

Each study participant reported taking either the COMPASS or the Accuplacer placement test prior to enrollment. Scott-Clayton (2012) stated "placement test scores are better at predicting who is likely to do well in the college-level course than predicting who is likely to fail" (p. 32). All students in this study were successful in completing the required developmental course sequence and were successful in completing college level coursework.

Motivation to persist. Another theme evident in the data was the student's internal motivation. Students described themselves as being motivated to persist, learning to be confident, and having an internal drive to be successful. Students noted an education was an important aspect for their future. This revelation in and of itself provided motivation. There were many student comments regarding motivation. One student stated, "I think education is necessary if you are young or old. There is not age for education [*sic*]" (Emily, September 21, 2015). Chloe wondered, "Is it too late to start this?" and quickly added "no it's never too late." One student response was quite powerful; "I wanted to prove to myself that I could do it" (Elizabeth, September 28, 2015).

Barnes and Slate (2010) stated, "The majority of high school graduates in the 21st century in the United States are not academically prepared for the rigor of postsecondary education" (p. 12). The students who participated in this study were students underprepared for college, and tested into at least two developmental courses. Fifteen study participants were required to take three or more developmental courses, four participants were required to take eight or more developmental courses, and one study participant was required to take 10 developmental courses. When study participants shared their high school experience, the majority of students viewed their high school experience as a negative experience. The overwhelming theme was high school did not prepare the students well for college. However, study participants reported their personal lack of motivation during high school was a contributing factor. In addition, students shared post high school life experiences bolstered maturity and helped create and focus

on future goals. For example, Hailey reported, "I grew up. I figured out that I need school in order to do well in life."

Support from others. Study participants reported support from people outside of PCC as a factor in motivation and success. These 'other people' included spouses, domestic partners, significant others, fiancés, and/or children. This finding supports previous research conducted by Barbatis (2010) who reported supportive families as contributing to success. Study participants relied heavily on support from their friends and family and shared various illustrations for the definition of support. For example, several study participants reported family members taking the kids to activities to allow the student time to study. Another example of family support included adult children who helped teach study skills or were available to explain course content. Other study participants identified friends and family as providing general encouragement and support. The concept of support was definitely evident as a factor in success regardless of how the study participant defined support.

Necessary skills. Finally, study participants reported possessing the necessary skills to be successful. Being organized was one of the main skills identified as being beneficial to success. Several study participants reported being organized was not an inherent skill but rather a skill learned from either experience or through a formal means such as the freshman success course. For example, Megan stated, "before arriving here [in the United States] I did not use a calendar, now it's my best friend." Likewise, Savanah reported, "I'm structured. I have a set schedule at school, so I work around that." While Destiny stated, "I have to juggle it all…although my days are long, when I'm awake for most of my days, it's paying off."

All study participants except one mentioned having the appropriate study skills to be successful. In fact, study participants were eager to explain how they managed to fit studying into their daily or weekly schedule and were eager to share how they studied. For example, one study participant shared she studied 15 minutes a day (Hailey, October 6, 2015) whereas another student mentioned she studied 20-25 hours per week (Megan, October 28, 2015). Students seemed proud of their ability to manage their lives, be organized and find time to study. Ava stated, "I'm looking at that I have to do all this to accomplish what I want."

Barriers to success: Uncontrollable events. Only one theme emerged regarding barriers to success and labeled "uncontrollable events" by the researcher. Sub categories of this theme included family events such as sick children, development of a disability, professor teaching style, and lack of course offerings convenient for the student schedule. Study participants were eager to share that even though they encountered these uncontrollable events, the goal of completing community college with a degree kept them on track and focused. For example, Destiny stated "I have thought plenty of times I'm just gonna [*sic*] leave school right now and run away. But I'm like, when I finish, my reward will be greater."

Study participants mentioned family events several times as an uncontrollable event that sometimes interfered with school and study time. The most common response was children, more specifically, sick children. The common theme was sick children caused study participants to miss classes. Sydney stated, "When one kid gets sick that's the end of it." Ella mentioned she did not have a husband or kids, but took care of an

elderly aunt full time. This responsibility sometimes interfered with school and study time as well.

The second theme was the difficulty of the course work itself and the teaching style of the professor. Students identified mathematics courses as troublesome and one student mentioned kinesiology as being difficult. However, the student motivation and internal drive to be successful and persist was evident. The students who mentioned the difficult courses also mentioned taking steps to do well such as seeking assistance from tutoring or the academic centers. In addition, study participants reported the teaching style of professors as a barrier to success. One student reported not being able to understand the professor, another student commented professor teaching styles do not always coincide with personal learning styles, and one student noted the learning environment is not always conducive.

Three students reported the development of a disability as a barrier to success. Two students reported losing eyesight as an adult. This presented a challenge to absorbing information without seeing words on a chalkboard, in notes, or in textbooks. This was an unexpected finding in this study from the perspective of the researcher. The researcher had not anticipated encountering students with disabilities of this nature.

The final uncontrollable event mentioned by students was the inconvenient times of course offerings compared to the student's life schedule. One student mentioned there were not enough courses scheduled in evenings, on weekends, or on-line. Another student stated, "With my schedule, I see this [lack of conveniently scheduled courses] causing a little bit of a road block" (Morgan, October 22, 2015).

The researcher heard anecdotal comments from faculty and staff about students working too much, and the work hours were a contributing factor to the lack of success at the community college level. Interestingly, study participants did not mention full time work or work in general as a specific barrier to success. If fact, they commented on their ability to be organized, having time management skills, and finding time to study as contributing to success rather than work being a barrier to success. This finding was inconsistent with a study conducted by Torres et al. (2010) who found the optimal work hours per week for students is 10-15 and working 30 or more hours per week resulted in a lower GPA (p. 65). Six of the 17 participants reported working full time while attending classes. All six of these students mentioned possessing organizational skills was crucial to fit school and work into their already busy schedule. Three participants reported working part time and seven reported being full time students and not working.

VanOra (2012) reported multiple demands on student time were a challenge for developmental students. The study participants mentioned their busy schedules during the interviews; however, students did not mention work and other life demands as a barrier to success. These demands were viewed as just part of life and the study participants figured out how to manage their time to fit it all in. Hailey stated, "I was working 40 hours, but then it interfered with my lab day so I cut it down to 32." Morgan stated, "I work full time and I have an almost eight-year-old son. It gets a little bit crazy…I just have to work around it all." Fitting school into the busy daily schedule was consistent with Wyatt's 2011 comment that "students had multiple obligations in their busy lives and school is just one of them" (p. 16).

Implications

The results and conclusions of this qualitative research were important for faculty and administrators considering initiatives and programs to increase the number of successful students in developmental courses, completing degrees and certificates, and graduating. One key factor identified by Emerging Scholars as a contributing factor to success was the establishment of a goal. Administrators must take into consideration programing for students who present with an undeclared major. Colleges must have a structured plan to assist this type of student with goal setting and career planning. McClenny and Arnspanger (2012) suggested redesigning the student success courses to "offer different versions of the course for students with undeclared majors and students interested in engineering, health care, teaching, and the workforce" (p. 112). The researcher believed this would allow the focus of the freshman student success course to be more specific and geared toward student interests. This specific focus could emphasize setting educational and career goals. McClenny and Arspanger (2012) described a course at Houston Community College where a portion of the class was devoted to career planning. Students were required to "attend two mandatory career conferences that showcase Houston Community College programs and help students with planning and setting educational objectives…students are required to declare a major and file a degree plan by the end of the semester" (McClenney & Arspanger, 2012, p. 112). The researcher believed adopting this type of programming could benefit students.

The second major factor concluded from this study was the importance of faculty and student engagement. CSSSE (2013) identified several best practice strategies for improving student engagement including "orientation, accelerated or fast-track

developmental education, first year experience, student success course, learning community, experiential learning beyond the classroom, tutoring, supplemental instruction, assessment and placement, registration before classes begin, class attendance, and [early] alert and intervention" (p. 6). College leaders need to explore and determine strategies that work best for their particular institution. Strategies that work for one institution may not work for another (Kent Farnsworth, personal communication, November, 2014). Based on data from this study student engagement comes in many forms and perhaps positive faculty contact and experiences is a key factor for success.

Future Research

There is an abundance of literature and research focused on numerous factors contributing to community college student success. Based on the statistics of community college completion rates, community college leaders have not found a silver bullet strategy for increasing student success (Kent Farnsworth, personal communication, November, 2014). Therefore, continued research is necessary. McClenny and Arspanger (2012) recommended continued qualitative research with community college students. In addition, the researcher believed future research topics might include qualitative research with a larger sample size, interviewing different populations of community college students, and a study comparing Emerging Scholars with struggling students enrolled in developmental education. Other topics for continued research include validity of placement testing, TRIO program success compared to general community student success, college readiness, the role of developmental education at the community college level, the effectiveness of peer mentoring programs, the effectiveness of support services including advising, counseling, and/or tutoring, or how specific classroom techniques

affect student outcomes. Several authors suggested that community college leaders need to listen to student voices (Arsparger, 2012; Clark, 2012), McClenney and Arsparger, 2012). Additional community college research should be qualitative and focus on the needs of the students as presented by the students themselves. Until community colleges can significantly increase student outcomes, the possibilities for research are truly endless.

Two key findings in this study related to student success were the establishment of goals and student engagement with faculty. These two topics could be a springboard for future research. One research question might include "is there a difference in length to completion or persistence of community college students who declare a major at enrollment with those who declare an "undecided major" upon admission?" Another avenue of research might include faculty perceptions of engagement with students, or what is the role of technology in faculty-student engagement and how does it affect student success? The possibilities are limitless. .

Summary

This research study focused on the perceptions of Emerging Scholars at a large Midwestern community college specifically factors beneficial to success and barriers to success as the scholars completed developmental and college level courses with a 3.5 or higher GPA. The data revealed two key factors that contributed to success: establishment of a goal and student engagement via positive faculty interactions with students. In addition, there were additional factors that played a role in student success including motivation, internal drive, support from others, as well as support from college services. This study confirmed student success is complex and multifaceted and no one factor

exists that is essential for the success of all students. The researcher expected the results to provide a snapshot view of the components to success and motivate other researchers to continue the mission to discover strategies for student success. "Student voices offer the most profound opportunity to appreciate and learn from the student experience" (Clark, 2012, p. 514). The researcher listened to students tell their genuine story about success at the community college.

References

Achieving the Dream. (2015a). *Achieving the Dream: About us*. Retrieved from http://achievingthedream.org/about-us

Achieving the Dream. (2015b). *Strategic plan at-a-glance: 2014-2019.* Retrieved from http://achievingthedream.org//news/13739/achieving-the-dream-new-strategic-plan

ACT. (2013). *Information brief: What are the ACT college readiness benchmarks?* Retrieved from http://www.act.org/research

ACT. (2015a). *College readiness benchmark scores*. Retrieved from http://www.act.org/solutions/college-career-readiness/college-readiness-benchmarks/

ACT. (2015b). *Overview.* Retrieved from http://www.act.org/products/k-12-act-test/

ACT Compass. (2015). *Overview.* Retrieved from http://www.act.org/products/higher-education-act-compass/

Adams, C. (2010). Remediation demands stretching resources of community colleges: Campuses weigh closing doors vs. expanding support. *Education Week, 30*(3), 8–9.

Adams, C. (2012). Community colleges rethink student-placement tests. *Education Week, 32*(8), 9.

Allensworth, E. M., Gwynne, J. A., & Moore, P. (2014). *Four key findings for high schools.* University of Chicago Consortium on Chicago School Research, Chicago, IL. Retrieved from http://www.ccsr.uchicago.edu

American Association of Community Colleges. (2015a). *About community colleges.* Retrieved from http://www.aacc.nche.edu/AboutCC/Pages/default.aspx.

American Association of Community Colleges. (2015b). *Significant events.* Retrieved from http://www.aacc.nche.edu/AboutCC/history/Pages/significantevents.aspx.

Arnold, K. D., Lu, E. C., & Armstrong, K. J. (2012). Individual: The attributes of college readiness. *ASHE Higher Education Report, 38*(5), 19-29.

Arnsparger, A. (2008). Student input helps community colleges improve overall experience. *Diverse Issues Higher Education, 25*(3), 41.

Bahr, P. R. (2010). The bird's eye view of community colleges: A behavioral typology of first-time students based on cluster analytic classification. *Research in Higher Education, (51),* 724-749. doi:10.1007/s11162-010-9180

Bahr, P. R. (2011). A typology of students' use of the community college. *New Directions for Institutional Research,* 33-48. doi:10.1002/ir.415

Bailey, T., & Cho, S. (2010). *Issue brief: Developmental education in community colleges.* Community College Research Center, Columbia University.

Bailey, T. R., Jaggars, S. S., & Jenkins, D. (2015). *Redesigning America's community colleges: A clearer path to student success.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Baldwin, C., Bensimon, E. M., Dowd, A. C., & Kleiman. L. (2011). Measuring student success. *New Directions for Community Colleges, 53*, 75-88.

Barbatis, P. (2010). Underprepared, ethnically diverse community college students: Factors contributing to persistence. *Journal of Developmental Education, 33*(3), 14-24.

Barnes, W., & Slate, J. R. (2010). College-readiness: The current state of affairs. *Academic Leadership: The On-Line Journal, 8*(4).

Barry, N. H. (2007). Motivating the reluctant student. *American Music Teacher, 56*(5), 23-27.

Blackwell, E., & Pinder, P. J. (2014). What are the motivational factors of first-generation minority college students who overcome their family histories to pursue higher education? *College Student Journal, 48*(1), 45-56.

Boswell, R. A., & Passmore, D. L. (2013). Role of early family configuration and hours worked on student success in two-year colleges. *Community College Enterprise, 19*(1), 9-18.

Boylan, H. R., & White, W. G., Jr. (1987). Educating all the nation's people: The historical roots of developmental education, part I. *Research in Developmental Education, 4*(4), 3-6.

Bradley, P. (2012). Making the cut: Colleges, state re-examine placement tests. *Community College Week, 25*(2), 6-7.

Burdman, P. (2012). *Where to begin? The evolving role of placement exams for students starting college*. Achieving the Dream. Retrieved from http//:www.jff.org/publications/wher-begin-evolving-role-placement-exams-students-starting-college.

Capps, R. (2012). Supporting adult-student persistence in community colleges. *Change, 44*(2), 38-44. doi:10.1080/00091383.2012.655218

Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching. (2014). *Developmental math*. Retrieved from http://carnegiefoundation.org/developmental-math

Center for Community College Student Engagement. (2012). *A matter of degrees: Promising practices for community college student success: A first look.* Austin, TX: The University of Texas at Austin, Community College Leadership Program.

Center for Community College Student Engagement. (2013). *A matter of degrees: Engaging practices, engaging students.* Austin, TX: The University of Texas at Austin, Community College Leadership Program.

Center for Community College Student Engagement. (2014). *Characteristics of Community college students*. Austin, TX: The University of Texas at Austin, Community College Leadership Program.

Center on Education Policy. (2012). Can goals motivate students? The George Washington University Graduate School of Education and Human Development. Retrieved from http://www.cep-dc.org/

Clark, L. (2012). When nontraditional is traditional: A faculty dialogue with graduating community college students about persistence. *Community College Journal of Research and Practice, 36*(7), 511-519. doi:10.1080/10668926.2012.664090

Clery, S. (2011). *Keeping informed about Achieving the Dream data*. *6*(3). Achieving the Dream. *Data Notes.* Retrieved from https://www.everettcc.edu/files/administration/institutional-effectiveness/student-success/achieving-the-dream/datanotes-mayjun-2011.pdf

College Board. (2014). *The SAT college and career readiness benchmarks*. Retrieved from http://satbenchmark.collegeboard.org

Common Core State Standards Initiative. (2015a). *Read the standards*. Retrieved from http://www.corestandards.org/read-the-standards/

Common Core State Standards Initiative. (2015b). *Standards in your state*. Retrieved from http://www.corestandards.org/standards-in-your-state/

Common Core State Standards Initative. (2015c).*What parents should know.* Retrieved from http://www.corestandards.org/what-parents-should-know/

Community College Resource Center. (2015). *Community college enrollment and completion*. Retrieved from http://ccrc.tc.columbia.edu/Community-College-FAQs.html.

Complete College America. (2015). *Our work*. Retrieved from http://completecollege.org/about-cca/

Conley, D. T. (2012). *A complete definition of college and career readiness.* Educational Policy Improvement Center. Portland, Oregon.

Conley, D. T. (2014). New conceptions of college and career ready. *Journal of College Admission, 223*, 12-23.

Crisp, G., & Delgado, C. (2014). The impact of developmental education on community college persistence and vertical transfer. *Community College Review, 42*(2), 99-117.

Dasinger, J. A. (2013). Causal attributions and student success in developmental mathematics. *Journal of Developmental Education, 36*(3), 2-12.

Dassance, C. R. (2011). The next community college movement? *New Directions for Community Colleges, 152*, 31-39. doi:10.1002/cc.464

David, K. M., Lee, M. E., Bruce, J. D., Coppedge, B. R., Dickens, D., Friske, J., &

Thorman, J. (2015). Barriers to success predict fall-to-fall persistence and overall GPA among community college students. *Journal of Applied Research in the Community College, 21*(1), 5-13.

Dishon-Berkovits, M. (2014). A study of motivational influences on academic achievement. *Social Psychology Education, 17,* 327-342. doi:101007/111218-014-9257-7

Dotzler, Jr., J. J. (2003). A note on the nature and history of post-secondary developmental education in America. *Mathematics and Computer Education, 1,* 121-125.

Dougherty, K. J., & Reddy, V. (2011). Performance funding for higher education: What are the mechanisms? What are the impacts*? Ashe Higher Education Report, 39*(2), 1-57.

Dumais, S. A. (2013). Stressors and supports for adult online learners: Comparing first- and continuing-generation college students. *American Journal of Distance Education, 27*(2), 100-110. doi:1080/08923647.2013.78265

Ellis-O'Quinn, A. (2012). An ex post facto study of first-year student orientation as an indicator of student success at a community college. *Inquiry, 17*(1), 51-57.

Fain, P. (2013, October 17). Walking the walk on completion. *Inside Higher Ed*. Retrieved from https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2013/10/17/community-college-completion-strategies-lack-scale-report-finds

Farley, J. M. (2005). The habit of success. *Leadership, 34*(4), 24-27.

Faulconer, J., Geissler, J., Majewski, D., & Trifilo, J. (2014). Adoption of an early-alert system to support university student success. *Delta Kappa Gamma Bulletin, 80*(2), 45-48.

Fowler, P. R., & Boylan, H. R. (2010). Increasing student success and retention: A multidimensional approach. *Journal of Developmental Education, 34*(2), 2-10).

Fraenkel, J. R., Wallen, N. E., & Hyun, H. H. (2012). *How to design and evaluate research in education* (8th ed.). New York, NY: McGraw Hill.

Golding, J. M. (2011). The role of attendance in lecture classes: You can lead a horse to water. *Teaching Psychology, 38*(1), 40-42.

Gonzalez, J. (2011). Achieving the Dream produces little change at community colleges. *The Chronicle of Higher Education*. Retrieved from http:chronicle.com/article/ Achieving-the-Dream-Produces/126304

Graham, L. (2011). Learning a new world: Reflections on being a first-generation college student and the influence of TRIO programs. *New Directions for Teaching and Learning, 127*, 22-38. doi:10.1002/tl.455

Greenberg, M. (2008). The new GI Bill is no match for the original. *Chronicle of Higher Education, 54*(46).

Hagedorn, L. S. (2006). *Traveling successfully on the community college pathway: The research and findings of the transfer and retention of urban community college students project*. Transfer and Retention of Urban Community College Students Project, Los Angeles, California.

Halawah, I. (2011). Factors influencing college students' motivation to learn from students' perspective. *Education, 132*(2), 379-390.

Harrell, I. L., Bower, B. L., & Arundel, A. (2011). Student characteristics that predict persistence in community college online courses. *American Journal of Distance Education, 25*(3), 178-191. doi:101002/abc.20007

Harvard University. (2015). *History of Harvard University*. Retrieved from http://www.harvard.edu/history

Higher Learning Commission. (2015). Statement of Accreditation Status. Retrieved from http://www.hlcommission.org/compenent/directory/?Action=ShowBasic&Itemid=&instid=1436

Hillman, N. W., Tandberg, D. A., & Gross, J. P. K. (2014). Performance funding in higher education: Do financial incentives impact college completion? *Journal of Higher Education, 85*(6), 826-857.

Hirsch, D., & Goldberger, E. (2010). Hovering practices in and outside the classroom: Time to land? *About Campus, 14*(6), 30-32.

Horn, L. (2010). *Issue brief: Tracking students to 200 percent of normal time: Effect on institutional graduation rates*. U.S. Department of Education, Washington, DC.

Hu, S. (2011). Reconsidering the relationship between student engagement and persistence in college. *Innovative Higher Education, 36*(2), 97-106. doi:10.1007/s10755-010-9158-4

Jaffe, G. (2015, January 9). Obama announces free community college plan. *The Washington Post*. Retrieved from https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/post-politics/wp/2015/01/09/obama-announces-free-community-college-plan/

Jinkens, R. C. (2009). Nontraditional students: Who are they? Part A. *College Student Journal, 43*(4).

Jones, D. (2012). *Performance funding: From idea to action.* Indianapolis, IN: Complete College America.

Jurgens, J. C. (2010). The evolution of community colleges. *College Student Affairs Journal, 28*(2), 251-261.

Karp, M. M., Bickerstaff, S., Rucks-Ahidiana, Z., Bork, R. H., Barragan, M., & Edgecombe, N. (2012). *College 101 courses for applied learning and student success.* (CCRC Working Paper, No. 49). New York, NY: Columbia University, Teachers College, Community College Research Center.

Kazis, R. (2006). Building a pipeline for college access and success. *Connection: The Journal of the New England Board of Higher Education, 20*(4), 13-15.

Kiany, G. R., Shayestefar, P., Samar, R. G., & Akbari, R. (2013). High-rank stakeholders' perspectives on high-stakes university entrance examinations reform: Priorities and problems. *Higher Education, 65*(3), 325-340.

Kolajo, E. F. (2010). From developmental education to graduation: A community college experience. *Community College Journal of Research and Practice, 28*(4), 365-371.

Korte, G. (2015, January 9). Obama pitches free two-year college plan in Tennessee. *USA Today.* Retrieved from http://www.usatoday.com/story/news/politics/2015/01/09/obama-free-community-college-tennessee-speech/21504849/

Kozeracki, C.A. (2005). Preparing faculty to meet the needs of developmental students. *New Directions for Community Colleges, 129,* 39–49. doi:10.1002/cc.184

Linderman, D., & Kolenovic, Z. (2013). Moving the completion needle at community colleges. *Change, 45*(5), 43-50.

Lloyd, P. M. & Echardt, R. A. (2010). Strategies for improving retention of community college students in the sciences. *Science Educator, 19*(1), 33-41.

Locke, E. A., & Latham, G. P. (2002). Building a practically useful theory of goal setting and task motivation: A 35-year odyssey. *American Psychologist, 57*(9), 705-717. doi: 10.1037/0003-066X.57.9.705

Lopez, D. (2009). College readiness for all: What's the alternative? *Principal, 88*(3), 50-51.

Lundberg, C. A. (2014). Peers and faculty as predictors of learning for community college students. *Community College Review, 42*(2), 79-98.

Martin, K., Galentino, R., & Townsend, L. (2014). Community college student success: The role of motivation and self-empowerment. *Community College Review, 42*(3), 221-241. doi:10.1177/0091552114528972

Maxwell, J. A. (2013). Qualitative research design: An interactive approach. (3rd ed.). Los Angeles, CA: Sage.

McClenney, K. (2009). Helping community-college students succeed: A moral imperative. *Chronicle of Higher Education*, *55*(33).

McClenney, K. M., & Arnsparger, A. (2012). Students speak: Are we listening? Starting right in the community college. Center for Community College Student Engagement, University of Texas at Austin.

McDonald, S. E. (2013). The effects and predictor value of in-class texting behavior on final course grades. *College Student Journal, 47*(1), 34-40.

McIntosh, M. F., & Rouse, C. E. (2009). *The other college: Retention and completion rates among two-year students.* Washington, DC: Center for American Progress

McKeown-Moak, M. P. (2013). The "new" performance funding in higher education. *Education Considerations, 40*(2), 3-12.

McPhail, C. J. (2011). *The completion agenda: A call to action: Summary report from the November 10-11, 2010 meeting of the American Association of Community Colleges Commissions and board of directors.* Washington, DC, American Association of Community Colleges.

Melguizo, T., Kosiewicz, H., Prather, G., & Bos, J. (2014). How are community college Students assessed and placed in developmental math? Grounding our understanding in reality. *Journal of Higher Education, 85*(5), 691-722.

Merrow, J. (2007). Community colleges: The (often rocky) path to the American dream. *Change, 39*(6), 14- 21.

Miao, K. (2012). Performance-based funding of higher education: A detailed look at best practices in six states. *Center for American Progress*, Washington, DC.

Mills, M. T. (2010). Tools of engagement: Success course influence on student engagement. *Journal of the First-Year Experience & Students in Transition, 22*(2), 9-32.

Missouri Department of Higher Education. (2014). *State of Missouri performance funding for higher education vo. 3.* Retrieved from http://dhe.mo.gov/ PerformanceFunding.php

Morante, E. A. (2012). What do placement tests measure? *Journal of Developmental Education, 35*(3), 28.

Murray, L. (2012). Gateways, not gatekeepers. *Educational Leadership, 69*(7), 60-64.

Nakajima, A. N., Dembo, M. H., & Mossler, R. (2012). Student persistence in community colleges. *Community College Journal of Research and Practice, 36*(8), 591-613. doi:10.1080/10668920903054931

National Center for Developmental Education. (2014). *Developmental Education*. Retrieved from http://ncde.appstate.edu

National Center for Education Statistics. (2014). *Characteristics of Postsecondary Students.* Retrieved from http://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/indicator_csb.asp

O'Banion, T. (2013). *Access, success, and completion: A primer for community college faculty, administrators, staff, and trustees*. Chandler, AZ: League for Innovation in the Community College.

Pell Institute. (2009). National studies find TRIO programs effective at increasing college enrollment and graduation. Washington DC: The Pell Institute for the Study of Opportunity in Higher Education.

Phillips, V., & Wong, C. (2010). Tying together the common core of standards, instruction, and assessments. *Phi Delta Kappan, 91*(5), 37-42.

Phipps, R. (1998). *College remediation: What it is, what it costs, what's at stake.* Institute for Higher Education Policy, Washington, DC.

Pike, G. R., Hansen, M. J., & Childress, J. E. (2014). The influence of students' pre-college characteristics, high school experiences, college expectations, and initial enrollment characteristics on degree attainment. *Journal of College Student Retention, 16*(1), 1-23.

Pratt, T. (2015). Getting it done: How colleges and universities are successfully boosting attainment rates. *The Presidency, 18*(4), 9-13.

Pruett, P. S., & Absher, B. (2015). Factors influencing retention of developmental education students. *The Delta Kappa Gamma Bulletin, 81*(4), 32-40.

Public Community College. (2013). *STLCC-Meramec honors emerging scholars*. Retrieved from http://www.stlcc.edu/Newsroom/2013/news32.html

Public Community College. (2015a). *Enrollment report fall 2015*. Retrieved from http://www.stlcc.edu/About/Institutional_Research_and_Planning/Enrollment_Reports.html

Public Community College. (2015b). *STLCC-quick facts*. Retrieved from http://www, stlcc.edu/About/Quick_Facts.html

Reason, R. D. (2009). An examination of persistence research through the lens of a comprehensive conceptual framework. *Journal of College Student Development, 50*(6), 659-682. doi:101353/csd.0.0098

Reggie, J. (2011, September 5). Bootstraps: Federal TRIO programs, if funded, could help close income gap. *New England Journal of Higher Education.*

Reichlin, L., & Gault, B. (2014). *Community college students need fair job scheduling practices.* Washington, DC: Institute for Women's Policy Research.

Reid, K. M., Reynolds, R. E., & Perkins-Auman, P. G. (2014). College first-year seminars: What are we doing, what should we be doing? *Journal of College Student Retention, 16*(1), 73-93.

Rutschow, E. Z., Cullinan, D., & Welbeck, R. (2012). *Keeping student on courses: An impact study of a student success course at Guilford Technical Community College*. New York, NY: Columbia University, Teachers College, Community College Research Center.

Rutschow, E. Z., Richburg-Hays, L., Brock, T., Orr, G., Cerna, O., Cullinan, D., … & Marin, K. (2011). *Turning the tide: Five years of achieving the dream in community colleges.* New York, NY: Columbia University, Teachers College, Community College Research Center.

Saenz, V. B., Hatch, D., Bukoski, B. E., Kim, S., Lee, K., & Valdez, P. (2011). Community college student engagement patterns: A typology revealed through exploratory cluster analysis. *Community College Review 39*(3), 235-267.

Sanford, T., & Hunter, J. M. (2011). Impact of performance-funding on retention and graduation rates. *Education Policy Analysis Archives, 19*(33), 1-33.

Saxon, D. P., & Morante, E. A. (2014). Effective student assessment and placement: challenges and recommendations. *Journal of Developmental Education, 37*(3), 24-31.

Schuh, J. H., Jones, S. R., Harper, S. R., & Associates. (2011). Student services: A handbook for the profession (5th ed.). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Scott-Clayton, J. (2012). *Do high-stakes placement exams predict college success?* (Working Paper No. 41). Community College Research Center, Columbia.

Shepard, M. M., & Sheu, T. S. (2014). The effects of informal faculty-student interaction and use of information technology on non-traditional students' persistence intentions and educational outcomes. *Journal of Higher Education Theory and Practice, 14*(2), 46-60.

Social Security Administration. (2015). *Top names of the 2000's*. Retrieved from http://www.socialsecurity.gov/OACT/babynames/decades/names2000s.html

Starnes, B. A. (2011). Change, Sputnik, and Fast Food. *Phi Delta Kappan, 92*(7), 72-73.

Sternberg, R. J. (2012). College admissions: Beyond conventional testing. *Change 44*(5), 6-13.

Tampke, D. R. (2013). Developing, implementing, and assessing an early alert system. *Journal of College Student Retention, 14*(4), 523-532.

Tandberg, D. A., & Hillman, N. W. (2014). State higher education performance funding: Data, outcomes, and policy implications. *Journal of Education Finance, 39*(3), 222-243. doi:101353/jef.2014.007

Taylor, M. (2006). *Helicopters, snowplows, and bulldozers: Managing student parents. The Bulletin of the Association of College Unions International, 74*(6).

Taylor, M. (2009). *Meet the parents: Managing for student success. In A collection of papers on self-study and institutional improvement*. Chicago, IL: The Higher Learning Commission.

Termos, M. H. (2013). The effects of the classroom performance system on student participation, attendance, and achievement. *International Journal of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education, 25*(1), 66-78.

Tinto, V. & Cullen, J. (1973). Dropout in higher education: A review and theoretical synthesis of recent research. Columbia University, Teachers College, New York, New York.

Torres, V., Gross, J. P. K., & Dadashova, A. (2010). Traditional-age students becoming at-risk: Does working threaten college students' academic success? *Journal of College Student Retention, 12*(1), 51-68.

U. S. Department of Education. (2015). *Student Support Services Program*. Retrieved from http://www.2.ed.gov/programs/triostudesupp/index.html.

U. S. Government. (2014). *Building American skills through community colleges*. Retrieved from http://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/100326-community-college

VanOra, J. (2012). The experience of community college for developmental students: Challenges and motivations. *Community College Enterprise, 18*(1), 22-36.

Vaughan, A., Parra, J., & Lalonde, T. (2014). First-generation college student achievement and the first-year seminar: A quasi-experimental design. *Journal of the First-Year Experience & Students in Transition, 26*(2), 51-87.

Walters, G. (2012). It's not so easy: The completion agenda and the states. *Liberal Education, 98*(1), 34-39.

Westervelt, E. (2015). *Higher Ed's Moneyball*. Retrieved from http://www.npr.org/sections/ed/2015/10/14/44088603/higher-ed-mo

Wood, J. L. (2011). Falling through the cracks: An early warning system can help keep black males on the community college campus. *Diverse: Issues in Higher Education, 28*(18), 24.

Wyatt, L. G. (2011). Nontraditional student engagement: Increasing adult student success and retention. *The Journal of Continuing Higher Education, 59*, 10-20.

Yates, K. J. (2010). *Graduation rates: A comparison of first-time, full-time freshmen who entered a community college prepared and those who entered underprepared for college-level work*. (Doctoral dissertation). Johnson City, TN: East Tennessee State University. Retrieved from http://dc.etsu.edu/etd/1674. Paper 1674. Electronic Theses and Dissertations. .

Zeidenberg, M., Jenkins, D., & Calcagno, J. C. (2007). *Do student success courses actually help community college students succeed?* (CCRC Brief, No. 36). New York, NY: Columbia University, Teachers College, Community College Research Center.

Zientek, L. R., Schneider, C. L., & Onwuegbuzie, A. J. (2014). Instructors' perceptions about student success and placement in developmental mathematics courses. *The Community College Review, 20*(1), 67-84.

Zumbrunn, S., McKim, C., Buhs, E., & Hawley, L. R. (2014). Support, belonging, motivation and engagement in the college classroom: A mixed method study. *Instructional Science, 42*, 661-684.

Appendix A

Interview Questions

Initial Question	Research Question Addressed
1. What brought you to Public Community College?	RQ1, RQ2
Follow-up questions if needed: • *What degree or certificate do you plan to obtain from PCC?* • *What do you plan to do with your degree/certificate once you graduate?* • *What year did you start taking classes at PCC?* • *How many credit hours on average do you complete each semester?*	RQ2, DD RQ2, DD DD DD
2. Some students who find out they have to take developmental courses never register and never start college for various reasons. What motivated you to continue despite being required to start in courses that don't count towards your degree/certificate?	RQ1, RQ2, RQ4
3. What positive experiences have you encountered while attending PCC?	RQ1, RQ3, RQ4
Follow-up questions if needed: • *How have these experiences contributed to your ability to be successful?*	
4. What factors outside of PCC do you believe contributed to your success?	RQ1, RQ2, RQ3, RQ4
Follow-up question if needed: • *How do you think [answer to question number #7] contributed to your success?*	
5. What struggles or challenges have you encountered while attending PCC?	RQ1, RQ3, RQ4
Follow-up questions if needed: • *How has this challenge impacted your ability to be successful?*	
6. Have you utilized any of the academic services such as the writing center, math tutoring, etc. at PCC?	RQ3
Follow-up questions if needed: • *Which services?* • *How frequently do you access the academic services?* • *Did the services contribute to your success?*	
7. Describe your experience meeting with an academic advisor to plan your personalized academic schedule/plan?	RQ3
Follow-up questions if needed: • *How were these meetings helpful to your success?*	

8. Describe your experiences when meeting with your professors during office hours. *Follow-up questions if needed:* • *How often do you meet with professors during their office hours?* • *Did you find these meeting helpful to your success?*	RQ1, RQ3, RQ4
9. During your time at PCC have you been involved in any extracurricular activities? *Follow-up questions if needed:* • *What extracurricular activities are you involved with?* • *On average, how much time per week do you spend engaging in these activities?*	RQ3
10. How many hours per week on average do you study?	RQ4, DD
11. Is there anything else that you think helped you be successful that we haven't discussed today?	RQ,1 RQ2, RQ3, RQ4
12. When you were admitted to the college, what placement test did you take to determine your placement in English, reading, and math?	DD
13. What developmental courses where you required to take?	DD
14. I have a few more quick questions that will be used to describe the participants in my study. a. What is your current age? b. What year did you graduate from high school? c. What was your high school GPA? d. What is your gender? e. How would you describe your ethnic or racial background? f. What is your preferred language? g. What is your marital status? h. Where do you reside? (Own home/apartment, with parents, other) i. How many children under the age of 18 do you care for while attending PCC? j. What PCC campus do you attend? k. How far do you commute to campus? l. How many hours per week do you work? m. What is your cumulative GPA at PCC?	DD

Note. RQ1 = Research Question #1; (RQ2) = Research Question #2; RQ3 = Research Question #3; RQ4 = Research Question #4; DD = Demographic data for descriptive statistics

Vitae

Janet K. Walsh earned a Bachelor of Science in Nursing degree from Truman State University in 1985, a Master of Arts in Health Services Management from Webster University in 1992, and a Master of Science in Nursing from Webster University in 1996. Ms. Walsh anticipates graduating from Lindenwood University's Doctoral Program in Higher Education Leadership in February 2016.

Following a career as a registered nurse, Ms. Walsh worked as a nurse educator for 20 years. She served as an Academic Dean for the Science, Math, and Health division on the Meramec Campus of St. Louis Community College from 2012-2015. She is currently serving as the Vice President of Academic Affairs at St. Louis Community College/Meramec Campus.