

Understanding academic coaching at community colleges: A multi-case study

by

Stephanie Anne Joiner

B.A., Oklahoma State University, 2002

M.A., Pittsburg State University, 2006

AN ABSTRACT OF A DISSERTATION

submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

Department of Educational Leadership
College of Education

KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY
Manhattan, Kansas

2024

Abstract

Community colleges play an important role in providing access to higher education to underserved student populations who often arrive on campus underprepared for the academic rigor of a college classroom. To support these students, many community colleges have implemented academic coaching programs. Built from professional coaching practices, early studies on academic coaching indicate that it can have a positive impact on student retention and completion rates; however, much of that research has largely focused on the quantitative effects of the practice at four-year institutions, and research conducted on academic coaching at community colleges has indicated difficulty in identifying consistent use of a coaching framework and evaluating it as a practice. This qualitative multi-case study addresses the gap in the literature by investigating shared practices and experiences of three community college academic coaching programs. With the resulting holistic analysis of academic coaching in community colleges using Ives' (2008) coaching dichotomies, this study provides an updated definition of academic coaching in the community college context and implications for practice and creating an opportunity for future studies to evaluate effectiveness of coaching programs.

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Approved by:

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When I returned to school with the goal of earning the doctoral title, I didn't return with the goal of job advancement or financial benefit. I love the act of learning, and I wanted this title for myself. I owned my selfish motivations and set out to prove that I could do it. What I quickly learned, however, was that I wasn't alone in my efforts. Every step of the way someone was there to love me, support me, provide guidance, and encouragement.

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Dedication

To Eleanor, Emalie, and Addilyn:

You are light and love in this world, and I am eternally grateful for you. May you always know the strength of your faith, the courage of your heart, and the power of your mind. You will always be my greatest accomplishment.

Chapter 1 - Introduction

Victor* walks into my office with more confidence than I expect. His coach told him to meet with me as a result of low grades on the last grade report. When I extend my hand to greet him, he is surprised by the gesture. He calls me ma'am and begins most answers with "to be honest..." I start our conversation by asking how he feels about his classes. "To be honest, I know they aren't that great. I'm doing the work, but I don't think my teacher likes me. I mean, I know I missed a few classes, and then I got lost on what homework was due, but when I asked the teacher for help, she didn't help me. I keep asking her for extra-credit but she said no." I empathize with his struggle. He isn't sure where to put the blame for his current grade.

I have worked to assist student athletes as an "academic mentor" for student athletes for nearly a decade. Most arrive in my office because they are told to, and most struggle to find the reason for their low grade in their classes, their instructors' inability to assist them, or how to improve their current situation.

Four years ago, my role as an academic mentor expanded beyond athletes to include students enrolled in developmental education courses. Most of those students walked into my office in reply to an emailed invitation as opposed to being told to, but they generally provided similar descriptions of their academic struggles. When we began to look at their academic practices, it became clear that they were lacking in very specific skills that lead to success in college courses: time management, coursework organization, study skills, and resource management. Additionally, they lacked an awareness of collegiate academic expectations, including expectations of critical thinking, self-directed learning, and active participation in the classroom. Finally, they were often unaware of the people and the resources available to assist their academic growth and development.

As the former Director of Student Academic Development at a community college, I am not surprised that many students lack preparedness. The open-door policies of community colleges that accept all who apply often result in students with multiple characteristics that negatively affect educational attainment: first generation, low-income, low academic preparedness, or limited social capital (Burns, 2010). Additionally, many of these students who begin their college career in developmental coursework to remediate deficient reading, writing, and math skills also possess these negative indicators (The Center for Community College Student Engagement, 2016; Pratt, 2017, & Whiton et al., 2018). To assist students in developing the academic skills needed outside of subject-specific remediation, many community colleges have begun implementing an academic support program based on a coaching practices. Academic coaches work one-on-one with students to provide an understanding of and develop the necessary skills for academic success in higher education.

Background/Community Colleges

Historically, community colleges in the United States have provided access to higher education to student populations that are generally underserved by four-year institutions (Cohen et al., 2014; O'Banion, 2019). This access accounts for a significant portion of higher education enrollments. According to recent statistics, the approximate 10.3 million community college students enrolled in the 1,043 two-year institutions account for 39% of all college undergraduates, and include 36% of all first-time freshmen in the United States (American Association of Community Colleges, 2022). Of these students, approximately 68% are considered "underprepared" or require remediation through developmental coursework (Center for Community College Student Engagement, 2016). Other than academic under-preparedness, many community college students arrive in classes with other personal factors that affect their

ability to successfully complete course and degree requirements. 29% of community college students are first generation college attendees; 65% of community college students attend classes part-time; 56% receive some form of financial aid; and 62% of full-time students and 72% of part-time students work while attending college (American Association of Community Colleges, 2022).

While access to higher education is an excellent mission, access without continuing support toward completion will continue to create barriers to academic, economic, and personal achievements (Center for Community College Student Engagement, 2016; Complete College America, 2012). For example, completion of an associate degree can increase the median earning of an individual working full time in the United States by 20% (Complete College America, 2012). Retention and completion rates are important metrics for community colleges in as a part of performance metrics, and currently these metrics indicate that more support is needed. Retention rates for full time students at community colleges is approximately 61%, compared to 81% of students at four-year institutions (National Center for Education Statistics, 2022). Further, completion rates for community college students (considered at the IPEDS standard of 150% of the time) are approximately 36% while the rate of completion for students at four-year institutions is approximately 61% (National Center for Education Statistics, 2022). When completion is evaluated for part time students, the rate drops significantly, even when providing more time for completion. The completion rate of part time community college students with 200% of the time is only 7% (Data Dashboard - Complete College America, n.d.).

Recently, the practice of academic coaching has been introduced in support of students at community colleges to support students' and institutions' retention and completion rates (Hall et al., 2021; Lawhorne, 2020; Ott et al., 2019; Pechac, 2017; J. A. Robinson, 2019; Strange, 2015).

However, due to the relative newness of the practice, research is limited and quantitative results remain somewhat inconsistent albeit generally positive. Hall et al. (2021) indicated limited impact on students' GPA and persistence. Lawhorne's (2020) study found that the rate of retention increased by a factor of 1.784 for students with academic coaching, but that completion rates were not significantly affected for students who received coaching. Ott et al. (2019) found that students who participated in academic coaching had higher outcomes than those that did not. Their investigation of short-term effects of coaching found an increase in earned credit hours and grade point averages for these students suggesting that coaching "has positive effects on progress toward degree" (Ott et al., 2019, p. 558). Pechac's (2017) study identified eleven factors of academic coaching that had a positive impact on credit hour completion, accounting for a 15% increase in credit hour completion. Studies conducted on academic coaching at all institutions of higher education, not just community colleges, have consistently indicated positive effects on completion and retention rates (see: Bettinger & Baker, 2014; Capstick et al., 2019; Franklin & Franklin, 2012; Lehan et al., 2018; Minglin, 2019; Qian et al., 2018). However, researchers often indicate the need to better identify consistent practices or frameworks for coaching to better analyze and understand the effects of coaching student completion and retention rates (Pechac, 2017; C. E. Robinson, 2015; J. A. Robinson, 2019; Sepulveda, 2020).

Academic Coaching

Academic coaching as a student support practice is offered at institutions of higher education across the United States (C. E. Robinson, 2015). It is offered through academic affairs offices, student affairs offices, athletic programs, and through programs designed for specific student populations (Bellman et al., 2015; Pechac, 2017; Qian et al., 2018; C. E. Robinson, 2015; J. A. Robinson, 2019; Sepulveda, 2020). With the recent growth of academic coaching programs

to support retention and completion efforts in the community college, it is important to understand the practice and how it is implemented within community college programs. In an effort to understand academic coaching, studies have been conducted across all levels of institutions (Bettinger & Baker, 2014; C. E. Robinson, 2015; Sepulveda, 2020), at four-year institutions (Bellman et al., 2015, 2015; Blankenship, 2017; Bosworth, 2006; Capstick et al., 2019; Connelly et al., 2019; Field et al., 2010; Franklin & Franklin, 2012; LaRocca, 2015; Lech et al., 2018; Lehan et al., 2018; Minglin, 2019; Parker et al., 2011), and at community colleges (Hall et al., 2021; D. Johnson et al., 2011; Lawhorne, 2020; Ott et al., 2019; Pechac, 2017; Perez, 2014; Qian et al., 2018; J. A. Robinson, 2019; Strange, 2015). Studies have evaluated the quantitative effects of coaching on retention, completion, grade point average, and credit hour generation (Alzen et al., 2021; Bettinger & Baker, 2014; Capstick et al., 2019; Field et al., 2010; Frazier, 2019; Ott et al., 2019; Parker et al., 2011; Pechac, 2017; Scott, 2017). Qualitative studies have captured the perspectives of academic coaches (J. A. Robinson, 2019), guiding frameworks of academic coaches (Sepulveda, 2020), and experiences of student coachees (Perez, 2014; Qian et al., 2018). To date, the only holistic qualitative studies of academic coaching programs were formative studies of developing programs (D. Johnson et al., 2011; Strange, 2015), and a mixed method study that returned to Strange's (2015) case study locations to evaluate effectiveness (Lawhorne, 2020). While consistent application of identified coaching frameworks have not been found in programs across institutions (C. E. Robinson, 2015; J. A. Robinson, 2019; Sepulveda, 2020), a review of the literature can classify four identified types of frameworks: 3rd party providers (Bettinger & Baker, 2014; Field et al., 2010; Pechac, 2017), GROW (Bosworth, 2006; W. Johnson & Sepulveda, 2021; C. E. Robinson, 2015; Sepulveda, 2020), Check-n-Connect (D.

Johnson et al., 2011; Qian et al., 2018), and institutionally developed (Capstick et al., 2019; C. Robinson & Gahagan, 2010).

A review of the literature on academic coaching has led to a better understanding of the practice. Academic coaching has been defined as a practice that is built upon a one-on-one collaborative relationship between student and trained college employee focused on helping “students to become more self-aware and reflective” (Dalton & Crosby, 2014, p. 62) and develop essential academic skills to “navigate the college and disciplinary environment” (Capstick et al., 2019, p. 221). An academic coach uses the “individualized practice of asking reflective, motivation-based questions, providing opportunities for formal self-assessment, sharing effective strategies and co-creating a tangible plan” (C. E. Robinson, 2015, p. 126). An academic coach will also act as a “liaison to campus resources” (Capstick et al., 2019, p. 220). Due to its close relation to other support services, academic coaching has been distinguished from academic advising and mental health counseling based on key coaching identifiers: “A salient feature of these definitions is the interactive and personal relationships that occur between students and coaches over time as well as the dedicated focus on building student agency and self-awareness” (Alzen et al., 2021, p. 540).

While academic coaching as a practice is being researched at increasing rates, the majority of the research has been conducted at the four-year level, with limited attention to academic coaching programs at the community college level. Researchers note the difficulty in evaluating coaching programs in a holistic fashion as shared frameworks and practices are not evident in the community college context. J. A. Robinson (2019) notes that this distinction may be the result of applying theories that support academic coaching that are developed and tested at four-year institutions to the community college context. The differences in the types of students

attending community colleges and the financial support for the community college indicate that a practice or theory specific to the community college should be developed.

This “relatively small” (Dalton & Crosby, 2014, p. 63) body of research on academic coaching indicates positive, quantifiable impacts that warrant further qualitative investigation to better understand *how* coaching programs are constructed and experienced in the community college setting to allow for a more consistent understanding of the key elements in an academic program that can be further studied.

Problem Statement

Due to community college’s open admission policies meant to expand the benefits of higher education to all, many students arrive to campus underprepared and with multiple characteristics that have been identified as posing a risk to academic success. Unfortunately, the retention and completion rates of community college students reflect the difficulties many of these students face and community colleges strive to alleviate through support measures. Academic coaching is a recently developed supportive measure implemented to increase retention and completion rates for community college students. Nascent research on academic coaching has largely focused on programs and students at four-year institutions (Alzen et al., 2021; Bellman et al., 2015; Blankenship, 2017; Bosworth, 2006; Capstick, 2018; Field et al., 2010; Frazier, 2019; LaRocca, 2015; Minglin, 2019; Scott, 2017; Sepulveda, 2020), and research in the community college setting has been limited to specific aspects of academic coaching such as the coach’s experience (J. A. Robinson, 2019), student experiences (Perez, 2014; Qian et al., 2018), or quantitative outcomes (Hall, 2017; Ott et al., 2019; Pechac, 2017). Research of the of academic coaching in community colleges often indicates difficulty in identifying or defining consistent practices (Pechac, 2017; J. A. Robinson, 2019); however, much of this difficulty can

be found in the limited scope of the research. This holistic program research was designed to analyze multiple data sources from multiple participant and program perspectives in order to understand the burgeoning academic coaching support programs at the community college level.

Purpose Statement

There is a current dearth of knowledge and understanding of academic coaching programs at the community college level. This exploratory multi-case study investigated how practices and experiences were shared among academic coaching programs within the community college setting. Additionally, it applied the conceptual framework of Ives' (2008) coaching dichotomies to create a better understanding of the coaching practice at community colleges.

Research Questions

The following research questions will guide this study:

- 1 How is the academic coaching model at community colleges described by academic coaches, program administrators, and institutional documents?
- 2 How do students experience academic coaching at community colleges?

Research Design

The qualitative research design of this study followed a multi-case study methodology with cross case analysis (Yin, 2014) to examine academic coaching programs at community colleges. The multi-case design was selected for comparative analysis to identify shared practices and characteristics based on the descriptions of the program and experiences of program participants. Case study designs allowed for a deeper understanding (Hays, 2004) of a contemporary “bounded system” (Creswell & Poth, 2025, p. 115) or case, and supported an understanding of how the program operated within its context (Yin, 2014). Case study further

allowed for a holistic analysis of a program that relied on multiple data sources to support this deeper understanding (Creswell, 2013; Stake, 1995; Yin, 2014). The triangulation of data collected from observations, interviews, and document analysis constructed an understanding (Stake, 1995) from multiple perspectives allowing for a more complete description of the academic coaching program in the community college setting.

Multi-case study designs provided an additional layer of understanding through replication (Creswell, 2013; Yin, 2014). Replication across varying program locations studied for each case increased the strength of the analytic conclusions (Yin, 2014). Purposeful selection, (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Patton, 2015) of academic coaching programs at community colleges identified through criterion sampling (Creswell & Poth, 2025) further supported replication of shared descriptions and experiences leading to a clearer understanding of how academic coaching programs at community colleges supported students and how it is a unique support program separate from academic advising or mental health counseling. Further, this cross-case analysis allowed for a better understanding of how the context of the community college impacted the practices and experiences of an academic coaching program to better distinguish it from academic coaching programs in the context of four-year colleges and universities (J. A. Robinson, 2019).

Research Sites and Participants

Multi-case studies call for at least two cases to be studied, but Yin (2012) recommends more to assist with pattern matching and cross-case analysis. As such, this study will seek three sites to be participate in a case study. Purposeful, criterion-based sampling (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Creswell & Poth, 2025; Patton 2015) was used to identify academic coaching programs within the United States. Participating programs were invited based on their

identification as having an academic coaching program and their willingness to provide access to their program for study. Programs selected for this study met the following criteria: the community colleges identified and publicly promoted the coaching service, coaching was distinct from others student support services such as advising or counseling, the program had been in existence for at least three years, and the program was an institutionally-based program (as opposed to a third-party service). Each site's program administrator was asked to assist in the identification of academic coaches and student coachees to participate in interviews, and in the scheduling of coaching observations. There were no predetermined characteristics or demographics for any participant other than the designation of their role in the academic coaching program. To support replication of cases, programs were selected from community colleges designated very large (*Size and Setting Classification*, 2024)

Data Collection

In order to gather enough evidence to allow for triangulation, multiple data sources were collected for each case. Yin (2014) states, "a major strength of case study data collection is the opportunity to use many difference sources of evidence" (p. 119). To achieve a wholistic understanding of academic coaching programs, observations were conducted of academic coaching sessions, program administrators, academic coaches, and student-coachees were interviewed, and document analysis of institutional publications that describe or advertise the program as well as training and process documentation were conducted. The on-site observations as well as interviews of academic coaches and document analysis of program planning and training documents assisted in understanding student experiences within the context of the site's program and practices. The complete case study protocol that outlines data collection methods aligned with the research questions guiding this study can be found in Appendix A.

The use of semi-structured interviews (DeMarrais & Lapan, 2004; Englander, 2012; Patton, 2015) of students and coaches allowed this study to seek the “‘everyday’ experience, experience as people understand it in everyday terms” (Crotty, 2015, p. 83) as students expressed it in terms of their “lived experiences” (Bhattacharya, 2017, p. 99). Stake (1995) notes the importance of observation to gain better understanding and provide context for the reader. Observation took place on site of the institution’s coaching program and via Zoom as offered by the coaching programs. Document analysis of program publications advertisements, website, training materials, and process documentation pieces was also conducted for each site and provided further context of the coaching program distinct from the interviews and observations (Hays, 2004; Stake, 1995). Finally, a personal journal was used to collect my personal responses during the data collection process, including my insights and recognition of my practical experience. These reflections allowed for transparent practices in the data analysis process (Tracy, 2010), and allowed me, as the researcher, to participate in the meaning making process (DeMarrais & Lapan, 2004).

Data Analysis

Patton (2015) notes that “purpose drives analysis” (n.p.). As such, this study used a data analysis strategy that relied on the propositions developed for this study (Yin, 2014). Namely, the context of the community college affects the application of academic coaching models developed and researched at four-year institutions (Capstick, 2018; C. E. Robinson, 2015; Sepulveda, 2020); and Ives’ (2008) dichotomies will support common themes in the academic coaching program’s practices, experiences, and descriptions to identify similarities across the participant institutions. Additionally, explanation building (Yin, 2014) was supported through an iterative data analysis as described by Bhattacharaya (2017) and Creswell and Creswell (2018) to

identify codes and themes within each case. First, individual case reports (Stake, 1995) were completed; then, cross-case analysis (Yin, 2014) was completed with the assistance of data tables (Creswell, 2013; Yin, 2014) to identify shared themes.

Significance of Study

This study is significant as it is the first holistic multi-case study of academic coaching programs at community colleges. Currently, academic coaching is being implemented at community colleges to support retention and completion efforts (Alzen et al., 2021; Hall et al., 2021; Ott et al., 2019; Pechac, 2017; Perez, 2014; Qian et al., 2018; J. A. Robinson, 2019). When considering the addition of an academic or student support program at a community college, institutions must weigh their abilities to implement the program in a way that considers impact versus resource abilities (Cohen et al., 2014; Community College Research Center, 2022b; O'Banion, 2019; Wild & Ebbers, 2002), but researchers have previously indicated a difficulty in evaluating the efficacy of academic coaching programs because there is difficulty in identifying a shared practice among programs (J. A. Robinson, 2019; Sepulveda, 2020). This research fills the gap of literature devoted to understanding the impact of academic coaching at a community college by creating an updated definition of academic coaching at the community college based on the identified shared practices and experiences. Additionally, the application of Ives' (2008) coaching dichotomies provided a framework for understanding academic coaching in the community college setting where previously applied frameworks from four-year institutions have fallen short. The study is beneficial for community college educators and academic support personnel who are interested in developing an academic coaching program or develop criteria for further evaluating the impact or success of current academic coaching programs.

Limitations

Limitations of this study and case study design include:

1. Very large community colleges *Size and Setting Classification*, 2024) comprised the selected programs for this study, as such transferability to academic coaching practices of smaller community colleges may be difficult.
2. The participants of this study were all identified through the academic coaching program being studied and may have been willing to participate as a result of personal connections to the program; thus, their responses may have presented a positive bias.

Definitions

Academic Coaching: the process of supporting the development of academic and personal skills with a student through a one-on-one relationship built by an academic coach who utilizes coaching techniques such as asking questions, supporting self-assessment, identifying resources, and developing a plan.

Academic Coach: a college employee that works with individual students in support of their academic and personal goals in a non-directive, partnership approach (Alzen et al., 2021; Sepulveda, 2020) and who uses coaching techniques such as asking questions, supporting self-assessment, identifying resources, and developing a plan.

Community College: a non-profit, accredited institution that awards an associate in arts or an associate in science as its highest degree, but may also offer coursework to industry-specific certifications and non-credit bearing courses to meet community needs (Cohen et al., 2014; O'Banion, 2019).

Essential Academic Skills: skills utilized by students to find success in collegiate coursework including study strategies, test taking methods, time management, goal setting, resource

acquisition (campus specific resources for health, wellbeing, and academic remediation), and communication.

Chapter Summary

Community colleges serve the community by providing open access to higher education. In providing this access, community colleges often serve students who are academically underprepared or lack essential academic skills, and with characteristics that have been identified as risk factors to academic success measured by retention and completion. Institutions of higher education, including community colleges have begun implementing academic coaching programs to support their students' retention and completion rates. While research on this practice is developing, studies on the practice in community colleges have been limited, and lacks holistic studies to understand academic coaching within the context of the community college. This multi-case study aims to fill that gap and provides analysis of shared descriptions and experiences of academic coaching programs to identify shared practices and characteristics of academic coaching at community colleges.

Chapter 2 - Literature Review

This exploratory multi-case study investigates shared practices among academic coaching programs at community colleges based on the perspective of those that participate in and support the academic coaching program. Identified shared practices were considered within the framework of Ives' (2008) coaching dichotomies. This chapter provides a summary of the emergent body of literature relevant to this study. First, a general overview of community college institutional and student demographics is important to understand the context of the programs to be studied and to understand how that context may affect the academic coaching program, or make it unique to the community college setting. This is an emerging practice in higher education, as a result, research on academic coaching is still limited. As such, an explanation of professional coaching practices is provided, including Ives' (2008) framework for analyzing coaching dichotomies. A review of the limited, but commonly cited research on academic coaching in higher education and specifically in the community college setting is next provided to create an understanding of how academic coaching has formed as an academic and student support program in the last two decades.

Community College Overview

According to recent statistics, community college students made up 39% of all undergraduate students in the United States (American Association of Community Colleges, 2022). Typically smaller in size than their four-year counterparts, community colleges have historically been built to serve their local communities and provide open access to educational opportunities (Cohen et al., 2014). Community colleges provide access to educational credentials including associate and applied associate degrees and job or skill-specific certifications. Beyond these credentials, community colleges provide services to their communities in the form of

continuing education and workforce preparedness opportunities, developmental and adult education programs, and academic preparation for transfer to four-year institutions. Courses are offered on traditional campuses, online, at military installments, and through partner high schools. Their broad missions and community support can be summed up as: “All education is general education. All education is potentially career enhancing. All education is for the sake of the broader community” (Cohen et al., 2014, p. 30).

Horn et al. (2006), asked students why they enrolled in a community college. Multiple answers were given, but the three most often cited reasons were personal interest (46%), to complete an associate degree (43%), and to obtain job skills (42%). The individual desire to improve self could be described as a motivating factor, but the varied desired outcomes indicate that the community college is created for the benefit of the community by meeting the individual needs of the student. O’Banion’s (2019) provides a current definition of the community college that captures their history and enduring purpose:

The primary purpose of the community college is to ensure that students are prepared to make a good living and live a good life. It is an open-door institution that accepts all who can benefit from its programs and services. It is a comprehensive institution that offers a variety of programs and opportunities to meet the needs of its diverse population. It is grounded in its local community but serves national and global needs when opportunities arise. It is Democracy’s College, ever evolving (p. 27).

As democratizing institutions of higher education, community colleges provide opportunities to students who may not otherwise be able to attend a post-secondary school. Their open-door policies and desire to create easy access to all citizens support the philosophy that an educated society is a stronger society (O’Banion, 2019). These open-door policies mean that

community college students arrive on campus often less prepared academically for the rigors of college classes. According to the National Center for Educational Statistics, thirty-seven percent of two-year public school students aged twenty-three or under arrive on campus with weak precollege academic preparation (Chen, 2016). Further, community college students often have a number of other descriptors (otherness) that differentiate them from what most consider “traditional” college students and can often impact the student’s ability to focus primarily or consistently on coursework or persist to completion of a degree (Cohen et al., 2014). The otherness of community college students can be identified in their age, enrollment status, exposure to higher education, mental and physical abilities, and additional life responsibilities (American Association of Community Colleges, 2022). Table 2.1 highlights common descriptors of community college students that impact their college experience.

Table 2.1

Percentage of Community College Students with Demographics That Can Impact College Experience compiled from the American Association of Community Colleges (2022).

Impactful descriptor	Percentage of Community College Students with descriptor:
Older than “traditional” age (22):	44%
First Generation:	29%
Enrolled part time:	65%
Employment by enrollment status:	
Full-time students	62%
Part-time students	72%
Receive Financial Assistance:	56%
Single parent:	20%
Have a disability:	15%

It is often this otherness of community college students that two-year institutions strive to support in order to “level the playing field for those who are ‘different’” (O’Banion, 2019, p. 27).

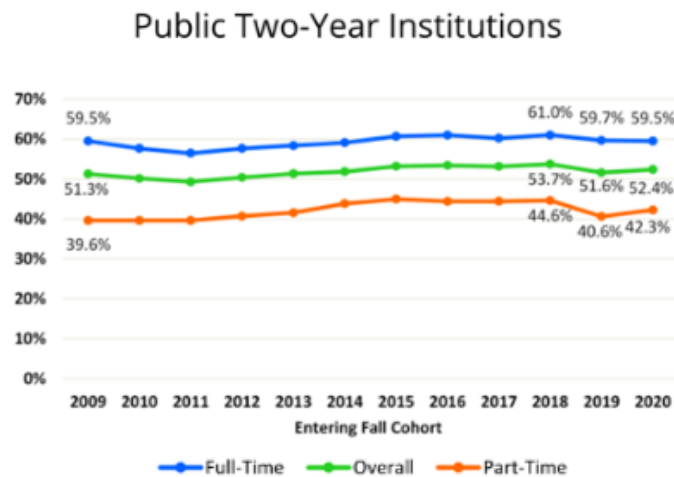
Additionally, open admissions policies at community colleges lead to the acceptance of more students who require academic remediation. Community college students represent a “higher proportion of lower-ability or less well-prepared students” than four-year schools (Cohen

et al., 2014, p. 55). Sixty percent of students who begin at a two-year institution take at least one remedial course within three years, and on average take 2.9 remedial courses (Community College Research Center, 2022a). This statistic is extremely important when considering that less than 1 in 10 community college students who begin in remedial courses graduate within three years (Complete College America, 2012). Additionally, underprepared students are often identified on community college campuses as those who arrive on a college campus without exposure to or understanding of collegiate culture and expectations and, as such, are deficient in the “skills, experience or orientation” (Levin, 2008, p. 182) of average students. Typically, underprepared students are first generation college students who may require remedial coursework in math, English, and/or reading, who may lack social capital (Burns, 2010).

Community colleges are open to all and accept students regardless of academic preparation or otherness; thus, success in classes and toward completion is often negatively impacted by the factors that affect students outside of the college classroom (Bettinger & Baker, 2014; Boggs, 2019; Cohen et al., 2014; O’Banion, 2019; Wild & Ebbers, 2002). Additionally, with recent pressures associated with the Complete College Agenda and political calls for increased accountability in the form of completion rates, community colleges are attempting to find a better balance between providing access and supporting students through completion (Boggs, 2019). Figure 2.1 illustrates retention rates for two-year public schools that have remained consistent over the last ten years, near 52% (Gardener, 2022; National Center for Education Statistics, 2022), while retention rates for four-year public schools is 75% (Gardener, 2022).

Figure 2.1

Retention (Persistence) Rates for Community College Students. Note: Source (NCES, 2022)



One notable effect on community college persistence is enrollment status. Part-time students comprise 65% of community college student populations (American Association of Community Colleges, 2022) and maintain the lowest retention rates near 40%. Another demographic that impacts retention is beginning age of students. Starting college after the age of twenty-one can negatively impact retention rates by 27% (Gardener, 2022). This statistic is notable as nearly 40% of community college students are over the age of 22 (American Association of Community Colleges, 2022b).

Community colleges provide access to those populations who may not yet be academically prepared or singularly focused on higher education goals. These population demographics indicate risk factors for success and completion, as a result community colleges are consistently looking for methods to provide support often without the large auxiliary funds of four-year institutions. The Community College Research Center (2022) notes “Community colleges receive much less funding per student than public four-year institutions, even though they serve a greater proportion of students who are underrepresented in higher education and who may need additional programs and supports to be successful” (para. 1). Much research has

been completed on student integration (Tinto, 1975), development (Astin, 1977; Astin, 1993), and support theories (Kuh et al., 2006) in efforts to retain and assist students through completion. Astin (1993) and Metz (2002) noted, however, much of these theories and practices are developed and researched at four-year institutions with student demographics that fit the traditional image of a college student. Community colleges focus on supporting the individual student based on their individual needs, goals, and desire for self-improvement (Horn et al., 2006; O'Banion, 2019), as a result coaching practices are being implemented as a support program designed for the support of the individual student. Academic coaching in the community college setting is a tool that is being used to address students struggling through the remedial pipeline or attending college with other descriptors that impact their academic skills, practice, or experience (Alzen et al., 2021; Frazier, 2019; C. E. Robinson, 2015).

Coaching as a Profession

Academic coaching has its roots in the psychological practice of coaching and industry's use of personal life coaching (Blankenship, 2017; Cox, 2015; Dalton & Crosby, 2014; Sepulveda, 2020). As a professional industry, life coaching uses positive psychology to assist people in the development of personal skills and a growth mindset to make necessary changes to reach success (Blankenship, 2017; Ives, 2008; Lynden, 2021). Coaches take on a "responsibility for learning and performance improvement" (Whitmore, 2017, p. 95) with their clients, and recognize that "choice and self-motivation are critical to success" (Whitmore, 2017, p. 96). Professional coaching has continued to grow as a field of study with the advancement of the International Coaching Federation that provides membership services, educational services, credentialing and industry standards, research, and corporate leadership support services (International Coaching Federation, 2022). Further, research journals for the coaching industry

have also been developed including the *International Coaching Psychology Review*, *The Coaching Psychologist*, and *Coaching: An International Journal of Theory, Research, and Practice*.

While there is no “legal definition” (Nieuwerburgh, 2017, p. 4) to coaching, and multiple theoretical influences and coaching methods have been developed (Ives, 2008), there are elements of coaching that remain consistent across professional coaching practices. Consistent elements include the importance of the relationship (Cox, 2015; International Coaching Federation, 2022; Ives, 2008; Nieuwerburgh, 2017; Sepulveda, 2020), partnering with the coachee to identify goals and processes and allowing for self-determination and ownership (InsideTrack, 2016; International Coaching Federation, 2019; Ives, 2008; Nieuwerburgh, 2017; Sepulveda, 2021; Whitmore, 2017), and the use of a specified process, methodology, or theory as determined by the coach and reflected in the individual coaching skills (Grant, 2011; Ives, 2008; Nieuwerburgh, 2017; Sepulveda, 2020). Combining recent literature on coaching as a practice, Nieuwerburg (2017) determines that coaching “(a) is a managed conversation that takes place between two people; (b) aims to support sustainable change to behaviours or ways of thinking; [and] (c) focuses on learning and development” (p. 5). Nieuwerburg (2017) further focuses his definition by identifying three elements necessary for effective coaching: the coaching process, coaching skills and a coaching “way of being.” (p. 13). Whitmore (2017) supports Nieuwerburg’s belief in the importance of the person conducting the coaching, noting that the coach’s awareness and responsibility are more important than the framework the coach follows. Coaching skills such as asking questions and active listening are shared across coaching practices, but the varied processes and theoretical influences in coaching create the difficulty in defining coaching as a singular profession or measuring its impacts (Grant, 2011; Ives, 2008);

however, it is precisely the varied approaches and influences to coaching that allow coaches to meet the needs of individuals and professional fields (Ives, 2008; Nieuwerburgh, 2017).

The International Coaching Federation (2019) has identified, through their coaching program analysis of 1,300 coaches worldwide, eight competencies organized by four themes to define their coaching standards. These standards focus on the attributes of the professional coach and what he or she is able to provide for their client. They do not necessarily create specific descriptors for coaching sessions or programs; however, the common elements of coaching including the importance relationships, partnering with the coachee to establish goals, following a consistent practice, and employing specific coaching skills are present:

A. Foundation

1. Demonstrates Ethical Practice
2. Embodies a Coaching Mindset

B. Co-Creating the Relationship

3. Establishes and Maintains Agreements
4. Cultivates Trust and Safety
5. Maintains Presence

C. Communicating Effectively

7. Listens Actively
8. Evokes Awareness

D. Cultivating Learning and Growth

8. Facilitates Client Growth (International Coaching Federation, 2019).

One of the most commonly referenced and professionally applied coaching frameworks is the GROW method of coaching (Cox, 2015; Grant, 2011; Nieuwerburgh, 2017; Whitmore,

2017). The origins of the GROW method can be found in Timothy Gallwey’s focus on the “inner game” of athletes (Whitmore, 2017, p. 12). Whitmore used Gallwey’s Inner Game Equation of $Performance = Potential - Interference$ as he worked with tennis and golf players. He began investigating how to apply his practice to professional leaders for growth and development within their organizations (Whitmore, 2017). Using neurolinguistic programming experts to review his taped sessions with managers, Whitmore defined his GROW framework as goal, reality, options, and will (Grant, 2011; Whitmore, 2017). Table 2.2 defines each stage of the GROW framework and corresponding purpose for the coachee during each stage. The GROW framework is flexible and cyclical in that each session can begin at any point in the framework depending on the need of the coachee.

Table 2.2

Stages of GROW Framework. Note: author created from Whitmore (2017)

Stage	Definition	Choices to be identified by coachee
Goal	Goal setting for the session, short term, and long term (goals may be aspirational or practical)	What do you want?
Reality	Reality checking of current situation including impacts from internal and external barriers, effects from the past, and concerns for the future.	Where are you now?
Options	Options include various possibilities and alternative strategies or courses of action	What could you do?
Will	What is to be done, when, by whom, and will they do it? – considered along with potential obstacles, and accountability plan, and a definition of achievement for the goal.	What will you do?

Though Nieuwerburgh (2017) emphasized the importance of a nondirective approach to coaching, Whitmore’s GROW Framework can be applied even when the goals are predetermined by the organization or a leader (Whitmore, 2017). Whitmore (2017) argues that predetermine goals can still be met as long as the goals appear to be the idea or owned by the coachee; however, providing ownership of the goal to the coachee allows for stronger motivation and

inspiration to meet the goal. What is most important in the GROW framework is the coach's ability to direct the coachee through the stages iteratively to ensure the coachee "remains energized and motivated... aligning [goals] with their individual purpose and personal values" (Whitmore, 2017, p. 100).

Defining Academic Coaching

Coaching programs in higher education began around 2000 when a private company piloted coaching programs to assist universities with retention (C. E. Robinson, 2015). Coaching as a retention strategy became a student-centered practice that supported individual learners and learning goals based on three types of coaching: skills coaching, performance coaching, and development or life coaching (Cox, 2015). These types, Cox (2015) argues, are particularly suited for coaching in higher education due to their relationship to andragogy and transformative learning. Ives (2008) identifies an adult learning approach to coaching that "helps self-directed learners to reflect on and grow from their experiences" (p. 102) based on andragogy, transformative learning, and experiential learning theories.

Often serving as a bridge between student services and academic affairs (C. E. Robinson, 2015; J. A. Robinson, 2019; Sepulveda, 2020), academic coaching as a profession and a practice is still emerging, and work to define its practice and scope is ongoing. In research, academic coaching is defined as a one-on-one collaborative relationship between student and trained college employee focused on helping "students to become more self-aware and reflective" (Dalton & Crosby, 2014, p. 62). Academic coaches help students to develop essential academic skills to "navigate the college and disciplinary environment" (Capstick 2019, p. 221), while also assisting students to become more engaged on campus (Robinson & Gahagan, 2010). An academic coach will often act as a connector to campus resources, working with faculty and staff

for the benefit of the student (Capstick 2019; Pechac, 2017; Robinson & Gahagan, 2010). Pechac (2017) emphasizes the didactic relationship of coaching “designed to enhance learning and development and to increase self-awareness and personal responsibility through a process of questioning and active listening” (p. 7-8), but the most commonly accepted and oft-cited definition of academic coaching comes from C. Robinson’s (2015) dissertation:

Academic Success Coaching is the individualized practice of asking reflective, motivation-based questions, providing opportunities for formal self-assessment, sharing effective strategies, and co-creating a tangible plan. The coaching process offers students an opportunity to identify their strengths, actively practice new skills, and effectively navigate appropriate resources that ultimately results in skill development, performance improvement, and increased persistence. (p. 126).

While C. Robinson defined academic coaching, a distinction must be made between academic coaching and other support services such as academic advising and counseling.

Academic Coaching vs. Academic Advising

As a result of its supportive role, academic coaching is often compared or contrasted to other support services provided to students such as academic advising or counseling (Alzen et al., 2021; Pechac, 2017; C. E. Robinson, 2015; J. A. Robinson, 2019; Sepulveda, 2021).

Sepulveda (2020) distinguishes academic coaches as distinctive from advisement and a distinct student support because although advisors can be academic coaches, academic coaching is the “*consistent combination*” of the coaching practices: “incorporating coaching skills, using coaching tools, having coaching conversations, coaching beliefs, and reflections on the practice” (p. 251). J. Robinson (2019) noted the distinction between advisors and coaches as the difference between transactional and transitional. The coach aides the student to through the transitions of

development, growth, change, experience, etc., while the advisor completes specified tasks. Sepulveda (2020) echoes this distinction identifying advising as a process and coaching as an “experience” (p. 52). LaRocca’s (2015) study that examined academic advising and success coaching as retention tools described advisement meetings and formal and process-oriented and coaching meetings as more friendly and holistic, supporting the student’s “life as a college student” (p. 88). A final distinction between the two roles can be expressed in relation to the timeline of a student. Academic advising includes the actions that take place before classes begin and focus on the business of taking classes, graduating, and/or transferring, while academic coaching takes place while the student is in classes, assisting with the development of academic skills and critical thinking (Jeffries, 2010).

The major organization for academic advisors in higher education NACADA began recognizing academic coaching as an advisement model and created a corresponding online community with established goals in 2009 (NACADA, 2022). The advising as coaching model uses the conversational framework to coach the student through advisement (McClellan, 2013). Since advising and coaching share similar technical aspects that include one-on-one relationships with the goal of growth and development for the student (McClellan, 2013), the combination of the two practices seems natural. Many coaching programs to support retention and completion are, in fact, maintained through advisement offices (C. E. Robinson, 2015; J. A. Robinson, 2019; Sepulveda, 2020); however, the directive nature that is required of an advisor’s role at the college precludes them from having a true coaching relationship with the student (InsideTrack, 2016; Sepulveda, 2021). The instructive nature of advisement that must meet the established goals and follow the established programs of the college and require the advisor to be an expert

leading the student to completion of a specific degree program affects the power dynamics of the relationship.

Academic Coaching vs. Counseling

Another student support service that is often compared to academic coaching is the practice of counseling (Alzen et al., 2021; Blankenship, 2017; Griffiths & Campbell, 2008; InsideTrack, 2022a; C. E. Robinson, 2015). Both coaches and counselors often provide holistic student support outside the bounds of traditional academic concerns (Blankenship, 2017; InsideTrack, 2022a; C. E. Robinson, 2015; J. A. Robinson, 2019), and both often use a conversational framework to guide their clients through sessions (Blankenship, 2017; Nieuwerburgh, 2017; Sepulveda, 2020). Despite these similarities, the two services are distinct in identifiable characteristics across institutions. Griffiths and Campbell (2008) distinguish professional coaching from counseling in three key areas: focus and intention, responsibility, and relationship. The focus of counseling sessions is generally placed on understanding the past with the intention of healing, while the focus of coaching sessions is to affect change in the present with the intention of meeting goals in the future (Griffiths & Campbell, 2008; InsideTrack, 2022a). With counseling, the responsibility of the client's outcomes rests with the counselor, whereas in coaching, the coach holds the coachee responsible for his or her own outcomes (Griffiths & Campbell, 2008). Finally, though the care and concern shared by counselors and coaches for their clients may reflect a similar relationship, the distinction lies in the power dynamics of the relationship. Like an academic advisor, a counselor is seen as the expert in the room, but a coaching relationship is built as a partnership with both parties directing content and direction (Griffiths & Campbell, 2008; Nieuwerburgh, 2017).

The strongest distinction between academic coaches and counselors rests in the role of the counselor in a student's mental health (Blankenship, 2017; InsideTrack, 2022a; C. E. Robinson, 2015). Students may discuss how their academics are affected by the mental or emotional health with a counselor, but the counselor's role is not focused on academic support it is instead focused on providing treatment (Blankenship, 2017; InsideTrack, 2022a; C. E. Robinson, 2015). In this role, counselors receive specific education, certification, and/or licensure (InsideTrack, 2022a; C. E. Robinson, 2015). When a student speaks of their mental health to an academic coach in the context of barriers to their academic progress, the coach's role is not to address the mental health issue, but to instead refer the student to the school counselor (Blankenship, 2017; Pechac, 2017; C. E. Robinson, 2015; Sepulveda, 2020).

Coaching Methods in Higher Education

Although researchers have pointed to the lack of a consistent coaching framework for coaching in higher education (Pechac, 2017; C. E. Robinson, 2015; J. A. Robinson, 2019; Sepulveda, 2020), to date, studies have focused on variable methods including the use of third-party providers (Bettinger & Baker, 2014; and Pechac, 2017), the Check-and-Connect method (D. Johnson et al., 2011; Qian et al., 2018), self-regulatory coaching framework (Franklin & Franklin, 2012), GROW coaching model (Cox, 2015; C. E. Robinson, 2015; J. A. Robinson, 2019) and institutionally developed programs such as Academic Coaching for Success (Capstick, 2019; Robinson & Gahagan, 2010). The following section outlines each of these methods as described in the literature, and concludes with a brief analysis of the approaches on the Ives' (2008) dichotomies.

3rd Party Providers

Third party providers are often referenced as an option for academic coaching at institutions of higher education (Alzen et al., 2021; Bettinger & Baker, 2014; Capstick et al., 2019; Dalton & Crosby, 2014; *InsideTrack*, 2022b; Keen, 2014; Ott et al., 2019; Pechac, 2017; J. A. Robinson, 2019), and InsideTrack is a regular provider of those services. A member of the nonprofit Strada Education Network, InsideTrack claims to have “pioneered the use of personalized, one-on-one executive-style coaching as a way to help all learners succeed” (*InsideTrack*, 2022b). Bettinger and Baker (2014) identify the goal of InsideTrack to be persistence and completion of assigned student learners through a “secret sauce” that “seems to include four primary ingredients: people, methodology, supporting systems, and technology” (p. 6). While Keen (2014) notes that the actual methods of InsideTrack’s coaching sessions are closely guarded and proprietary, Bettinger and Baker (2014) provide limited descriptions.

InsideTrack coaches communicate with their assigned students through phone calls, emails, text messages, and social media communications to provide approximately 20% institutionally-provided content and 80% general content to support the student’s success in school (Bettinger & Baker, 2014). Students must opt-in to receiving coaching from InsideTrack coaches. Contacts with InsideTrack coaches are described as brief interactions of five minutes or less, and meetings are longer in length and include conversations about topics as needed by the student, including study skills, goal setting, and advocacy (Bettinger & Baker, 2014; Keen, 2014; C. E. Robinson, 2015). Bettinger and Baker (2014) found that about 77% of InsideTrack-coached students participated in at least five coaching contacts over 24 months.

Pechac (2017) studied a different third-party provider of coaching services in the Ohio Coaches Program (OCP) provided by Americorp. The OCP coaches were recent college graduates specially trained to support community college students in Ohio, invited to participate

based in their enrollment in first-year experience and remedial coursework. In the OCP, coaching was conducted across the academic year and remained optional for the student. Americorp OCP coaches attempt to meet with students at least three times during the course of a semester through in-class meetings, small groups, phone calls, email, or social media communication. Coaching interactions focus on “developing such skills as juggling multiple roles, notetaking, managing time or stress to registering for courses or accessing vital student services, such as tutoring” (Pechac, 2017, p. 56) as well as providing connections to necessary school support departments such as financial aid and advisement and community-support services. An additional goal of Americorp coaches is to assist the student in reflection upon their individual academic goals in support of retention and graduation.

A final 3rd party provider of coaching services discussed in the literature is the Edge Foundation (Parker et al., 2011). The Edge model focuses on the development of “executive function skills –such as time management, organization, sustained attention, and self-awareness” (Executive Function & ADHD Coaching - Edge Foundation, 2022). Edge coaches receive “specialized training that focuses on high school and college students with ADHD” (Parker et al., 2011, p. 120). After an initial two-hour intake, the Edge model is comprised of weekly, pre-scheduled sessions of about 30 minutes. The initial intake and regular sessions occur over the phone with shorter email and text messaging often occurring between scheduled sessions (Parker et al., 2011). Edge coaches and students do not meet in person.

While each of these providers have developed their own processes, frameworks, and training systems, they share similar characteristics. Third party providers reference an executive or professional coaching model that uses a prescriptive framework in support of study and personal management skills.

GROW Coaching Model

Referenced as being in use by only two institutions in C. Robinson's (2015) exploratory study, the GROW Coaching Model is a well-known psychological coaching method (Grant, 2011) that is being adapted to academic coaching programs (Cox, 2015; J. A. Robinson, 2019; Sepulveda, 2020) although it is often institutionalized or rebranded for an individual institution, such as the ACE model at the University of South Carolina (J. A. Robinson, 2019). Cox (2015) connects the value of the GROW method to Knowles' theory of andragogy (Knowles et al., 2020), particularly the characteristic of adult learners learning what they need to learn when they need to learn it: "[it] involves working with coachees to address an initial coaching *goal* (or task), looking at the current *reality* of the situation, exploring *options*, and working out what *will* be done as a result" (p. 30). Grant (2011) also points to the importance of beginning the next coaching session with a brief review and evaluation of those action steps, leading to "RE-GROW" with the student. J. Robinson (2019) identifies the benefit of academic coaches using the GROW model is their creation of "tangible plans" (p. 48) with their students focused on academics and engagement that can be reviewed at subsequent meetings. Descriptions of the GROW method in the higher education setting do not distinguish a desired number of meetings nor is method of communication discussed; however, based on J. Robinson's (2019) study, in-person meetings can be assumed as the main method of communication.

Check and Connect Coaching Model

Developed as an intervention program for K-12 students through the University of Minnesota's Institute on Community Integration (Institute on Community Education, University of Minnesota, 2020), the Check and Connect method has been modified and implemented in a community college setting in limited amounts (D. Johnson et al., 2011; Qian et al., 2018). An

important principle of the Check and Connect method is to shift in perspective “from preventing negative outcomes (e.g. dropout) to promoting student competences, engagement, and school success” (Christenson et al., 2012, p. 4). This shift is supported in the method’s emphasis on proactive *check-ins* with students and intentional, timely *connections* or interventions for support services to assist students meet their academic goals (Christenson et al., 2012; D. Johnson et al., 2011). In the community and technical college setting, the Check and Connect model has four main components:

1. Small-group and individual mentoring.
2. A mentor/small group leader who keeps the focus on achieving the students’ academic career goals (via setting goals on the monitoring form and use of modules on goal-setting). The mentor both facilitates the group and is available for individual mentoring. The mentor provides active support.
3. Systematic self-monitoring by students with feedback from the small group and mentor.
4. Intentional, timely, personalized “interventions” designed to help students stay on goal.

(D. Johnson et al., 2011, p. 44).

Institutionally Developed Models

Examples of coaching programs that are developed and have been promoted by individual institutions include the Academic Coaching for Excellence (ACE) model developed at the University of Memphis (Capstick et al., 2019) and the academic coaching program in the Academic Center for Excellence at the University of South Carolina (SC) (C. Robinson & Gahagan, 2010). Institutionally developed programs are built to fit the needs of their students and are unique to their institutions; although, they often share elements of professional models such as GROW (J. A. Robinson, 2019). The ACE model is a structured program developed for at-risk

students – defined as those who fall below a 2.0 GPA in their first 59 credit hours (Capstick et al., 2019). With a focus on retention and assisting students in navigating the “often confusing college experience” (Capstick et al., 2019, p. 221), the model includes bi-weekly meetings with an assigned coach for 45-60 minutes. The focus of the sessions is collaborative, with coaches and students identifying barriers, evaluating personal academic skill deficiencies, and available support and resources (Capstick, 2018). The regularly scheduled meetings creates accountability through SMART goal setting, and assists with the student’s development of social and “college cultural skills” (Capstick, 2018, p. 58) needed to support persistence. In the ACE model, coaches are graduate students pursuing advanced degrees in counseling, higher education, and related fields (Capstick et al., 2019).

The SC model includes structured bi-weekly meetings with an assigned coach for 45-60 minutes. The focus of the sessions includes self-assessment, reflection, and goal setting. (C. Robinson & Gahagan, 2010). All students and coaches develop a written academic plan or engagement plan to identify specific resources and create next steps that direct the topic of subsequent meetings (C. Robinson & Gahagan, 2010). The structured process “of self-assessment, reflection, and goal setting promotes self-authorship and leads to increased buy-in and empowerment” (C. Robinson & Gahagan, 2010, p. 29).

Coaching Dichotomies

In consideration of the varied methods and theories influencing coaching practices Ives (2008) identifies three dimensions (as presented in the coaching literature) to define coaching. These dimensions are expressed as dichotomies and include directive vs nondirective approaches, personal development vs goal focused outcomes, and therapeutic vs performance driven effects. Table 2.3 briefly describes the dichotomous ends of each dimension. For the

purpose of this study, Ives' (2008) dimensional dichotomies will provide the conceptual framework through which data analysis will occur.

Table 2.3
Ives (2008) Dimensional Dichotomies of Coaching

Dimension 1:	Directive	Non-Directive
Approaches	Coach offers advice and guidance. Coach may have specific expertise or knowledge. Coach shares theoretical ideas.	Coach acts of facilitator of coachee's process toward goals. Coach follows "ask-not-tell" approach. Coach does not need specific expertise and does not share personal theoretical perspectives.
Dimension 2:	Development-Focused	Solution Focused
Outcomes	Strategy is holistic and supports more general personal development. Strategy is problem focused – identifying what is holding the person back. Long-term strategy where feedback is used as a learning tool.	Strategy is goal oriented to achieve specific outcomes. Strategy is solution focused – identifying resources to move coachee forward. Strategy is short-term and nontherapeutic. Feedback is used to guide future actions.
Dimension 3:	Therapeutic	Performance Driven
Effects	Coaching for personal development - to change feelings or actions. Relationship development is central to supporting personal growth. Raising awareness of coachee's feelings is the end. Coaching creates stability to support personal growth.	Coaching for improved performance. Relationship is not central to change. Raising awareness of coachee's understanding of his circumstances is the means to change personal actions. Coaching creates instability to motivate change.

Ives uses these three, dimensional dichotomies to better express the differences between eight methodological approaches to coaching, asserting that identifying where the methodological approaches fall within the dichotomies assists with defining each approach and understanding how the approach is best suited for particular situations. Specifically, Ives applies the dichotomies to the following coaching practices defined and discussed in the professional coaching literature: humanist, behaviorist, adult development, cognitive coaching, goal-focused, positive psychology, adventure coaching, adult learning, and systemic coaching. These dimensions are particularly helpful when considering how academic coaching relates to the coaching industry and in determining how academic coaching differs from other support

services. Additionally, the community college setting likely affects how academic coaching is practiced and where it falls within Ives' dichotomies.

Application of Ives' (2008) Dichotomies to Academic Coaching Models

The purpose of early research on academic coaching models was not to identify shared frameworks. In fact, much research cited the difficulty in measuring the practice or successes of academic coaching programs due to the lack of a shared framework (C. E. Robinson, 2015; J. A. Robinson, 2019; Sepulveda, 2020). However, with the descriptions of the programs provided in the research, the application of Ives (2008) framework provides a useful method for identifying similarities. With the limited information shared regarding their proprietary methodology, third party providers could be described as non-directive and solution focused models. It is unclear where their models would be placed on Ives' (2008) third dimension regarding effects; however, based on the limited number of meetings described in the studies, it may be inferred that most 3rd party provider programs would be considered performance driven. In the ACE model, it is unclear from the literature if the coaches act in a directive or non-directive fashion, but their approaches could be described as development focused and performance driven. SC's program, however, could be identified within the dimensions as non-directive, solution-focused and performance driven.

Although often cited in research, descriptions of the application of the GROW model in higher education programs is not sufficient to determine how its implementation specific to higher education settings would be categorized within Ives' (2008) dichotomies. Currently, the Check and Connect and third-party provider models are the only models named in research for community college practices. J. A. Robinson's (2019) broad study points to the lack of

framework followed by community college academic programs and notes that the use of the GROW model may be applied or implemented in the community college setting.

Research on Academic Coaching

While it is difficult to evaluate the effects of academic coaching on student success or retention rates in large scale due to the multiple methods employed and lack of shared framework across institutions, initial studies of the multiple methods show promise. Table 2.4 summarizes the impact recorded of each method described above. The studies summarized below shared other measurable variables such as student demographics, meeting frequency, and meeting topics.

Table 2.4*Summary of studies based on identified academic coaching models in higher education*

Coaching Method	Study Method	Sample Size	Measurable Effect
3 rd Party Providers			
(Bettinger & Baker, 2014)	Quasi-randomized comparative analysis	13,555 students at 8 institutions, 59% received coaching, 41% did not	5% more likely to persist after 6 and 12 months, 4% more likely to persist after 18 months
(Pechac, 2017)	Non-experimental quantitative analysis	5,808 students who received coaching at 15 community colleges	11 coaching factors have a positive impact on credit hour completion, accounting for 15% of all credit hour increases.
(Parker et al., 2011)	Qualitative Interviews/Pilot Study	7 students at midwestern university	Enhanced goal attainment, caring accountable relationships, enhanced well-being and self-control
GROW	Although often cited in literature as an applicable coaching method, no empirical or qualitative studies have been conducted on its specific application in higher education.		
Check and Connect	Phenomenological qualitative study	39 students from 2 community colleges	Students used coaches to seek academic support, find opportunities to engage in campus, discuss future career goals, and identify support services. Students perceived improved academic achievement, motivation, and engagement
(Qian et al., 2018)			
Institutionally Developed Programs	Cohort-based nonequivalent groups post-tests comparative analysis	1434 at-risk students at university, 76% participated	Participation increased GPA by ½ pt and was twice as likely to increase GPA above 2.0. Participants were more likely to be retained. The number of coaching sessions had strongest impact on improved success.
(Capstick et al., 2019)			

Research on academic coaching in higher education is growing, though much of the findings indicate the developmental state of the practice. J. Robinson (2019) identifies academic coaching as a part of higher education for less than twenty years, and, to date, a majority of research has been completed for dissertations (Blankenship, 2017; Bosworth, 2006; Capstick, 2018; Frazier, 2019; LaRocca, 2015; Lawhorne, 2020; Minglin, 2019; Pechac, 2017; Perez,

2014; C. E. Robinson, 2015; J. A. Robinson, 2019; Scott, 2017; Sepulveda, 2020; Strange, 2015; Yancey, 2021). Various populations have been studied in limited fashion: students with disabilities (Bellman et al., 2015; Mitchell & Gansemer-Topf, 2016; Qian et al., 2018), medical students, (Connelly et al., 2019; Lee et al., 2020), online students (Bellman et al., 2015; Scott, 2017) and students with ADHD (Swartz et al., 2005). While the majority of research has been conducted on students at four-year institutions, studies have recently begun focusing on the community college setting (Hall et al., 2021; D. Johnson et al., 2011; Lawhorne, 2020; Ott et al., 2019; Pechac, 2017; Perez, 2014; Qian et al., 2018; J. A. Robinson, 2019; Strange, 2015). With a developing body of literature on academic coaching, Franklin and Franklin (2012) have noted that the “processes [of academic coaching] are worthy of closer attention” (p. 37).

First Cited Sources on Academic Coaching

The most cited research on academic coaching in higher education was commissioned to evaluate the use of a third-party provider to implement professional coaching strategies in support of retention efforts in higher education. Bettinger and Baker’s (2014) study of the third-party provider InsideTrack was broad in scope as it provided data analysis that included academic records of 13,555 students at a combination of four- and two-year institutions across the country. The study was a “quasi-random[ized]” (p. 7) control assessment of academic coaching’s effects on persistence and retention. The study found a positive correlation between personal coaching and student persistence and retention. Five percent of coached students persisted past their first year and 3% to 4% of coached students persisted beyond 18 and 24 months. These persistence percentages lead to an increase of retained students for institutions between 9% and 15% and a 4% increase in graduation rates (Bettinger & Baker, 2014). Coaches for InsideTrack communicated with students via phone and focused on identifying personal and

academic barriers to the students' successful completion of coursework, and connecting the student to campus-provided resources while developing their personal advocacy skills (Bettinger & Baker, 2014).

In a seminal study of academic coaching programs at multiple institutions of higher education, including community colleges, C. Robinson (2015) conducted exploratory and descriptive research to better understand the national definition of academic coaching. Her research sought to identify individualized support mechanisms created for students and shared institutional program outcomes. Using survey information from 160 coaching programs in 39 states and a comprehensive review of program descriptions and websites, she strove to differentiate academic coaching from other campus support services such as academic advising, counseling, mentoring, and tutoring. She next evaluated the programs based on Astin's (1993) inputs, environment, and outcomes (IEO) framework. C. Robinson's study was further impactful in that it was the first of its kind to focus on "intra-institutional (i.e. not outsourced) coaching programs" (p. 7); thus differentiating itself from Baker and Bettinger (2014).

C. Robinson (2015) consistently noted the disparity in definition and practice of academic coaches and academic coaching programs in her study, particularly in distinguishing themselves from others support services or identifying a theoretical/conceptual framework that guides their work. One consistent theme C. Robinson noted (2015) is academic coaching's focus on the development of individual student needs: "Perhaps this disparity of need is why coaching is so hard to define and lacks consistency between institutions" (p. 124). Notable key characteristics found by C. Robinson (2015) included that coaching programs tended to include consistent contact and expectations of holding the students accountable while developing academic skills and individualized plans for meeting the student's academic goals. While the

relationship between coaches and students was more formal than in mentoring relationships, the meeting sessions were less formally structured than in advisement sessions to assist with identifying and addressing the needs of the individual. C. Robinson's work was impactful as it led to the first definition (which she coined "aspirational") of academic coaching.

Additional early research conducted on academic coaching practices in higher education was completed without the benefit of the formative details provided by Bettinger and Baker (2014) or C. Robinson (2105); however, their work exemplifies the first attempts to promote academic coaching as a practice in higher education. Bosworth's (2006) dissertation focused on the practice of coaching online students at for-profit schools with the use of Inside Track. Her mixed-method study was limited in its scope but did report marginal impacts on student persistence. Perez's (2014) dissertation of student perceptions of academic mentoring and coaching at two community colleges in California identified themes of empowerment, motivation, and role models as important to the mentor/coach role but was limited by a lack of distinction between the roles in the institutions studied. Coaches were identified as such for the study, but not necessarily as a part of their job function. Strange's (2015) dissertation provided a qualitative formative program evaluation of a newly developed coaching program through the state system of community colleges in Virginia. While designed to provide insights for the emerging practice, her study limited application beyond the state's program.

Research at Community Colleges

As research on the topic of academic coaching is increasing, focused research in the community college setting is growing as well. Perhaps the increased focus on community colleges is in recognition of academic coaching's ability to provide individualized support to students fits with the community college democratic mission. Currently, however, a majority of

the research on academic coaching at community colleges has been conducted for dissertation studies (Lawhorne, 2020; Pechac, 2017; Perez, 2014; J. A. Robinson, 2019; Strange, 2015) indicating a need for further published research and attention. The early studies of Perez (2014) and Strange (2015) were limited in scope and supporting literature. As such, the more recent studies of Pechac (2017), J. Robinson (2019), and Lawhorne (2020) provide a stronger context for understanding the practice at community colleges.

In an effort to understand the impact of academic coaching at community colleges in the Midwest, Pechac (2017) studied 15 Ohio community colleges during their participation in the Ohio Association of Community Colleges (OACC) Coaches Program, an Americorp program designed to “increase success among community college students in Ohio” (p. 55). The focus of Pechac’s study was to evaluate academic coaching’s impact on credit hour completion. Building from Robinson’s (2015) study, Pechac used a secondary dataset provided by the OACC to evaluate the influence of frequency of contacts was impacted by student demographics and to evaluate how the frequency of contacts impacted the success outcome, defined as credit hour completion. Specifically, she focused on exploring how coaching acts as a bridge to support services and strove to identify "which students need the most help, how often these students should meet with a coach coach, which topics should be discussed, and which forms or modes of Communication should be utilized" (Pechac, 2017, p. 111). Further, Pechac’s analysis found that credit-hour completion can be predicted by 17 input variables and coaching factors including frequency of contact, topic, and mode.

Pechac (2017) identified four key findings that contribute to the literature of academic coaching’s impacts on student success at community college. Specifically, she noted that there is value in multiple, in-person contacts where specific subject matter is discussed (namely

“juggling multiple roles, registration, completion plan, and career advisement” (Pechac, 2017, p. 114)), and that there is value in coaching contacts for students who are part-time, African American, and/or Pell eligible. Pechac argued that while coaching can be effective for community college students, her research indicates that coaching strategies should be "tailored" to better address specified population (low Income, African American, and at large institutions)

Although not a part of her research, Pechac (2017) surmised that while the act of referral to support services was an integral part of a coach's role, what resonated with students was time in relationship with the coach. This use of coaches-as-support was supported in the frequency of student service topics discussed during Coaching sessions (i.e. financial aid, career advisement, registration, etc). Coaches did not perform these services but were able to support a student's access to them -or understanding of how they could assist. As such, coaches were an integral part of support network and use of these support services. Further, Pechac (2017) noted the need to identify a "core technology" (p. 124) or definition of coaching to distinguish it from other support services and recommends future qualitative research (specifically case study) to better and analyze student and coach characteristics that support the effectiveness of coaching.

The next researcher to build from C. Robinson's (2015) national study and focus exclusively on community colleges, J. Robinson (2019) interviewed 44 success coaches from 16 states at community colleges of varying sizes. This study had two main goals: to understand how community college success coaches understand and develop their role as coach in assisting students to find success, and to compare their conceptualization of practices to the dominant student success theories in the literature to better understand how theory impacted the coaches' practices and how their practices expressed theories. By situating her study around the phenomenon of community college success and analyzing the success coaches' perceptions of

their work, she hoped to create a better understanding of the non-academic or co-curricular role of the success coach in supporting a community college student's success goals. Although J. Robinson (2019) utilized C. Robinson's (2015) definition of an academic coach, J. Robinson's study focused on "success" coaches who primarily worked in student affairs.

J. Robinson's (2019) first key finding was to identify five sub-sets of coaching perspectives that created a spectrum of practices: utilitarian focus, post-college focus, student-authored focus, and holistic focus. This spectrum of practices, she argued, also demonstrated the tension between the typical institutional definitions and measures of student success in the utilitarian perspective that measures retention and grade point averages for success and the more sophisticated understanding of what it means to be successful to a community college student when the student's success is measured on holistic standards of personal needs and goals that are individual to each student. J. Robinson's (2019) second key finding was an identification of "implicit and explicit influences on success coaches' perspectives on meaning and essence of success" (p. 240). While including "preferred theories and associated concepts" (J. Robinson, 2019, p. 242) she also identified the importance of coaches' religious perspectives, formative personal experiences, and their deeply held personal convictions as having strong impacts on their approach to the support of a student. While previous research on coaching focused on definitions and results, J. Robinson's (2019) key findings broadened the scope and understanding of the coach-to-student relationship and highlighted the relationship between the two dominate foci of academic coaching: students' holistic success in comparison to traditional definitions of academic success.

Interestingly, J. Robinson (2019) found that most coaches did not utilize the traditional theories from literature to guide their work, nor did their practices fit within a shared framework.

She argued that this lack of consistency evidenced the inability of these theories to speak to the community college student and their needs, and that to apply the theories developed and researched based on the experiences of students at a four-year college or university was to neglect the unique experiences of community college students.

Lawhorne's (2020) dissertation returned to the Virginia Community College System studied by Strange (2015) to further investigate the impact of academic coaching on retention on completion through the quantitative analysis of data provided by the state system. Lawhorne's data set was created from five years of data on program participants who were classified as first-generation college students, Pell Grant recipients, or from a historically underrepresented racial group or ethnicity, and had completed less than fourteen college credits. Lawhorne used propensity score matching to identify 1,749 students in both the treatment group (opted in to coaching program) and the control group (did not opt in to coaching program). Using logistic regression as a predictive analysis to test the relationship between participation in academic success coaching and completion and retention for students. Lawhorne's analysis found that participation in the student success coaching had a positive impact on retention, but that it did not have an impact on the probability of completion. Noted limitations of Lawhorne's study included the inability to measure frequency of coaching contacts or topics of coaching sessions.

Published studies on academic coaching in the community college setting remain limited (Hall et al., 2021; Ott et al., 2019; Qian et al., 2018). In 2018, Qian et al, conducted a qualitative study of 39 students w/mental disabilities enrolled at two community and technical colleges in the upper Midwest who participated in the institutions' Check & Connect coaching programs. Their phenomenological study, based on student interviews, considered the students' perceptions of how mentoring influenced their post-secondary education experience. Qian et al (2018) found

the most common support, provided to students was academic with coaches offering assistance managing academic loads and developing study skills. Further, students identified the benefits of a personal relationship, and the availability of their coach had an impact on their academic motivation, engagement, and success. Qian et al. connected the importance of the student's relationship with a mentor to his or her development of resilience in a post-secondary educational setting.

Ott et al. (2020) studied short-term impact of academic coaching in the community college setting when the coaching interventions took place within a single semester and were provided by the same third-party provider studied by Bettinger and Baker (2014), InsideTrack. In their quasi-experimental study, the researchers conducted propensity score matching to evaluate the impacts of academic coaching of 1,326 students at two community colleges in Montana. The short-term coaching programs focused on “developing the skills necessary to excel in community college” (Ott et al., 2019, p. 550), and found a positive impact on retention and achievement, and students with “more intense” (p. 550) coaching earned higher grade point averages than other students. Ott et al. defined academic achievement as credit hour completion and increased GPA, and “intense” coaching as meeting two or more times with an academic coach over the phone, via text message or email. Further, an interaction between a student and a coach was defined as a meeting if it “move[d] students toward their goals” (Ott et al., 2019, p. 553).

In the most recent study of coaching of community college students, Hall et al. (2021) investigated the use of predictive analysis systems coupled with proactive success coaching to increase persistence and student GPA. While this study could not find consistent statistically significant effects in a student's GPA and persistence, the researchers noted that they could not distinguish if this was the result of the predictive analysis system, the type of students selected

from the predictive analysis to receive the intervention, or the method of coaching given to the students. Noted limitations indicated that information was not collected on the number of coaching sessions received or the “degree to which coaches monitored and provided feedback” (Hall et al., 2021, n.p.).

Chapter Summary

Academic coaching has been in practice for a little more than two decades. As the research indicates, there are still many gaps in understanding consistent practices for academic coaching programs in higher education. While studies have indicated impact from the coaching practice (Bettinger & Baker, 2014; Capstick, 2018; Minglin, 2019; Scott, 2017; Swartz et al., 2005), much of the research does not disaggregate findings by institution type (Bettinger & Baker, 2014; C. E. Robinson, 2015), or it is dedicated to four-year institutions (Alzen et al., 2021; Bellman et al., 2015; Blankenship, 2017; Bosworth, 2006; Capstick, 2018; Field et al., 2010; W. Johnson & Sepulveda, 2021; Scott, 2017); therefore, the context of the community college is not sufficiently explored. This is impactful when we consider why it has been difficult for researchers to identify shared practices or application of coaching frameworks among community college academic coaches (C. E. Robinson, 2015; Sepulveda, 2020). Open door admissions that seek to provide access to higher education and allow for the increased enrollment of underprepared or disadvantaged students (Center for Community College Student Engagement, 2016; Cohen et al., 2014; O'Banion, 2019), affects the context in which academic coaching programs are practiced. The qualities that distinguish a community college from a four-year institution do not stop with admissions practices. It is these differences that can impact the academic coaching program (J. A. Robinson, 2019). As such, this study seeks to understand the academic coaching program within the context of the community college and identify shared

practices. Ives' (2008) framework will provide a lens to shape understanding and definition of the shared practices.

Chapter 3 - Methodology

Introduction

This study was completed as a multi-case study with cross-case analysis that explored academic coaching at community colleges in the United States to identify shared experiences and practices of academic coaching in the context of community college programs. Descriptions of the academic coaching programs by program administrators, academic coaches, and institutional documents and promotional materials were analyzed in conjunction with the experiences of academic coaching as described by student coachees to identify case-specific themes which were then further analyzed through cross-case analysis to identify consistent practices for academic coaching programs in the community college context. Ives (2008) coaching dichotomies provided the conceptual framework for this study and contributed to the recommendation of an updated definition for academic coaching specific to the community college context.

This chapter represents a discussion of my positionality as a researcher, the theoretical framework, proposed research design, methodology, rationale, and pilot study that informed this study. Additionally, it describes my processes for the protection of human subjects, data collection and analysis, and ensuring the trustworthiness of the study's findings.

Researcher Positionality

As the previous Director of Student Academic Development at a community college in central Kansas, I worked with students in their journey to find academic success. I created the institution's Academic Development Center (ADC) to support students in their acquisition of academic skills. To support their development, I began implementing an academic coaching program. Like many of the programs studied at community colleges, my program has struggled with clearly defining our role in relationship to other student support services and formalizing

processes based on best practices for community college students. I have often found that much of the research completed on academic coaching programs is conducted by and for the four-year institution. It was my desire to understand how to best support students through academic coaching that inspired my research.

Community colleges are in the position of serving underprepared students as a result of their open admissions policies (Cohen et al., 2014); however, as locally supported institutions, funding for academic support to the underprepared student is limited (Boggs, 2019; Community College Research Center, 2022). I came to this research frustrated by the contradiction with the hope of inspiring programming and resources for underprepared students as they navigate the collegiate classroom and collegiate classroom culture. The majority of the students I have worked with share the characteristics that commonly affect completion and retention. For example, many are enrolled in at least one developmental course, are first generation college students, and arrive on campus from with varying socio-economic statuses. I have worked with online students, military spouses, international students, and single parents. I am drawn to their experiences as individuals and the common struggles they encounter deciphering expectations of collegiate study including classroom policies, instructor expectations, time management skills, and self-directed learning. More recently, their experiences have been colored by the disruption and changed expectations that COVID brought to their educational experiences. Finding support beyond learning has been central to my work with students.

Although I no longer act as the director of the Academic Development Center, it is still a part of my professional responsibilities. As I continue to advance in my career in higher education, I find myself consistently questioning policies and procedures as well as the support services offered to the students that still fill our classrooms. I regularly advocate to faculty and

administration for the student who struggles. In some old-fashioned way, I still believe that given the right tools and assistance, the American dream of personal achievement in academia is possible. In the community college setting (particularly those smaller in size and financial resources), I feel there is a disconnect between student services and instructional and classroom-based practices that creates cracks for the underprepared students to fall through. Smaller staffs and fewer resources have led to siloed activities that do not focus on the development of the student in the role of a student +: student + athlete, student + teenager, student + low income, student + full-time employee, student + parent, etc. It is this disconnect that I strive to correct.

My perspective and experience with supporting under-prepared students at a community college and in working to develop an academic coaching program with limited financial resources allowed me to relate to the participants in this study. While I strove to maintain subjectivity at each location, I was also able to identify nuances during the course of interviews and observations that may not be apparent to those unfamiliar with coaching practices or the community college. Participants spent less time explaining what academic coaching is on a basic level, and could discuss with me the intricacies of their program. I was able to build quick rapport with coaches and administrators by relating to their personal desire to support students. I had significant experience developing rapport with students which assisted in developing a similar rapport with student coachees during interviews, allowing them to feel comfortable sharing their experiences with me.

Theoretical Perspective

The theoretical perspective that directed this research was constructivism. The constructivist epistemology recognizes that meaning cannot be discovered but is instead constructed by the experiences of interactions of humans and their world (Crotty, 2015).

Although it is similar to a constructionist perspective, constructivism posits that knowing or meaning making is the work of the individual within social contexts while constructionism places the work of meaning making on the social collective that is imparted to the individual (Crotty, 2015; Young & Collin, 2004). Constructivist perspectives strive to create an understanding of phenomena as opposed to an explanation as “constructivism rejects the idea that there is objective knowledge in some external reality for the researcher to retrieve mechanistically” (Given, 2008,n.p.). The researcher creates understanding through the interactive process of researching how the individual makes meaning within their social world (Crotty, 2015; Given, 2008).

The “transactional model of conceptualization” (Crotty, 2015, p. 108) of constructivism recognizes that there is a conscious act in knowing something. This conscious act is called intentionality: “consciousness is directed toward the object; the object is shaped by consciousness” (Crotty, 2015, p. 44). It is this interaction between subject (who has consciousness of object) and the object (which is shaped by the consciousness of the subject) that creates meaning for the individual. Further, by consciously seeking to understand the subject of research, the researcher is an active participant in the meaning-making process, emphasizing the “nonobjective dimensions of scientific investigation (e.g., concept generation, definitional work, explanation, claim-making, argumentation, conflict resolution, interpretation of results, evaluation, and establishment of consensus” (Mills et al., 2022, n.p.). The central role of the constructivist researcher is to be the gatherer and interpreter of the perspectives of the individuals within the case study, “clarifying descriptions and sophisticating interpretations” (Stake, 1995, p. 102). Academic coaching is a social practice that emphasizes the relationship between coach and coachee (International Coaching Federation, 2019; Nieuwerburgh, 2017). As such, this study

created understanding or *verstehen* (Crotty, 2015) of the practice of academic coaching conceptualized from the multiple perspectives of those participating in the program.

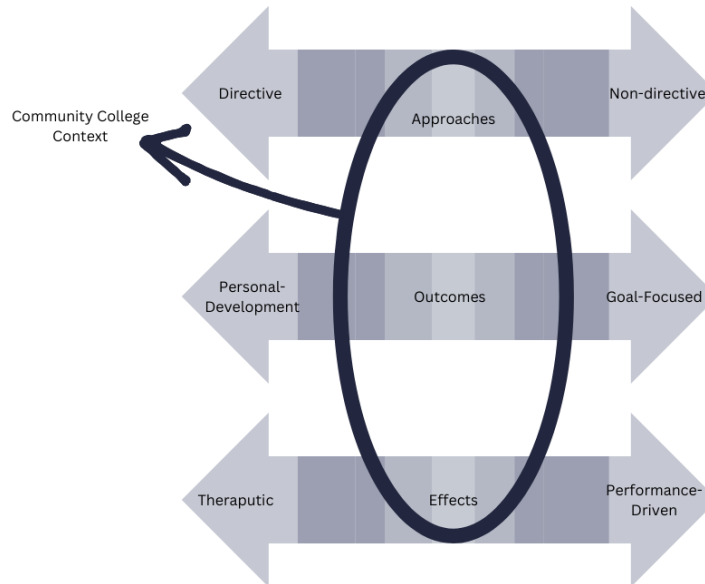
Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for this study was Ives' (2008) coaching dichotomies. Ives (2008) identified three distinct dichotomies present in the body of literature used to define professional coaching: directive vs nondirective approaches, personal development vs goal focused outcomes, and therapeutic vs performance driven effects. Ives applied the three dichotomies to known coaching methodologies to better understand the purpose of each methodological approach and to evaluate its appropriateness for specific situations or coaching relationships. Ives (2008) did not explore the still nascent approaches of academic coaching within his framework; however, his application of the dichotomies to the practices of adult development coaching, goal-focus coaching, and adult learning coaching indicates a similar application to academic coaching in the community college setting will provide a system for classification of coaching approaches for each case and for shared characteristics during cross-case analysis.

The difficulty in characterizing or defining academic coaching as a practice in community colleges (J. Robinson, 2019) may be the result of applying student development, retention, and engagement theories developed in four-year institutions (J. Robinson, 2019) and not specific to the practice of coaching. The context of the community colleges may affect identifying expected characteristics for a student support program (Astin, 1993) like academic coaching. For example, as a program it is housed in varying departments on campuses including academic affairs, student affairs, academic support centers and specialized offices such as athletics (C. E. Robinson, 2015), and coaches hold varying titles such as academic coach,

Figure 3.1.

Application of Ives' (2008) Dichotomies to academic coaching within the community college context



academic success coach, and success coach (C. E. Robinson, 2015). Ives (2008) descriptors within the three dichotomies created a framework that is not reliant on the expected shared characteristics of a student support program but are instead reliant on the approaches and practices of coaching itself. The dichotomies will be applied during the data analysis process of interview transcriptions, observation notes, and document analysis. Figure .3.1 illustrates how the conceptual framework will be applied to the academic coaching programs within the context of the community college setting to identify shared characteristics, and Appendix B further specifies its application to the research questions guiding this study.

Research questions

This exploratory multi-case study sought to identify shared practices among academic coaching programs at the community college based on the perspective of those that participate in and support the academic coaching program. The following research questions guided this study:

- 1 How is the academic coaching model at community colleges described by academic coaches, program administrators, and institutional documents?

2 How do students experience academic coaching at community colleges?

Research Design and Rationale

This study was a qualitative multi-case study to explore academic coaching in the community college setting. Multiple units of analysis including the experience of the academic coaches and students, the management of the program by a campus administrator, and published descriptions of the program allowed for the identification of consistent practices and elements of coaching in the community college setting. This study added to the limited body of literature on academic coaching in higher education and the even more to the limited body of literature on the growing application of the practice in the community college setting. Further, previous studies (C. E. Robinson, 2015; J. A. Robinson, 2019; Sepulveda, 2020) have noted the difficulty in evaluating the effectiveness of coaching programs because they could not identify what to measure or how to measure due to lack of consistency or understanding of the practice. This study provided a qualitative understanding of how academic coaching is practiced in the community college setting creating opportunity for future studies to evaluate effectiveness of coaching programs.

While narrative inquiry and phenomenological studies are qualitative methods that provide unique insights into the perspectives and motivations of academic coaches (Qian et al., 2018; J. A. Robinson, 2019; Sepulveda, 2020), the focus of these methods on one unit of an academic coaching program would have limited our understanding of academic coaching as a practice as it is experienced in the community college setting. Narrative inquiry seeks to understand the unique experiences of individual perspectives, focusing on the participants' identities and turning points in their personal journey (Creswell, 2013). The individualized focus of narrative study would have limited our understanding of academic coaching programs to the

perspective of the single participants, thus limiting the ability to answer the research questions of this study. Additionally, phenomenological studies may be a path to understand a shared experience with a phenomenon of difficult to define concepts (Creswell, 2013) such as the nascent practice of academic coaching, but this would have required careful selection of participants that had a “common understanding” (Creswell, 2013, p. 83). A task that would be difficult across multiple locations and contexts (Creswell, 2013). Additionally, a phenomenological study would limit the scope of this research to the program participants and would not provide a holistic examination of academic coaching practices in community college programs. This study aimed to search beyond the experiences of individual participants in order to better understand the shared practices of academic coaching despite varying locations and contexts.

As a multi-case study this research provided an in-depth understanding (Creswell, 2013) of academic coaching programs across multiple locations within the context (Yin, 2014) of a community college setting. The collection and interpretation of multiple perspectives, triangulated within each case and analyzed across cases through the lens of the Ives’ (2008) framework for defining coaching programs, provided an opportunity for transferability and natural generalization of the readers, and can lead to improved practice (Tracy, 2010) or understanding of academic coaching as a practice at community college programs in the United States.

Case Study Design

The general methodology of this research is case study. Specifically, this research followed a holistic multi-case design with cross case analysis (Yin, 2014) to create a better understanding of academic coaching programs in the context of a community college setting.

Hays (2004) identified the purpose of case study as “illumination and understanding” (p. 218) of contemporary cases. Yin (2014) purported that a case is a "real-life phenomenon that has some concrete manifestation" (p. 34) to be studied through case study methods when “the boundaries between the case and context of the case may not be clearly evident” (p. 16). For this study, each case was an academic coaching program at community college that utilized institutionally employed academic coaches. The cases of this study existed within the context of academic coaching in higher education within community college settings.

To clearly identify what will be a case within a study, the researcher must bound the case by identifying the boundaries between case and context (Hays, 2004; Yin, 2014). Cases in the study were bounded by their identification as an academic coaching program at a community college. To be considered a program, the academic coaching program at a community college had to be identified and publicly promoted as a service for students and employ coaches, identified through job duties or official titles. Due to the varying titles of academic coaches and programs at institutions (Capstick, 2018; C. E. Robinson, 2015; J. A. Robinson, 2019; Sepulveda, 2020), the specific title will not bound the case, only the identification as a program; however, for clarity, I approached this study with the following definition of academic coaching: a one-on-one relationship between a college-employed coach and student in support of the student’s academic and personal goals. An academic coach will support the development of academic and personal skills while utilizing coaching techniques such as asking questions, supporting self-assessment, identifying resources, and developing a plan.

A multi-case study is designed to identify replication across cases (Creswell, 2013; Yin, 2014). Further, Yin (2014) notes the strength of analytic conclusions with multi-case designs. In order to support replication within the design of the study, case selection was based on similar

characteristics of the community college, identified through purposeful, criterion-based sampling (Patton, 2015). To ensure “cases that are very similar to study the characteristics they have in common” (Patton, 2015, Exhibit 5.8). Additionally, Appendix A provides a case study protocol that guided the study at each site, supporting replication design (Stake, 1995; Yin, 2014) of the study.

Yin (2014) argues for the importance of case study research to be guided by propositions the researcher holds regarding the subject based on a thorough investigation of literature.

Previous studies have indicated a lack of training or clearly defined and consistent coaching practices at community colleges (Hall et al., 2021; Lawhorne, 2020; J. A. Robinson, 2019). The proposition that guided this research study was that the context of the community college affects the application of academic coaching models developed and researched at four-year institutions (Capstick, 2018; C. E. Robinson, 2015; Sepulveda, 2020). Thus, it was imperative to understand how academic coaching is described, practiced, and experienced in the community college setting by those who describe, practice and experience it to analyze for commonalities. An additional proposition that guided this study was that Ives’ (2008) dichotomies would support common themes in the academic coaching program’s practices, experiences, and descriptions to identify a model of academic coaching at community colleges.

Populations and Research Setting

Purposeful (Creswell & Creswell, 2018) and criterion based (Creswell & Poth, 2025) sampling directed the selection of three academic coaching programs at three different community colleges in three different states in the United States. In order to qualify as an academic coaching program for this study, the community colleges identified and publicly promoted themselves as a coaching service for students in support of their academic goals, they

were distinct from others student support services such as advising or counseling, they had been in existence for at least three years, and they maintained an institutionally-based program (as opposed to a third-party service). Due to the varying titles of academic coaches and programs at institutions (Capstick, 2018; C. E. Robinson, 2015; J. A. Robinson, 2019; Sepulveda, 2020), the specific title of the coaching program (i.e. academic coaching, student success coaching, etc.) did not bound the case. Further, to support replication of cases, community colleges of similar size and geographic area were invited to participate. All three participating colleges were designated as very large institutions (*Size and Setting Classification*, 2024) community colleges from the middle of the United States.

Individual participants from each institution were selected based on criterion sampling (Creswell & Poth, 2025) as well. Academic coaches and program administrators were employed by the institution and maintained coaching within their job duties. Student coachees who participated had met at least once with an academic coach. Identification of individual program participants was supported by each program's administrator in conjunction with advertisements and letters shared with program administrators for the purpose of this study (see Appendix G). In total, four program administrators, ten academic coaches, and 14 student coachees participated in this study. Individual demographics were not considered as a part of the invitation to participate in this study.

Protection of Human Subjects

Before conducting all research, approval was obtained from the Kansas State University Institutional Research Board to ensure minimized risk to all participants. Additionally, the research protocol for this study was approved by Institutional Research Boards of all three participating institutions as well as the institution visited as a part of the pilot study for this

research. To maintain confidentiality, participants were assigned a participation number and pseudonym. These were used for record keeping and to maintain confidentiality in the final report of findings. No identifiable details have been shared in the final report that might expose the participants identity. All observation and interview notes were processed to remove any identifying information and updated to reflect the participant ID before being stored on a digitally secured thumb drive.

Informed consent was obtained for all program administrators, students, and academic coaches who participated in the interview process and/or coaching observations. The informed consent form (Appendix F) was shared with participants prior to the beginning of our first interview or coaching observation. During that introductory conversation, I communicated the premise of the study, my interest in the subject, and my plans to protect their individual identities. I explained their right to withdraw consent at any point as well as their ability to review transcriptions prior to the data analysis process.

Interview and observation notes were digitally written on a password-protected digital tablet. The raw data was stored on a digitally secured thumb drive and locked in secured file cabinet when not in use. All interviews were recorded through Zoom meeting software and transcribed using Zoom's transcription or Microsoft 365 online software. During the transcription process, any use of participants' actual names or identifiable information was removed or altered to reflect participant ID or pseudonym. Digital recordings of the interviews were deleted after transcription, and audio files will be stored on secured thumb drive. Cloud versions of the interviews were deleted after the transcription was completed as well. Any additional digital notes, drafts of the report, or transcribed interviews have been stored on a digitally secured thumb drive. All digital copies of the raw data saved on the secured thumb

drives will be secured for three years after the completion of this dissertation after which they will be deleted and destroyed. Hard copies of documents, including draft reports and institutional publications are stored in a locked file cabinet and will be destroyed after three years using the secured document disposal process which includes shredding, and destroying through a paid service.

Data Storage

To maintain the confidentiality of participants, preparations for data management must be made, including data storage methods (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). While used for data collection and analysis processes, the researcher's laptop was not used for data storage. All digital data was saved on a password protected thumb drive, and all physical data including institutional documents and informed consent forms are stored in a locked filing cabinet. The only people with access to the data are the researcher and her major advisor for review as requested. Locked file cabinets will be maintained by the researcher and digitally protected thumb drives are password protected and stored within the locked file cabinet when not in use. All data will be stored for three years.

Pilot Study

In order to evaluate my proposed methodology and practice my plans for data collection (Yin, 2014), I conducted a pilot study at a very large (*Size and Setting Classification*, 2024) community college with coaching program in their academic advisement office. In this pilot study, I observed three academic coaching appointments. These observations not only assisted in bracketing my preconceived perceptions of academic coaching, they also assisted me in the development of my observation process. Specifically, I learned to better identify elements of coaching as defined in the literature and how to notate my observations so that my notes

emphasized the details in support of my research. I also interviewed three coaches, two students, and a campus administrator.

I requested feedback from all interviewees after the conclusion of the interviews. This feedback helped me to identify follow-up questions to ask in interviews, and supported my development of interview tempo – I found I had to practice giving participants enough time to consider their responses before encouraging further responses. I believed that these practice interviews would also assist me in determining how the order of interviews affected or directed the data collection in subsequent site visits; however, I found that participant availability and program preparation for the visit was more impactful. Finally, I conducted an analysis of the programs published materials on the program and identified process for notating evidence specific to my research questions. Completion of the pilot study did not lead to edits my research protocol (Appendix A), but did lead to improvements in my approach to data collection methods while on site.

Data Collection

The strength of case study methodology is the varying data points collected through multiple methods to allow for a robust data set for analysis (Mills et al., 2022; Stake, 1995; Yin, 2014). As such, data was collected for this study through, observations, interviews, and document analysis of published program documents, training materials, and documentation processes. To maintain consistency in data collection at multiple sites, a detailed research protocol (Yin, 2014) was followed (Appendix A). Additionally, alignment of each data source with the study's research questions was aligned based on Yin's (2014) four-level research question framework (Appendix B).

Academic Coaching Observation

The purpose of an observation in a qualitative study is to “let the occasion tell its story” (Stake, 1995, p. 62), to gain better understanding and provide context (Hays, 2004; Stake, 1995; Yin, 2014) in the case’s “natural setting” (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p. 181). The observations conducted provided an opportunity to see the practice of academic coaching in relation to the academic coaches’ descriptions of their practice and the student’s description of their experience. For this study, I observed at least two academic coaching session at each site. To avoid confusion between unit analysis and data collection (Yin, 2014), I did not require that the observation participants and the interview participants be the same individuals; however, at two sites, I did interview one student that I had also observed. The duration of each observation was determined by coaching program practices of each site, but on average lasted about thirty minutes. I was a non-participant observer (Bhattacharya, 2017; Creswell & Creswell, 2018), and strove to focus on details that expressed directive vs nondirective approaches, personal development vs goal focused outcomes, and therapeutic vs performance driven effects (Ives, 2008). I noted details that spoke to the community college experience, and I looked for descriptors of the program as provided by the program administrator and academic coaches who were interviewed prior to observations. Details from the observations supported my ability to provide a thick description (Bhattacharya, 2017; Stake, 1995) of the academic coaching experience and programs at Community Colleges.

Interviews

Givens (2008) notes that combined perspectives of qualitative constructivist research provide authenticity to the understanding as expressed by the researcher. To collect combined perspectives (Yin, 2014) of multiple participants in the academic coaching programs at each site,

I conducted semi-structured interviews (deMarris & Lapan, 2004; Patton, 2015) with up to three academic coaches, up to four students, and one program administrator at each site. Interviews lasted between thirty and seventy-five minutes. Interviews with academic coaches and program administrators provided descriptions of academic coaching as a practice within the context of a community college program. Interviews with students provided descriptions of how the student coachees experienced academic coaching. By collecting the descriptions and interpretations of academic coaching by multiple participants in varying roles, a more complete understanding of each case was developed.

All interviews were conducted as conversational, semi-structured interviews (Bhattacharya, 2017) that allowed for me to work with the interviewee to create a shared understanding (DeMarrais & Lapan, 2004) of academic coaching. Questions as identified in the case study protocol (Appendix A), were tailored to the role of the interviewee in the academic coaching. For example, interviews with program administrators focused on developing an understanding of how the institution and program leader described academic coaching, and interviews with student participants will focused on understanding the experience of academic coaching as it is practiced at each site. Program descriptions and experiences provided insights into the programs' placement within Ives' (2008) dichotomies.

Document Analysis

Documents analysis was an important part of this study as it provided context of the academic coaching programs being studied and supplemental information distinct from the interview and observations (Hays, 2004; Stake, 1995). Further, corroborated expanded understanding (Yin, 2014) of the academic coaching program from the perspective of the institution. For each case, I analyzed documents that were provided my program administrators

including program training manuals and institutional reports. I sought and analyzed publicly documented descriptions of the academic coaching program in various print publications available to students in the program offices or posted in campus buildings, and digital publications such as institutional webpages. Each institution had a least one of each of all publications described. These documents were analyzed for defining characteristics and descriptions of the program including program processes, theoretical emphases, and student testimonials. Additionally, program-specific publications and advertisements provided insight to the program's desired outcomes and effects which spoke to the program's placement within Ives' (2008) dichotomies.

As a part of the document analysis process, I also reviewed documents that detailed the academic coaching process for the coaching programs as found in training documents for coaches. These documents were provided by program administrators and assisted in identifying expectations of academic coaches within the coaching process. The identified expectations were reviewed for directive or nondirective approaches (Ives, 2008). They supported my understanding of what makes academic coaching unique as a support service to the student at each institution and provided context to the descriptions and experiences as given by study participants.

Data management

To ensure participant confidentiality and data integrity, a specific data management plan was created and detailed as a part of the case study protocol (Appendix A). Microsoft Office products, Google Chrome, Adobe DC, the Zoom online meeting platform and reMarkable digital tablet's online application provided the software for collecting and organizing the study data.

Interviews took place in person with the Zoom online meeting platform used for recording the interview digitally as well as via Zoom with the record meeting option selected. Digital recordings were transferred to the external thumb drive for long term storage. Zoom and Microsoft 365 transcription software were used to assist in the transcription process, with transcriptions saved to a Microsoft Word document for analysis and storage. Upon completion of transcriptions, all video files of the interviews were deleted and only audio files have been maintained. Interview and observation notes were taken on a reMarkable 2 digital tablet. PDF files of the notes were exported from the tablet and saved on the external thumb drive. Print documents such as flyers, brochures, or training documents that were collected on site were stored in a locked cabinet when not in use.

Data Analysis

In determining a data analysis strategy, Patton (2015) recommends a “purpose drives analysis” (n.p.). The purpose of this study was to examine multiple cases of academic coaching programs within the context of community colleges to create a better understanding of key characteristics or commonalities. Patton (2015) and Yin (2014) recommend a general strategy of relying on theoretical propositions to guide the data analysis. Specifically, the proposition guiding this study was that there are consistent practices among academic coaching programs in community colleges and that those consistencies can be viewed through the lens of Ives’ (2008) dichotomies. The technique of explanation building (Yin, 2014) relied on an iterative process of data analysis that guided my review of the collected data at each location to create individual case descriptions (Yin, 2014). The subsequent case reports (Patton, 2015) were further analyzed in a cross-cases analysis using a spreadsheet to review identified themes (Creswell, 2013; Patton,

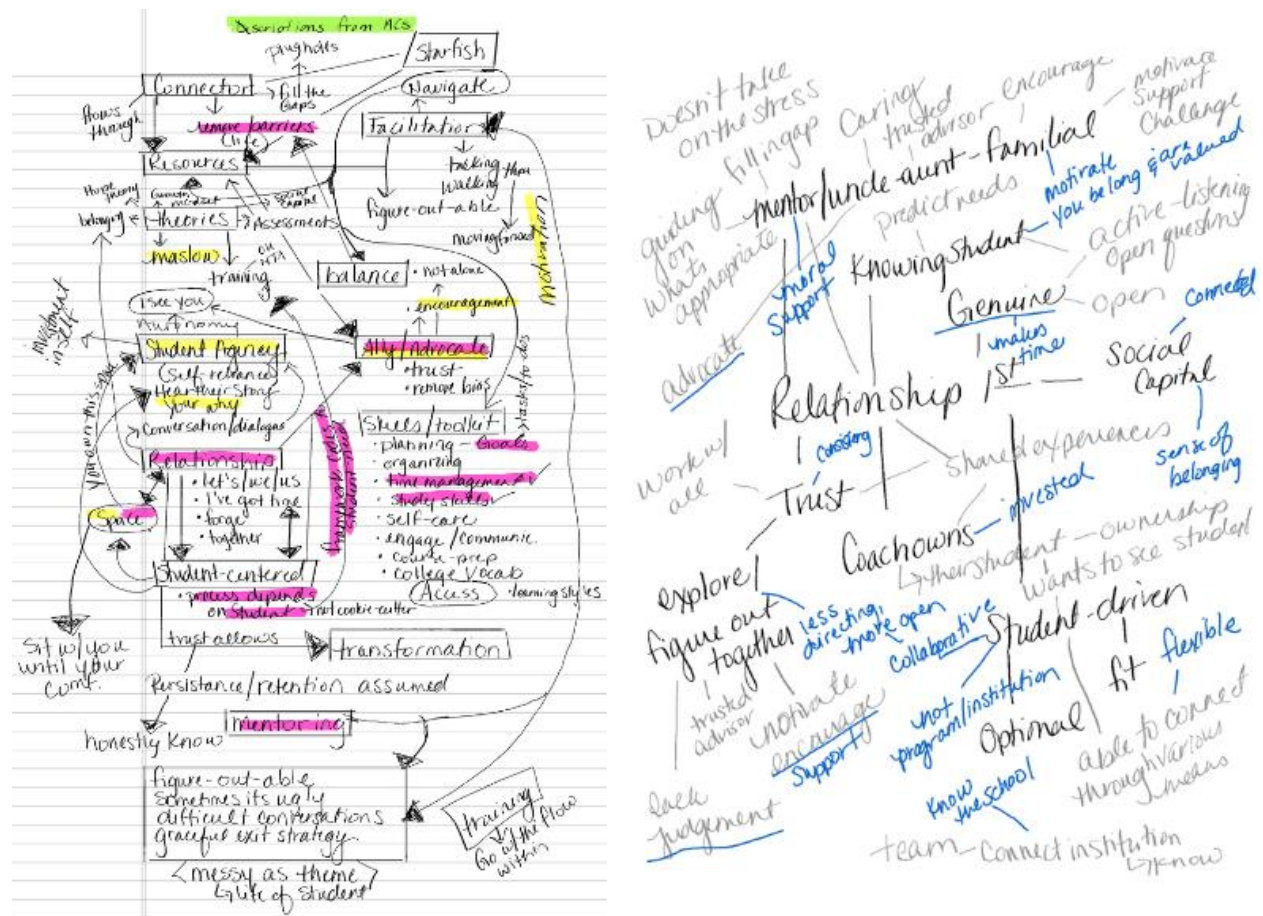
2015) guided by the level two questions outlined in Appendix B. This iterative process allowed for continued analysis and triangulation of data to answer this study's guiding research questions.

Using inductive data-analysis as described by Bhattacharaya (2017), I coded data based on significance to develop themes and continually reflect on the descriptions provided and experiences of the student participants. Creswell and Creswell (2018) note that data analysis in qualitative studies should begin during the data collection process. As such, I reviewed my research journal to create data memos (Creswell, 2013) at the end of each day on location. These data memos, along with Ives' (2008) dichotomy descriptors will allowed me to "winnow" the data: "a process of focusing in on some of the data and disregarding other parts of it" (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p. 191). By completing the data memos as a part of the initial data collection, I was better prepared for the in-depth data analysis upon completion of each site visit.

To conduct analysis of all collected data, multiple iterative processes took place. All interviews were transcribed by the researcher with the assistance of Zoom and Microsoft 365 automatic transcribing software. The manual process allowed for personal focus on what is meant by the participants in the interview recognizing "what is meant is what is important" (Stake, 1995, p. 66). Immediately after all interviews were transcribed, I read transcriptions to identify initial themes and noted themes within the research journal. Next, I reviewed observation notes, and document analysis notes and began chunking the data into segments of commonality (Bhattacharya, 2017; Creswell & Creswell, 2018) identifying codes from the chunks (Bhattacharya, 2017; Creswell & Creswell, 2018). At this stage, my data memos shifted from text-based notes and outlines to mind maps that visually identified codes within the data. Figure 3.2 is an example of two such mind maps.

Figure 3.2.

Examples of mind maps created during the data analysis process for two cases



Codes were then placed into an excel spreadsheet to identify themes in the data (Bhattacharya, 2017; Creswell & Creswell, 2018). This process was completed for each case individually, resulting in data tables for each case. During cross-case analysis, the individual data tables were analyzed for commonalities among identified themes to create a holistic review of academic coaching at community colleges. To maintain the coding process, I followed Creswell and Creswell's (2018) recommendation of Tesch's (1990) process. In the steps summarized below, I have identified my specific use of this process:

- In order to get a broad understanding of each case, gathering and noting meaning in lieu of specific substance, I focused my readings of interview transcriptions, observation

notes, and document analysis notes into individual sessions that focused on one unit of data at a time. Initial patterns and personal responses noted within margins of transcriptions and note pages, and connections were made within and between notes of each unit.

- After completing a reading of a unit of data, I summarized my marginal notes in my research journal. I then used this initial list of topics to create a mind map to cluster similar themes and identify relationships (see Figure 3.2 for examples).
- To return to the data, I focused on marginal notes and comparisons between units of data (interviews vs. observations vs. document analysis). Secondary, and sometimes tertiary, mind maps were created, re-clustering like ideas and emphasizing repetitions between data units.
- Review of the mind maps led to the identification of codes for organizing data tables. With these descriptive codes identified, I returned to the data and inputted examples or references to specific information from each unit of data.

The data chunking and coding process was completed by hand with the assistance of the digital tablet and Microsoft Excel for organization of data tables to illustrate overlapping data points. Identified themes for each site were organized into individualized case reports, and led to the development of visual representation of each case's academic coaching program based on the relationships identified through the data analysis process.

Cross-case analysis (Yin, 2014) was conducted through the use of a large data table that combined shared themes and codes. The cross-case data table was analyzed for the continued development of themes to express descriptions and perceptions of all cases, and identify where cases deviated from the identified patterns. Table 3.1 illustrates the identified data codes from

each case study. Additionally, a first level analysis of shared themes was conducted by color coding related topics from each case. In Table 3.1, each colored square represents a relationship between cases. Additional relationships were identified within in the non-colored squares, but may not have been as impactful in the cross-case analysis.

Table 3.1. *Table illustrating cross case analysis using data codes from individual case study reports. Table illustrating cross case analysis using data codes from individual case study reports.*

Case Study	NCC	SCC	TCC
Data Codes	Relationships	Skills	Consistency
	Transformation	Boundaries - Definition	Process
	Student Autonomy	Service/Transaction	Relationships
	Training/Research-Informed	Action Steps	Data Informed
	Access - Maslow	Developing	Good Coaches
	Community	Good Coach	Program Other
	Space & Motion	Instructional	Institutional Symbiosis
	Skills	Diagnostics	skills
	Misc. Themes - distinctions	Rapport v Relationship	Goals, student focus
		Motivation	
		Other	

Personal Journal

My previous experiences academic coaching practices was continually bracketed through the use of a reflective research journal, updated continuously while on site of each case, and reflectively at the end of each day and/or visit. I continuously used the research journal throughout my data analysis process as way to identify personal notes within the data-chunking process. The practice assisted with my identification where my previous knowledge and past experiences shaped my perception and data analysis (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p. 184). The use of my personal journal also supported consistent self-reflection on situational and procedural

ethics while studying each case and sincerity in data analysis and final reporting of data (Tracy, 2010).

Trustworthiness

Researchers of the constructivist paradigm aim for trustworthiness, authenticity, and credibility (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). These qualities in qualitative research begin with the researcher's desire to provide authentic representations of the data and the implications of the findings (Lincoln et al., 2018; Tracy, 2010). To this end, this study maintained the "big tent criteria" (Denzin, 2008; Tracy, 2010) through careful methodological preparation and implementation. As compiled by Tracy (2010), the "big tent criteria" include worthy topic, significant contribution, rich rigor, sincerity, credibility, resonance, ethical, and meaningful coherence.

Worthy Topic and Significant Contribution

A worthy topic is built from practical wisdom and "contextual priorities," and it must be "relevant, timely, significant, and interesting" (Tracy, 2010, p. 840). This study provides a significant contribution to the developing body of literature on academic coaching within the context of community colleges. The context of the community college influences the goals and abilities of academic coaching programs that may be affected by limited budgets and offered to nontraditional students. Additionally, as research on the defining factors of academic coaching programs is often focused on four-year models, this study allowed for the researcher to reconsider what is already known about the phenomenon and raised the collective knowledge to a higher level of awareness (Tracy, 2010) by providing descriptions of processes and experiences as described in the community college setting.

This study also makes a significant contribution to the academic coaching literature in that it provides practical significance. Practical significance is achieved in research that is useful and “captures how practitioners cope with situated problems and provides implications that may help participants develop normative principles” (Tracy, 2010). Although moral implications and political calls to action may not be present in this study, understanding the prevalent practices and experiences of academic coaching in the community college setting has provided a useful framework for future evaluative studies or program development. This study allowed for a specific definition of academic coaching at the community college, emphasizing the program’s approaches, outcomes, and effects, providing a framework for future studies and program evaluations.

Rich Rigor

Rich rigor is evaluated by not only the amount and variety of data collected, but also the quality of data collection and analysis processes. Tracy’s (2010) call for “requisite variety” (pg. 841) in data collection to ensure the complexity of the phenomenon is adequately captured and expressed was assured in the multi-case study plan of this research. By collecting the perspectives of academic coaches, program administrators, and students through interviews, observing academic coaching practices, and evaluating printed and published descriptions of the programs at multiple locations, a variety of perspectives were collected allowing for a complex understanding of academic coaching in the community college setting. Rich rigor is further evaluated by ensuring data collection and analysis methods are sound. In this study, rigor is evidenced by a complete case study protocol and thorough, transparent descriptions of interview, observation, and document analysis processes guided by four levels of questions for case studies (Yin, 2014). Case study reports were developed prior to the cross-case analysis with the level

one and two questions of the protocol in mind, while cross-case analysis focused on level three questions.

Sincerity

Sincerity in research is achieved through self-reflexivity and transparency (Yin, 2014). In qualitative studies, an author's self-reflexive processes support the meaning-making process for the researcher and provide continued context for the reader. It is supported in data collection methods that distinguish between what was said, printed, or observed by the researcher and the researcher's personal responses and interpretations of the events. It is further supported through the act of "showing" the researchers reactions throughout the research report (Tracy, 2010). For this study, interview and observation notes followed the templates provided in Appendix D to allow physical space for distinguishing between what was said or observed and what was experienced by me the researcher. This process allowed for clear delineation and showing of my reflections and responses in the final report. My use of a personal journal also assisted in maintaining and reporting an accurate portrayal of the research process by providing a space for me to not personal reflections and questions. My responses to the cases and the study participants were noted in case study reports when appropriate to the meaning-making process.

Credibility

Thick description, triangulation and member checks support the credibility of research (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Patton, 2015; Stake, 1995; Tracy, 2010; Yin, 2014). Although thick description is best evidenced in the final report of a case study, it began with detailed notes taken during the interview and observation process. As a non-participant observer, I focused on observing participants' physical and verbal cues as well as the context of conversation. Further, I captured notes during the interviews to supplement the transcribed conversations with

information on participants' nonverbal indicators. My participation in a pilot study proved valuable as a practice for these skills. The case study reports captured thick descriptions of each case in its physical space and personal characteristics of the study participants.

Triangulation speaks to credibility when two or more points of evidence speak to the same finding (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Tracy, 2010; Yin, 2014). Conducting multiple interviews with multiple participants at multiple locations allowed for triangulation of themes in descriptions of academic coaching and experiences of academic coaching in the community college setting. Additionally, these themes were compared to the themes identified through observation notes and document analysis to provide further triangulation. The desired program approaches, outcomes, and effects as described by coaches was triangulated with the experiences as described by students and descriptions as presented in program documents.

Finally, credibility will be supported through the use of member checks to “allow for sharing and dialoguing with participants about the study’s findings, and providing opportunities for questions, critique, feedback, affirmation, and even collaboration” (Tracy, 2010, p. 844). Creswell and Creswell (2018) recommend member checking with semi-polished portions of the report while Stake (1995) notes the importance of member checking earlier in the study to allow for interpretation and recommendations from participants. During the course of each interview, I followed up various responses from interviewees with statements of my understanding and provided the opportunity for immediate clarification or feedback. Additionally, member checks were provided to each participant at the conclusion of interview transcription and prior to the completion of each case study report; however, only one participant responded, but did not offer any comment or requests for revisions.

Resonance

Resonance supports the trustworthiness of a qualitative study in that it indicates the findings of the report impact to the reader through transferability and naturalistic generalizations (Stake, 1995; Tracy, 2010). Transferability occurs when the reader can relate to the representations of the report's findings or stories. Naturalistic generalization differs from statistical generalization in that the findings may not be directly applicable across settings or individuals, but instead provide a vicarious experience that leads to an improved practice (Tracy, 2010). Writing skills are important in the development of resonance in that they are necessary to invite the reader into the experiences as expressed in the report. To support resonance, I focused on developing the "small instances" (Tracy, 2010, p. 845) of academic coaching descriptions and experiences at community colleges and express them within the language of the study's contextual framework, Ives' (2008) dichotomies. These small instances were found in moments from observations and small quotes from interviews shared within case study report. Other small instances that informed the context of the community college setting were developed in the descriptions of the programs' physical spaces and general descriptions of participants' characteristics and needs. Providing direct quotes also allowed me to express the voice of the study's participants within case study reports.

Ethical

A "universal end goal of qualitative quality," (Tracy, 2010, p. 846) ethics directed the methodological decisions of this study and guided my implementation of the case study protocol at each site. The plan for the protection of human subjects and secure data storage was followed. On the surface, academic coaching does not infer sensitive subject matters; however, academic coaching sessions can cover topics of a personal nature (J. A. Robinson, 2019). As such, I will

employed situational ethics (Tracy, 2010) while observing academic coaching sessions and interviewing student participants. Further, my use of member checks assisted evaluating the ethic of each case study report by allowing the participants consideration in the inclusion of shared information. While a few student coachees offered personal information during the course of their interviews, those personal details were not shared within case study reports.

Meaningful Coherence

Meaningful coherence indicates that all aspects for the research project from formalization to publication work to complete its stated purpose: “studies that meaningfully coherent eloquently interconnect their research design, data collection, and analysis with their theoretical framework and situational goals” (Tracy, 2010, p. 848). To this end, this multi-case study was designed to suit a constructivist theoretical perspective. A case study protocol was developed and followed, and data collection methods and questions were directly aligned to the study’s stated purpose and research questions as evidenced in Appendix B. The final draft of this report captured the descriptions and perspectives of the study’s participants within the context of each case’s institutional academic coaching program. Descriptive, active writing practices were employed to invite the reader to experience the academic coaching programs in the community college setting through the individual case study reports

Chapter Summary

This multi-case study was designed to identify shared practices and experiences of academic coaching programs in the community college setting through the lens of Ives’ (2008) coaching dichotomies. The case-study design (Yin, 2014) allowed for a holistic program analysis that captured multiple perspectives to construct of a more complete understanding of academic coaching at each location. Cross-case analysis allowed for the identification of shared

characteristics within the community college settings. Three academic coaching programs were selected based on shared institutional demographics as very large institutions (*Size and Setting Classification*, 2024) and their identification as an academic coaching program.

Data collection consisted of observations of academic coaching sessions, semi-structured interviews with program administrators, academic coaches, and student coachees, and document analysis of academic coaching publications, promotions, and training documentation at each site. Participation by all institutions and their corresponding participants was voluntary and confidential. Participant confidentiality was managed by this study's plan for the protection of human subjects and approved by all appropriate Institutional Review Boards.

An inductive data analysis process (Bhattacharaya, 2017) followed a general strategy (Patton, 2015; Yin, 2014) relying on the theoretical propositions that there are consistent practices among academic coaching programs in community colleges and that those consistencies can be viewed through the lens of Ives' (2008) dichotomies. The technique of explanation building (Yin, 2014) relied on an iterative process of data analysis to create individual case descriptions (Yin, 2014) that were further analyzed in a cross-cases analysis guided by the four-level questions of the research protocol found in Appendix B. This iterative process supported the "big tent criteria" (Tracy, 2010) ensuring trustworthiness

Chapter 4 - Case Study Reports and Cross Case Analysis

Introduction

This multi-case study investigating academic coaching at three extra-large community colleges in the United States, resulted in the following case study reports and cross-case analysis. Each of the following case study reports emphasizes how academic coaching is described, practiced, and experienced in the community college setting by those who describe, practice, and experience it. Each identifies key findings from the inductive data analysis process to create a holistic understanding of academic coaching at that community college. To support the expression of my understanding of each case's coaching practice, each case study report includes a visual representations of that program's coaching model. Although each case maintains its unique program identity, the resulting cross-case analysis identifies multiple shared characteristics providing a comprehensive description of academic coaching within in the community college context. Multiple units of analysis including the descriptions of ten academic coaches, fourteen student coachees, and four program administrators, along with analysis of published descriptions, advertisements, and training manuals of each program allowed for the identification of consistent practices and elements of coaching in the community college setting.

Nalis Community College

Nalis Community College is a large community college with a fall headcount of 14,390 and an FTE of 8,354. Located in a major metropolitan area within a south-central state, NCC has four campuses and offers online courses and programs. While each campus emphasizes specific programs of study, general education classes are offered at each location. Sixty-eight percent of NCC' students are enrolled part-time, 78% are degree-seeking students, and 42% of their full-

time student population receive Pell grants. NCC' student population is diverse with 51% of students identifying as white or Caucasian.

NCC's Academic Success Coaching program is a student service offered by the Office of Institutional Equity located at the college's Hillside Campus. The program has four full time coaches (including the program director) and four part time coaches. While the main office is located on the Hillside campus, coaches travel to all campuses for coaching meetings and meet with students remotely as well. Coaches are assigned cohorts based on program of study and developmental course enrollment; however, coaches are able to meet with students outside of their cohort in order to serve individual student needs. Student peer coaches assist success coaches with student outreach, campus presentations, and directed study sessions.

The Hillside campus is located in an industrial section of the city, near the airport. The Academic Building, in which the Academic Success Coaching program's offices are located, maintains the industrial atmosphere of its neighborhood. The program's offices are tucked in a corner of the building, at the end of a long row of classrooms and offices. Across the hall, the program operates a meeting room for student organizations, a study hall space, and a recreational room with lockers, games, and resources for students. The hallway between the two areas is filled with postcards, flyers, and posters advertising student services, student organizations, and the Academic Success Coaching program.

Not all coaches are housed in the program offices. Multiple coaches' offices are distributed through other office complexes on campus, due in part to the dual-roles of the coaches with other programs on campus. The office space and student meeting spaces are filled with various supplies, informational flyers, student resources, program materials, books, and snacks. Although there was not heavy foot traffic in the office, the chaos of the items within the

space speak to consistent activities and student life. The program's unofficial motto *You are not alone* could be felt in the space. A meeting, a party, or casual conversation could all be supported in a moment's notice. Boxes of snacks, a popcorn maker, printed study and note taking resources, inspirational posters, and games are stacked in corners, on tabletops, and on various countertops and tables. There is also warmth in the chaos, resembling the messiness of a family home chasing each member's activities and busy life schedules. The physical personal affect within the program space creates an atmosphere the welcomes all kinds. It is a space in which one could feel at home.

Participants

Participants for this study included two administrators, three coaches, and four students. A third administrator provided historical context for the program but was not officially interviewed. One of the administrators assisted with the development of the Academic Success Coaching program, but currently works for another institutional program. His interview contributed to the researcher's understanding of the Academic Success Coaching program in relation to other support services for NCC. Of the student coaches interviewed and observed, three were student-employees of NCC.

The program's immediate administrator is a former faculty member who is actively engaged with institutional and community leadership and support initiatives. Leonard is kind and his support for the individual is clear as he participates in conversation. While intently listening, he is consistently processing information about next steps or support measures to be applied. He was quick to provide support for this research, providing access, information, and connections to additional administrators on campus. With each person who stopped by his office, he was able to make individual connections, recalling personal details about that person's life, school work, or

schedule. His approach to each person is in support. He has a clear understanding of the parameters of academic coaching and emphasizes the importance of research-informed decisions. His academic training provides a documentable framework for the program, but his leadership allows for the individual approaches of each of his coaches.

Three academic coaches participated in this study. All three coaches have advanced college degrees. Julie was warm and very professional. Her care and compassion were evident as was her kindness through focused listening. She effuses comfort. She was very professional, but approachable, and her consistent use of “we,” “us,” and “together” in her conversations with students built space within the relationship for trust and guidance. Her approach wasn't mentoring, it could best be described as based on trust and commitment. As a part-time coach, she is also an adjunct for NCC, teaching orientation courses.

Scott is a full-time coach for the program, who was charismatic and joyous. His laughter was infectious and his energy was focused on support. He was comfortable weaving aspects of his academic and personal history in conversation and asked questions that reflected an established relationship with his student. His temperament created easy conversations. His passion for students extended beyond the college as he regularly mentored youth within the city as well.

Monique is a full-time coach who began as an advisor at SCC. She was warm, knowledgeable, and comfortable with sharing her knowledge. She believed in the value of self and the representation of self. She was the most directive of the participating coaches. An active participant in the City's Leadership program, she displayed her leadership qualities and institutional expertise. She was easy to talk to and giving of herself as she supported the individual student.

Additionally, four students participated in this research. All students were residents of the metropolitan area. One student Asia was a first-semester freshman, and had only one official coaching session prior to our interview. The three remaining students, Tom, Jaylen, and Jimmy were also employed by college and active participants in the coaching program. Jimmy and Tom had met with their coaches regularly over the course of at least one year, while Bob had only informal coaching as a result of his work on campus. Bob is a returning student who had experienced student support services while attending a private college in a neighboring state.

Distinction from Other Support Services

While not specifically articulated in published advertisements, academic coaches and program administrators clearly distinguish the role of coaching at a community college from other support services such as academic advising and counseling. In each of their interviews, the distinctions were easily identified and articulated similarly. The distinction between coaching and advising could be understood as holistic, transformational student support vs transactional, institutionally defined academic goals; and the distinction between coaching and counseling was described in terms of professional boundaries and training.

In describing the difference between academic coaching and advising, the first distinction given is difference in the desired result of the meeting with students. Leonard summed it up well: “The success coach recognizes that the transactional aspect of getting through the program is not relevant for the student how needs to transform their thinking, transform their situation.” Coaching is concerned with the whole student before the program’s or institution’s goals of course completion, persistence, retention, and graduation, whereas advisement is concerned with the institutional requirements for persistence, retention, and graduation. Leonard further notes that coaching must be concerned with “putting the whole person in the picture to create balance”

in order to make progress toward the “student-defined goal.” Advisement, on the other hand, instructs the student on institutionally defined goals and next steps.

Coaches interviewed supported this view. Julie noted that coaches help students “manage work-school-life balance,” and provide a “toolkit of success that’s not just good here, it’s good for you down the road.” Monique and Scott echoed this view of providing tools, support, skill development, and resources for all parts of the student’s life. Scott called it “filling in the gaps...patching up the holes.” Monique relayed the importance of connecting to other departments and resources and developing a foundation ensuring the student is taking care of their whole self, “find[ing] out what’s going on” and then giving them “the tools they can use.” In order to serve the whole student, coaches have to be knowledgeable of not only campus departments and resources, but community resources as well. Each coach interviewed noted their work in connecting students to resources for transportation, mental health, community engagement, domestic violence, financial needs, or food insecurity. Advising, on the other hand, begins with the institutional goal in mind. According to Julie is focused on the “academic part of completing the degree”; Scott described advisement as “focus[ing] on those classes and how they can transfer... so [students] don’t waste their time”; and Monique stated coaching is “different from advising where there are boxes to check, content to cover.” For each coach, the most important aspect of coaching was the student in the chair, his or her needs, and his or her goals, not the established goals of the institution.

Due to the nature of coaching’s approach to the whole student, there are often moments when students begin disclosing personal information and/or mental health concerns. To navigate the role of coach in these situations, participants focused on the professional and medical practice of licensed therapists to create boundaries. Leonard points to the “deeper emotional...

mental, psychological concerns” that may create a medical need or “legal aspect” to assisting the student. It is this line, “someone is having a health concern that could potentially need a diagnosis for more in-dept support” that directs the coach to refer the student to a mental health counselor or therapist. Julie echoed this distinction noting that counseling is about mental health and wellness and may be a resource a student can be referred to, but the coach’s role is not to treat the health concern. The academic success coach relies on the advisor and a counselor as a part of the “village” that can provide support and resources to the student. Scott remarked that it’s the coach’s job to know what is involved with advisement and counseling (along with disability services), “so you can point students to those resources. [Coaching] is a nuance. It flows through all these things.

Training for Flexibility

Descriptions of the Academic Success Coaching program at Nalis indicate a structured practice. Additional descriptions emphasized the importance of the individual student coachee and the power of the relationship between the coach and coachee as the directional force of the program’s coaching practice. The structure and purpose of the coaching sessions must remain flexible as individual coaches apply their individual interpersonal skills to developing the relationship in support of the individual student’s needs. Leonard summarized the importance of this purposeful and yet flexible practice when he noted that coaches must “go with the flow, but there are key points.”

All academic coaches and student employees receive specific training on the “key points” of the program, including: the practice of coaching, program-specific implementation practices, and multiple educational theories that the coaching strategies and program practices are built upon. Lain’s coaching program provides a detailed training protocol for coaches and student

employees that includes completion of the National Tutoring Association's Coaching Certificate program, an in-house training manual and online course shell, shadowing, and presenting on personally developed methods. The external training was specifically named by the program administrator and all coaches in their interviews. Elements of the in-house training manual were referenced by academic coaches as a part of their practice, and elements of the training were observed in coaching sessions and on print publications advertising the Success Coaching program. The emphasis on training and the expertise it provides to the coaches' practices is foundational to the program.

Additionally, when asked what makes a good academic success coach, Leonard identified the need to "be aware of best practices and research" as one of the most important characteristics. In support of this need, He further noted that he tells his coaches, "I need you to be aware of best practices, research. Be research-informed for how you make your decisions as a coach." The program's training manual includes sections on "Research and Proven Practices" and "Theoretical Frameworks" for coaching. These sections reference the research of C. Robinson (2015), the GROW model (including (T)GROW and GROWTH models), and coaching practices such as effective questioning and listening, and the power of reflection. Additional strategies that build the coaching framework and are described in detail in the coaching manual include the use of student assessments, intake surveys, and the use of student success platform STARFISH. Many of these elements are reflected in the descriptions of the academic success coaches and observed in their coaching sessions.

An Identifiable Process

Due to the structured training that provided consistent background and resources for coaching models, the coaches followed similar processes with identifiable and shared elements.

Each of the coaches identified the training received, the training manual, and structures of the coaching framework such as the use of STARFISH and referenced the value of the LASSI assessment tool and the institutionally developed intake survey to prepare for meetings with students. While they did not identify the GROW coaching framework by name, many of the coaching skills, including those that support the GROW framework were described by the coaches or observed in their coaching sessions. Further, the descriptions of the coaching process were similar for all the coaches, indicating their individual approaches were built from the same foundational knowledge and training. In their interviews, the coaches describe the process in five key stages: 1. Getting to know you; 2. Why are you here? 3. Identifying strengths and weaknesses; 4. Reviewing strategies or skills; and 5. Setting goals (short term action steps or longer goals for completion) (see table 4.1). Monique's process was least like the formula as described by the others in that goal setting wasn't a part of her described practice; however, she expected (and indicated she generally receives) students to return her office with a report on what went well with the applied strategies and what didn't go well. She said,

If we have to come back to the old drawing board, we will.... So I'm just here to make sure you are strong enough to keep them moving, even if it's a half a baby step. As long as you're moving forward.

Although the typical session descriptions were given for first time appointments, all coaches, like Monique, expect the student coachees to return and report back on how the strategies are being implemented toward their goals. Julie noted that is the "hope," and to support their return she schedules their return appointment at the end of the session: "So September 27th is good for you at 3:00? I'll see you at 3." Scott describes this as "circle[ing] back" to report on

progress. Table 4.1 identifies the key stages of the NCC coaching process as described by the academic coaches.

Table 4.1.

NCC Coaches' descriptions of typical coaching sessions

	Julie	Scott	Monique
Getting to know you	So first, getting to know you...so they're telling me a little bit about themselves	I'll just tell them a little bit about me and coaching...and then I ask them to introduce yourself... then get their story	We first start out with introductions, so you get to know me, know that I'm OK.
Why are you here?	How's your semester going? Where are we? How are you feeling about that?	Ok, so what brings you, you know, why are you coming to my office today?	A student might say they have a time management [issue}... Ok well let's go a little deeper...
Strengths and Weaknesses	I like to talk about their strengths... take a moment to brag on yourself... What are some things we need to work on?	I've got my little cheat sheet [assessment results] so it's already in cause a lot of them won't, especially if they're doing bad...And I stopped, I said, 'I gotta celebrate you...'	We'll talk about our assessments, so they can see... this is a need.
Strategies or Skills	So it gives me an opportunity to say, "OK, have you thought about...?"	A quick to do: here's how we're gonna do our quiz... it was truly the order in which she was doing the work...	So let's find some tools to help you...I had strategies and plans...
Setting Goals	... have a conversation about their goals for the semester...overarching goals, then we can talk about steps to get there.	We're going to be working that to do list out together, and I need them coming back	

Student coachees identified multiple elements of this process in their description of coaching sessions. Asia spoke of the small talk and questions that began her session and noted her coach's desire to set goals. She also indicated that she was working on practicing some of the time management strategies before her next meeting. Although Tom didn't think there was a pattern because "it's kind of different every time," he described his sessions in a way that indicates the pattern:

We start off with small talk, and then we get to like school stuff... Just like circling around, seeing how you've done, keep looking at what you've been doing up to this

point, seeing if things could change...I never leave a meeting not knowing what to do next...”

This pattern was observed in coaching sessions as well. Each session observed began with a time to catch up on life, what was happening outside of school, and then a question directly related to the schoolwork or strategy the student was working on. In one observation, the student coachee was asked to reflect on lessons learned about the last quiz he took. In another, there was an extended conversation with the student about managing his schedule to include time for study as he was working part time and performing in a community theater production. Additionally, the first observation included a request for the student to report back on his upcoming quiz in relation to his quiz prep. Both coach and coachee were committed to checking in on the process during a scheduled future conversation.

Coaching Skills and Academic Theories

Additional coaching skills such as active listening, effective questioning, and goal setting are covered in the program’s training manual and listed as important skills for coaches by Leonard. Each of these skills was also apparent in interviews with the study participants and in observations. Julie emphasizes the use of SMART goals with her students: “And so I said, ‘you heard of SMART goals? You know, being specific and measurable and attainable, realistic, time based.’” In her interview, Monique pointed out that when she first meets with students that she has received training and notes, “I can ask the questions” to help keep the student moving forward. Students noted the ability of their coaches to ask questions and allow the student to be heard, without judgement. Additionally, Asia and Tom both spoke of goals set with their coaches. Asia pointed out that her coach was working her to set more “specific” goals than “just getting done.”

In addition to coaching strategies, the Academic Success Coaching program builds from multiple academic theories as cited by the program administrator and within the coaching manual. The coaches application of these theories in their individual practices develops the “research-informed” and “research-based coaching strategies” referenced in the training manual and on the program’s website. Review of the training manual reveals Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs, Tinto’s Student Development Theory, Rosenburgh & McCullough’s social relations for sense of belonging, Snyder’s Hope Theory, Dweck’s Growth Mindset, and Guantlett’s Social Capital Theory as the theories important to the program’s coaching framework.

During interviews with coaches, specific theories were not often named. Monique spoke most directly of the Growth Mindset and Hope theory, but when asked about theories that guide their practice, coaches generally discuss elements of the theories as opposed to the theories themselves. Julie and Monique note that students won’t care about their homework “if they are worried about their livelihood” or not getting enough to eat or getting enough sleep, indicating the influence of Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs directs their holistic support of students. Scott practice reflects the importance of belonging as he emphasizes to students, “you belong here. You belong at SCC.” Monique works with students to develop their personal community resources of people meant to assist with specific access or individual growth, identifying the power in knowing the right people to meet academic and professional goals. Exposure to these theories in their training allows for the theories to inform their practice with students. As Leonard emphasizes, the research-informed process “gives you a better chance of landing on success.

Relationships

Central to Nalis' academic coaching program is the relationship established between the academic coach and the student coachee. While the training for academic coaches creates a foundation for the program, it is the emphasis on developing relationships that brings life and creates an impact for students. The importance of the relationships is described in print, reflected in the physical space of the program, emphasized by all study participants in their interviews, and easily observed during coaching sessions. The characteristics most directly associated with a "good coach" by the study participants at NCC most often supported strong relationships: able to build trust and rapport, non-judgmental, able to connect to the student, caring and compassionate, empathetic, good listener, and passionate or sincere in their work with students. These characteristics were identified by study participants more consistently than those of leadership, experience, and skilled in research or best practices. Table 4.2 provides a snapshot of the characteristics as identified by study participants and highlights the frequency of those characteristics.

Table 4.2.

Characteristics identified as important for an academic coach to possess.

<i>Characteristic</i>	<i>Leonard</i>	<i>Coach Julie</i>	<i>Coach Scott</i>	<i>Coach Monique</i>	<i>Coachee Asia</i>	<i>Coachee Tom</i>	<i>Coachee 3</i>	<i>Coachee 4</i>
<i>Build Trust</i>	X	X		X		X	X	
<i>Build Rapport</i>	X				X			X
<i>Research & Best Practices</i>	X			X				
<i>Flexible</i>	X							
<i>Non-Judgmental</i>	X		X			X	X	
<i>Connect/Build Relationship</i>	X		X	X	X	X	X	X
<i>Resource/Community Aware</i>	X	X		X	X	X	X	X
<i>Care & Compassion</i>		X	X		X	X		
<i>Hear Student/Empathy</i>		X	X	X		X	X	
<i>Listening Skills</i>		X	X			X		
<i>Intentional</i>			X			X		X
<i>Passionate/Sincere</i>			X		X		X	X
<i>Experience</i>				X		X		

The importance of relationships was described in the training manual within the context of clear boundaries. For example, the relationship may be therapeutic but not the purpose is not therapy, and one-on-one support for the student must be “student-defined.” In print, elements of personal relationship and support are described as “Personal one-on-one interactions” that provide “individual attention.” Additionally, the relationships are described as helping with encouragement, motivation, and confidence, emphasizing the relationship between coach and coachee as “impactful.” The relationships become impactful for the students because they are built upon care, compassion and support.

Supportive Roles

Coaches and the program director describe their role as a coach in terms that indicate a supportive relationship. They note that they are a “navigator,” an “ally,” and an “advocate” for the student. They consistently use the first person plural when discussing conversations with students: “Let’s do it!” “What can we work on together?” “We solve the me, we do it together.” “Let’s talk about...” Further, they do not speak of their role as an expert or instructor of how to

find student success; they only speak of their expertise or knowledge in terms that support the student on the student's journey. Monique noted that the "relationship and personal knowledge is more important than specific [coaching] skills," and Scott pointed out that the "process is flexible. The relationship is more important."

This partnership is an integral part of the support for the student and student coachees identified the supportive relationship with their coaches as well. Tom shared a story in which he feared he was going to be placed on academic suspension, and his coach's response was, "'We can fix it.' Immediately, he was focused on helping me out." Jalen compared his experience with a coach to his personal relationship with his grandfather and noted the shared experiences between him and his coach that helped develop their relationship. Jimmy noted that the importance of the relationship with the coach is that the coach is "someone who cares about you to learn about your uniqueness."

Though the supportive nature of the relationship is described in familial terms by the students, it is also unique to the coaching relationship precisely because of the coach's ability to support the student at the institution and with academic-specific goals. Tom noted this distinction on two occasions. First, he noted the value of his coach's advice as an expert as compared to his mother:

Just cause, my mom... She's dramatic... She'll take a situation that like at a two and she'll make it to like a ten... But Leonard, I mean he's been doing this for a very long time. Same with Scott... So I take what they say, straight up, and just do it.

Second, in his story about almost quitting school, he identified the difference between the support of his family, friends, and church, and that of his coach. His family and friends often expressed interest in how school was going, but he pointed out that "everybody is just waiting on

the results and they're not helping through the process." He recognized that the knowledge base of his friends and family didn't include the information he needed to obtain his degree, they couldn't help him. He further noted that coaches are there for the process: "They're there for the process, you know. The good, the bad, good grades, the bad grades... They don't freak out at you or give up on you."

The importance of caring

It is the care and compassion identified as an important coaching characteristic that drives the relationship between the coach and the student coachee. It also how the relationship can be "therapeutic but not therapy," and is integral in developing trust with the student. Scott notes that the first thing coaches must do is "forge that relationship" that shows "care for the students," and that means caring enough to hear the student and see the student as an individual. Leonard echoes this sentiment when he describes the relationship that allows the student to feel supported: "I trust that you hear my voice. You hear my values, you hear my struggle, and you respond to me as an individual, not as a person who is seeking a degree." Care and compassion are supported by coaches in their desire to "suspend judgement" and practice empathy. It is the coach's "passion" to provide support "regardless of situation, or decision, or goal." Scott notes he develops empathy through intentional listening to "shut down preconceived bias" and "learn the student." Julie notes her desire to provide space for the student: "I want to be here with you. Come on... I got time." This sentiment is echoed by Monique as she notes students "honestly know I'm there for them." She tells them, "I'll sit with you until you feel comfortable."

Student Coachees noted the care they felt and its ability to develop trust in the coach, even if as Tom pointed out it may take multiple meetings. Asia described her first impressions of her coach as "very warm, nice, patient, calm." She noted that these qualities made her want to

meet with her coach again, and that she felt like she “could talk to the coach at any time.” Tom’s described the care as “mak[ing] you feel like you don’t have to run away” noting the “lack of judgement of situation.” Jalen noted the meetings provided a “safe space,” while Jimmy felt that the coaches “actually care about your success.”

The strength of the relationship between coach and coachee was also evidenced in the observed coaching sessions. Each session observed included students who had participated in multiple coaching sessions and had well-established relationship with their coaches. The coaches were very comfortable walking through conversations about the students’ lives, personal needs, and skill development in a relaxed, familial way. It was easy to get lost in the conversation. There were wasn’t a distinguishable pattern or focus as the conversation unfolded, yet aspects of school, life, and next steps were all covered. Interestingly, the two sessions were unique to the relationships. In the first. Intentional listening on the part of the coach was apparent. The coach’s gaze rarely left the student, and he never interrupted the student’s speech. In the slower moments, the student pushed the conversation by noting personal reflections on his academic process. This didn’t feel intense as one might expect. Instead, it felt comforting. The coach cared to hear the student. As the session progressed, the personal references of previous conversations and student’s life were more prevalent. And during moments when the student expressed vulnerability or difficulty with a course, the coach was quick to celebrate previous successes and identify his personal awareness of faculty and personal experiences in difficult courses.

In the second session, the coach and coachee shared French fries during their conversation. The care the student experienced from the coach was reflected back to the coach as the student stepped out of the room to get his coach a bottle of water. The conversation was much more circular than the first observation with themes and topics being repeated between the

two until a final conclusion on the topic was established and the next topic introduced. The coach celebrated the student's multiple successes during his time at Nalis when he expressed nervousness about moving to his next school. She noted, "You're not the same person you were." It was difficult to remain an observer in these sessions as the conversation was inviting, easy, and comfortable. I learned much about the students' personal relationships and daily activities outside of their role as a student, and my emotions were lifted as I viewed each session.

Trust and sincerity

The focus on the relationship by the coaches is central to the practice as it develops trust. Scott succinctly expressed why the relationship is so important within the program: "build relationship to build trust to affect change." In order to build that trust, coaches begin with caring and compassionate responses to students, providing "support regardless of situation or decision or goal." Leonard recognizes the value of this care: "It opens the door," and let's the students know "we're happy you're here." To support the student's trust of the relationship, coaches focus on remaining transparent and sincere with their coachees. Transparency in the realities of the student's situation, institutional requirements, and sincerity in the coach's desire to support through those realities allows for the student to gain trust. Leonard describes the approach a coach takes when a student considers choosing a path he may not necessarily recommend:

Basically, if they make a decision that we don't support individually, we ask them questions to say, "Let's think. About the consequences. Are you prepared for these?"

And our job at that point is to identify consequences and say, "we just want to make sure that you understand this is how it's likely to unfold. Let's do the best with what your decisions are. Let us support you to have the best experience" ... Understanding I do

work for the institution, so I am going to tell you how that's going to affect your institutional journey, right? But At the end of the day, you have to be in charge of you. Being transparent and working with sincerity in support of the student is evident in the coaches' approach to their students. Julie said, "this is not just my job, this is what I *get* to do. This is what I get to do every day." Scott describes it as "seeing the student succeed is a passion... they have to feel and know that you are there." They recognize that trust and sincerity allow them to have "these difficult conversations" and "navigate the ugly" with their students. Julie emphasizes with her students that "everything is figure-out-able" and Monique is going to have "a real conversation, to get to the root of the problem" and she's going to "sit with you until you feel comfortable."

Students recognize the sincerity of their coaches and express trust in the relationship and the authenticity of the coach's desire to help. Asia described her coach as authentic and genuine which "established trust" in the relationship and the desire to meet again. Tom said the approach of his coach in difficult conversations "makes you feel like you don't have to run away," recognizing that "support even if you put yourself in the situation." Jimmy compared the experience to his experience at a former school:

I guess it comes down to this, like people actually care about your success, not just about, you know, you getting these time in this in the library or you know whatever it is. They care about actually like how you're doing. Like that's how I feel here when people ask me, "Hey, How are you doing? Are you doing good? When's your test? When are these things?" I feel like people will actually care about me.

While difficult conversations were not observed within the coaching sessions observed for this study, the authenticity and trust established in the relationships was apparent. Students

were comfortable discussing finances, personal relationships, and next steps, even with an observer in the room. They trusted the coach's interest in their answer and were able to bring up subjects they wished to cover as well. Jalen readily expressed his concerns with his ability to maintain his "edge" as he moved to a new state and had to resituate himself within a community and at school. When his coach reminded him of all he accomplished and how he possessed the skills to pick it back up, he believed her and began projecting positively on his future.

Student Autonomy

Program structure and training support Nalis' academic success coaches as they focused on developing relationships based on trust and authenticity, recognizing that the trust established in the relationship allowed the student to take ownership in their personal development. The coaching program supports the student regardless of student's goal or level of success in meeting that goal as ultimately the program desires student autonomy in their personal development. Program administrator Leonard noted the importance of student agency when meeting with students. He indicated: "you have to be in charge of you... we need to land where you are willing to land where you are willing to make a commitment." This desire to put the student in charge of their decisions and goals was evident in his recommendations to students when referring them to additional campus or community services. He indicated that coaches make recommendations, not requirements. "We try to help them create that sense of ownership and their own journey. I don't want to invite someone into the space our trusted space without them feeling like they're in charge of that decision." The training manual supported the desire for student autonomy as well. It described the coach's role as "facilitating vs directing" and emphasizes that the coaching sessions are "based on student needs."

As stated previously, academic theories and coaching strategies did inform the coaching program and individual coaching practices; however, the individual student and individual student meeting supersedes any specific strategies for coaching. Leonard noted that flexibility and care are more important, and the coaching strategies and formulaic process must not become a “checkbox approach.” This approach to coaching is reflected in the descriptions of the coaching process given by academic coaches. When asked if he knew the direction a coaching session would go before a student walked in the door, Scott responded, “No. I don’t know.” He emphasized that he wanted the student to know, “you run the coaching session.” Leonard described the importance of being able to change the focus of their approach based on the student coachee and his or her needs as expressed in a specific moment as the need to “be flexible with shifting situations.” While coaches did indicate the value of the assessment tools to prepare for a student meeting, they also noted the necessity of the student identifying the direction of the session so they that they maintain ownership of the process. Scott emphasized this when describing his approach to walking students through decisions:

It goes back to that on taking ownership right of their learning of taking agency or ownership of your education. This is you. We say all the time, you're investing in yourself. This is your journey. That's not my journey. Yeah, that's your journey. And let me be there to walk along with you in this journey.

Monique described the approach to a coaching session as “not a cookie-cutter process” and noted coaches don’t have a straight or easy answer about their process because it is always student focused: “I just assess what the student has to say... So I give them the room so they can speak their own voice.” Julie further developed this idea:

So I'm not trying to... In fact, I tell them, "You know, our approach is not a one-size-fits-all, it's not a 'There you go. You know the ingredients. Bake. Do this.' Everybody's different. We all come to the table with different not just circumstances, but different gifts and different, you know, different, valuable things that you can contribute." So you know it is kind of talking through and walking them through.

Student Transformation

While the relationship was foundational to student autonomy the introduction of small changes and specific skills to the student's daily process were what lead to student transformation. Descriptors of academic coaching in print and online publications focused on the skills students can develop and how those skills will impact their academic and personal goals. In fact, in publications, skill development was a prominent focus, indicating that mastery of these skills will increase academic success. Published student testimonials spoke to the skills students developed, for example: "My coach helped me identify specific academic strategies, time management, confidence, budgeting my time, and working through testing preparation"; and "I left more organized and focused." Additionally, the program's website and advertisements heavily market to academic skill development "to ensure success." Specifically, it stated that students will gain skills for to support more efficiency when studying and reviewing course materials, to support their exam performance and manage test-taking anxiety. It further noted that academic coaches will help with goal setting, time management, and creating a plan for success.

Additionally, the introductory description on the program's website seemed to speak to the importance learning academic and personal skills for performance-based definitions of success specifically noting challenges and barriers. However, in the program's training manual

and in descriptions provided by the administrator and academic coaches, institutional goals were secondary to the student and his or her development and need. Skills were listed as tools coaches and students can access; they were not the purpose of the meeting. Further, institutional goals of retention and completion were not a focus of the meetings. Coaches operated within the context of assumed retention and completion goals of the student, but they did not specifically mention these as goals for their coaching sessions.

While print and online publications emphasized skill development for performance goals, they also noted the importance of developing skills for personal development or transformation. It was this transformation that is ultimately desired for the student. As Leonard described it: “transform their thinking, transform their situation.” Transformation through small daily practices was also in the language of publications. It was connected to leadership skills and managing life balance, and it is promoted through student testimonials:

My Academic Coach helped me figure out my strengths and weaknesses, and she provided me with resources to improve in specific areas that I could identify and focus on. Coaching helped me see where I needed to work but also know where I have grown. The coaching manual was also less skill-focused. Instead, it emphasized student development, learning, and potential supports for that development. It was the short-term emphasis on habit formation that leads to long-term personal transformation. Jaylen noted the ability to be transformed through coaching, stating that participation expanded his knowledge and his awareness, and as a result he has added a minor to his academic plan. He marveled at how coaching “can change a person’s life” even in “just one conversation.”

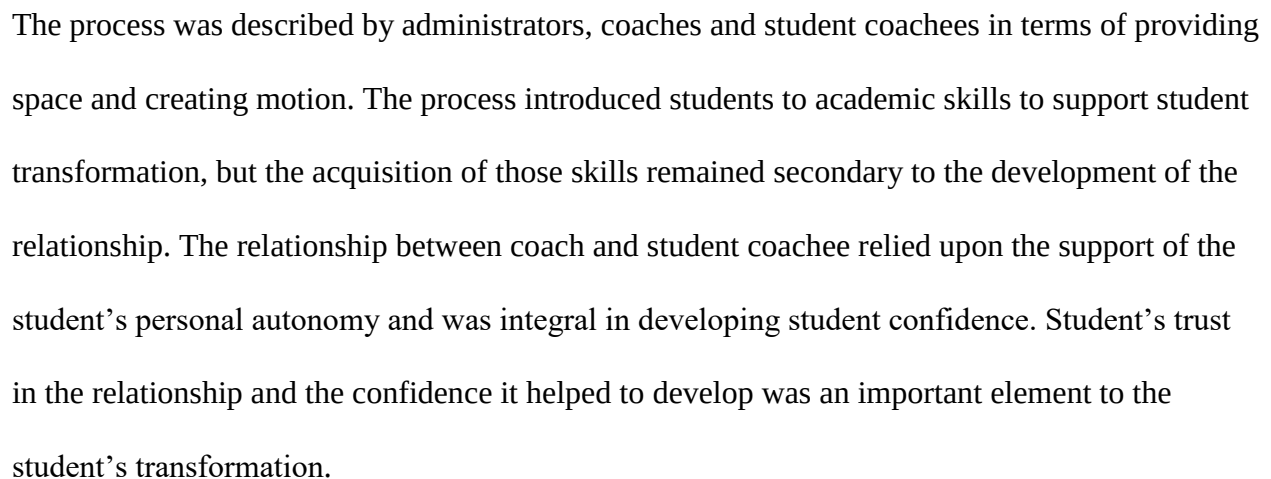
The desire to develop skills toward personal transformation could be seen in how the coaches spoke of motion for the student. Julie talked about “talking through and walking

through” with students. Scott and Monique continued to return to the idea of “moving forward.” Coaches continually wanted to support students as they took the next step, and often the goal of a meeting might be as simple as a task or a to-do to find that forward motion. Moreover, this next step may not have been persistence or completion, but instead could be a “graceful exit strategy.” Further, personal development could best be seen in the desire for student autonomy and student agency. Monique spoke of the student’s “why” as their motivation, school as an “investment” in self. The coach’s role was then as the navigator, facilitator, connector to the student-defined result and is often in the space of removing barriers to that result.

Visual Representation of Nalis Community College’s Academic Coaching Model

Figure 4.1 is a visible rendering of the Nalis Community College’s Academic Coaching Program as understood through the interplay between the themes identified in this case study report. The program’s emphasis on developing a relationship was central to the program’s approach to academic coaching. The training provided to the academic coaches supported their knowledge of coaching skills, student development, and institutional and community resources so the coach was prepared to follow a process that “go[es] with the flow, but there are key points.

Visual representation of the NCC academic coaching program highlighting the relationships between key themes of this case study.



Staugh Community College (SCC) is a very large community college located in a south-central state. Their fall headcount is 35,600 with an FTE of 18,784. Located in a major metropolis service area, SCC maintain 11 campuses and provides online instruction. Additionally, SCC partners with local school districts to provide early college high schools that

serve over 2,000 students. General education courses are offered on nearly each campus, but the individual campuses are often home to specific programs and areas of study. A Hispanic Serving Institution, SCC's student demographics are also include a 75% part-time status, an average age of 24, approximately 10% of student enrollments generated by developmental courses, and 23% of students receiving Federal Pell Grant support.

Staugh's academic coaching program is one of ten departments within the college's Student Engagement and Academic Success Division, in Student Affairs. Academic coaches are not the only coaches at SCC. Additionally, the institution provides Transformation Coaches for neurodiverse students and adult education students with an emphasis on students returning to the workforce after incarceration. Success Coaches are also provided to students through Advisement to assist with persistence, retention, completion, and transfer. Academic coaching employs ten full-time coaches, including the program director. Coaches hold office hours on eight of the college's eleven campuses and are also available to meet with students online. Coaches are not assigned a cohort of students, but many are embedded into courses based upon faculty requests which provides a small cohort for targeted communications. Additionally, SCC's academic coaches provide outreach to student populations through a published workshop series and participate in institutional outreach and recruitment events within the communities SCC serves.

For the purpose of this study, I visited two academic coaching offices on two separate campuses. The Northpark campus is in the central part of the city, and the Burlington campus is located in a suburb of the city. The Northpark campus is centrally located in a renovated commercial building. Former retail space has been transformed into an enclosed campus with a focused curriculum in transferable general education courses and the creative arts. The two-story

building is actually three buildings connected by broad hallways, lined with student art and photography. Banners and posters are hung advertising support services and student organizations. White boards are strategically placed throughout the campus and list questions for student input: “What should SCC bring to Northpark? What student organization do you want to participate in? What have you learned at SCC,” etc. Students treat the whiteboards like a social media feed, drawing arrows from one response to share their support of, or opposing of another’s opinion. Doodles are mixed in with requests for faith-based groups and recreation programs.

The second campus visited was located in a suburb on the northern edge of the city. Recently renovated, the Burlington campus looks like a small, but traditional college campus. Red brick buildings were arranged in a cluster with landscaped grounds including small walking paths, a bricked courtyard, and a small outdoor meeting space under a canopy. Like the Northpark campus, students at Burlington can take general education transfer courses. Burlington focuses, however, on career technical and health science courses. This campus is quiet, missing the hum of the city and the commercial campus, and students observed on campus could be described as the “traditional” college student demographic.

At each location, I interviewed a student and an academic coach. While at the Northpark campus, I also observed a program staff meeting held via Zoom with coaches participating from multiple campus and home locations. Coaching sessions were observed in person at the Burlington campus and virtually. Both virtual sessions were hosted by coaches at the Burlington campus.

Participants

Participants in this study include the program administrator, three academic coaches, and six student coachees. Additional context was provided by academic coaches in informal

conversations within the academic coaching space and during a coaching staff meeting. These conversations provided additional perspectives to the details of my initial observations within the site notebook.

The Academic Coaching program's direct administrator Sara was relatively new to her position. Organized and detail-focused, she serves her coaching team and the institution by focusing on developing clear processes and ensuring quality. She had a clear understanding of program objectives and worked to expand understanding of academic coaching at the institution with faculty, support staff, and students. She encouraged campus involvement and ensured the program is represented at multiple college recruitment events within the community. Easy to talk to, Sara switched between subjects on the meeting agenda and in the interview with comfort. With a background in counseling and academic advisement, her communication skills and holistic perspective of the student experience created the supportive structure of the program while maintaining clear professional boundaries between coaching and other support measures.

Three academic coaches participated in this study. All of the coaches have pursued post-graduate degrees, and all three have an educational background in the social sciences and education. When previous or professional experiences in counseling and social services were discussed, the coaches were very clear in their distinction between those roles and academic coaching. Maintaining the professional boundaries of coaching was very important to each of them.

Ashley was motivated and moved quickly through conversations. She had matter-of-fact approach and supported her recommendations with references to research and personal experiences. Her experience directed her approach as she was consistently connecting details provided by the student coachee to the next guided question, recommended approach, or

discussion of resources. Though she was thinking quickly, she practiced checking in with the student and showed patience and kindness as she slowed herself down to better explain or help the coachee.

Claire was patient and kind. She approached conversations with an open warmth that responded to the person in the room with her. She was not soft spoken, but her approach was gentle. Her previous professional experience taught her the value of meeting students where they are, and she expressed the desire to ensure they felt heard and supported in their efforts. Professional boundaries were important to her, and she reiterated those boundaries multiple times in her conversations with me. With her warm approach to students, the need to maintain those boundaries was likely important as it would be easy for student coachees to feel comfortable enough to discuss areas of mental health and their personal lives with her.

Tori's approach was youthful. Still developing her personal coaching practice, she relied upon her resources to support the coaching session. She was upbeat and enthusiastic about supporting students. She paid attention to details like correctly pronouncing a student's name in conversation, and had a habit of pausing in conversations to ensure the student understood information and how to use resources. She was still learning how to support students in her role as an academic coach and was still developing personal confidence in that role, but she expressed sincere desire to help students as they navigate coursework and their college experience.

Six student coachees participated in this study: Brayla, Sidney, Aislinn, Omar, Rayshana, and Richard. Only one of the six students, Brayla, was a full-time student, and Omar was the only student who had met with a coach more than one time. Students were pursuing various degrees including emphasis in psychology, history, nursing, and education. Although five of the six students had only met with their coach once at the time of this study, three of them indicated

plans to return for a future session. Students visited academic coaching for a variety of reasons including time management, understanding course expectations, test-preparation, study skills, as well as personal support.

Access and Atmosphere in the Learning Hubs

The two academic coaching locations visited shared specific characteristics of the academic coaching program while assuming the unique characteristics and feel of their individual campuses. The bustle of the city life and working students was apparent in the Northpark campus, while the more traditional, slower pace of an affluent suburb and college campus was felt at Burlington. Both locations hosted their Academic Coaching programs in large, student-focused learning hubs. The large hubs were set-up nearly identically at each location.

In both learning hubs and situated immediately inside the front door of the learning hubs, were welcome desks manned by student employees who welcomed visitors, assisted with reserving computers and study spaces, scheduled appointments with student services, or located a scheduled session. Within each hub, over 600 computer station were grouped together in color-coded zones, organized to allow for individual use of the provided desktops, study group space, tutoring services, or a variety of classes. Lining the walls and positioned in between various computer zones, posters and signs advertised course schedules, tutoring sessions, support services available to students, as well as academic resources to help with note-taking, studying for math exams, and reading a textbook. Around the edges of the learning hubs, quiet study rooms could be reserved and multiple student support and student affairs departments such as Academic Advising, Career Counseling, Testing Services, and Academic Coaching had office space for meeting with students.

At the Northpark campus, a large retail store had been converted into the interactive learning hub. This hub was situated without exterior windows resulting in a dark, industrial atmosphere. The darker atmosphere was countered with bright lights, white computer tables, fancy desk chairs, and new desktop computers. The office space for academic coaching in this hub felt temporary within the learning hub. Set-up with small wall-portions and grouped together on an outside edge, the space provided limited privacy; however, the consistent hum of activity within the learning center allowed for conversations to be shared by students without much concern of others listening in. The academic coaching program had access to a more private office space with workspaces for academic coaches and other support personnel built in the former dressing room of the retail space, but it was not open for student traffic.

In Burlington, the Academic Coaching offices were located in the back corner of the learning hub on the first floor of a long rectangular building. The hub stretched the length of building, with large floor-to-ceiling windows and exposed duct work. The space was modern, clean, and bright. Academic coaching offices were located near tutoring services and in a partitioned office space along the back wall of the learning hub. Similar to the Northpark campus, the coaching space offered limited privacy for meeting with students. There were four desks, placed along the outside corners of the space. In the center, was a collection of large filing cabinets with student resources and schedulers stacked neatly on top. The desks were new and clean, and furniture accents were turquoise in color, continuing to add brightness to the space. While the Burlington academic coaching offices were considered the home base, it was not a bustling office space. Most of the coaches worked at alternate locations and all coaches had remote shifts that could be covered from home.

Neither academic coaching office visited saw many students for walk-in support, but the coaches remained busy with student outreach and a staff meeting during the day. The days began very quiet in the learning hubs, but by lunch, students were congregating around computer pods, participating in an algebra class and psychology class, and the tutoring tables were full. The bustle that developed in the learning hubs was a contrast from the quieter corner of the coaching offices. Many coaching sessions were held remotely, and multiple coaches noted that was often preferable to students as they were often too busy to make a stop at campus. While the learning hubs were designed to provide easy access for students, and students did come to the hubs for courses and other meetings, the hubs did not seem to drive walk-in traffic to academic coaching. The meetings were often a result of targeted communications to students. Only one student participant noted that she attended a coaching session as a walk-in. All others attended sessions as a result of course requirement, coach reach-out, or referral. Designed to provide access to multiple student and academic support programs and other students, the learning hubs impacted the academic coaching program's approach and identity.

Program Approach to Coaching

According to Sara, SCC's academic coaching program has two mottos: "Study smarter, not harder" and "Better grades, less stress." These mottos encapsulated the program's approach to student support and service. To support a student's ability to study smarter and with less stress, the program emphasized the development of study skills, and most often, time management. Additionally, the program's approach to the coaching sessions was semi-structured and efficient, working to provide needed information and support to the student without adding more to the student's to-do lists. This approach operates as a customer-service approach that

supports individual student needs as they are needed by the student, and takes on the feel of a medical-intake.

On the program's website, the customer-service approach is marketed through its emphasis on the student's experience with academic coaching and academic coaching's ability to assist the student with his or her to complete coursework and study more quickly and with greater results. The first page of the program's website highlighted the positive experiences of students with quotes from students that describe how the student improved their learning process and skills, echoing the mottos. It also featured statistics that illustrate students' reports of improved performance, college experience, academic skills, and awareness of campus resources. Additional pages highlight the study skills and resources academic coaching provide to students, the academic coaches and their coaching philosophies, and frequently asked questions about academic coaching as a service. Service to the student-customer was supported by the management and organization of the overall set-up of the website. Each page ensures access and quick responses to common student questions and provides the customer-service staples of contact hours, contact methods, and online scheduling, continuously promoting the service model of the coaching program.

Underlying and supporting this approach is the leadership provided by Sara. Sara noted that when she began, "there was no direction to this position." In order to provide more consistency of service to students, she wished to move away from "here's the best practices of coaching, let's all put it in there, let's all get trained on it and then everyone kind of just choose their own [approach]." Most recently, she has named a goal of identifying one to two coaching models for the program to train on and apply to their session with the goal of providing consistency for students.

Additionally, Sara has focused her efforts on developing processes for training, reviewing student feedback, and providing case studies for the team during program meetings to discuss and identify a shared approach to coaching. The shared approach improves conversations and training efforts in support of the student, regardless of student need. Coaches received training to ensure knowledge and awareness of the other resources on campus and in the community as a way to be available to a student regardless of the student's need. Coaches Claire and Ashley referenced the value in their program meetings' ability to identify a best practice or approach for working with students and referring students to additional campus resources as an important part of their approach. The emphasis on training and shared processes supports the program's customer-service approach allowing students to gain access to needed supports.

Areas of focus

The role of the academic coach is understood as within the scope of eight areas as listed in the training manual: academics, school community, graduation, career, commitments, effectiveness, finances, and health. Additionally, the manual connected each of these areas to support skills and personal perspectives that the academic coach helps the student coachee to develop. These eight areas have been identified to define the boundaries of academic coaching in relation to other support services. In some of the areas where academic coaching may overlap with the other support services such as advisement in the area of graduation, or counseling services in the area of health, the academic coach's role is to help the student develop an understanding of the other support service's role and connect them to the appropriate resource as opposed to help students complete a task. Further, the development of the student's personal perspective on many of these skills and focus areas was apparent in the coaches' approach to the

coaching session. Coaches filled their sessions with explanations of why a practice or resource was valid as much as it discussed the how-to of a specific skill.

Table 4.3.

Eight focus areas of academic coaching at SCC and corresponding skills or perspectives to be supported within each area.

<i>Focus Areas</i>	Academic & Personal Skills	Personal Perspectives
<i>Academics</i>	Study skills, academic habits, use of resources	
<i>School</i>		Identification and development of student's sense of belonging to SCC
<i>Community</i>	Action steps	Value of education to future plans, motivation
<i>Graduation</i>		
<i>Career</i>	Personal skills and strengths assessments, resume building, job-search plan, interview skills	Connection between education and career goals
<i>Commitments</i>	Time management, task prioritization, creating balance	
<i>Effectiveness</i>	Planning, organization, communication, follow-through	Value in long-term goals and developing confidence
<i>Finances</i>		Identification of financial concerns
<i>Health</i>	Sleep, Nutrition, and Exercise skills	Value in personal support

Skills-based approach

An important aspect of the program approach to coaching is providing instruction on academic and personal skills to assist students within the eight areas of focus. Ashley described coaching as “a tutor in study habits and study skills.” Tori noted that she isn’t comfortable with the advanced math class content, but that isn’t a barrier because she focuses on the “skills that can be applied to the course.” When meeting with students, academic coaches focused on academic skills such as time management, organization, how to use the study cycle, reading skills, and study skills. Additionally, in interviews all participants noted at least one specific skill and multiple skills were referenced multiple times. Table 4.4 identifies the academic skills highlighted in the academic coaching program as identified by the case study participants.

Table 4.4.

Academic and individual skills developed through academic coaching as named by student coachees.

	Sara	Claire	Ashley	Aislinn	Brayla	Omar
Time Management	X		X			X
Organization	X					
Test taking			X			X
Group study	X					
Organization			X			
Academic skills	X	X		X	X	
Study cycle			X			
Reading				X		
Goal setting						X
Growth Mindset		X		X		
Study Plans/Habits	X				X	X

Action steps

Woven into the coaching sessions, were explanations of the study skills and suggested action steps for the students to take. Sara described the action plan she creates with students as mapping backwards for a roadmap to complete. The focus of the roadmap fits the student and their reality and is based on action steps to practice the academic skills. At the end of a session, Claire often asks her student coachee, “What's one to two things you'd like to try out?” Ashley will also ask her coachee, “What can you do within the next week that's going to help you be more successful?” “What are you going to do tomorrow?” Or, “What are you going to do next week to help you get better grades or manage your time more effectively or better prepare for your tests?” During observed sessions, coaches often asked questions like “Do you think you can try that?” “When can you block time to complete...?” Claire noted the desire to try one of the steps as an important aspect of the program because ultimately “it’s progress, not perfection.” Student coaches identified the presence of a step to take as well. Aislinn described them as “steps to do... like a task.” Brayla noted she ended her session with the advice of her coach to “try this” and “come back if you have questions.

Diagnose and Treat

While SCC's academic coaching program is designed to support students "app to cap" and works to differentiate itself from the transactional nature of other support services such as advisement, the program's diagnostic model that focuses on skill development and action steps does not foster long-term transformational goals and follow-up for students. Similar to a medical intake, observed academic coaching sessions focused on diagnosing student issues, concerns, or barriers and providing immediate recommendations or treatments for improving their student success opportunities. Coaches were adept at processing information provided to them by the students and asking follow-up questions to help students articulate their needs. Ashley's description of how the purpose of a meeting often unfolds:

Well, I think when I first meet a student, 'cause the ones that are familiar with what coaching does, I think it's very student driven. The ones that aren't, I feel like I am prompting some of the things. I'm very upfront like, "Hey, here's all the things that I can help you with. Let me ask you a few more questions." Then I usually say, "Hey, I'm really hearing that time management might be something that we can discuss further. Is that okay with you?" Some of them are like, "No, I want to talk about this." I'm like, "Okay, perfect. Let's talk about that."

Her descriptions of a working with a student who "doesn't know why" they are at the coaching session can be similar: "I'm like, 'Oh, can I ask you some more questions to figure that out?'"

In the observations, coaches drove the conversation by asking questions. The questions were rapid-fire, one right after the other, but the coaches remained attentive to the student and the student's answers. They often directed their gaze directly into the camera when meeting with a student remotely, and they maintained an open posture of listening while meeting in person,

but the speed of the questions indicated a knowledge of common student barriers, or experience in asking questions to gain specific information, much like a doctor looking for the cause of a patient's symptoms.

Sara noted the importance of academic coach's ability to practice "intentional listening and active listening and probing questions at a pace that comfortable for a student." To this end, students were able to answer the questions of the coaches with more specific information about their study habits, their time commitments, and struggles when studying. While the questions dominated the first portion of the session, student coachees were engaged and willing to continue the investigative process, and as a result, coaches could be seen connecting the dots of the student-described symptoms to identify the need of the student. At the session continued, coaches would pull up a resource or slightly pause and note, "just a few more questions" before presenting multiple resources and options for the students. In one instance, I observed how the questioning process allowed the student to realize her own errors in test preparation. After that realization, she began to ask more questions about how to remedy her process. The pace of the questions was purposeful, and students remained engaged in the process, looking for the expert opinion on how to improve. Aislinn could see how the coaches knew that "everyone learns in their own way, so be able to tailor to that specific person" was a skill of the coach.

The next portion of the observed sessions included the expert recommendations of the academic coaches for students to improve their academic processes and performance. Coaches recommendations remained within the boundaries of academic skill development and focused largely on time management and the study cycle. Additionally, the recommendations were often supported by explanations of how and why the recommended process or action step would assist the student. Phrases like, "studies show" and "students often" peppered the explanations and

emphasized their expertise on the subject of student learning and academic skills. Tori shared her knowledge of a student's instructor and his approach to teaching and evaluating in his online course. The expertise of the coaches and their comfort in prescribing the next steps for the students to try supported the students' willingness to apply their recommendations. Aislinn noted "After that coaching session, I'm like: "Okay, this is what they should be doing... so it gave me a clearer picture of what I should expect from a professor."

The diagnosis-treatment pattern of the coaching session could also be seen in the students' expectations for returning to a second coaching session. Most participants in this study had only attended one coaching session, and though all were actively engaged and saw the benefit of the session, the prevailing feeling was that coaching is a needs-based service. Brayla noted that she will come back if she begins to "fall on her path" again, and that one of the true benefits of the meeting was the "knowledge" of the support available to her. She would know where to go in a crisis. Aislinn echoed this sentiment. She learned about coaching, and gained an appreciation of the service through the appointment. She said, "I hope they know that... they're so helpful." One student interviewed indicated he meets regularly with his academic coach to continue developing and practicing his time management skills. Coaches do have regulars who return for meetings. Ashley noted that she has more this year than in previous years, and Ana described taking a picture with an award one of her regulars recently received; however, the expectation for a student to attend a second or third meeting was not emphasized in observed sessions. Coaches encouraged action steps, asked if the student thought they could try the new skill or process, and ended the meeting with an open invitation to report back or make an appointment if the student wanted or found they had more questions.

Boundaries

During the course of my visit, through interviews and observations, the importance of boundaries became apparent. Coaches were clear in their descriptions of what their program could do in a coaching session and what was not to be done. These boundaries were in relation to their previous professional experiences, interpersonal relationships with their student coaches, and the scope of their service in relation to other student support services including those that offered coaching. Sara referenced the importance of the coaches' training and program manual in helping to maintain boundaries by noting, "This is our scope of learning support...by academic we can help in anything that relates to learner support." She further requires new hires to participate in the "Academic Guidance Specialists" training provided by the institution, so coaches can see the distinction between their role and the role of other guidance specialists including advisors, success coaches, and transformation coaches:

But I think it's important to understand what everyone's role is and who can do what. So that to me, that's a very... by being part of that sets a clear expectation of these are all the different roles at ACC that fall within academic guidance.

A common boundary expressed by coaches and the program administrator was in relation to what they have received previous training to do and their current position. Sara, Ashley, Claire, and Tori all indicated their previous work experience or professional trainings as having an impact on their current role as an academic coach. In discussing their personal approach in relation to previous experiences and training, they emphasized the boundary in terms of licensure and ability to practice. Academic coaches with training in social services and counseling were very quick to point out they were not utilizing professional certifications or licensure in their work and that their focus remained within the scope of academic support. When discussing how

her previous experience influences her approach to student coaching meetings, Ashley emphasized that there is a clear line she maintains and quickly pointed out “I’m not certified.” Claire echoed this sentiment stating, “I see my role as connecting them to resources. I don’t provide it. I’m not a counselor.”

Academic coaches discussed their boundaries in regards to other support services as well. Ashley noted “We’re a resource connector. We may not be the person who can answer that question, but we can find someone who can.” Claire noted, “I want them to know that this is how I can support you and who else, who are professionals, who are trained that we can connect you with when you’re ready to.” Ashley also pointed out that other coaches on campus work to maintain boundaries as well describing how with their access to student information, Student Success Coaches see the struggles of a student and then refers them to an academic coach for the strategy to address the struggle. Sara explained how she works within the boundaries as well: “When we talk about the boundaries of advising, we are not advisors, but students will come in and not understand. So sometimes those questions present... Let’s write that question down. Remember, that’s not my role.”

As maintaining boundaries in the role and scope of academic coaching in relation to other support services, maintaining boundaries within the professional relationship between the academic coach and student coachee was also important. Sara said that she wants students to know that “they have a person, which comes with boundaries,” and it is important for coaches to maintain those boundaries when a student directs the conversation into personal counseling-type sessions. Claire noted the importance of boundaries as well. She emphasized her desire to provide a space for students to share and be “vulnerable,” but she stopped short of identifying a relationship with the student as a necessary ingredient. Professional boundaries were important

to her, and she was transparent with her students about those boundaries. She indicated that what is most important is the ability to develop rapport, “rapport is key.” Ashley noted a student who was currently “going through a lot,” but that she “couched everything in terms of ‘your time management.’” Students noted the ability of the coaches to build rapport and maintain their professional boundaries. Aislinn said, “She just gave this really calm presence and she just leveled with me... I left there feeling very... I don't know, I felt a lot better.” Brayla described the coaching approach as one that “reinforces student as an individual, not the process, not the skill, not the end result - the student and the student need.” These perspectives emphasized the student’s emotional connection to the process, but did cross into personal relationships.

Coaching at SCC

As previously mentioned, the SCC Academic Coaching program is one of ten Student Engagement and Academic Success Division programs, and one of three coaching programs within that Division. The institution itself values the practice of coaching. It has coaching programs not only for its students, but also its employees. The college has developed its own coaching certification process, built from the InsideTrack model, known as the FADS model = Frame, Assess, Discuss, Summarize. SCC’s certification process is only open to employees after two years of service and includes coursework on coaching theories, an assigned mentor, and a quality assurance review prior to certification. Academic coaches are not required to complete the institutional coaching certification process, though Ashley is currently a mentor of the coaching certification program, two others are currently enrolled in the training, and one has plans to enroll in the future. Sara indicated that she intends to continue encouraging participation in the program as coaches become eligible and scheduling permits. SCC’s commitment to coaching practices has influenced the Academic Coaching program positively and negatively. It

has provided a framework to for training for academic coaches, but it has also created difficulty in maintaining program identity on campus.

Training

While not a part of a new coach's onboarding process, the institutional coaching certification program is mirrored in the training provided to new academic coaches. Academic Coaching has established a two-week onboarding process that includes a multi-module training program (complete with quizzes), partnering with a mentor-coach, role-playing, and observations of coaching sessions. Additionally, new academic coaching hires are asked to complete the Academic Guidance Specialist training provided for student services employees under student affairs. To provide ongoing support of coaching practices, Sara provides case studies for review with the coaches during semi-annual retreats, reviews departmental processes, and opens the floor for coaching discussions during department meetings. Further, Sara was focused on updating the program's training manual. Though still in development, the manual reviewed focused significantly in clarifying roles of academic coaches at the institution, the eight areas of the coaching program, coaching best practices, and academic skills.

Sara noted in her interview that there is "not one theory that we're training everybody on," and this is evidenced in the scope of exposure she provides to her coaches through multiple training opportunities. A well-rounded knowledge base of learning theory and institutional roles and resources are important to the program. The training manual states: "Coaches benefit from understanding learning theories to encourage students to become skilled life-long learners," and exposes coaches to a multiple, cited theories within the manual, both in general and connected to recommended study skill strategies. Both Claire and Ashley indicated they were continually researching on their own, reading best practices and searching other institutional websites for

resources. During one observation, I noted the number of times the coach said, “research shows...” when explaining why a student might want to try the strategies she was discussing. Concepts of the GROW coaching framework were identified by Sara, and both Ashley and Claire referenced the Growth Mindset theory as influencing their work.

The FADS approach to coaching sessions was a part of the training manual, and was clearly referenced by Sara and Ashley. The FADS approach was also evident in observed coaching sessions with new student coachees. Coaches began their sessions with a brief statement of who they are and how they can help; they engage in conversation that is filled with intentional questions meant to diagnose student need; they review academic strategies and resources that are available, often providing tangible tools for students to apply, and then end the session with a review of what they went over and suggested next steps.

Previous Work Experience

Although the influence and support of coaching as a practice at SCC heavily influenced the training received by academic coaches, what seemed to be the most impactful to the program’s coaches was not necessarily the training received but instead their previous professional experience. Claire and Ashley referenced previous work experience in social work, public schools, and counseling. Additionally, the professional experience of other academic coaches was evident as well. Claire pointed out this impact, and Ashley spoke of the Academic Coaching team’s regular review of survey results to adjust approaches with students. The team approach was identified in the training manual in a section titled, “Leveraging your Team” and it was evident in the department meeting that was observed as well. During this meeting, a coach requested advice from the team regarding a student with accommodations who was obviously unaware of the services available to her. The coach was looking for recommendations on how to

best support and advocate for the student within the boundaries of the academic coaching relationship. Team members made recommendations for state-level services the student could look into, and recommended helping the student create a list of questions to take with her when she next meets with disability services.

Program Identity

With multiple layers of coaching at SCC and student-support programs that identify as coaching, the academic coaching program has noted difficulty with their identity on campus. Sara noted the need to better market academic coaching in order to differentiate it from other support services that offer coaching: “Branding is difficult here, internally and externally.” She further noted that in messaging to students, the coaching roles are often poorly distinguished leading to confusion when a student reaches out and makes an appointment. This need was also identified by another director of support services on campus in a conversation within the learning hub. He requested some marketing materials to help publicize academic coaching and what it provides to students. In the staff meeting, Sara also discussed the need to create branding for the program and that marketing was currently working on a logo. Ashley noted confusion with academic success coaches that students often experience as well. However, students did not express as much confusion. Aislinn noted that when she recognized her need for help, “there were signs everywhere” that were advertising academic coaching and those signs encouraged her to reach out. Brayla indicated that she had “heard” about coaching, but she hadn’t been “introduced” to it until she was required to attend a meeting for one of her courses.

The difficulty in branding the academic coaching program could be a result of the multiple coaching roles on campus, and the silos created by their individual practices. The silos were most apparent in the consistent in the use of multiple student-information collection

softwares used by the institution and the limits of access different departments had to the student information. For example, academic coaches had access to Accudemia for tracking coaching sessions and notes, but academic advisors and success coaches did not use that software, so the academic coaches were also learning to use the student information system Inspire. However, the coaches could not access all portions of Inspire or a third system known as Workday, where the student data is maintained. Sara was working to increase the access of academic coaches to the Inspire software, but in the meantime, the coaches are keeping notes in multiple locations and relying on limited information of the academic life of the student coachee. Ashley noted that as academic coaches, they don't have access to "where the student is struggling" in terms of their student records or meetings with other support services. As a result, they often rely on information shared in a referral or by the student to identify the student's needs.

An additional impact on program identity is likely it's physical proximity and similar coaching approach to other student support services. The learning hubs group multiple support services and multiple "academic guidance specialists" programs, including academic coaching, near to each other in the same large learning hub. These services operate within the bigger space, without physical differentiation or clear signage of services. This seems to create confusion and makes individual identity difficult for the academic coaching program. While many of these programs are to coach and help the student navigates, which should be helpful, it is difficult for students to know which coach to see for what, and in maintaining the boundaries of each role, coaches described having to assist students make appointments for the other service, or walking students to another space in the learning hub. It seemed that students could be shuffled quite a bit with multiple appointments with multiple people.

Differentiation of Services

Although they struggled with promoting their program identity, the academic coaching program clearly articulated the practice of academic coaching in contrast to the student support services of advisement and counseling. This distinction is not always apparent in the approach of the academic coaches, advisors, or counselors, likely due to their similar training, but it is more clearly understood in the scope of each program. The coaching manual stated, “When describing coaching to students, DO NOT try to over-explain coaching. Coaching will look different for each student, so students will often only realize what coaching is by experiencing it.” However, coaches and the program administrator were able to articulate the difference between academic coaching and other support services provided, these differences were also articulated within the training manual and by the students. Additionally, the Academic Coaching webpages included distinctions between academic coaching, advisement, counseling, and tutoring as a part of its frequently asked questions page.

Academic coaching is understood to be similar to academic advising in that it is a service meant to help students, as Claire defines it, “meet what they define as their academic goal.” The difference between the two services, however, is in the scope of their support. Academic coaching focuses on the student, while academic advising focuses on the institutional requirements. Table 2 outlines the eight distinct areas of focus for academic coaching, and it is important to note that while there are areas of overlap between coaching and advising, when overlap does occur, academic coaching focuses on the individual development of the student, not the institutional process. Sara notes that the focus of the academic coach is “fluid” and is based on an action plan that is built for the individual; whereas, the advisor’s role is “transactional,” and their academic plan is about the degree or program requirements. She further notes that as a student's needs change, so can academic coaching as a service: “We’re trying to work with the

student app to cap and everything that comes between.” Claire sums it up by saying the “advisor is about the process, the coach is about the person.” Ashley noted that coach is “strategy focused and skills based,” the “tutor in study habits and study skills” while the advisor focusses on course planning and transferring.

The scope of academic coaching and counseling are similar in that they are both focused on the individual student; however, the difference between the two is in professional credentialing and areas of focus for individual development. All coaches noted their practice of referring students to the “professionals” that could assist with mental health needs or noted that they are not “licensed” to practice mental health counseling. The manual clearly states that academic coaching isn’t designed provide mental health care. Instead, academic coaching focuses on the academic skills students can develop. Claire describes this distinction and process for referral well:

I want to affirm people. I want them to feel heard. And I want them to know this is how I can support you and who else, who are professionals, who are trained that we can connect you with when you're ready to.

Students were able to see the distinction between coaches and other support roles on campuses as well. Aislinn noted the transactional nature of the academic advising in that she would attend the appointment to take care of a task. She also described the distinction between coaching and counseling saying that her coach “wasn’t trying to get to the why’s which is usually what happens in counseling.” Further, Brayla and Omar focused on naming the skills their coaches were assisting them to develop and differentiated that process from the focus on “course planning, transferring, and things like that” of academic advising.

Visual Representation of Straugh Community College's Academic Coaching Model

Figure 2 provides a visual representation of Straugh's academic coaching model depicting the influences and boundaries upon it. The physical location of the program offices and institution's liberal use of coaching programs impacted the program's coaching model.

Figure 4.2.

Visual representation of SCC's academic coaching program as understood within the context of the institutional support silos.



The program managed multiple boundaries in their support of students including institutional and professional. Academic coaching emphasized its focus on eight areas of the student's academic and institutional experience and building a quick rapport with students to support them quickly and with care. Their approach to coaching sessions followed an diagnose and treat pattern that emphasized the use of academic skills and action steps for students to take to improve their academic success. While the program and institutional boundaries created silos for student support, the extensive training for coaches on those support silos allowed them to provide support to students in accessing and navigating each program or student support department.

Tulain Community College

Tulain Community College (TCC) is a very large community college in the capital city of a midwestern state. TCC has six campus locations across its host city and a connecting suburb, and provides courses in-person, online, and through flexible online/in-person options. TCC has a diverse student population with approximately 72% of their students taking courses part-time, and 87% of all students pursuing degrees or certificates. The majority (69%) of their student population is traditional college age of 24 and under, and nearly 100% of their student population is from in-state student residency. Tulain Community College also hosts eight intercollegiate athletic teams.

TCC's Academic Success Coaching program is a part of the Student Affairs division of the college and is located at the largest of the TCC's campuses near the state capital. Fully staffed, the program had seventeen academic coaches with three members of the program's leadership team who also provided coaching to students. Each student at TCC is assigned a coach after participation in one of the college's orientation sessions, and coaches manage their caseload from the point of enrollment through graduation. If a student does not attend an orientation session, they are assigned a coach upon referral by a faculty or support staff member or by contacting the program's office. Coaching assignments were generally made based on academic areas of focus or a student's inclusion in an identified student population group. Academic coaching was well supported at TCC. In the last five years it has grown from only serving selected populations to providing services to all students, and the institution employed more full-time coaches than full-time academic advisors. Though the program office, located in a student service building, housed all offices and student meeting spaces, students who do not attend the metro campus were able to meet with their coach via online WebEx meeting spaces.

TCC's metro campus was located in the heart of the city, a mile from the state capital and only four miles from a major state university. The campus maintained a traditional aesthetic with large brick buildings clustered around a bricked campus plaza. An old clock tower welcomed visitors onto the campus, and art installations could be found within the green spaces of the campus. Across the street from the campus, a river wound through the city, surrounded by a green open parkway. Security on the campus was stringently maintained with entry into the buildings managed by key cards given to students, staff, and faculty. Welcome desks near main entrances were staffed during building hours to allow guests without key cards into the building. The academic coaching program offices were located on the second floor of the building, overlooking an open food court. The building also held offices for admissions, enrollment and registration, academic advising, career services and counseling, and was home to a theatre, fitness center, and athletics.

The program offices, known as the Lounge, had a front reception space with a student employee or coach working to welcome walk-in students and assist with the check-in of scheduled appointments. The space was clean and bright and held a welcome desk, conversation chairs, and various academic support documents and student services flyers. Various student conversation pieces such as a blessings tree and bulletin board with post-it notes written by students and coaches provided a glimpse of the students who had visited and used the Lounge. Just behind the reception space, the Lounge continues into a small classroom space set-up with two round tables, a whiteboard, and a projection screen set up for group presentations or small study groups. Within the meeting space a free library bookcase was filled with various books on growth mindset, leadership skills, study skills, and personal growth. Additionally, a small shelf was filled with personal health and hygiene items free for students to take as needed. Along the

west wall of this space, three private meeting rooms were set up with a small table and two chairs. These rooms were used to host the coaching sessions. Coaches reserved the spaces based on their appointment schedules and used the rooms to meet with students in-person and online as they provided privacy and confidentiality for students. On the north wall of the classroom space, a locked door lead to the academic coaching program offices. The coaches shared a large, open office space with desks organized in rows with small walls separating the rows. Coaches used their office space for managing email communications, updating notes from coaching sessions, answering phone calls, and collaborating with their peer coaches.

Participants

Participants in this study included one program administrator, four academic coaches, and four student coachees. Additional context was provided through informal conversations with additional coaches on site and during an observation of a program staff meeting. I was also afforded an office that allowed for general observations of the program staff during the course of their daily work. These conversations and observations allowed for additional details and perspectives for review in my site notebook.

The program's leader Jennifer had been at the institution for more than five years and had worked with academic coaching in multiple roles during that time. Before becoming the Director of the program, Jennifer worked as a coach and a manager. She approached her work with genuine care and enthusiasm. During her interview she stated, "I could talk about work for days." Her enjoyment of her work translated into a desire to get it right. She focused on creating consistent practices for the program and the coaches and on using data from student interactions and student feedback to guide those practices. Kind, professional, and intelligent, she made

decisions and improvements based on data, but lead with her heart. Her coaching team respected her work and expressed appreciation for her leadership.

The academic coaches who participated in this study have all worked at TCC for multiple years and approached their students and student meetings with care and enthusiasm. Orson and Kameron participated in interviews and shared personal reflections on the coaching process. Orson had been an academic coach for six years and had extensive experience as an athletic coach for teams of all ages, youth to college. Gregarious and kind, Orson approached his role as a coach as a supporter for the development of the college student. He strove to be “the greatest cheerleader and encourager.” He had extensive knowledge of the college experience influenced by his previous profession in athletics and as a former academic advisor and emphasized the importance of developing a relationship with his student coachees. Kameron had worked as an academic coach for four years. For one of those years, he assisted in the development of a volunteer-based coaching program for the state. Focusing on the big picture, Kameron was reflective on the impact of coaching the whole student and providing access by focusing on “the human aspect, the emotional social aspect of the college experience.” He believed in the importance of constant, reliable programming that does not necessarily focus on skills, but on the connection he could make with students and helping students make connections with other students and the institution.

Coaches Mark and Jeremiah participated in observed coaching sessions. Both coaches approached their student coachees with kindness and patience. Mark met with a student over WebEx and emphasized his connection to the student by remaining focused on the web cam as if he was maintaining eye-contact with her. He was quick to recognize campus resources and shared his personal experiences as a student and his knowledge of her instructors. He was

reassuring and worked to ensure the student recognized she was “not alone” in her stresses and concerns about returning to class. Jeremiah met with one of his regular student-coachees in person. He was familiar with the student’s life experience and could easily recall the details of the student’s life. His approach was warm and open. He remained focused on the student and was very relaxed in the space of the coaching meeting and enjoyed the conversation as it unfolded. While encouraging student in his current good practices and choices, he easily wove in recommendations and things to be considered as the student continued forward.

Four students participated in this study: Laci, Eli, Jessica, and Gweyn. Three of the students had met with their coach more than once, and two of them met with their coach on a relatively regular schedule. Jessica allowed for an observation of her first coaching meeting. All students were degree-seeking, and were pursuing the subjects of psychology, engineering, and American Sign Language. Laci and Gweyn were also student employees of TCC.

Academic Coaching Program

Tulain’s academic coaching program emphasized a consistent process that was focused on personal relationships before individual skill development. The consistent process was developed and supported through data-informed review and training processes, and this consistent, reliable, and data-informed process of the program had created a symbiotic relationship between the institution, the program, and the student where the program worked to share information, connections, and resources between the institution and the student for the benefit of both.

When asked to describe what academic coaching is, key roles were repeated by the program administrator, coaches, and student coachees. The roles of supporter of students in their college experience, connector to college experiences and resources to ensure engagement, and

navigator of college “how-to” and departments were the most often cited as provided by academic coaching. These roles were developed and supported through the programs training manual and within ongoing professional development within team meetings.

Table 4.5.
Roles of an academic coach as described by case study participants

Supporter	Connector	Navigator
We provide persistent, proactive support throughout their time at the college - Jennifer	Making sure they feel connected to the campus – Kameron	We educate students on the skills they need in order to navigate college - Jennifer
I'm here to support and assist you as you're meeting your goals - Orson	Helping you stay connected and engaged – Eli	I want to teach you the skills so you can navigate this on your own too - Kameron
They try to support them whenever they can – Gweyn	We connect students to resources...and [provide a] connection to community resources – Jennifer	A majority of the time it's we figure out what's going on then how to approach that – Eli
I just felt like the amount of faith she had in me or the potential she saw in me, we just met for an hour or so, made me feel like, 'maybe I can do this. Maybe she's right, maybe I do have this. I have the support system - Laci	they're really good at just knowing a lot of resources, familiarity with different departments in the school – Gweyn	I can go and say, "hey, I'm struggling with this," or "what would be some recommendations or some resources or tools or study tactics that I could do” - Gweyn
	It's us creating a relationship so you can stay engaged and I can help you navigate your college experience - Orson	

The roles of supporter, connector, and navigator (as expressed in Table 4.5) could also be identified in the program’s website and within their training manual. The first page of the program website lists responsibilities for academic coaches that emphasize the how they fulfill those roles by emphasizing descriptors of how coaches assist with problem solving, personal development, and campus engagement. Within the training manual, suggested elevator pitches for coaches explaining the program included descriptors of coaches who support, guide, and connect students, as well as how coaches are navigators, who help remove barriers. Additionally, the website listed the program goals which included engagement with the campus, its culture,

and its resources. To ensure the coaches know how to support students' connections to and engagement with campus resources and activities, the training manual provided information on referral processes, and communication expectations that include campus activities.

Distinction from and Overlap with Advisement and Counseling

While the roles of connector, navigator, and supporter were definitive to the coaching process, the question of how coaching is differentiated from other campus services such as advising and counseling were not as stringently identified or focused on. In her interview, Jennifer spoke the most of boundaries when describing what coaching is not. When I asked about those boundaries, she replied, "I think something that was really ingrained to us when our program started was what we aren't, because other people were concerned that we were going to be infringing upon them." What became clearer as I continued through interviews and observations, however, was that the boundaries were no longer as present. Jennifer noted this as well: "We all try to be careful and stay in our lanes, but there is some grey areas." As an example of this grey area, she noted that while teaching students how to read their individual degree plan within the institutionally provided tool DegreeWorks, they were crossing into academic advisor territory. To manage the grey area, they would follow that review with a statement like, "It's still a good idea to make an appointment with an advisor."

Academic coaches noted their existence and work within the grey space as well. They did not identify a strong concern from other departments about the overlap. Additionally, their descriptions of support in these grey areas were often identified as a support to gain access to or fit a need that couldn't be met by the other areas. Kameron pointed out that coaching was "more narrowed onto the day-to-day experiences" of the student while advisement was more focused on

the long-term educational plan. Similarly, he noted how coaching connects students to counseling by introducing the concept of receiving support in a non-stigmatizing way:

I think there's such a strong negative stigma attached to connecting with a therapist or a social worker or asking for help from those areas that the coaching piece can kind of feel like the student can connect and talk about those things without the stigmas attached to it... Everyone has a success coach, so it isn't a bad thing that you are assigned one or that you are meeting with one.

Orson noted that he “may not differentiate between advising and counseling.” He states, “I jump right into it... I just ask them what their needs are and then I try to direct them if it's not something I can help with. Orson did refer to advising, though he assists students in understanding their degree requirements and courses. He also notes, “I refer a lot of students to counselling,” so he doesn't “muddy the waters” of the academic coaching focus.

Student coachees could, however, identify when they would reach out to their coach versus advisement and indicated the coach's role was supporting them through the process or meetings with other departments. Eli described how the coach connects students based on the need they might describe in the meeting. Gweyn and Laci both noted the confusion between advisors and coaches, but identified the confusion based more on their titles than on their roles. Both pointed out the that use of the word “academic” in their job titles was what cause the confusion, and both recommended referring to the positions as “we just need to say *advisors* and *coaches*” (emphasis mine). Gweyn did note that the advisor is more about the program the student is in, and the coach is “more of the overall success” of the student.

A distinction between other support areas and coaches at TCC that was shared between students and coaches could be best described as time and availability. TCC employs more full-

time coaches than full-time advisors. Additionally, the academic coaching program sets goals for connections and communications with their students to ensure consistent and wholistic support. Kameron noted that coaches tend to be able to focus on the whole student due to the regularity of contact they were able to provide that other departments may not:

We kind of do the day-to-day connections with the students and we can do follow-ups to see how things are going. Whereas I think some of the other departments like advising or maybe sometimes counseling, they may only see the student once a semester or once every other semester... It could be once and then done. I think that's kind of where it's different. Students can expect a coach to be a little bit more regular than the other areas.

Gweyn echoed this sentiment:

So advisors would help with their classes and then send them on their way. Whereas a coach might be like...the student could come in and say, "I don't even know where to find something." Coaches will take them around, give them a tour of the school, tell them about the resources. Or if they come and say, "I'm struggling with this." It is much more individualized. It's much more personable. They literally can be there as a full on guide of, "Oh, you need this department? Let me take you over there. Let me show you where it is." Or "Let me help you with ..."

This focus on availability and open support was echoed in a video posted to the program's website. The student featured in the video notes that coaches were there to help with "basically anything, they can help navigate the system within TCC.

Focus on Process

An important element of the academic coaching program at TCC was an emphasis on processes. While the program did not wish to make individual meetings prescriptive to a process,

locations and situations in which these processes were observed or discussed. Each process listed, was either identified by name or described in significant detail.

Table 4.6.

Program processes as identified through interviews, observations, and the training manual at TCC.

	Software & Systems	Communications	Meeting Documentation	Follow-Up
Manual	Program Flowchart, Institutional Policies/Procedures, Coaching Processes, Case Management Softwares, Learning Management System, Student Information Systems	Early Alerts, Monitoring Reports, Appreciative Advising, Challenge and Support, Newsletters, Touchpoint Communications	Documenting Meetings, Documenting Interactions, Documenting walk-ins	Monitoring Reports
Jennifer	Case management system	Student check-ins, communication expectations	Enrollment check-ins, meeting notes, walk-in notes	Enrollment check-ins, consistent follow-up
Coach Orson	Student Information System,	Personalized check-in messages		Personalized messages to ask “how that went?”
Coach Kameron	Assignment of coaches	Check-in emails, Appreciative Advising	Case management system notes,	Follow-up text, Consistent check-ins
Student Coachees		General check-ins, campus events, personal well-being	Appointment check-in process, walk-in notes	Checks back in
Observations	Case management software, Student Information System		Notes	Previous meeting references, task follow-up
Team Meeting	Student Information System, Case management software	Enrollment check-ins, lifecycle touchpoints, academic alerts	Enrollment check-ins	Follow-up timeline

While there was a distinct emphasis on processes for the program, the process for individual coaching meetings were protected from scripted processes. In fact, Jennifer noted that the meetings had begun to become too scripted, “I noticed that a lot of the coach student interactions were just very problem-solving and transactional.” The team reviewed the meeting process and moved away from structured meetings, particularly the first intake meeting, as organic relationship development was more important. Jennifer directed those conversations, and

the program refocused their efforts on understanding: "Why are we here? What is coaching?" Coaches reflected this open approach in their descriptions of their meeting process. Orson stated, "What guides my coaching process is the student. Student drives because everybody's different"; and "Each coach has their own [method], which I love." Kameron noted the influence of transformational learning and appreciative advising on his process, but ultimately recognized his role supported the "emotional-social aspect of the college experience." He further pointed out that participation in the coaching meetings were "optional, so I don't want them to feel like I'm going to force them." As a result, he lets the student direct where the meeting will go.

The open, student-directed focus of the meetings was present in the student-coachees' perspectives and within the observed sessions as well. During observations, I noted the open body language that was directed at the students. Both observed coaches fully engaged in the conversation and spoke conversationally. Students were given the opportunity to bring up their needs or concerns and directed the conversation more than the coach. In describing their coaching sessions, the students noted that it always started with general conversation and just a simple, "How's it going?" Eli said he often asks, "What should I do?" Gweyn described a similar approach: "I can go and say, 'hey, I'm struggling with this,' or 'what would be some recommendations or some resources, tools or study tactics that I could do?'" All three students noted that they make the final decision of what happens next, or that they worked with their coach in working through their options. Barbie explained, "it's 'Well, what do you want to do next? What avenue do you want to take?'" Eli said, "A majority of the time it's we figure out what's going on, then how to approach that."

Consistency

The value of processes for the program was consistency. The program administrator, academic coaches, and program documents emphasized consistency. The program flow diagram supported the consistent expectations for the program and coaches through the lifecycle of the student. Students expressed that consistency as important to them and their success as well. Consistency meant that students could trust the program to help, regardless of the question, struggle, or problem. Consistency meant that every student could have access, and consistency meant that fewer students fall through the cracks. One place that the impact of consistency was best expressed was in a student testimonial video on the program's website. The student shared of his hesitancy in meeting with a coach, but in that first meeting his coach "accepted me just as I was, knowing that I was an ex-heroin user. What?! They're there to help you." Jennifer and Kameron both pointed to the freedom given to the coaches and student coachees in the meetings because the stigma of attending was removed by consistently assigning students a coach, consistently connecting with the students, and consistently following-up with the students and their needs.

As previously mentioned, consistency was important for the program in regards to their processes. Consistency was also expressed in the importance of persistence and the act of following-up. By focusing on consistency in processes, the program could be persistent in their support of students and in the act of following-up. Persistence was expressed in the manual's application of the Appreciative Advising theme of Delivery: "The advisor is there for students when they stumble, believe in them every step of the way, and help them continue to update and refine their dreams as they go." The program's website includes the persistence of coaches in their support of students as well stating coaches' responsibilities included persistent and proactive support. Jennifer's first descriptions of academic coaching emphasized persistence as

well: “We provide persistent, proactive support throughout their time at college.” Kameron noted a “key piece” of academic coaching was the persistent presence and support it provides: “long-term relationships matter because sometimes students don’t have the stability of having a long-term relationship.” He noted this was particularly important when students stop out and then return and feel like they have a trusted advisor always available to them.

Students identified the persistence of their coaches as well. Gweyn referenced the “faithful emails” that comes from her coach. She further appreciated the “continual encouragement and building” of the relationship and the messages she receives. She went further to express how the persistence was more important than the message:

It is just that encouragement, that support, continual communication, that they don’t just give up. I know coaches that their students never meet with them ever, even in their house if burning down. They never meet with them. And yet, those coaches, they still reach out, they still do their best. They try to support them in whatever way they can.”

Laci echoed this sentiment noting that her coach was always reaching out and offering support:

I feel like she's always encouraging me, even when I'm not completely upfront, like something's going on. I think she kind of can tell because she will be like, I just wanted to reach out...” Or “So you know, I have availability...” and it's like, okay, I do. I'd like to make an appointment.

This persistent presence was also promoted by TCC’s coaching program in the student testimonial videos on their webpage. The students featured both emphasized the ongoing, consistently present, and encouraging nature of their academic coaches.

Following-Up

The most important element of consistency expressed by study participants, however, was in the act of following-up. Each study participant noted the act of follow-up in their descriptions of the academic coaching, and it was this conscience emphasis on following up that creates the consistency and the persistence of their coaching program. Communication expectations as described in the training manual included an emphasis on following-up and checking-in on progress with most recent activity, meeting topic, or practiced skill. Additionally, significant time of the team meeting focused on the parameters of following up after early alerts and documenting responses and progress from the student. The program website also advertises and promotes the expectation of following-up both in published student testimonials and in their definition of the program element of Progress Review: “Checking in with students on existing goals. Check-ins and follow ups, reviewing grades, short-term, long-term goals.”

Jennifer prioritizes the follow-up for her coaches. In the context of our interview, she discussed the need to follow-up on multiple occasions. And the coaches all identified the desire to follow-up as a part of their practice and communication plans with their students. There was a recognition that the student may not always follow-up and as a result, the coach should extend the check-in to determine progress, provide additional support, or identify new barriers. The phrase “follow-up” was also consistently used by the student coachees.

Table 4.7.

Identification of the follow-up process by program administrator, coaches, and student coachees.

	<i>[Coaches] should be following back up with that student to say, 'hey, did you get that straightened away?'</i>
Jennifer:	<i>The thing that I try to stress with the coaches is there should always be follow-up. I started getting concerned because I noticed that a lot of the coach student interactions were just very problem solving and transactional. There wasn't follow-up.</i>
Coach Orson:	<i>So you do as a practice, schedule that next follow-up appointment. Then I'll set a task for myself...The next day, I follow-up with the student and be like, "How did the ____ go?"</i>
Coach Kameron:	<i>But then I'll tell them, "Let's do the follow-up next week"... [Then] we'll take a look at different ways, like what went well, what didn't, "have you tried it?"... If this is working, great, I'll still do my monthly outreach and we can see how things are going.</i>
Coachee Laci:	<i>Even if I don't set a goal when I leave, I always feel still like, "let's follow-up."</i>
Coachee Eli:	<i>That's sort of what I talk about and like, [the coach says] "Hey, what is what? What's gotten done?" I say, "Hey, you know, I did this..."</i>
Coachee Gweyn:	<i>At some point I said I wanted to finish my associates so now every so often they following up of "oh, how many credits do you have left? But there is that continual follow-up of just, "Hey, hope everything's going good. You've got this. Good luck, we're almost there..."</i>

Relationships

Relationships were an essential factor in supporting the consistency of the academic success coaching program. Orson summed up the importance of the relationship to the coaching practice: "connection to me... it is...it is the relationship, nobody's going to come back to talk to you if they don't think you care." Jennifer noted this same goal early in her description of the program and continued to reference the importance of it throughout:

We stress that we are relational, not transactional, so the goal is to have an ongoing relationship with students... ideally from the time they get started to the time they graduate.... We want to know the student. What are you learning about the student? ...

The student and the relationship is driving the coaching sessions... They're *your* student. In describing a first session, Orson explained how he focuses on the relationship with the student by inviting the student to participate in the process with him. He starts by "telling them that it's us creating a relationship so you can stay engaged, and I can help you navigate your college experience." Orson continued to keep the student in mind as he approached them as individuals

as well. He recognized the responsibility of the coach to make the student comfortable with the process and with the relationship: “Get out of your wheelhouse, stay in your wheelhouse, do what you need to do to make the student feel comfortable.” Kameron explained an important value of the relationship as it helped students gain social and emotional connections to benefit their college knowledge and experience. He wanted to underscore that even while taking care of tasks or how-to do something, it's that relationship that really creates value for the student: “long-term relationships matter because sometimes students don't have the stability of having a long-term relationship.”

The long-term trusted relationship of the program and described by the coaches could be understood as like a relationship of a trusted uncle or grandparent that a student could go to ask any question. The coaches were also seen as someone who knew how to help them, providing access and support that they may not have had otherwise. Kameron noted his process was “cultural-wealth informed,” providing social and cultural capital much like a family member might. Students also identified the relationship as an important part of the academic coaching program and noted the personal ties as well as a sense of value in the coaches knowledge and abilities. Eli commented that the coach was someone he could explore options with, and bounce ideas off of. Gweyn noted the relationship was “personal” and that her coach was a “trusted resource” that she could “sit down” and “talk about it” with. Laci provided the most personal descriptions of her relationship with her coach and discuss how that relationship helped her to feel like she belonged and was valued. She often asked her coach to attend meetings with other departments to have “somebody I trust,” and help her make a list of topics to cover when she couldn't be in the meetings. She recognized the support her coach provided goes beyond just college knowledge as well: "I feel like I didn't have a lot of support growing up and this... she's

the adult. I needed as a kid." She also pointed out, "so if I get a good grade or I pass something, I want to share that because I know she'll be proud of me. Which as an adult, it seems kind of silly to say, but..." Having a trusted advisor gave each of the students encouragement and an inside track to their academic progress. Much like Laci noted the value of an advocate in meetings regarding her accommodations, Gweyn pointed out the fact that her coach was able to identify and correct an error in her student record that saved her significant money by correcting her residency status it cut her tuition "probably in-half."

Another element of the relationship that allowed the student to develop trust and a familial connection was the intentional practice of collaborating with the student and allowing the student to direct their own path. Orson noted that although he could make suggestions to students, he didn't feel like he was there to hold them accountable. Instead, he relies on his relationship with the student to support them through the choices they make. He likened it to the game-day coaching of his past; he walks them through available scenarios but leaves them with "it's your decision." Kameron pointed out that coaching was "letting students know this is your opportunity to a self-authorship of what to do and what... to take control." Eli described how his coach gave him suggestions and they walked through the options together making his sessions "more collaborating and less directing." Gweyn described this collaboration similarly:

Sometimes I just automatically bring my questions. Like "This is what I'm struggling with." It's like, "All right, well if I was in your position, this is what I would do. But I understand that you might see things differently, might have a different perspective." So they try to give good feedback as far as good suggestions, but ultimately it's like, "Hey, you know what? If that's not going to work, then here's some other options."

The value of relationships was also touched upon in the program's training manual, in the student testimonials of the program's web pages, and observed in coaching sessions. The training manual's use of the Appreciative Advising strategies of Disarm and Discover directed the coaches to listen and get to know their students "to create a safe, welcoming environment" while collaborating with them in the meetings to "draw out the student's passions, strengths, and interests." The program's web pages devoted significant space and information to get to know the coaches. Each coach's picture and small biography was included that provided a glimpse into them as a person and allowed a preview of the coach a student could choose to work with. The coaches shared information about their college experiences, personal hobbies, and family. Additionally, the web pages provided significant space to student testimonials all of which emphasized the relationship that was developed between the student and their coach. The testimonials referenced how the coach didn't hesitate to help in anyway, provided a belief in the student giving them self-confidence, or simply just gets it. The testimonials speak of a coach that they can count on like a trusted friend or relative.

A first coaching session and a coaching session with a regular student coachee were observed during this study, and both reflected the emphasis on personal relationships. In the session with the first-time coachee, the coach approached the meeting with openness, personal anecdotes, and directed attention to listen and get to know the student. He never interrupted the student or jumped to a conclusion. Instead he built the conversation and his recommendations in a natural flow that fit the student's tempo and concerns. In the coaching session with the returning student, the coach easily recalled previous conversations and personal details his student coachee had shared. The student also referenced previous conversations and recommendations of his coach. In both sessions, I noted the physical presence and attention of

the coaches that was directed to the students. Their approaches were of ease and comfort, but noticeably purposeful. In my notes from the session with the returning student, I noted that the coach felt like a big brother in the room.

Coaching Characteristics

The consistency of the program, the value it placed on relationships, and the importance of student autonomy could be seen in the characteristics “good coaches” were described as having. Study participants noted personal characteristics that supported these themes of the program. Interestingly, knowledge of specific academic skills or institutional knowledge were not priorities of student participants when describing a good coach. The traits of a good coach that were repeatedly listed can be categorized as interpersonal, student-focused, or personal (see Table 4.8). The personal characteristics spoke to the consistency of the program as well as the coach’s ability to develop relationships with students; the interpersonal traits supported relationship development and student autonomy; and the student-focused characteristics supported student autonomy and consistency. Knowledge of the institution was listed as

Table 4.8.

Characteristics of a good coach by category as named by student coachees

Interpersonal	Student-Focused	Personal
Good listener	Cares for student	Flexible, open to change
Non-judgmental	Relatable	Encouraging
Open to all people	Responsibility to student	Trustworthy
Good communicator	Focused on student	Relatable
Present	Consistent	Supportive
		Proactive

important, but it was valued as something to be shared with the student or used to advocate for the student. The need for these specific skills denoted the importance of the relationship not the skills themselves. Further, knowledge of academic skills were not listed at all.

Data Informed

Data was an important aspect of Tulain's Academic Success Coaching program. The collection of data, analysis of data, and application of data was proudly discussed and consistently observed during the course of the site visit. Data was important to the program's management team as it informed the program's processes, training, and student outreach, and it provided support to the institution. Data points collected included student feedback gathered through surveys, intake processes, and during scheduled outreach projects, meeting and communication data, and institutional data emphasizing student success, retention and persistence. In the training manual, the importance of using data was clearly articulated:

We can be more strategic about how we engage in coaching; we can start to think about where low-touch/high-impact support will work, and where high-touch/high-impact support is necessary. Basically, this translates to maximizing the effectiveness of our time and resources.

In conversations with the program administrator, the importance of data was mentioned in multiple contexts such as ensuring consistent practices, clarifying processes and program expectations, providing feedback to individual coaches through evaluation processes, providing holistic support for the student, and in support of the institution's retention efforts. Orson identified the use of data to inform team meetings and trainings and recognized the growth of data use by the program: "We're talking about numbers more now. We're talking about more processes, I think, highlighting the numbers." Both Orson and Kameron discussed their use of student data from the institutional systems regarding student grades, early alerts, and progress toward degree was important to their meeting prep prior to meeting a student for the first time; and both referenced their use of their case management system to document meetings and

communications, which became data points for the program. Kameron also spoke of how his process was also influenced by patterns he was noticing in the program's student data, specifically in how that information could be applied and used to advocate for students: "I think the next step for us is trying to make sure how we can also advocate for the resources that students are needing."

Although academic coaching was well supported at TCC, it was still a relatively new in its availability to all students, and like most developing programs, defining data points for the program was a current emphasis. Jennifer noted that the program was currently focusing on how to define the work that they do in order to better measure impact. She noted the program's desire to define a student "meeting" versus "communication," asking, "how do we measure?" This emphasis on clearly defining became a reiterative process for the program so it could better evaluate its work and its success:

So we've shifted to measuring engagement and levels of engagement... And being able to have really solid data that shows how effective we are has been one of the biggest challenges just because it's just not easy to measure. But we're getting a lot closer. So my hope is now that we're measuring how many students actually engage and what engagement means, different types of engagement, being able to look at, then work with our center for data science and say, "Okay, how many of these students are able... How many pass their classes, how many come back?"

This attention to the data and trying to get it right was reflected by Kameron as well:

We moved from having X amount of meetings per week to now the system allows us to see what our engagement looks like with each student. So we're shifting to... And this is literally new as in last month... Our system's able to see all the incoming texts that we get

and when we log their incoming emails. That's going to kind of categorize the students of highly engagement or lower engagement.

Using the case load management software for collection of data on the program and processes has allowed the program to make data-informed decisions about their own processes. Additionally, the program utilized student data to market their program, listing statistics based on student feedback collected. For example, “85% agree working with my ASC has helped me improve my college experience.

Training

New academic success coaches were provided a significant amount of training that included a two-week onboarding process, an online course, and a training manual, *The Handbook: Academic Success Coaching*. Jennifer noted that much of the onboarding process and the manual spoke to institutional systems and processes. Data, however, also informed a significant portion of the training manual. Definitions of coaching content, coaching sessions, documentation requirements for the different session types were provided to be collected as data points through the case management system. Reviews of the student data available to coaches for meeting preparation were highlighted. Categories of student “tiers” were identified by data markers and the manual detailed expected communications and support based on those definitions. Additionally, significant space was allotted to explaining how to operate the caseload management system for documentation and data collection. In one instance, the handbook highlighted the importance of collecting student contact and engagement data from coaching sessions and communications stating, “If it isn’t documented, it didn’t happen.” The value of consistent data collection was communicated through the manual.

What seemed to be more impactful than the onboarding training process, however, was the ongoing training that took place through team meetings and regular one-on-one meetings with coaches and the program managers. The team meetings were referenced by both Orson and Kameron as being a part of their coaching practice. Additionally, both referenced the use of data in the team meetings. Orson specifically described how the program managers reviewed data from the caseload management system and shared that feedback in team meetings and indicated that he likes the numbers: “I like to know what I’m doing.” The use of data in the team meeting observed was prominent. During the observed team meeting, data was presented on the program’s current enrollment check-in campaign and reviewed from recent presentations to the Academic Senate and Board of Trustees. Additionally, the team discussed data collected through the early alert process by the program’s case management software. This presentation was a first review of numbers, and the coaches participated in an active dialogue identifying themes and requesting additional data analysis based on student populations and correlation of qualitative data collected from students. This conversation also led to peer mentoring opportunities as the coaches discussed their practices in reaching out to students and follow-up conversations as a result of an early alert. Newer coaches asked for advice on number of reach-outs and methods for engaging non-responsive students. The reflection and team dialogue led to recommendations to include faculty members in communications and how to “reframe” the message with students.

The training manual also identified how data would be used in the regular meetings with coaches and program managers including “session frequencies, lessons learned, activities attended, [and] barriers encountered.” Jennifer also pointed out that although they do look at engagement with coaches and correlation with retention numbers, they do not assign specific retention goals for their, nor do they discuss caseload retention reports to the coach. The

emphasis remains on the program's impact through individual engagement: "[We] provide feedback based on analytics, 'Let's work on increasing engagement' or 'You're doing awesome!'" While the meetings reviewed data collected in regards to the coaches work and their students, the meeting was also an opportunity to document items such as "personal goals, success stor[ies], how can leadership support you?" to identify themes for the program.

Institutional Symbiosis

While data collection was an important part of the academic success coaching program for internal reviews and process improvements, the program's data practices were employed to the benefit of the institution. Sharing data as a way to address students' barriers and needs created a symbiotic relationship between the institution, the program, and the students where the coaching program acted as the liaison between students and TCC. Jennifer and Kameron noted that the institution often looked to the coaching program for information on student retention. Jennifer stated, "that is something that our department is always looked at [for]: 'Retention is down? Success coaches, why is retention down?'" Kameron echoed this comment, "We are not solely responsible for retention; it can seem that way... The idea that 'Oh, the success coaches will fix it..." While the program recognized that retention wasn't just *their* responsibility, they also provided support to the institution's retention efforts by supplying data. Qualitative data captured through the enrollment check-in campaign, student surveys, and coaching sessions was analyzed and shared. Jennifer said that "ultimately the goal is to increase retention," and part of their responsibility was in identifying barriers students face, including institutional barriers. This practice was evidenced in the presentations made to the Academic Senate and the Board of Trustees. Both of which presented quantitative and qualitative data collected from students and coaching contacts.

Kameron expressed the responsibility of using the information gathered from students to support changes for the institution. He recognized the power in the information the program was gathering and noted that the “next step for us is trying to make sure how we can also advocate for the resources that students are needing.” Having data assisted with this process because it highlighted systemic and institutional issues that could often be overlooked or dismissed:

But just letting people know, because I think we feel the secondary stress from the students, whether if it was due to procrastination or work schedules or life, and they can't plan ahead for some reason. I think sometimes it's easy to take that and say ‘This is the situation,’ rather than hearing what the system's set up as.

Jennifer noted the power of having data to inform change with advisement concerns that had been brought up by students:

But being able to present, "Hey, we have X number of students who say they can't register until they talk to an advisor," helps make case potentially for maybe we need to hire more advisors or figure something out with the advising system.

The program’s identification of institutional barriers also led back to further training on how to assist students with those barriers thus supporting institutional and student goals for retention and completion. A section of the training manual was devoted to “training on institutional practices and policies that affect student progress.”

The symbiotic relationship was also present in the coaches roles of connector and navigator. Jennifer, Kameron, and Orson all highlighted the practice of referring students to institutional programs and events to support the student’s engagement as well as the event. This was also highlighted in the team meeting with a discussion of recruitment and participation efforts for the college’s upcoming 1st Gen event. It was also observed in the coaching sessions.

Coaches quickly promoted other campus offices and assisted with the how-to of scheduling and use of services. The promotion of these services was a true promotion. Coaches expressed the benefits or referenced their knowledge and experience with the offices and the people within as a way to encourage the student's use of the recommended service.

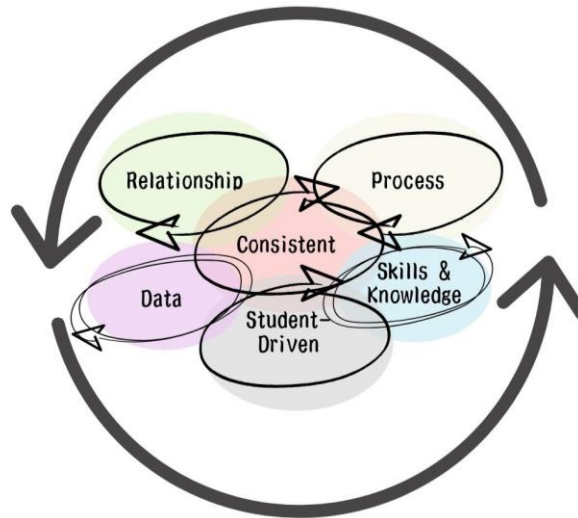
Student coachees also expressed the value in the program's role as connector to the college for the student. The coachees interviewed who were also employed by the college referenced their practice of contacting the coaching office while at work to assist with institution-based questions. They recognized the coaches' value as a "go-to resource" even in their role as an employee. Laci noted the role of her coach as a unofficial recruiter for the college noting the impact of the coach's willingness to give her a campus tour on her decision to return to school. In fact, Laci noted that because of her experience with her academic coach, she hoped to complete her Bachelor's degree and return to TCC to work as a coach in the future.

Visual Representation of Tulain Community College's Academic Coaching Model

Figure 4.4 is a visual representation of the Tulain's academic coaching model. Central to the model was the theme of consistency. Supporting the program's ability to be consistent in each additional theme was the program's consistent approach to training and the impact of administrative support. Consistency was central to the program's approach to relationships with students, processes for communicating with and documenting student engagements, and adherence to student-driven coaching sessions. Relationships relied on the consistent presence

Figure 4.4.

Visual representation of TCC's academic coaching program emphasizing the consistent process that provide feedback and development.



and follow-up of coaches, and that follow-up was often managed through consistent processes for communication. Coaches' use of academic skills and institutional knowledge were consistent in their application during coaching sessions, but they were secondary to the relationship. Additionally, data collection and review were consistent elements of the coaching program specifically in how they informed the coaching process and support back to the institution.

Further, while consistency was the central theme of this model, the recursive nature of the feedback loop between the themes, as reflected by the circular arrows, ensured continued ability to train academic coaches on student needs and best practices, and return support to the institution in the form of documentable evidence. The result of the feedback loops to the program and the institution allowed for continued, documented growth and development of the coaching program itself.

Cross-Case Analysis

The purpose of this study was to closely examine academic coaching programs at community colleges to develop an understanding of coaching practices in the community college

setting. Several themes emerged through cross-case analysis of the three case studies in the shared descriptions of academic coaching by program administrators, academic coaches, and program documents, shared experiences of academic coaching as expressed by student coachees and observed in coaching sessions. Academic coaching programs analyzed for this study shared multiple program characteristics as evidenced in the themes of each case report. The following sections provide a thematic review of the cross-case analysis based on the study's research questions.

RQ1: Descriptions of Academic Coaching

When considering the first research question, *How is the academic coaching model at community colleges described by academic coaches, program administrators, and institutional documents?*, I focused my analysis of shared themes from each case that described how academic coaching as it is intended to be practiced at each site, and I triangulated those descriptions with observations I made while on site of each case.

Each site visited focused on providing consistent training to their coaches that included individual program and institution expectations as well as academic theories and best practices for coaching or advisement. Although most of the training referenced specific coaching processes, most of the coaches did not identify their practice in the terms of those processes. What was evident, however, was that each program had consistent practices and approaches with their students that was reflected in interviews and observations. Additionally, the training emphasized the coaching program's role among other support services for students and allowed administrators and coaches to clearly articulate the distinction between academic coaching and advisement, counseling, and tutoring. The consistent process of each coaching program shared a consistent focus on the student. Holistic student support, beyond strict academics and point in

time needs, was to be guided by the student in the coaching session and not pre-determined by the academic coach. Further, the student-driven approach was dependent on the academic coaches' abilities to develop a strong relationship of trust or quick rapport with a student. Where relationships were developed, they were often described in familial terms and as having a strong impact on the student's ability to persist in their studies. Where relationships did not have significant development, immediate comfort with the coach was observed or expressed. Academic skills were consistently identified as a part of the process, but in practice the skills were less important than the support provided to the student. They were a tool in the coach's toolbox of support. Another important description of the academic coaching programs was their emphasis on program documentation and data collection through the use of articulated processes, procedures, and software.

The Importance of Training

Program administrators and academic coaches of all three cases described specific training that impacted their program's practices. Although program administrators were more comfortable describing the training protocols in detail, coaches also described distinct training parameters. The training protocols were built from a combination of program-specific manuals, institutionally provided trainings (typically shared with student services departments) and external training opportunities. Two of the three programs also required coaching observations and peer mentoring during the onboarding process. Shared descriptions of the training provided emphasized institutional processes and coaching skills such as active listening and purposeful questioning. All training documents reviewed included an overview of multiple academic theories, coaching models, and academic coaching research.

Shared Coaching Process

While each program's training protocols reviewed coaching models such as the GROW model, none of the programs trained to a specific process or protocol for each meeting. In fact, the one program that had a specific process for initial program meetings moved away from the scripted process as all programs noted the need to allow the meetings to develop as need was identified by the student in the meeting. Interestingly though, each program did create and follow its own's process or approach that was described by the program administrators and coaches. Each program's process was unique to itself and its institution. Shared elements of the academic coaching processes among the cases included an opening section that focused either on getting to know the student to build a sense of rapport or catching up on the life and school events that had taken place since their previous meeting; and a portion of the meeting devoted to reviewing available resources or skills for the student to consider or practice. Another shared element of the process that was identified across all programs was the desire to allow the student and the student's self-identified needs to drive their approach and the individual coaching sessions. Additionally, because the coaching process was unique to each case but similarly described by the coaches and administrators of that case, it could be inferred that the program's recognition of the training they received through each other was strongly influenced by the institutional processes of each case.

Differentiation from Other Support Services

All training manuals described the differences between academic coaching and other traditional support services, most commonly advising and counseling. The distinctions as described by the training manuals was echoed by program administrators and academic coaches. The consistent distinctions from advisement described were in reference to the scope, relationship, and focus of the coaching program. Academic coaching was most often described in

terms of the student. The focus on the individual meetings was on the student, a driving force behind the meetings was the relationship developed between coach and student coachee, and the scope of the support coaches offered was often described as nearly limitless. Academic coaching was meant to serve the student, regardless of need, for the duration of their time with the institution, and emphasized the personal relationship. Academic advising, on the other hand, was described as a stop-in service that was focused on the needs and programs of the institution. Further, while advising was understood as supporting the student multiple times through their duration of their academic life cycle, the relationship was not a driving force or factor that supported consistent support regardless of student need. It was described as “transactional,” meeting the needs of the institution in relation to the student.

Since the support provided to students through academic coaching was developed through the personal relationships with the student and was built for holistic student support, regardless of identified need, the academic coaching programs worked to maintain clear distinctions from mental health counseling. Both were described in terms of personal relationships and care, and distinctions were not clearly made in descriptions of meeting content. Instead, academic coaching was described as maintaining professional boundaries to avoid counseling students themselves. Program administrators and academic coaches all described their practice as supporting students through awareness and access to counseling services when the personal needs escaped their scope of academic services, as they noted they did not have the professional certification, training, or current licensure to practice mental health counseling. Mental health counseling was also described as service in support of a student’s health and wellness.

Holistic Student Support

Descriptions of academic coaching programs all emphasized the desire to support the whole student. This holistic support was described in terms of student needs and the student's time at the institution. The emphasis on providing holistic support of student needs was often described in the academic coach's role as navigator and as connector. Both of these roles were meant to assist students in receiving support regardless of the barrier or concern the student faced while pursuing their academic goals. Additionally, this holistic support of student needs could extend beyond academic skills, courses, and institutional expectations. Coaches commonly referred to their knowledge of community resources for students recognizing that concerns in life affected the student's ability to focus on academic requirements. Community food banks, public transportation, and mental health resources were referenced in support of students at all three institutions.

The holistic student support of students could also be identified in terms of the student's life cycle for the institution. "From app to cap" was a descriptor given by one program administrator to describe the timeframe the academic coaching program served the students. Another academic coach described how his relationship with his student coachees extended beyond their time enrolled in at the college, particularly in situations when a student might stop-out. His desire to serve the student need provided the space for the student to reconnect with the college and return to coursework. The descriptions of consistent support and ongoing relationships supported the programs' desires to be available always to the student and contrasted their descriptions of academic advising as transactional, finite, or for a limited process. Two of the programs relied on cohort-based models to support the lifecycle of the student with one program emphasizing a communication schedule and the practice of following-up with a student to ensure long-term continuity.

Student Identified Needs and Goals

Holistic student support was also described as being driven by the student and the student's self-identified needs. Program administrators and coaches described the student as the driving force of coaching sessions. Coaches began the coaching sessions by getting to know the student or catching up on the student's recent activities and concerns. This initial stage allowed the student to identify for themselves and the coach what they wanted to address in the remainder of the meeting. For those students that struggled with identifying a specific need or desired area of focus, the coaches described their process of offering suggestions for focus, or resources for the student to consider. What was clear, however, was that the coach's suggestions and recommendations remained as only suggestions and recommendations for the student to pursue; ultimately, the student determined if they wished to pursue the resource, practice the skills, or discuss the concern further. Multiple coaches noted the ability for students to tell them "no" or not take a recommendation, and program administrators emphasized the program's desire to support the need "as identified by the student."

Additionally, goals for the coaching sessions and individual student goals were determined by the student coachee. Coaches did not describe specific desired outcomes for the coaching sessions or for their job as a coach precisely because the focus was on the goals as identified by the student coachee. Program administrators did verbalize that their programs were developed in support of retention goals for the institution; however, they also clearly noted that those goals were not placed upon individual meetings or coaching evaluations. This allowed for coaches to support the unique goals as created by the student. Goals were often described in terms of actions steps or things that the students "could try" before the next meeting. This

allowed for continual identification of short-term goals by the student in support of their academic process or personal goals.

Support without Judgement

A consistent theme in each case was the program's desire to support the individual student based on his or her individual needs without judgment. Coaches and program administrators consistently noted that students could walk in with any type of need, and that the role of the coach was to address that need without judgement. The holistic support of the student required acceptance of the whole student. Coaches most commonly discussed the suspension of judgement in terms of their focus. They recognized the focus was on addressing the problem, question, or barrier with an eye on future progress or change. This future-thinking emphasis allowed for the coaches to continually encourage change in student process and habits and was supported by the coaches' beliefs that students could make a change. Although they did note that some students continue to make the same mistakes or resist change. In those situations, coaches continued to maintain their responsibility to the individual student to continue their efforts. Additionally, coaches discussed communication strategies for non-responsive students with each other in their effort to continually connect with and support the student, regardless of their situation. The suspension of judgement was also emphasized as it related to the student's personal life choices or socio-economic status. This non-judgment in these areas was emphasized as the coaching programs recognized many barriers to student success came from their lives outside of the classroom.

The Importance of Relationships

Program administrators and academic coaches in all three case studies described the value and the impact of building relationships with their student coachees to the coaching

process. SCC's descriptions emphasized building rapport with the student in order to create a space for immediate support and trust, and also described the relationship between the coach and the student coachee as having clear professional boundaries. The other two programs, however, emphasized the importance of developing deeper or more personal relationships between the coach and the coachee and described the relationship as foundational to their program's coaching process. These relationships were important to the program's descriptions of providing support "regardless" of the student's choices, including mistakes, and were supported by the coach's ability to "suspend judgement" when providing support to the student. Though the word "unconditional" was not used, the descriptions of the relationships were akin to those of familial relationships that were honored in their existence and existed for the purpose of showing care and support to the student coachee.

Academic Skills

Academic skills were described as a part of the coaching process for each academic coaching program visited by each program administrator and academic coach. The skill most commonly named as a part of the coaching process was time management and each program described their program's specific approach to the skill of time management through printed and/or digital resources that coaches provided to student coachees. Additional skills named by program administrators and coaches were organizational skills, study skills, note taking skills, resource management, and college (or institutional) processes. While these skills were named as a part of the academic coaching "tools," program administrators and coaches did not describe these academic skills as the focus of their coaching sessions. They kept their descriptions of the session focused on the student, academic skills could be taught as a part of that support, but the

student was of greater importance. Interestingly, these skills were often emphasized in print and web publications as a marketable takeaway from the coaching sessions.

One case emphasized academic skills and tools more than the others. SCC's emphasis on the teaching of skills was evident in coaching sessions as coaches spent much time explaining the how and why of a particular skill or resource. Their use of the academic skills was described as "teaching how-to" study or manage time, and this use assisted with program identification and boundaries.

The Value of Data

The collection and review of student data was described by program administrators and coaches at each site as an important part of their coaching process. Data reviewed included student data as available in the institution's information learning management systems. Coaches described this data as important in preparing for coaching session with students; however, they also indicated they did not necessarily bring up the information to the student. Instead their review of the data allowed them to identify important questions to ask the students early in the coaching process. Additional data reviews described by coaching programs included the data collected through the course of student coaching sessions. This data was collected in various ways including coaches' notes and surveys, and each program identified a specific software for managing contact and meeting notes. The importance of the data collected through the program's practices and processes was also described as impactful as it was used for ongoing training and improvements. Coaches often described the use of student information during the course of team meetings and its impact on their coaching process. Additionally, TCC described their use of the data collected to advocate for student needs on their campus.

RQ2: The Experience of Academic Coaching

To answer the second research question, *How do students experience academic coaching at community colleges?*, I focused my analysis of shared themes from each case based on student descriptions of the coaching program and their experience within it. I further triangulated those descriptions with observations I made while on site of each case.

Cross-case analysis of student experiences of academic coaching identified several shared experiences among student coachees. Student descriptions of their experiences focused on the process of working through struggles or barriers with their academic coaches, and felt ownership in the process. While they expressed confidence in the academic coach's knowledge or experience, they valued how the collaboration allowed them to maintain ownership of their experience and their decisions. Students also experienced personal connections and trust with their academic coaches that were described in comforting and familial terms. These personal connections allowed for the student to experience holistic support "without judgement." Additionally, students identified academic skills that were a part of the coaching process, emphasizing the skills of "navigating college" and time management in their experiences.

Working Through

Student coachees often described their experience with academic coaching as "working through" a problem or a barrier. They described the experience in terms that denoted motion such as walking and talking through or taking steps. Additionally, they describe the experience in terms of having someone to work through the problem with, recognizing the benefit of the coach in the process of learning about and participating in college. The learning processes described included lessons on their own knowledge and processes, personal barriers that affected school work, how to manage college classes, instructors, homework and study, and the processes that

are unique to their college including financial aid, advisement, enrollment, etc. Some students described the working through within a single visit to address a single problem or concern, and others talked about the working through in the context of multiple visits with multiple topics. Either way, the experience was focused on how the coach helped the student coachee to figure out a solution or next step to try. Many students also reported that the solution they came to or applied assisted them in their progress.

Collaboration and Student Ownership

A consistent experience of the students through the process of working through with their coaches was the experience of collaboration that allowed the student to maintain autonomy of their decisions. Students spoke of the process as collaborative in that they felt the coaches were working with them. Students often noted that they directed the conversation or selected the topic that they wanted help with, and then they talked through options of how to address it with their coach. The coach could offer suggestions or explain information and provide guidance, but the student was consistently a part of the conversation and the decision of what to try next. The students described their ability to choose to take the recommendations of their academic coaches as well. A few even described their choice to not try or to request a different action to try. The collaborative process that supported autonomy empowered students to participate in the decisions that impacted their success. This support of the individual and the individual's choice contrasted the students' descriptions of other types of coaches they had experienced. For the student, the role of the academic coach supporting the person, not the process, the institution, or the team. The students described the coaches as experts, but also experienced a coaching relationship in which supporting the student was the focus.

Coach as Expert and Resource

Student coachees experienced their coaches as experts in the room. They noted their ability to answer questions about the college and their courses. They also noted that the coach would help “no matter what” the question or situation was. Additionally, the student descriptions indicated they trusted the expertise, knowledge, or ability to find an answer on all topics presented. Student coachees indicated they would often call the academic coaching office to answer questions related to their job on campus. Another student noted that if a coach makes a recommendation, he takes it, “straight up.” This faith in the coaches’ expertise allowed students to feel comfort in asking questions, and accepting the responses given. Interestingly, multiple students commented on the difference between the information or recommendations given by their coach and of that given by their parent or friends. While they recognized the supportive nature of the parental or friendly advice, they did not necessarily value it in their decision-making process, but because they recognized the expertise of the coach, the recommendations had impact. When students had experienced limited interaction with their coaches, they expressed surprise at their level of knowledge and expertise and noted that this impression would support their use of a coach in the future as a trusted resource for information and support.

Relationships

Relationships were an important element of the student coachee’s experience with academic coaching. In all three cases, students described personal, familiar, and trusting relationships. Even when the students did not have a developed relationship with their coach, the ability of the coach to create a quick rapport that reflected care and concern was noted by students. In two cases, NCC and TCC, relationships were a fundamental building block for the coaching program. Students in those cases noted stronger emotional connections to their coaches and credited coaches in their accomplishments. Multiple students noted they “wouldn’t be here”

(still enrolled in college) without the help of their coach. In all cases, the students described the value of the relationship in the context of how it provided comfort and confidence in their ability to find progress or a path to success. In essence, the relationship helped them to believe in their ability find success.

Like Family

In the cases where the relationship was a fundamental ingredient for the coaching program, the relationship was often a familial experience. Students noted the genuine care they felt from their coaches and many expressed deep emotional connections to their coaches. During observations in these cases, I noted this connection. Conversations seemed similar to those a student might have with a close relation like an aunt or uncle or and older. The coach and coachee were familiar with each other, referenced previous conversations and events, and contained informal behaviors and thought processes. The conversations could be similar to those had over the proverbial dinner table where the events of the day and struggles of life are shared and discussed. The familial care expressed by coaches created a safe space for students to share, reflect, and make decisions that students described in terms of comfort and trust. Additionally, students recognized the consistency of their coaches in these relationships. They described their coaches as “always there,” “consistent,” and “reliable.”

Without Judgement

In all cases, students noted that a key element of the coaching relationship was the lack of judgement coaches expressed about the student’s situation or presented question. This lack of judgement was coupled with the student’s understanding that the coach was there to work through and figure it out with them, and it supported the safe space coaches created for the students in their coaching sessions. Students also described the lack of judgment when

differentiating their coach from family and friends. Students recognized that while their family and friends would be there for them, telling their family about their struggles could be difficult, but the coach's approach was to address the problem without judgement.

Student coachees described the coaches' lack of judgement and willingness to work through anything with them in a caring fashion as motivating. Even when a relationship had not yet fully developed, and in the case where rapport was developed more than relationships, students noted the comfort and care they felt from coaches and how that care made them feel better about their current situation and abilities to progress forward. By focusing on the forward progress, the coach was instilling confidence in the student to make changes or at least make progress. This experience could also be understood when students contrasted academic coaches from other coaches they had experienced in their life. Other types of coaches were often more focused on the team or the correct way to do a skill or task than the student themselves. By focusing on the student without judgement and while showing consistent cares, the coaches seemed to build the student's self-confidence and belief in their own abilities.

Academic Skills

Student coachees all described the use of academic skills within their coaching sessions. Most commonly, students noted study skills, time management, and college navigation as the skills developed through coaching. However, these skills were not described as the emphasis of academic coaching, but simply an element of coaching. Students also discussed each of these skills in terms of development, not mastery or a specific method to be followed. Additionally, these skills were often discussed as part of the "talking through" process of coaching meetings. The conversations with their coaches about managing their time and/or needed college resources was how students identified their development of these skills.

In coaching sessions, coaches encouraged the use of time management or study skills. The explanation of how to implement or why a student should implement a specific skill was emphasized by SCC. In all cases, however, the practicing of skills was not required. Coaches encouraged use in coaching sessions by asking students if they could consider implementing specific tasks or steps into their regular process. The skill of navigating college was consistently provided as an informational piece. Students also described how coaches would explain different college processes and departments and how to navigate the services they provided. Students also described their coaches as helping them to complete college processes, or prepare for meetings with additional departments.

Additional Themes

Additional themes that were identified through cross-case analysis spoke to the context of the programs within their institutions. Namely, institutional culture, physical location on campus, and the program's ability to differentiate itself from academic advising and counseling services on campus. A strong influence on each of the academic coaching programs visited was the institutional culture. The institution's approach to academic coaching could be seen in the development and support of the program as well as the institutional attitude toward coaching as a practice. It impacted the culture of the coaching program itself. Another influence on the coaching programs was the physical space of the program offices. Each site visited had a unique approach to their physical space. The physical space was largely impacted on space provided by the institution, relationships to other programs, and program identity. Finally, academic coaching programs existed in relation to academic advising and counseling, often sharing characteristics of each. The result of the shared characteristics, however, did not negatively affect the program's ability to distinguish itself from these support services.

Institutional Emphasis on Academic Coaching

In two of the cases studied, the institution provided strong administrative support of the programs and viewed academic coaching as needed support tool for students. In these cases, the programs were often recognized as being “go-to” locations for students in all situations, and for faculty and staff in their work with students they were often considered a valuable resource. These coaching programs were often looked to as partners in the development of other student programs and resources. Reach-out to the coaches by concerned faculty or to the coaching program by institutional services for input on student barriers was common. One institution increased student tuition in direct support of the academic coaching program, allowing for a large full-time coaching staff devoted to serving the largest portion of student populations of all sites visited. These sites emphasized developing personal relationships with students and focused on serving students in the classroom, at the institution, and in their lives outside of academics. Coaching sessions were more personal and collaborative.

In the remaining case, where the academic coaching program struggled with maintaining and promoting its identity on campus, its institutional culture did support coaching as a practice, but in its broad support, identified multiple programs that coached students. This broad application of coaching created strong training processes for new academic coaches, but it also seemed to create concern about which department coached or supported which need of the student. This concern led to multiple support silos as the individual programs, including academic coaching, worked to maintain clear boundaries between the various support services to students. This culture impacted the academic coaching program in its ability to holistically serve students as there was a consistent concern about maintaining those boundaries. It also impacted the individual coaching sessions as it limited their scope. The program focused more heavily on

explaining the how and why of academic skills and did not rely on the development of coach to coachee relationships, opting instead for building rapport with students. However, academic coaches still worked to maintain collaborative processes with the students as a tenant of coaching practices.

Physical Space

The physical spaces of each site visited reflected the institutional culture and support of academic coaching as well. While all cases shared some similarities in their approach to the coaching space needs, institutional impacts on the physical space were noted. TCC and NCC designated office space and meeting space used for the academic coaching program that allowed for group sessions, access to personal needs (i.e. the hygiene closet), and private coaching offices for coaching sessions. TCC emphasized the ability of student organizations to use its physical space for meetings and became a built-in support for additional support programs by housing academic coaches within multiple support program office spaces. NCC housed all academic coaches in a large modular office space, but differentiated that office space from the student-facing meeting spaces for group sessions and individual meetings. Both of these programs were allotted unique spaces that fit the needs of their program and access to all students; however, it could be difficult to locate these coaching offices amongst the campus locations and buildings.

SCC hosted coaching offices on multiple campuses within larger student learning hubs in an effort to meet students where they are likely to go for support. This broad hub of support joined multiple support programs within one large space. However, this site did not provide space for group sessions or meetings outside of reservable classrooms. Additionally, this site did not provide private office space to coaches for coaching session with students. The location of

this program in the back corner of the learning hubs, contributed to the struggle this program had with maintaining and promoting their identity on campus.

Existence in the Intersection of Support Services

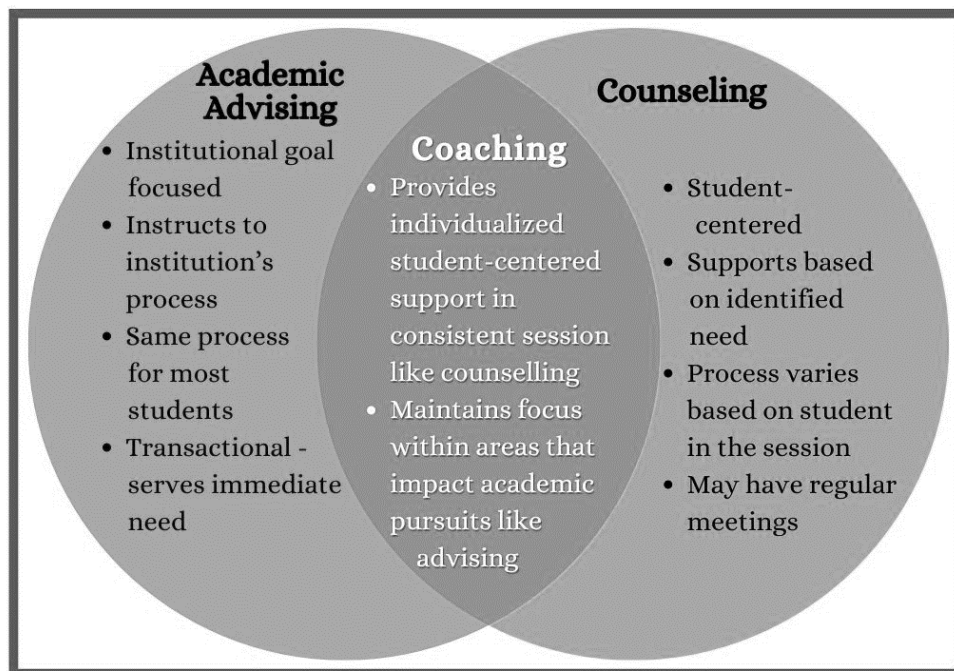
All academic coaching programs that participated in this study desired to support other services and often referred students as a part of the coaching process, and all programs were able to clearly delineate their role from that of other support services, namely academic advising and counseling. Academic coaching was often compared to academic advising using the terms “transformational” and “holistic” for academic coaching, and “transactional” and “institution” for academic advising. Program administrators, academic coaches, and students all recognized that advisement that was a service built to support the institutional plans or goals. Advisors helped students to complete those plans and goals. Additionally, advisement was identified as a service that was provided for point-in-time needs; whereas academic coaching provided holistic service in support of the whole student over the course of their lifecycle at the institution, and in some cases, after a student had left. Coaching was student-focused and the goal could shift based on the needs of the student. Coaching was described as transformative in that the relationship was ongoing and including continually checking-in on the student as the student developed skills and knowledge. While one coaching program’s sessions were more closely aligned to the transactional, point-in-time service model of advisement, as a program, the model aimed to serve continuously and in an on-going fashion, and served the various and changing needs of students, even those that fell outside the context of academic and degree plans.

Academic coaching programs served individual students with a large scope of individual needs; thus, they recognized and respected the professional credentials of counselors, noting the medical and legal distinctions those credentials provided. When concerns regarding mental

health issues or diagnosis affected a student’s academic process or goals, coaches referred students to counselors and assisted them in scheduling appointments, but during coaching sessions, they focused on the academic skills or academic impacts so as to not “muddy the waters.”

Interestingly, academic coaching programs all recognized their existence overlapped these support programs. Multiple coaches and an administrator discussed the “gray areas” between the services. Additionally, they noted that their program often “filled in the gaps” between support services. Where service-area overlap existed, coaches often managed “the gray area” of the overlap. Figure 4.5 illustrates the how the academic coaching programs operate in relationship to advising and counseling. Interestingly, academic coaching shares characteristics **Figure 4.5.**

Venn Diagram expressing the service-area overlap in which academic coaching provides support.



between advisement and counseling, living in the intersection between the two support programs. Program participants consistently described the approach of academic coaches in similar terms as

counseling but focused on the outcomes or effects of academic pursuits. While coaches supported the individual student similar to a counselor, they strove to maintain focus on the elements of the student's life that affected his or her progress toward personal (or the institutionally defined) academic goals. Programs managed the overlap in varying degrees, but two similarities in that management were consistent. First, academic coaches supported their student coachees in the appointment-making or identification of need to make an appointment with an advisor or counselor. Second, academic coaches helped students prepare for those meetings by describing what could be expected or identifying topics to cover or questions to ask.

Chapter Summary

This multi-case study investigated academic coaching at three large community colleges in the United States, and included participation from program administrators, academic coaches, and student coachees. The results of this study were presented in three case study reports that identified program characteristics and important themes for each institution. These reports were followed by a cross-case analysis that answered the research questions guiding this study and identified three additional themes.

The academic coaching program at Nalis Community College emphasized the relationship between the academic coach and student coachee as integral to their coaching process. Their process was further supported by training provided to the academic coaches in support of coaching skills, student development, and institutional and community resources. Coaching sessions were student-centered and non-prescriptive, and the coach was prepared to follow a process that “go[es] with the flow, but there are key points.” The fluid approach provided space and created motion for the student. The process introduced students to academic skills in support of student transformation, but the acquisition of those skills was not as important

to the coaching process as the development of the relationship with the student coachee. The relationship and coaching sessions emphasized the student's personal autonomy and was integral in developing student confidence. Student's trust in the relationship and the confidence it helped to develop was important to the student's transformation and progress toward their academic goals.

Straugh Community College's academic coaching program was strongly influenced by boundaries and institutional silos. The physical location of the program offices and institution's liberal use of coaching programs at the institution impacted the program's identity and application of coaching practices. Academic coaching emphasized its focus on eight areas of the student's academic and institutional experience, and coaches worked to build a quick rapport with students to support them quickly and with care. Their approach to coaching sessions followed a diagnose and treat pattern that emphasized the use of academic skills and action steps for students to take in pursuit of their identified needs and goals. While the program and institutional boundaries created silos for student support, the extensive training for coaches on those support silos allowed them to provide consistent support to students, particularly as students navigated each program or student support department.

The academic coaching program at Tulain Community College emphasized the theme of consistency: consistency in relationships, consistency in communication and documentation processes, and consistency in their student-driven approach to coaching sessions. Supporting the program's ability to be consistent was the program's consistent approach to training and the impact of administrative support. An important element of the program's coaching process was the act of following up. Coaches' use of academic skills and institutional knowledge were a part of coaching sessions, but they were secondary to the relationship. Additionally, data collection

and review specifically informed the coaching process and provided institutional support. Further, while consistency was the central theme of this model, the recursive nature of the feedback loop between the themes ensured continued ability to train academic coaches on student needs and best practices, and return support to the institution in the form of documentable evidence resulting in continued, documented growth and development of the coaching program itself.

Cross case analysis of the three academic coaching programs identified shared descriptions and experiences as well as additional themes that impacted the academic coaching programs. Academic coaching at the community college level focused on providing consistent training to their coaches including program and institution-level expectations and parameters, coaching best practices, academic theories, and institutional and community processes and resources. Although most coaches did not identify their practice in the terms specific coaching models, each program had consistent practices and approaches with their students that was reflected in interviews and observations within each case. Additionally, the training allowed administrators and coaches to clearly articulate the distinction between academic coaching and advisement, counseling, and tutoring. Each coaching program shared a consistent focus on holistic student support, beyond strict academics and point in time needs that was driven by the student coachee, not the coach. Further, the student-driven approach was dependent on the academic coaches' abilities to develop a strong relationship of trust or quick rapport, and were often described in familial terms and having a strong impact on the student's ability to persist academically. Academic skills were consistently identified as a part of the process, but in practice the skills were less important than the support provided to the student. Another important description of the academic coaching programs was their emphasis on program

documentation and data collection through the use of articulated processes, procedures, and software.

Cross-case analysis of student experiences of academic coaching identified several shared themes as well. Student descriptions indicated that they felt ownership of the coaching process, decisions made, and action steps to be taken as a result of coaching. Their descriptions of the coaching sessions focused on the process of working through struggles or barriers with their academic coaches. Additionally, they expressed confidence in the academic coach's knowledge of the institution and community or experience in higher education and life. Students valued how the collaborative nature of the coaching process allowed them to maintain ownership of their experience and their decisions. The relationship between coaches and student coachees was an important part of the student's described experiences as well. Personal connections and trust with their academic coaches were described in comforting and familial terms, and allowed for the student to experience holistic support "without judgement." The lack of judgement and consistency in support built confidence and student autonomy in their decisions as students. Additionally, students identified academic skills that were a part of the coaching process, emphasizing the skills of "navigating college" and time management in their experiences.

The institutional context of the academic coaching programs, namely, institutional culture, physical location on campus, and the program's ability to differentiate itself from academic advising and counseling services were also identified through cross-case analysis. The institution's approach to academic coaching was identified in the development and support of the program, institutional attitude toward coaching as a practice provided both support and, at times, hinderances to the coaching programs. The physical space of the program offices was unique for each case. The physical space was largely impacted by the institution (what they provided) and it

had an effect on the program's relationships to other programs, as well as their program identity. Finally, academic coaching programs all existed in relation to academic advising and counseling, often sharing characteristics of each. The result of the shared characteristics, however, did not negatively affect the program's ability to distinguish itself from these support services. Instead, academic coaching programs operated in the shared space by filling in the gaps and providing access and support to students in their use of those support services.

Chapter 5 - Discussion

Introduction

The individual case study reports for the three cases and accompanying cross case analysis provided in the previous chapter identified definitive themes for the academic coaching programs at large community colleges. This analysis sought to answer the research questions of this study: 1. How is the academic coaching model at community colleges described by academic coaches, program administrators, and institutional documents? and 2. How do students experience academic coaching at community colleges? This study is the first holistic, qualitative study that includes multiple participant perspectives creating a more complete understanding of academic coaching in the community college setting. It addresses the “relatively small” (Dalton & Crosby, 2014, p. 63) body of literature on academic coaching and provides a response to C. Robinson’s (2015) noted difficulty in identifying shared practices between academic coaches and academic coaching programs.

This chapter begins with the application of the study’s conceptual framework Ives’ (2008) coaching dichotomies to create a clear definition of academic coaching at community colleges. As the conceptual framework for this study, Ives’ (2008) dichotomies were influenced the study’s research and interview questions. This is followed by a discussion of findings, including a new definition for academic coaching in at the community college and how my findings support academic coaching literature and recommendations for practice and further study.

Application of Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework that guided this study was Ives’ (2008) coaching dichotomies. Ives’ research identified three distinct dichotomies present in the body of literature used to define

the multiple professional and psychological coaching frameworks: directive or non-directive; personal developmental or goal focused; and therapeutic or performance driven (see Table 2.3). Although Ives (2008) did not apply his coaching dichotomies to academic coaching, his standards for each dichotomy provided a framework for defining academic coaching at the community college that is not reliant upon expected characteristics or previously applied student development, retention, and engagement theories developed in four-year institution as it has been previously studied (C. E. Robinson, 2015; J. A. Robinson, 2019). Figure 3.1 illustrates how academic coaching in the community college context can be defined within Ives' (2008) dichotomies. The dichotomies were applied during the data analysis process to individual cases and during cross-case analysis. Appendix B specifies the application of the dichotomies to the research questions within the case study protocol.

When Ives (2008) dichotomies are applied to academic coaching at community colleges, each institution expressed similar patterns within the three dimensions with considerable alignment within dimensions one and three. Table 5.1 illustrates the evaluation of each community college within Ives (2008) dichotomies. Nalis and Tulain Community Colleges aligned in two of the three dimensions. Both could be defined as non-directive and therapeutic. Both programs sought to emphasize student autonomy and choice within the coaching sessions, and both built coaching sessions around the relationship between coach and coachee in order to support personal development and progress toward academic goals. In these two dimensions, Straugh Community College was more slightly more directive and performance driven. This shift in approach and effects was best understood in the program's coaching process that followed a diagnose and treat pattern. At Straugh, coaches desired for the student to maintain ownership of the coaching sessions; however, they often acted as experts in the room and gave

advice in their area of expertise. Additionally, the process was not necessarily reliant on long-term relationships but was instead focused on immediate changes to improve performance.

Although Straugh was slightly more directive and performance driven than non-directive or therapeutic, if evaluated on a spectrum between the dichotomies, it lies closer to a midpoint, maintaining qualities of the nondirective approach and therapeutic effects.

Table 5.1.

Application of Ives' (2008) coaching dichotomies to the academic coaching programs of this study.

Dimension 1:		←Placement on Spectrum→	
	Directive		Non-Directive
Approaches	Coach offers advice and guidance. – SCC - TCC	NCC	Coach acts of facilitator of coachee's process toward goals. NCC – SCC - TCC
	Coach may have specific expertise or knowledge. NCC – SCC - TCC		Coach follows “ask-not-tell” approach. NCC – SCC - TCC
	Coach shares theoretical ideas. NCC – SCC - TCC	SCC	Coach does not need specific expertise and does not share personal theoretical perspectives. - TCC
		TCC	
Dimension 2:			
	Development-Focused		Solution Focused
Outcomes	Strategy is holistic and supports more general personal development. NCC - TCC	NCC	Strategy is goal oriented to achieve specific outcomes. SCC – TCC - NCC
	Strategy is problem focused – identifying what is holding the person back.	SCC	Strategy is solution focused – identifying resources to move coachee forward. NCC – SCC - TCC
	Long-term strategy NCC - TCC		Strategy is short-term and nontherapeutic. SCC
	Feedback is used as a learning tool. NCC - TCC	TCC	Feedback is used to guide future actions. NCC - SCC – TCC
Dimension 3:			
	Therapeutic		Performance Driven
Effects	Coaching for personal development - to change feelings or actions. NCC - TCC	NCC	Coaching for improved performance. NCC – SCC - TCC
	Relationship development is central to supporting personal growth. NCC – SCC - TCC	SCC	Relationship is not central to change. SCC
	Raising awareness of coachee's feelings is the end.		Raising awareness of coachee's understanding of his circumstances is the means to change personal actions. NCC – SCC - TCC
	Coaching creates stability to support personal growth. NCC – SCC - TCC	TCC	Coaching creates instability to motivate change.

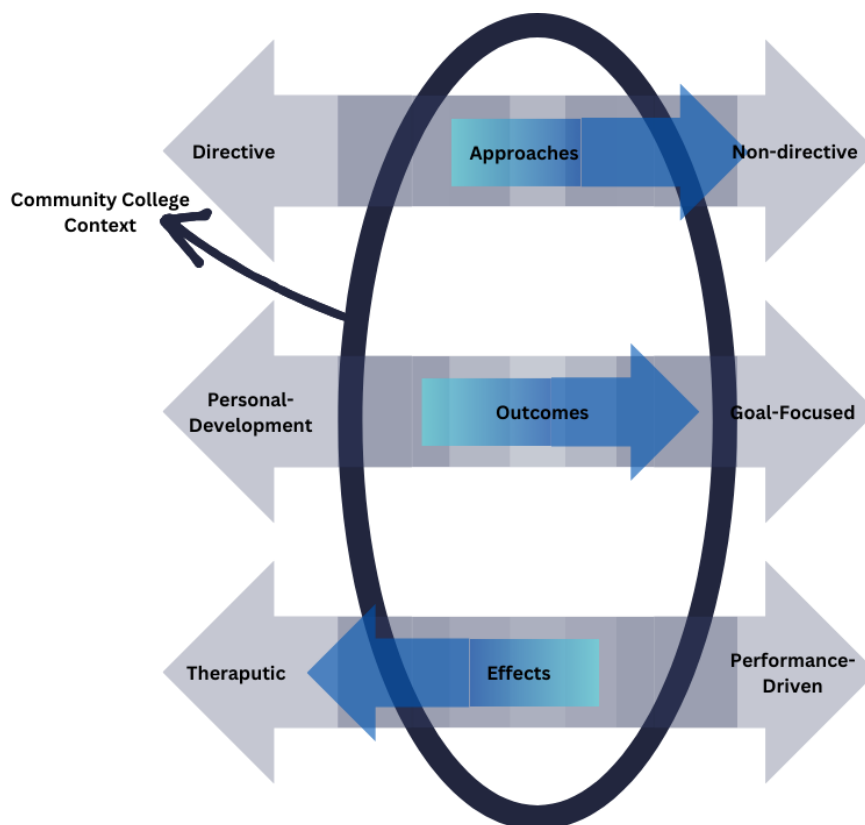
When evaluating the academic coaching programs on the second dimension, development-focused vs solution focused outcomes, a consistent application was difficult to identify at first. The difficulty was the result of the criteria's definition in application. On the

surface, the programs seemed to be development-focused; however, that application did not explain the consistent forward progress toward solutions that the coaches strove for. Ives (2008) notes a similar difficulty in evaluating this dimension stating that among coaching perspectives “differ as to the description or definition of a goal” (p. 107). He continues, “goals exist at varying levels of abstraction, forming a hierarchical structure,” (p. 107) noting that abstraction and structure impact the program’s definition or understanding of the term “goal.” When evaluating the goal focus of the three programs, most coaches did not focus on specific goals in meetings with their student coachees. Instead, they were looking at steps for change. These steps were in support of developing the coachee’s abilities to reach their goals. Ives (2008) identified this process in the practice of adult-development coaching practices that don’t set predetermined goals, and instead “create the psychological space for reflective learning” (p.106). Thus, the coaching model at community colleges emphasized the longer-term holistic and therapeutic support of personal development as a goal, or to achieve the outcomes as determined through the process. This application of the second dimension aligns the programs closer to solution-focused on the spectrum.

The placement of the academic coaching programs at community colleges within Ives’ (2008) framework is illustrated in Figure 5.1. The result of the application of Ives (2008)

Figure 5.1.

Visual representation of the academic coaching programs of this study within Ives' (2008) coaching dichotomies



dichotomies on the academic coaching programs at community colleges through the cross-case analysis indicates the programs are most closely aligned as non-directive, solution-focused, and therapeutic. Of the coaching models reviewed by Ives (2008), none fit this dichotomous pattern. Research on academic coaching has shown difficulty in defining the practice, particularly at the community college (C. E. Robinson, 2015; J. A. Robinson, 2019; Sepulveda, 2020). Further, J. A. Robinson (2019) notes that this is likely a result of the inability of researched theories and practices to fit the needs of the community college student as the current research is often directed to programs at four-year colleges and universities (Alzen et al., 2021; Bellman et al., 2015; Blankenship, 2017; Bosworth, 2006; Capstick, 2018; Field et al., 2010; Johnson & Sepulveda, 2021; Scott, 2017). By applying Ives' (2008) dichotomies to academic coaching programs at the community college, a clear pattern emerges that indicates common qualities in

the academic coaching programs studied that indicate a shared practice built to support the student characteristics of the community college context.

Table 5.2 summarizes the application of Ives' (2008) dichotomies to the various coaching models discussed in the body of research on academic coaching. This application was based on the available descriptions of academic coaching programs described in literature and include: 3rd Party Providers such as OnTrack (Bettinger & Baker, 2014; *InsideTrack*, 2022b), Americorp (Pechac, 2017), and the Edge Foundation (Parker et al., 2011); institutional models such as the Academic Center for Excellence at the University of South Caroline (SC) (C. Robinson & Gahagan, 2010) and the Academic Coaching for Excellence Model at the University of Memphis (ACE) (Capstick et al., 2019); and the professional coaching model of GROW (Cox, 2015; J. A. Robinson, 2019; Sepulveda, 2020). Where cells are empty in the table below, the literature did not provide sufficient detail of the model's application to evaluate within the dichotomy. Notably, academic coaching in the community college settings of this study are unique in the application of the dichotomies. This comparison provides an indication of why academic coaching at the community college is often found to be lacking in a consistent framework for coaching practices (J. A. Robinson, 2019). It has been measured or evaluated against program models not developed specifically for community college students by community college practitioners; however, the academic coaching programs at community colleges reviewed for this study did in fact share a consistent framework with each other, a non-directive, solution-focused, therapeutic model.

Table 5.2.*Comparison of academic coaching models within Ives' (2008) coaching dichotomies*

<i>Model</i>	<i>Approach</i>	<i>Outcomes</i>	<i>Effects</i>
3rd Party Providers	Non-directive	Solution-Focused	
Institutional Model		Personal Development	Performance Driven
Ace			
Institutional Model Sc	Non-Directive	Solution-Focused	Performance Driven
Grow	Application not adequately described in Acad. Coaching Literature		
Community College Programs In This Study	Non-Directive	Solution-Focused	Therapeutic

Defining Academic Coaching at Community Colleges

Academic coaching definitions in the literature emphasize the one-on-one relationships between coaches and student coachees in which the academic coach utilizes professional coaching techniques such as motivational questioning, active listening, and goal setting to support students in the development of an academic plan and accessing campus and community resources (Neuhauser & Weber, 2011; C. E. Robinson, 2015; J. A. Robinson, 2019; Sepulveda, 2020). The academic coaching programs at community colleges contained the predefined elements listed; however, the application of Ives' (2008) dichotomies creates a clearer definition of the practice. Notably, the academic plan that is highlighted in the literature was less important in practice. Only one administrator within the community college programs emphasized an academic plan for students. What was more important to the programs was the development of personal and academic skills and access to resources and college-going knowledge that allowed students to find their defined version of success which often centered around personal improvement or development without a concrete goal or plan to obtain.

Academic coaching at the community college emphasized the individual coachee and the individual student's needs above pre-defined plans or goals. C. Robinson (2015) wondered whether the individual focus on individual student needs of academic coaching was what made

the process “so hard to define and lack[ing in] consistency between institution” (p.124).

However, when considered as a definitive element of a coaching approach as expressed by Ives (2008) dichotomies, a clearer understanding emerges. The findings of this study have led to a new definition of, academic coaching at the community college: a purposeful, semi-structured coaching practice that employs reflective conversations, supported by a relationship, to empower the student coachee to identify and address his or her needs and/or personal goals while providing access to academic and personal skills, institutional and college-going knowledge, and college and community-based resources. It is a non-directive, goal-focused, and therapeutic coaching practice.

Purposeful Practice

Based on these findings, academic coaching at the community college was found to be robust with defined characteristics and processes. Although many of those processes were not directly tied to researched, named, or marketed approaches, program consistency to their process illustrated a purposeful approach that was guided by comprehensive and ongoing training within each program. Although much previous research indicated a lack of identifiable process based in researched practices (Pechac, 2017; J. A. Robinson, 2019; Sepulveda, 2020) the evaluation of programs was in comparison to established practices in professional coaching and/or coaching at four-year colleges and universities. At the community college, the academic coaching program’s training on multiple frameworks and academic theories of student retention and engagement were present and provided context for the development of the program’s developed coaching practices. The result was a purposeful development of coaching skills that coaches employed in coaching sessions that were directed by the student and the student’s identification of need and or goal. While academic coaches at the community college did not name a specific coaching

framework they were adhering to, their individualized approach allowed for better support of the individual student (Ives, 2008; Nieuwerburgh, 2017) while following an identifiable, purposeful process.

The purposeful process in coaching sessions was characterized by a conversational approach that met each of the following steps: welcome, getting to know, or catching up, identification of concerns or review of progress made, consideration of next steps, new skills, or available resources, identification of next steps, goals, or follow-up process. The process unfolded much like a qualitative, semi-structured interview (DeMarrais & Lapan, 2004; Patton, 2015) where the coach and coachee are co-partners in the meaning-making of the session. Nieuwerburgh (2017) recognized this structure as “a managed conversation” (p.5). Purposeful training for academic coaches on coaching skills such as developing a relationship, asking questions and intentionally listening (Cox, 2015; International Coaching Federation, n.d.; Nieuwerburgh, 2017; C. E. Robinson, 2015; Sepulveda, 2020), as well as campus and community resources allowed the coaches to manage the conversation with their coachees to identify next steps, questions, recommendations, etc. How the conversation was implemented, and these steps were followed, was unique to each program and consistently applied in each program; thus fitting the need of the individual programs and the institutions they served. Additionally, the loose structure of the coaching sessions is directly tied to the importance of the student coachee in the coaching session. The student chooses the direction of the session, the student chooses what to share, and the student decides what to do next. The conversational, semi-structured approach to the coaching sessions maintains the non-directive approach of coaching, ensuring the coachee maintains responsibility and ownership of their progress.

The semi-structured processes within coaching sessions are supported by more specific program processes. Program processes are clearly articulated in programming materials and training processes. Each program emphasized clear processes for communication with students, documentation of communications and meeting notes, and processes for continued reach-outs or follow-ups with students. Additionally, each program supported these processes with consistent onboarding for new coaches and ongoing training for all coaches. These shared, required processes insured consistent support of students, data collection, and program improvement. In fact, two of the programs visited were in the process of updating their training documents based on program growth and development and student feedback.

The purposeful approach to the coaching process and data collection led to purposeful use of student data to inform and support both the coaching program and the institution itself. Program evaluation is an important element of higher education to not only ensure program effectiveness, but to also provide an avenue for program improvement (Newcomer et al., 2015). Additionally, program reviews that provide evidence a college is supporting student goals for education must clearly articulate relevant data that informs decision-making for accreditation and accountability (Suskie, 2015). The academic coaching programs could successfully implement changes to their programs based on their collection of student feedback, and this could process allowed them to provide evidenced feedback to the institution at large. The coaching programs were also identifying key metrics for student success that were “good enough” (Suskie, 2015, p. 169) for evaluation to their programs’ successes. Each provided data reports that were establishing baseline expectations and investigating correlations between use of academic coaching and improved student metrics. Additionally, each of these reports was tailored to the individual program, based upon their program’s desired outcomes.

The Importance of Relationships

Central to academic coaching at community college is the relationship developed between the coach and the coachee. The semi-structured process in the coaching sessions is often conversational precisely because it is built around the established relationship. The importance of relationships is well documented in coaching literature (Cox, 2015; International Coaching Federation, 2019; Ives, 2008; Nieuwerburgh, 2017; Sepulveda, 2020). In higher education, the relationship is described as “collaborative” (Dalton & Crosby, 2014), and didactic (Pechac, 2017). Both of these descriptors held true in the community college setting, and were particularly present when rapport was more important than a deep relationship as it was in the customer service model of Straugh Community College. However, what is more apparent in the community college context, is that the relationships between the academic coach and the student coachee provided a safe space for students to share their concerns, ask questions, and try new skills. The relationship empowered the student in the process as it existed “without judgement.” Pechac (2017) surmised that the time spent with coaches and relationships developed between the coachee and coaches was often most impactful as well.

Relationships in this study were often described in familial terms by students in the study, reminiscent of relative who provided access and resources to the unfamiliar world of higher education and the community. The coaching relationships built social and college capital by getting student coachees connected to the right people and the right resources. Student coachees routinely recognized how their coaches connected them with campus and community resources who had the answers or had the needed resources to remove a barrier or complete a task. The value of the personal relationship that provides expertise and access is impactful in the community college context because of the students served. Community college students often

arrive on campus underprepared (Burns, 2010; Chen, 2016; O'Banion, 2019) and with other demographics that affect completion and retention rates such as part-time status, older than traditional age, first generation, and employed (American Association of Community Colleges, 2022). Students with these descriptors often have not had significant exposure to the world of higher education; thus needing the support in order to "level the playing field" (O'Banion, 2019, p. 27). Developing a trusting relationship with the student provides the often missing social capital for these students (Burns, 2010) because community college practitioners focus on supporting the individual student based on their individual needs, goals, or desire for self-improvement (Horn et al., 2006; O'Banion, 2019).

Program administrators and coaches all emphasized the importance of developing the trust of the student early in the coaching relationship, and they all described the coach's role as supporting through all situations, without judgement as well. It is the emphasis on the relationships within academic coaching at community colleges that align it with therapeutic effects (Ives, 2008).

Empowering Student Development

As previously stated, an important element of the coach to coachee relationship was the ability of that relationship within the coaching process to empower the student to ask questions, share concerns and barriers, and try new skills or strategies for personal development. Students consistently noted the ability to ask questions or try new strategies as a result of their relationship with the academic coach, and academic coaches consistently noted that student autonomy was central to their practice when making suggestions or identifying resources or new skills to try. Autonomy was also important in determining the purpose of coaching sessions or individual academic and personal goals. Academic coaching at the community college recognizes that

sustainable growth or transformation of the student had to be built on the student's desire for that change; thus, if a student did not desire to address a specific need or habit that the coach had identified as a potential barrier, they did not address it in the coaching session, nor did they create a goal for that purpose. One administrator described it in this way: "Success is yours, not the institutions - I work for the institution so I will tell you barriers, pitfalls, but you make the choice."

Giving student coachees autonomy to choose further supported the trust the coachee felt in the relationship. Students recognized that the process was for their benefit and not for the institution or another person's goals for their life. As a result, they invested in the process for themselves, identifying the growth or change they wanted to obtain. Even when the student chose to address an immediate need like transportation issues, the coach's willingness to help with that identified need further supported the student's recognition that they could "do this" particularly because they trusted the coach was there to support them. For professional coaches, the recognition of choice and self-motivation is considered critical in a client's success (Cox, 2015; Nieuwerburgh, 2017). Academic coaches at community colleges recognized the student's autonomy and choice to engage in the process and take steps to understand and improve their academic skills or personal management skills as the true goal for coaching sessions. While personal development was an outcome, the desired effect of academic coaching program was continual motion and progress toward that development, making academic coaching at community colleges solution-focused (Ives, 2008).

Academic Skills to Support Personal Development

Although the student chooses the direction of coaching sessions, academic coaches at the community college relied on a specific set of tools to support the academic and personal skill

development and college going knowledge of student coachees. Time management, study skills, and college navigational skills are all a part of the coach's toolkit. Supporting the development of academic skills has been identified as integral to academic coaching in higher education (Bettinger & Baker, 2014; Capstick, 2018) as has the role of the academic coach as a connection for the student, faculty, and other support services (Capstick, 2018; Pechac, 2017; C. Robinson & Gahagan, 2010). The community college programs in this study emphasized time management more than any other skill, often providing institutionally developed planners, assignment trackers, or calendar resources as a part of the practice. Additionally, the programs maintain digital and physical collections of resources for study skills, test-taking skills, research skills, etc. Coaching sessions don't often involve practicing the skills, although coaches will support students in learning how to use institutionally provided resources.

What is important in the community college academic coaching program is the introduction to and explanation of the academic skills or college resources. In this research, the process of the conversation-based coaching sessions supported the college-going knowledge for student coachees in the context of the coaching relationship. This, in turn, allowed for access to skills and information that many underprepared college students may not have been introduced to. One coach specifically named the "cultural wealth" his relationship with his students could provide as he described how he introduces the coachee to various college resources and skills. Additionally, the conversational approach allowed for the academic coach to model how to apply the skill, ask the question, or work through difficulties, while allowing the student to maintain the choice of when, how, or if to utilize them. This supported the coach's goal for the student to make the process their own and apply it for their own development. Previous studies have also

identified the time and relationship with a coach as the student coachee develops these skills as impactful to the coaching process (Pechac, 2017; J. A. Robinson, 2019).

Relationship to Advisement and Counseling

Due to the need for community colleges to provide services to meet student needs with less-available dollars (Cohen et al., 2014; O'Banion, 2019), it is important to understand how student support programs provide needed supports to students in support of retention and completion efforts (Alzen et al., 2021) without too much duplication of efforts. This concern about duplication of efforts can affect an institution's implementation of academic coaching programs (Sepulveda, 2021) or lead different services to believe they are able to integrate coaching into seemingly similar programs like advisement (McClellan & Moser, n.d.; NACADA, 2022). However, academic coaching at the community colleges of this study could be clearly distinguished from other support services and provided an important service in support of the individual student and the student's understanding and use of the currently established services of advising and counseling.

Much has been stated to support the distinction of coaching from advisement and counseling (Alzen et al., 2021; Blankenship, 2017; Griffiths & Campbell, 2008; InsideTrack, 2022a; Jeffries, 2010; Nieuwerburgh, 2017; Pechac, 2017; C. E. Robinson, 2015; J. A. Robinson, 2019; Sepulveda, 2020, 2021), and these distinctions remained true in the coaching programs in this study. Advisement was contrasted in its transactional role that supported institutional goals as opposed to the holistic support provided to individual students and their defined goals of success. This echoed the findings of J. Robinson (2019) and Sepulveda (2021) that defined the distinction between advisement and coaching as that of transactional vs transitional. The development of the student was desired outcome of the coaching sessions, not the institutionally

desired outcomes. Additionally, counseling was recognized as a professional and health-based practice that not only served a student holistically, but also required specific certifications or licensure for practice. So, while coaching programs supported the whole student regardless of identified need or goals, academic coaches respected the training and certifications of professional counselors and their ability to support student health and wellness. This recognition of the counselor's professional training coupled with the desire to remain focused on forward motion reiterated the responsibilities of a counselor as identified by Griffiths and Campbell (2008), namely the counselor's responsibility of promoting healing. With this recognition, coaches often worked with students in their choice to receive support from counseling services, echoing Pechac's (2017) notation that the act of referral to other support services was an integral part of the academic coaching process.

Definition in the Intersection

What was clearly evident in the programs of this study was the shared space in which the academic coaching processes operated, and the impact that space could provide to students' progress. Figure 4.5 uses a Venn Diagram to illustrate the relationship of academic coaching to academic advisement and counseling based on the results of this study. This diagram reaffirms the descriptions of Alzen et al. (2021) of the overlap between academic coaching, advisement and counseling as described in literature. In the intersection of the diagram, between the descriptions of advisement and counseling, academic coaching supports the whole student as he or she strives to meet the academic goals associated with the institution. Counseling programs do not provide guidance on academic program requirements and advisement programs emphasize the institutional plan over the individual goals and needs of the student. Student coachees recognized the coaches' emphasis and support of their person and their knowledge of the

institution's processes, procedures, and academic-based barriers. It was often the individualized, personal support of the student coachee that empowered him or her to take the necessary steps to meet the academic requirements of a course or academic program. Multiple student coachees noted that they "wouldn't be here [still enrolled]" if not for their academic coach and his or her support through institutional processes or the development of the knowledge of "how-to" be a college student.

Additionally, due to their work in the intersection, academic coaching programs in this study were able to support institutional efforts of retention and completion in two ways: by providing supported referrals to the needed supports of advisement (for academic-programming needs) and counseling (for personal health and wellness needs), and by providing data-driven feedback to the institution and the support services about the needs of students as identified through the coaching process. Both supports were important to institutional retention and completion efforts as they helped students engage with the institution and access needed resources. The support provided to students during the referral process often included a brainstorming of questions to ask when meeting with an advisor, thus supporting better engagement and outcomes from the advisement session. Additionally, coaches noted that because academic coaching was available to all students, it removed the stigma often associated with receiving help and this assisted when students were determining whether they wished to meet with a counselor or not – the student coachee felt more comfortable receiving the help a counselor could provide. Finally, one community college of this study was able to use documented feedback from student coachees to advocate for more academic advisors to assist students in the enrollment process, thus increasing access for students. It is precisely the work completed in the shared spaces of support services that often lead to academic coaching's

designation as a bridge between student services and academic affairs (C. E. Robinson, 2015; J. A. Robinson, 2019; Sepulveda, 2020).

The role of the academic coaching programs at the community colleges of this study within the shared space of support services further illustrates the definition of their shared model within Ives (2008) dichotomies. The greatest distinction between academic coaching and advising can be seen in their approach to the student. The advisor must be directive in order to support the completion of the institutional designated goals in the form of degree plans and graduation requirements. They are the expert in the room, directing the steps of the student. Academic coaching and advising, however, do share a solution-focused outcome. Both are striving for an end goal, but their end goals are different from each other. Academic coaching strives for personal development in the specific area of a student's academic life, while advising strives for completion of the institution's academic plan. Moreover, the shared holistic approach of counseling and academic coaching can be seen in their shared outcomes for the student. Both provide therapeutic benefits through their relationship-centric process that aims for stability. Academic coaching and counseling also differ in their desired outcomes. Counseling is firmly rooted in personal development, striving for general personal development by reflecting on what is holding the student back; whereas, academic coaching outcomes of solution-focused, developing the personal skills a student coachee to guide future actions. Table 5.2 illustrates the shared space of academic coaching, advising, and counseling based on Ives' (2008) dichotomies.

Table 5.3.

Comparison of academic coaching, advising and counseling evaluated through the lens of Ives (2008) coaching dichotomies.

Ives (2008) Dimensions	Advising	Academic Coaching	Counseling
Approaches	Directive	Non-Directive	
Outcomes	Solution Focused		Personal Development
Effects	Performance Driven	Therapeutic	

Implications for Practice

This study has identified a more complete definition for academic coaching within the community college context by investigating the descriptions of academic coaching programs by program administrators and academic coaches and through document analysis, as well as the experiences of student coachees within the academic coaching programs. With this definition in mind, the following implications for practice should be considered for community colleges who provide academic coaching or who are considering academic coaching as a support program for students.

Academic coaching programs should clearly define their practices and procedures and provide ongoing training to their coaches in support of the program. All participating programs in this study had clear program parameters and expectations. Academic coaches could clearly articulate the purpose of their programs and student participants understood the role of their academic coach as separate from and in relation to other support services. While academic coaching sessions need to remain flexible to support individual student needs, the academic coaching programs need to clearly outline their program parameters and expectations for coaches to ensure consistent support of students regardless of the individual direction of coaching sessions. Specifically, programs should consider the use of Ives (2008) coaching dichotomies to articulate their desired program approach, outcomes, and effects. Defined program practices should remain holistic and program-based and must allow for flexibility in coaching sessions. Program practices to be considered include communication and documentation expectations, professional relationships to institutional programs and services such as advising, counseling, and tutoring, professional relationships to student coachees, and the program approach to coaching sessions. Additionally, by clearly identifying program processes and procedures in

support of coaching sessions, program identity can be clearly articulated by program administrators, coaches, and student coachees.

Training should be provided to academic coaches on coaching skills, institutional processes and procedures, and academic theories that speak to student engagement and retention; however, this training should not create a prescriptive approach to student coachees within the coaching sessions. Rather, it should provide contextual knowledge for the coach in his or her support of the student. Academic coaches in this study did not always directly reference academic theories on student learning, retention, or engagement, nor did they reference specific coach frameworks or models; however, their descriptions of practice and important coaching skills echoed the language and recommendations of the theories and frameworks identified in their program's training manuals. Training processes should be ongoing, documented, and include the opportunity for collaboration and learning opportunities with all coaches in the program. Student descriptions of their experiences shared commonalities that indicated consistent training for program coaches, and program coaches noted the value of shared dialogue and learning from their peer academic coaches.

Interpersonal skills that support communication and authentic care for students are important characteristics for the academic coach. These skills support the development of rapport, relationships, and support for student coachees, and lead to the trust of the coachee for the coach and the academic coaching process. Additionally, problem-solving and task management skills become important as academic coaches support multiple students with individual needs and barriers. Coaches are often tasked with supporting students through personal and difficult situations and must be able to communicate information and resources while providing support without expressing judgment. Student coachees consistently recognized

the interpersonal skills of their academic coach and their coaches' abilities to provide comfort, care, and support in a non-judgmental fashion.

Institutional support for academic coaching programs, or lack of institutional support, can have strong impacts on the program's ability to support students. The coaching program within this study that had the most difficulty in promoting their campus identity operated in a system of support silos in which boundaries of service were more closely guarded. Academic coaching will exist in a shared space between other support services; however, that shared space is often where students can fall through the gaps. Institutions and other support programs should not fear the overlap with academic coaching programs but should recognize the value the coaching program brings to the institution's goals of completion and retention by supporting students to access the other support programs. When there is institutional emphasis in maintaining boundaries between coaching programs and other support programs, the academic coaches cannot operate with as much flexibility in coaching sessions, which may limit access. Additionally, programs that must manage institutional and program barriers may have difficulty in promoting the academic coaching program.

Data collection, analysis, and distribution should be used to improve not only the academic coaching program, but also the institutional support of student success. When documentation of coaching sessions and student needs are consistent elements of an academic coaching program's process, programs are given a significant amount of data that can support their coaching practices. The data should be consistently reviewed for themes and provide topic for program-specific training. Individual session notes can be used for an in-house case study to discuss approaches and available resources. Additionally, documentation of student barriers could be beneficial when shared with the institution at large. Patterns in student data that assist

with identifying barriers created by institutional processes and procedures can support a student's ability to find success in a course or with completion. When community college resources are often limited, this support back to the operations of the institution can add value to a program that does not generate credit-hour-based revenue. For example, one institution's use of their coaching contacts to reach out to students who had not yet enrolled for the upcoming semester led to information on barriers keeping students from enrolling and increased enrollment for the next semester. Data collection on this project proved beneficial to the institution and supported the value of the coaching program to the college.

Recommendations for Future Research

The research of this study provided a new framework for evaluating academic coaching programs in the community college setting, by identifying shared practices among three community college academic coaching programs. The following recommendations for future research are offered as a result of these findings:

1. These shared practices and the application of Ives' (2008) coaching dichotomies should be used to establish criteria for the development of a new academic coaching program, or evaluation of existing academic coaching programs. Special emphasis could be placed on a program's desired approach, outcomes, and effects for coaching sessions.
2. Multiple coaches in this study noted their role in providing college-going knowledge or social capital. Future studies should consider academic coaching through these theoretical lenses.

3. Longitudinal studies should be considered to evaluate the long-term impacts academic coaching has on completion rates for community college students both at the community college and continuing through higher education.
4. Cost analysis studies should also be considered to evaluate how program impacts on persistence and retention rates correlate with increased tuition and or state aid to institutions. This analysis could provide better support for the cost-effectiveness of academic coaching as a traditionally non-revenue generating program.

Conclusion

This multi-case study addressed a gap in academic coaching literature specific to the community college context. It developed a stronger understanding of the academic coaching practice which lead to an improved definition of its practice in the community college that can be applied in future research and program development. Contrary to previous findings, academic coaching at the community college does have a notable, definable format focused on allowing the students to develop their individual needs, overcome their individual barriers, and meet their individual goals. Driven by the student, with a goal of personal academic development, and with therapeutic effects, it's student-centered focus is particularly appropriate to the community college. It is a program that reinforces the community college identity of a democratizing institution, providing access to and support through educational attainment providing students access to personal, institutional, and community resources, tools, and knowledge that they may not have had access to previously. It supports their personal development in their attainment of personal academic goals.

This study situated academic coaching at the community college within Ives' (2008) coaching dichotomies and found it to be a non-directive, goal-focused, and therapeutic coaching model. It is a purposeful, semi-structured coaching practice that employs reflective conversations, supported by a relationship, to empower the student coachee to identify and address his or her needs and/or personal goals while providing access to academic and personal skills, institutional and college-going knowledge, and college and community-based resources. Further, this study provided implications for the practice of academic coaching at the community college and provided parameters for future areas of study.

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Appendix A - Case Study Protocol

Case Study Overview: The purpose of this case study is to gain a better understanding of academic coaching in the community college setting. Specifically, this study will consider how the academic coaching program is described by the institution, program administrators and coaches, as well as how students experience the academic coaching program. Direct observation and document analysis will provide additional insights to the coaching program within the community college context.

Data Collection Procedures: All data collection and analysis will be conducted by a single researcher, and the sole author of this study, Stephanie Joiner. Upon IRB approval, the following steps will be taken to identify and communicate with sites to be included in the multi-case study.

- I. Identification of potential cases
 - a. Identify academic coaching programs at community colleges
 - i. Email Coaching in Higher Education Listserv with general invitation to participate
 - ii. Conduct broad internet search to identify published academic coaching programs at community colleges
 - b. Contact individual program administrators and/or coaches with specific invitation to participate, including proposed scope of study, rationale of study, and proposed schedule of study.
 - i. Communicate via email and physical letter
 - ii. Follow-up with phone calls as needed.
 - c. Communicate with identified contact person to screen sites for participation (Yin, 2014) based on the following criteria:
 - i. Publication and/or promotion of academic coaching services
 - ii. Active use of academic coaching (students use the service)
 - iii. Employees perform academic coaching as a part of their job duties
 - iv. Academic coaching program has administrative oversight
- II. Communication with selected cases' contact individuals
 - a. Brief Zoom meeting to introduce self and establish rapport
 - b. Review case study protocol and proposed schedule for visit
 - c. Discuss potential students and coaches for observation and interview
 - d. Review informed consent form and practices
 - e. Invite feedback and edits to proposed plans

Upon identification of case locations and scheduling of campus visit, the following plans will be implemented at each location for data collection. While the description of activities per each day is preferred, the order of events will depend upon the activities and needs of the individual case locations.

- III. Schedule of data collection activities for each case (approximately 2 days per location).
 - a. Arrival day
 - i. Introductions to program administrator and coaches
 - ii. Tour campus and initial visit to academic coaching program location

- iii. Interview 1 (program administrator)
 - iv. Documentation collection
 - b. Day 2
 - i. Interview 2 (academic coach(es))
 - ii. Interview 3 (student(s))
 - iii. Observation of academic coaching session(s)
 - c. Day 3 (if needed)
 - i. Remaining interviews or observations

In support of accuracy in data collection, member checking will be conducted on the following schedule. As soon as possible, completed transcriptions of interviews will be shared with study participants for review and suggested edits or corrections.

Data Collection Tools: To each case location, the following data management tools will be implemented.

- I. Password protected laptop for word processing, collection of digital files for document analysis, and recording and transcribing of participant interviews.
 - a. Microsoft Office products: Word, Excel, and Outlook
 - b. Zoom online meeting platform
- II. Remarkable 2 digital tablet for interview and observation notes and personal reflections on site.

Large expandable folio for loose document collection (documents such as flyers, pamphlets, training materials, forms, etc.)

Appendix B - Data Collection Alignment to Research Questions

Data Collection Questions: The questions directing this study are divided into four levels (Yin, 2014), described below:

- IV. Study guiding question: How are practices and experiences shared among academic coaching programs within the context of the community college setting?
- III. Pattern finding question: How are shared practices and experiences noted or identified between cases?
- II. Individual case question: How is academic coaching described and experienced at this community college?
- I. Questions asked of interviewees, during document analysis, or guiding observations.

Using the levels described above, this multi-case study will ask the following questions:

- 4A. RQ1: How is the academic coaching model at community colleges described by academic coaches, program administrators, institutional documents?
 - 3A1. What shared descriptions exist among coaches regarding academic coaching as a practice?
 - 3A2. What shared experiences exist among coaches at community colleges?
 - 3A3. What shared descriptions exist among administrators regarding academic coaching as a practice?
 - 3A4. What shared views of the role of academic coaching at community colleges exist with coaches?
 - 3A5. What shared descriptions among coaches and administrators exist that reflect the descriptions of academic coaching by students?
 - 3A6. What shared descriptions exist among community colleges of their print and or internet materials that describe or promote academic coaching?
 - 3A7. What shared practices can be identified among community colleges in their training and/or documentation processes for academic coaching?
 - 2A1. How do coaches describe academic coaching as a practice?
 - 2A2. How do coaches experience academic coaching at a community college?
 - 2A3. How do administrators describe academic coaching as a practice?
 - 2A4. How do administrators view the role of academic coaching at a community college?
 - 2A5. How does the community college describe or promote academic coaching in print/online materials?
 - 2A6. How does the community college form an academic coaching program through training and/or through documentation of process?
 - 2A7. How is the description of academic coaching by administrators reflected in the descriptions of coaches?
 - 2A8. How is the description of academic coaching in documentation reflected in the descriptions of administrators and coaches?
 - 1A1. How do you describe Academic coaching? (Interview – Administrator, Coach)

- 1A2. How is coaching different from other support measures? (Interview – Administrator, Coach)
- 1A3. What guides your coaching process? (Interview – Coach)
- 1A4. Can you tell me about a typical coaching session? (Interview – Coach)
- 1A5. Why was academic coaching established? (Interview – Administrator)
- 1A6. What support/boundaries/expectations are provided to your AC program? (Interview – Administrator)
- 1A7. How is your AC program evaluated? (Interview – Administrator)
- 1A8. What makes a good academic coach? (Interview – Administrator, Coach)
- 1A9. What descriptors of Academic Coaching are published in print or online publications (Document Analysis)
- 1A10. How is Academic Coaching described in training and or process documentation? (Document Analysis)
- 1A11. What are the physical aspects of the program space? (Observation)
- 1A12. Where does coaching take place? (Observation)
- 1A13. What aspects of coaching can be observed in the program space? (Observation)
- 4B. RQ2: How do student experience academic coaching at community colleges?
 - 3B1. What shared experiences exist among students who participate in an academic coaching program at a community college?
 - 3B2. In what ways do students differentiate academic coaching from other support services at a community college?
 - 3B3. What shared impacts of academic coaching do students describe in their lives and/or academic experiences?
 - 3B4. What shared experiences of students exist that reflect the description of academic coaching by coaches and administrators?
 - 2B1. How do students describe their experience with academic coaching?
 - 2B2. How do students differentiate academic coaching from other support services?
 - 2B3. How do students describe the impact of academic coaching on their life and academic experience?
 - 2B4. How is the description of academic coaching by administrators reflected in the descriptions of students?
 - 2B7. How is the description of academic coaching by coaches reflected in the experience of students?
 - 2B6. How is the description of academic coaching in documentation reflected in the experience of students?
 - 1B1. How would you describe your coach's role or job? (Interview – Student)
 - 1B2. Can you tell me about an academic coaching session? (Interview – Student)
 - 1B3. Why are you meeting with an Academic Coach? (Interview – Student)
 - 1B4. Do you have any goals for your academic coaching meetings? (Interview – Student)
 - 1B5. How does your coach help you? (Interview – Student)
 - 1B6. Have you ever been coached before? How is academic coaching similar or different to that experience? (Interview – Student)

- 1B7. What is said about academic coaching program in published student testimonials? (Document analysis)
- 1B8. What definable characteristics of coaching can be observed during coaching session? (Observation)
- 1B9. How are coaching sessions managed in the program? (Observation & Document Analysis)
- 1B10. Are any processes or systems observable? (Observation)
- 1B11. Is academic coaching combined with other support practices? (Observation & Document analysis)

Application of Ives' (2008) Dimensional Dichotomies: The following illustrates the alignment between the level one questions of this study and Ives dimensional dichotomies:

<i>Ives Dimension</i>	<i>Study Questions</i>
Directive vs Non-Directive Approach	1A1, 1A2, 1A3, 1A4, 1B2, 1B8
Development vs Solution Focused Outcome	1A4, 1A9, 1A10, 1B4, 1B8, 1B9
Therapeutic vs Performance Driven Effect	1A3, 1A4, 1A7, 1B1, 1B3, 1B8, 1B9

Appendix C - Observation Protocol

There will be at least one observation at the site location. The observation will occur during a scheduled academic coaching session. As such, the duration of the observation period will be dependent upon the time planned for the scheduled session. The participants observed during the coaching session may or may not be the same student and coach interviewed on site. Personally identifiable information and personal life details will not be collected during the observation. Field notes will focus on the approach of the coach, the framework or patterns of the coaching session, subject areas discussed, and responsiveness of and questions from the student. Participants will be given the opportunity to member check the researcher's field notes and provide suggestions and corrections for consideration.

The following pieces of information may or may not be included within the observation field notes:

- Setting description including physical space and surrounding area
- Physical description of coach participant especially as it relates to their methods of relationship development and support of student.
- Physical description of student participant, especially as it relates to their participation in the coaching session and experience of the practice.
- Attitudes and emotional response cues
- Coaching characteristics and/or framework
- Topics of conversation
- Time involved

Depending on schedule approved by site location, the observation will take place after an interview with either the program administrator or coach. Additionally, an initial review of program documents will have also been completed. The following questions will be considered during the observation:

- 1A11. What are the physical aspects of the program space?
- 1A12. Where does coaching take place?
- 1A13. What aspects of coaching can be observed in the program space?
- 1B8. What definable characteristics of coaching can be observed during coaching session?
- 1B9. How are coaching sessions managed in the program?
- 1B10. Are any processes or systems observable?
- 1B11. Is academic coaching combined with other support practices?

Appendix D - Observation field note templates

Participant ID:

Date:

Time:

Location:

Location (room) description:

Focus on details that express directive vs nondirective approaches, personal development vs goal focused outcomes, and therapeutic vs performance driven effects (Ives, 2008), along with the descriptors of the program as provided by the program administrator or as identified through document analysis.

Personal Reactions

Observation Notes
Observations

Comprehensive summary:

Appendix E - Document Analysis Protocol

At each site, documents such as brochures, newsletters, or advertisements of the program will be requested from program administrators and coaches. In addition, a general search of the institutional website will be conducted and will provide digital documents regarding the coaching program. These documents will provide data regarding the descriptions of the program as shared with the public and institutional stakeholders. Additionally, any training documents and documents that map process (i.e. coaching reports, meeting note templates, etc). These documents will provide data that speak to consistent practices and expectations of the coaching program. An initial review of these documents will be completed before the initial interviews and/or observations, when possible, to assist the researcher in the development of program-specific questions regarding the descriptions of the program when appropriate.

The following questions will be considered during a complete document analysis:

- 1A9. What descriptors of Academic Coaching are published in print or online publications
- 1A10. How is Academic Coaching described in training and or process documentation?
- 1B7. What is said about academic coaching program in published student testimonials?
- 1B9. How are coaching sessions managed in the program?
- 1B10. Are any processes or systems observable?
- 1B11. Is academic coaching combined with other support practices?

Appendix F - Informed Consent

PROJECT TITLE: Understanding academic coaching at community colleges, a multi-case study

Project Approval Date:

Project Expiration Date:

Length of Study:

**PRINCIPAL
INVESTIGATOR:**

Royce Ann Collins, Associate Professor

CO-INVESTIGATOR(S): Stephanie Joiner, doctoral student

**CONTACT DETAILS FOR
PROBLEMS/QUESTIONS:**

Dr. Royce Ann Collins, racollin@ksu.edu

**IRB CHAIR CONTACT
INFORMATION:**

Lisa Rubin, Chair, Committee on Research Involving Human Subjects, 203 Fairchild Hall, Kansas State University, Manhattan, KS 66506, (785) 532-3224; Brad Woods, Associate Vice President for Research Compliance, 203 Fairchild Hall, Kansas State University, Manhattan, KS 66506, (785) 532-3224.

PURPOSE OF THE RESEARCH:

The purpose of this multi-case study is to learn about academic coaching programs at community colleges by studying how the programs are described by the people who work in the program and how students experience the academic coaching program. This study will collect multiple perspectives at multiple locations to identify shared practices and experiences in the community college setting.

PROCEDURES OR METHODS TO BE USED:

To learn about academic coaching, you will be interviewed for approximately one hour. The interview will be audio recorded for transcription purposes. You will be assigned a participation number and pseudonym to be used for record keeping and to maintain confidentiality in the final report of findings. No identifiable details will be shared in the final report that might expose your identity. You will have the opportunity to review the transcript to assure accuracy of your responses.

RISKS OR DISCOMFORTS ANTICIPATED:

There are no anticipated risks for participants in this study. You may withdraw from the research at any time.

BENEFITS ANTICIPATED:

Academic coaches and administrators will learn about their coaching program and processes, through the reflective process of the interviews and in the review of case study reports.

EXTENT OF CONFIDENTIALITY:

Interview and observation notes will be digitally written on a password-protected digital tablet. The raw data will be stored on a digitally secured thumb drive, locked in secured file cabinet. All interviews will be recorded through Zoom meeting software and transcribed. During the transcription process, any use of participants' actual names or identifiable information will be removed or altered to reflect participant ID or pseudonym. Digital recordings of the interviews will be deleted once transcription is complete, and audio files will be stored on secured thumb drive. Cloud versions of the interviews will be deleted after transcription is complete. Any additional digital notes, drafts of the report, or transcribed interviews will be stored on a digitally secured thumb drive. All digital copies of the raw data saved on the secured thumb drives will be secured for three years after the completion of this dissertation after which they will be deleted and destroyed. Hard copies of documents, including draft reports and institutional publications will be stored in a locked file cabinet and will be destroyed after three years using the secured document disposal process which includes shredding, and destroying through paid service.

The information or biospecimens that will be collected as part of this research will not be shared with any other investigators.

IS COMPENSATION OR MEDICAL TREATMENT AVAILABLE IF INJURY OCCURS? ☐ Yes ☒ No

Terms of participation: I understand this project is research, and that my participation is voluntary. I also understand that if I decide to participate in this study, I may withdraw my consent at any time, and stop participating at any time without explanation, penalty, or loss of benefits, or academic standing to which I may otherwise be entitled.

I verify that my signature below indicates that I have read and understand this consent form, and willingly agree to participate in this study under the terms described, and that my signature acknowledges that I have received a signed and dated copy of this consent form.

(Remember that it is a requirement for the P.I. to maintain a signed and dated copy of the same consent form signed and kept by the participant).

PARTICIPANT NAME:

PARTICIPANT SIGNATURE:

DATE:

WITNESS TO SIGNATURE:
(PROJECT STAFF)

DATE:

Appendix G - Recruitment Materials

Dear Academic Coach,

My name is Stephanie Joiner and I am currently working on my dissertation *Understanding Academic Coaching at Community Colleges, A Multi-Case Study* through Kansas State University College of Education. The purpose of this multi-case study is to learn about academic coaching programs at community colleges by studying how the programs are described by the people who work in the program and how students experience the academic coaching program. This study will collect multiple perspectives at multiple locations to identify shared practices and experiences in the community college setting.

Your institution has agreed to participate in this case study, and I would like to request your participation as a study participant. To conduct my research, I will plan on visiting your campus for two to three days, using the following data collection methods: interviews with a program administrator, academic coaches, and students, observations of the coaching program and sessions, and a document analysis of program-specific documents including advertisements and training documents. I would like permission to either interview you in your role as a coach, and/or observe one of your coaching sessions.

I believe you and your will find personal benefit from this study as well. Interviews will provide an opportunity to reflect on your academic coaching practice and the opportunities it provides to your students. Additionally, participants in this study will be given an opportunity to review individual case reports for their institution as a part of the research process.

Your privacy is important, and all data collected through my interview and observations will be protected and kept confidential. You will be assigned a pseudonym (alternative name to protect your identity), and you will be given an opportunity to review my findings.

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary, and you will be asked to sign consent forms acknowledging your desire to participate. You may leave the study at any time. If you agree to participate, you will be asked to meet with me for at least one, and no more than two, interviews to discuss the academic coaching program at your institution and your personal coaching practices. Interviews will take place on your campus or can be conducted via Zoom if needed.

If you would like to participate in this study, or have any further questions, you may contact me at 620.639.2493, or email me at sajoiner@ksu.edu.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Stephanie Joiner". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Stephanie Joiner

Dear Student,

My name is Stephanie Joiner and I am currently working on my dissertation *Understanding Academic Coaching at Community Colleges, A Multi-Case Study* through Kansas State University College of Education. The purpose of this multi-case study is to learn about academic coaching programs at community colleges by studying how the programs are described by the people who work in the program and how students experience the academic coaching program. This study will collect multiple perspectives at multiple locations to identify shared practices and experiences in the community college setting.

Your institution has agreed to participate in this case study, and I would like to request your participation as a study participant. To conduct my research, I will plan on visiting your campus for two to three days, using the following data collection methods: interviews with a program administrator, academic coaches, and students, observations of the coaching program and sessions, and a document analysis of program-specific documents including advertisements and training documents. I would like permission to interview you and/or observe one of your coaching sessions.

I believe you and your will find personal benefit from this study as well. Interviews will provide an opportunity to reflect on your personal use of academic coaching and how you have used the program to help you develop as a student.

Your privacy is important, and all data collected through my interview and observations will be protected and kept confidential. You will be assigned a pseudonym (alternative name to protect your identity), and you will be given an opportunity to review my findings.

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary, and you will be asked to sign consent forms acknowledging your desire to participate. You may leave the study at any time. If you agree to participate, you will be asked to meet with me for at least one, and no more than two, interviews to discuss your experiences with the academic coaching program. Interviews will take place on your campus or can be conducted via Zoom if needed.

If you would like to participate in this study, or have any further questions, you may contact me at 620.639.2493, or email me at sajoiner@ksu.edu.

Thank you,



Stephanie Joiner



HELLO
YOU'RE INVITED

★ ★ ★ ACADEMIC COACHING STUDY ★ ★ ★

STUDENT INTERVIEWS
@ [REDACTED]

★ ★ ★ OCTOBER [REDACTED] 2023 ★ ★ ★

Participation is voluntary and confidential

STUDY CONDUCTED BY:
STEPHANIE JOINER, KANSAS STATE UNIV.
FOR MORE INFORMATION:
620.639.2493 OR SAJOINER@KSU.EDU

Not sure about an interview? Would you consider letting me observe a meeting with you and your coach?



HELLO
YOU'RE INVITED

★ ★ ★ ACADEMIC COACHING STUDY ★ ★ ★

COACHING OBSERVATIONS
@ [REDACTED]

★ ★ ★ OCTOBER [REDACTED] 2023 ★ ★ ★

Participation is voluntary and confidential

STUDY CONDUCTED BY:
STEPHANIE JOINER, KANSAS STATE UNIV.
FOR MORE INFORMATION:
620.639.2493 OR SAJOINER@KSU.EDU

Students may participate in an interview as well!

