

An exploration of the experiences of students in a guided pathways model program

by

Clarence Y. Madison Sr.

B.A., Davenport University, 2001

M.M., Walsh College, 2012

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

2022

Abstract

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Key findings from this study were as follows: 1) an effective guided pathways model aligns individualized plans using comprehensive academic roadmaps co-created by academic advisers and students; 2) students who met with an academic adviser early in the admission process were likely to complete their program on time; and, 3) regular visits with academic advisers helped to keep students focused on their program of study while navigating life's challenges. Lastly, the community college participating in this study invested sufficient professional development funds to support guided pathways services. For example, the college supported professional development to ensure faculty and staff could attend conferences and other training efforts to learn best practices to enhance outcomes of the college's guided pathways model. Findings from this study can be used to inform community college leaders about how to build academic program models to promote student success and completion rates. The findings from the study may also be used to help practitioners identify ways to increase on-time graduation rates.

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Approved by:
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Dedication

This dissertation was dedicated to my family, who allowed me to participate in this dissertation journey. My wife, Precious Pudding Madison, my son Clarence Madison Jr, and my daughter, Precious Monkonjae Madison. This group waited up at night when I left classes late on many nights and made sure I was cared for before they went to bed. I dedicate this study to my Dad, Mr. Edward B. Madison, who made sure that I got the best of everything and deprived himself while making me better. He has been the wind beneath my wings in every milestone in my life. I also would like to dedicate this study to my late chairman Dr. Irving Pressley McPhail, who left us before I could complete this journey. He was the one person who made me a better writer, thinker, and scholar. IPM, you will forever remain in my heart and thank you for all you did to get me to where I am today.

Chapter 1 - Introduction

Community colleges and other institutions offer broad access to students due to liberal admission policies and the idea of the community college as the "people's college" (Bailey et al., 2015). However, over time, liberal access to community college may collide with on-time graduation without a student-focused direction that includes a guided pathway's solution.

A growing number of community colleges and universities are finding ways to improve student outcomes by redesigning academic programs and student support services utilizing the guided pathways model to increase on-time graduation rates (Bailey et al., 2015). Researchers have concluded that deferred on-time college graduation rates, among many new high school graduates and other college-going adults, stem from the lack of mastery of core academic skills. The lack of skills mastery is evident in subjects such as mathematics and English. Insufficient core academic skills also translate to low scores on diagnostic assessments during the admission process, which impacts a disproportionate number of students who enroll in developmental education courses before taking courses leading to a degree.

In 2004, Achieving the Dream became the first national initiative to help colleges design programs that place students on logical paths to on-time graduation, igniting interest from community college leaders across the country (Brown, A., Jenkins, A., Lahr, H., Mazzariello, A., 2019). The Lumina Foundation for Education provided initial funding for Achieving the Dream, though other funders have since supported this effort. Achieving the Dream provided strategies to help institutions improve college completion agendas, equity targets, and overall community college institutional performance by emphasizing longitudinal academic tracking of individual students (Brown et al, 2019). By tracking the data, colleges were able to align their decision-

making regarding the allocation of college resources with student progress in educational pathways.

According to the 2015 report, *The Movement Toward Pathways*, published by the American Association of Community Colleges (AACC), five principles guided the work of the Achieving the Dream organization:

- Secure leadership commitment
- Use of data to prioritize actions
- Engage stakeholders
- Implement, evaluate, and improve intervention strategies
- Establish a culture of continuous improvement

Completion by Design, which began in 2011 with funding from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, represented the first national initiative explicitly focused on guided pathways at the community college level (AACC, 2015). Completion by Design developed eight principles intended to improve student understanding of pathways and, by extension, helped to accelerate the time it took students to complete college (Cerna et al., 2015). Completion by Design's eight principles included: accelerate student entry into coherent programs of study; minimize the time required to get students college-ready; ensure students know what requirements are needed to succeed; customize the curriculum; contextualize instruction; integrate student supports with instruction; continually monitor student progress; and proactively provide feedback.

According to Brown et al. (2019), the guided pathways model represented a new, ambitious plan unfamiliar to participating colleges. Achieving the Dream created the guided pathways model to include individualized educational planning for students that comprised a

consistent program of study, contextualized instruction, directed student support, and a continuous feedback structure to monitor student progress.

Background of the Problem

This research was conducted in the state of Louisiana. Graduation rates for community college students in Louisiana are lower than other post-secondary institutions in the state and, on average, across the nation (www.nces.ed.gov). The National Center for Education Statistics reported that Louisiana also lags behind national two-year college completion rates at 39.2% for part-time students and 57% for full-time students. Researchers also note the rise in the number of years it takes for most incoming high school students to complete their degrees and move on to either a four-year institution or the job market (www.communitycollegereview.com/blog/the-catch-22-of-community-college-graduation-rates.)

In making sense of the completion puzzle at the community college level in Louisiana and across the nation, it is essential to examine students' backgrounds and the paths they navigate as they matriculate.

Bailey et al. (2015) suggested that, for a guided pathways model to be effective, community colleges must know their students and how far they are toward completing—or straying from—program requirements. The authors argued that tracking students through a guided pathways model makes it easier to create and enact interventions and solutions when students deviate from their academic program of study. Given the focus on increasing on-time graduation rates at community colleges, documentation of guided pathway models on different college campuses is beneficial for continuous improvement. Furthermore, few studies have focused on the experiences of students when examining the benefits of guided pathways.

Documenting students' lived experiences in guided pathways will help community colleges understand what is working and what is not working.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this case study was to examine the student experience in an established guided pathways model program that integrated a system of student support services to increase on-time graduation rates.

Research Design

A qualitative case study was employed to conduct the research. This case study research drew data from multiple sources, including interviews, archival records, and documents.

Research Questions

The research questions that guided this study were:

1. How did the participants describe the colleges' approach to helping students enter an academic pathway?
2. How did the participants describe the college's approach in clarifying the students' pathways that helped them to choose the right career to keep them on track to ensure students are learning?
3. How did the participants describe their guided pathways model experiences to keep students on track with their career goals?
4. How did the participants describe the college's approach to ensure that learning happened with intentional outcomes for students?

Conceptual Framework

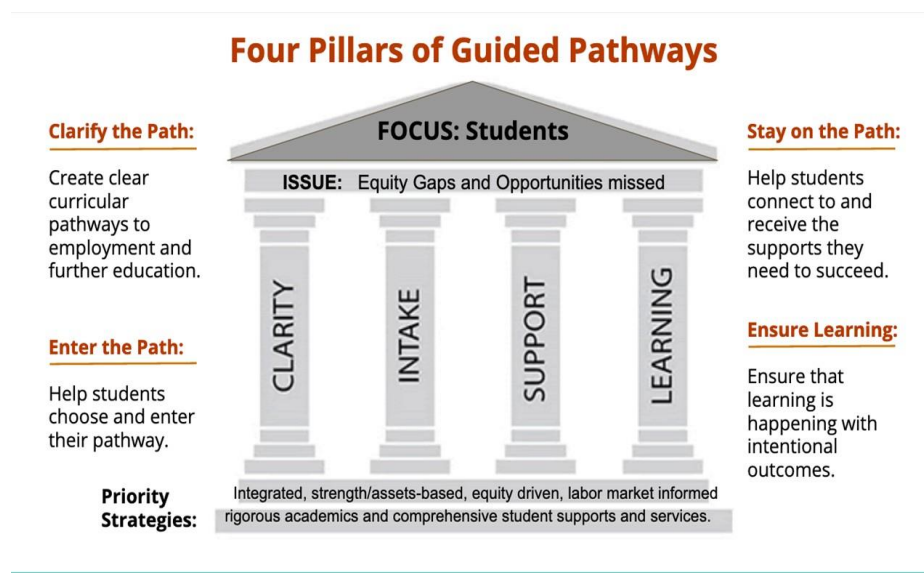
AACC's (2018) guided pathways model served as the conceptual framework for the study. Guided pathways models test the efficacy of all college systems targeted to support

student success. In 2004, the Achieving the Dream organization, funded by the Lumina Foundation, introduced evidence-based community college programs and interventions to help community colleges across the nation institute plans and strategies to help students realize a more significant economic opportunity. The AACC’s guided pathways model was designed to not only help students to succeed on their educational journey but to help them graduate with a firm plan in hand and a working knowledge of career opportunities available in each major (Herder, 2021).

Community colleges must begin to move from a model that promotes access to enrollment to one that supports access to completion (Sugimoto & Veney, 2017). Sugimoto and Veney suggested colleges must strive to keep their promises to help students graduate. Figure 1 describes the four pillars of the guided pathways model. Educational pathways and services must support deep student learning that prepares learners for further education and employment success.

Figure 1

Four Pillars of Guided Pathways



Note. Student Experience Crosswalk: Where Student Support (Re) defined and Guided Pathways Meet: <https://tinyurl.com/y38buraf>

The model in Figure 1 describes the quickest route to program completion in well-designed academic plans for students. The model consistently helps move students forward and identifies strategies for countering obstacles that may come into play and defer the goal of on-time graduation.

Significance of the Study

Community college leaders and educators may use the findings from this study to explore services to increase student completion rates. The findings may also assist practitioners in creating academic plans for students based on a coherent program map as identified in the guided pathways model. The findings from the study may be used by faculty to collaborate with other disciplines to define and assess learning outcomes for academic programs that aid student progress toward completing an academic plan. Findings from this study may provide information about the importance of an ongoing student monitoring and feedback system. Finally, the findings may help practitioners to develop orientation programs or to incorporate ongoing information and course sequencing in a student's academic program.

Definitions of Terms

The terminology presented here defines the terms necessary to understand the research questions.

Advisers: Administrators who help students choose a program of study (www.cccse.org).

Advisers have various titles in this dissertation, including academic advisers, career advisers, counselors, coaches, and mentors. This dissertation uses the term adviser, which incorporates all of these roles.

Attainment rate: The percentage of the working population who earn a degree (Kelly & Schneider, 2012).

Community college: Community colleges, sometimes called junior colleges, are two-year institutions that provide affordable post-secondary education as a pathway to a four-year degree (AACC, 2020).

Completion rate: The percentage of entering students who earn a degree (Kelly & Schneider, 2012).

Developmental education: Programs designed to strengthen students' skills to complete college-level courses (Boylan, 2009).

Developmental education student: Students who take a developmental course to improve core academic skills and to ensure readiness for college-level courses (Rutschow & Schneider, 2011).

Guided pathways model: Redesigning each part of the student experience, from the stage where students choose programs and start remedial or college-level work to the time of graduation when they move on to further education or careers (Bailey, 2017).

Integrated Reading and writing courses: Developmental English courses where reading and writing competencies are taught together. By combining the classes, fewer courses are needed before students are ready for credit courses (Rutschow & Mayer, 2018).

Participation rate: The percentage of a population who enroll in higher education (Kelly & Schneider, 2012).

Student success: Attainment of learning outcomes, personal satisfaction, and goal/intent attainment, job placement and career advancement, civic and life skills, social and economic well-being, and commitment to lifelong learning (Fain, 2009).

Limitations

Restrictions imposed by the pandemic prevented the researcher from traveling to Louisiana to conduct interviews in person.

Delimitations

This qualitative study focused on interviewing a select group of participants.

Summary and Organization of the Remainder of the Study

This chapter described the background and problem statement, the purpose of the study, the research questions that guided this study, the conceptual framework, limitations and delimitations, the significance of the study, and concluded with the definition of terms.

Chapter 2, the literature review, covered the following topics: an overview of academic issues in community colleges; barriers to student success; overview of student outcomes and student success in community colleges; community college reform initiatives; overview and implementation of guided pathways; and overview of academic advising.

Chapter 3, methodology, described the research design and rationale; the research questions; data collection methods; document review; data analysis; population and sample; setting and context; the role of the researcher; ethical considerations; and trustworthiness.

Chapter 4, findings, covered the purpose of the study; research questions; presentation of findings; profile of participants; presentation of findings by research questions; what advisers said; what students said; what administrators said; and emerging themes.

Chapter 5, discussion and recommendations, covered an overview of the study; discussion of major findings; findings related to the literature; discussion of findings related to the conceptual framework; conclusions; implications, and researcher's reflection.

Chapter 2 - Review of the Literature

The purpose of this case study was to examine an established guided pathways model that integrated a system of student support services for increasing on-time graduation rates. The literature review is organized into six major topics as follows: (1) Overview of academic issues in community colleges; (2) Barriers to student success; (3) Overview of student outcomes and student success in community college; (4) Community college reform initiatives; (5) Overview and implementation of guided pathways; and, (6) Overview of academic advising.

Overview of Key Academic Issues in Community Colleges

A major issue facing community colleges is finding the right interventions, programs, and services to keep students in school until degree completion (O'Banion, 2019). Previous research reveals that the major focus behind the lack of educational attainment was the disproportionate number of students enrolled in remedial education courses; many remedial students face challenges when they enroll in community colleges, only to drop out before completing a program of study. This section of the literature review provides a brief overview of the literature relevant to key academic issues in community colleges.

Developmental Education

Developmental education has been in the fore-front of academic issues in community colleges since its inception. Unfortunately, many unwelcome labels describe developmental education, including students as high-risk, marginal students, and the educationally disadvantaged or academically unsuccessful (Moore, 1970). Moore expressed frustration with labeling developmental education students as high-risk and the inadequate education provided by institutions otherwise considered innovative and equipped to serve all students. Moore's book, *Against the Odds*, launched a series of questions about student success that remain unanswered

in today's community college environment and removed the veil as to the inability of open-door colleges to help all those who sought admission.

The researcher selected Moore's book to launch the literature review because Moore was one of the first community college educators to argue that students who are considered high-risk when they come to the community college face overwhelming odds, the least of which are the academic hurdles they must overcome. Moore affirmed that deliberate professional neglect of remedial students is most prevalent in higher education. In his book, Moore spoke of how he was also labeled as a high-risk student and that, by all evaluative predictors, he should not have gotten into college. Family members told him his odds of completing high school were slim to none, yet, just the opposite occurred, and his graduation from college proved the naysayers wrong. Moore observed that the great paradox in all of the conversations about student achievement is that educators have insisted for too long that developmental education students are the problem. For the purpose of this study, while the researcher used such term as an *under-prepared, ill-prepared, or developmental student, these terms are not used* to suggest these students are less intelligent or possess deficits that make it impossible to succeed. In conducting this literature review, many researchers used these very terms to make their points and to prepare their institutions to treat all students in an equitable manner in dispensing instruction to all students regardless of their level of preparation. Baier et al. (2019) suggested that developmental courses were designed to help academically underprepared students succeed in college. According to these researchers, classroom learning community programs help intellectual growth through both academic and social support.

In the following section of the literature review, the researcher calls attention to a series of early studies that serve as a foundation for understanding the intent of developmental education: Cross (1976); Roueche and Roueche (1977); Roueche and Roueche (1999).

Cross (1976) contended that a more helpful distinction between what is remedial and what is developmental would be found in the purpose or goal of the program. She suggested that if a program's objective were to overcome academic deficiencies, she would call that program in the standard dictionary sense in which remediation is concerned with correcting weaknesses. If a program aims to develop students' diverse talents, whether academic or not, she would term the program developmental in that, its mission is to give attention to the possible development of talent and strengths and to correct weaknesses.

Roueche and Roueche (1977) wrote that the same functional illiteracy problems as identified by Cross continue to persist. Roueche and Roueche continued to argue that in the 1960s, many high school graduates lacked job skills and were characterized as functionally illiterate as a result of their public schooling. Functional illiteracy here is described as the inability to either read or write one's name. Thus, after 12 years of formal education, students are graduating from American high schools that fit the description of functionally illiterate.

Roueche and Roueche (1999) recommended that developmental education address student needs other than individual skills in isolation. This intentional focus on the person boosts the confidence levels of the individuals, thus increasing self-esteem and the potential for academic success.

Developmental education cannot be characterized by a limited definition of verbal and quantitative skill remediation for the low-achiever. It spans a broader base. It signifies efforts to take students from where they are to where they want—or need—to go and aims to provide both

the academic and the personal skills to make that move (Roueche & Roueche, 1977). Roueche and Roueche, furthermore, defined remedial and developmental education and the subtle differences between each term. The term *remedial* means students would undergo remediation of their skill deficiencies to enter a program for which they were previously ineligible. The term *developmental* indicates that the development of skills and attitudes would occur, but that this development was for a different purpose other than to increase a student's eligibility for another program.

Another important aspect of developmental education is the extent to which instructors demonstrate the capacity to deliver instruction in a manner that promotes student success. Research indicated that many community colleges instructors were challenged to align their instructional delivery methods with their students' level of preparation.

Corrin (2013) also stated that community college enrollment has increased. Community colleges play an increasingly vital role in post-secondary education, enrolling 40% of all college students. However, degree completion rates remain low partly because many students do not start or complete the developmental education sequence. At most, only one in three students earn a certificate or degree within five years. Nearly 60% of learners arrive academically unprepared and enroll in one developmental reading, writing, or math course. Some face as many as four classes of remedial math or English before ever attempting a college-level course. Very few learners ever make it as far as completion.

Instructional Delivery

Many community college reform efforts have sought to improve their instructional delivery modalities to prepare students when they enter these colleges. These strategies are in the areas of streamlining a student's journey through college by providing structured choices.

Baier et al. (2019) argued that instructional delivery might require shifting from transactional to relational teaching models to increase collaboration and engagement. When faculty show interest in student well-being and overall development, it creates an environment where they will most likely persist. The more that faculty engage students and make them feel a part of their success, the more apt they are to increase their confidence and internalize a new role (Mitchell et al., 2015).

Barriers to Student Success

This section provides a discussion of the major barriers that may impede student success in community colleges.

Guidance for Student Success

Boylan (2009) outlined five common mistakes in developmental education programs: lack of seamless transition in developmental courses; untrained adjunct faculty assigned to teach developmental courses; an insufficient centralized approach to coordinate development education; failure to establish and enforce attendance policies; and, failure of monitoring to ensure students who need help get help. The researcher noted that most errors Boylan described are errors of omission rather than commission; it was not that these colleges did the wrong things so much that they failed to do things right.

As the first mistake, Boylan cited that community college did not ensure a seamless transition in developmental courses. College-level courses require that the exit standards of a first-level course are consistent with the entry standard for the next-level course. In other words, the same standard for completing the lowest level developmental mathematics course should be the same as those required for entry into the next level developmental mathematics course. Boylan preferred that the same instructors teach both the developmental courses and the college-

level courses in a particular subject so as to ensure consistency. Likewise, Roueche and Roueche (1999) discussed the faculty teaching assignments to ensure students a seamless transition between all developmental courses and between developmental and college-level courses. However, a study by Schultz (2000) explained that, on average, full-time faculty taught only 35% of developmental courses at community colleges. A problem is knowing that so many developmental courses are taught by part-time faculty, and they are usually absent from the departmental meetings intended to strengthen developmental education. In addition, Boylan suggested that it makes it challenging to ensure the consistency of standards in developmental courses.

The second mistake Boylan articulated was that community colleges do not train adjunct faculty teaching these developmental courses. Boylan stressed that a wise investment in the community college is appropriate for adjunct faculty members to increase their teaching success in developmental education classes. In addition, Boylan asserted that adjunct instructors might be well trained through graduate programs in their discipline. Still, this training is unlikely to include any coursework on college teaching in general or teaching developmental education students. Colleges may provide an orientation program, a handbook, or a standardized syllabus for adjunct instructors, but they rarely provide training in adult learning techniques for developmental education students. As a result, many adjunct instructors teaching developmental education students do so without knowing how to teach them most effectively (Boylan, 2009).

According to Boylan, the third mistake was that community colleges do not coordinate their developmental education effort. Boylan acknowledged that experts in the field have consistently advised locating developmental education courses and support services in the same administrative office (Boylan, 2002; Keimig, 1983; McCabe, 2000). However, according to

Boylan, only a few community college leaders appear to have taken this advice. One of the main benefits of having a centralized approach to developmental education is that it becomes easier to coordinate the activities in this setting. (Boylan et al., 1997).

The fourth mistake with developmental education that Boylan (2009) stressed was that many community colleges failed to establish and enforce attendance policies. Boylan frowned on colleges that allow developmental education students who are already poorly prepared to miss many of their classes and get away without being penalized or made up the times lost. Boylan argued that if colleges are serious about implementing the attendance policies for missed classes, developmental education students will see the seriousness of the college for making sure they attend classes to gain the necessary learning for improvement in the areas of their deficiencies. The author quipped that many faculty members adopted the institution's stated attendance policy for their developmental classes; however, it contributes to the impression that absenteeism is acceptable if not excessive.

Finally, the fifth mistake that Boylan (2009) noted was that many community colleges failed to ensure those who need the most help get it. Boylan indicated that most community colleges either assess students upon entry to determine and, depending on the policies, advice, or require students to take the courses into which they place. However, other researchers shared a different perspective on how to help students to become successful. For example, Attewell et al. (2006), 58% of entering community college students place into one or more developmental courses. Boylan (2009) suggested that whatever advising, placement, and monitoring procedures for course placement are not working very well.

Another study that put the spotlight on barriers to student success was conducted by Bailey et al. (2009) where the authors also reported that only 30% to 40% of students placed into

a sequence of developmental education courses enrolled in the entire series. According to these authors the longevity of the time spent in developmental education course served as a major barrier to completing a degree.

Course Taking Patterns

A large percentage of community college students take at least one developmental course. For example, the typical community college devotes much of its time and resources to helping academically ill-prepared students, who represent the broad majority of incoming students, reach its academic readiness standards (Bailey et al., 2015).

According to Ganga et al. (2018), community colleges educate nearly 40% of undergraduates, and more than two-thirds of these students take at least one developmental course. However, developmental education is costly for states. Ganga et al. suggested that community colleges leaders ensure that developmental education works for all, including the institutions and the students who carry the hefty price invested in developmental education.

Cost Factors

The collective cost of developmental education for students and families is \$1.3 billion per year, and the total price at all colleges is \$7 billion (Ganga et al., 2018). The Education Commission of the States report titled "Developmental Education: An Introduction for Policymakers" (Ganga et al., 2018) stated that most placement tests are inaccurate and the causative reason for high enrollments in developmental courses. The same report found that more than one-third of students placed into developmental English and almost one-quarter of students placed into developmental Math had the potential to earn a B or higher in college-level courses. The report also found that students who disregarded a developmental placement

and enrolled in college-level classes were more likely to pass the college course than were students who started in the developmental sequence.

According to Stacey & Jaggars (2014), only 28% of community college students who take a developmental course earn a degree within eight years. Moreover, many students assigned to developmental courses drop out before completing their sequence and enrolling in college-level classes.

Most policymakers are not happy with community college students' inadequate success rates (Goldrick-Rab, 2010). This disapproval by policymakers is that they believe they are doling out too much money but are not getting the desired results, like timely degree completions by community college students. Goldrick-Rab (2010) posits that another reason policymakers are coming to these conclusions is that a large proportion of students who enter community colleges do not persist for longer than a semester, complete a program, or attain a credential.

Bailey and Cho (2010) argued that states spend tens of millions of dollars on remediation, and national estimates suggest that over \$1 billion annually is spent on these services. Because of the high cost, students would probably have to absorb some of the expenses. In addition to the potential higher cost to students for developmental courses, students may become annoyed that the courses they take do not count toward credit courses for graduation. Bailey and Cho reasoned that this might explain the high no-show rates among students referred to remediation.

College-Readiness and Student Performance

As "open door" institutions, community colleges have always led to educating the underprepared students for college-level work (Jenkins & Boswell, 2002). Numerous studies have examined the relationship between community colleges and developmental education students. Jenkins and Boswell (2002) argued that many of the developmental students entering

community colleges are recent high school graduates and are not college ready at the time of enrollment at the community college.

Barnes et al. (2010) argued that college readiness, as defined by scores on a standardized test such as the ACT or SAT, is very narrow and limiting as an identifier for student success. The researchers described college readiness as academically prepared and study skills, emotional maturity, and knowledge of educational finance, among other variables. Many students who come through the door of community colleges are primarily first-generation students and lack college-readiness skills despite high schools' efforts to prepare them. In addition, some students admitted to college have insufficient reading, writing, or mathematics skills, which is another validation for colleges to implement the guided pathways model (Koch, Moore, and Slate, 2012). Conley (2008a, 2008b) theorized that the four key elements of college readiness are cognitive reasoning strategies, academic knowledge and skills, learned behavior, and contextual skills.

Bailey and Cho (2010) posited that when students first arrive at community college, almost all take math, reading, and writing skills. From these assessments, students are categorized as "college-ready." They can enroll in college-level courses in relevant subjects or are considered "developmental" or "remedial" students. They are referred to academic services for a plan to raise their skills to college standards. Many researchers have claimed that a significant difference exists between college eligibility and college readiness (Barnes & Slate, 2013; Barnes et al., 2010; Cline et al., 2007, 2008a, 2008b; Merisotis & Phipps, 2000). In another study, Reid and Moore (2008, as cited in Koch et al., 2012) conducted a qualitative study of 13 first-generation college students from the same urban high school to examine students' perceived strengths and weaknesses of their college preparation. Students had at least a 2.5-grade point average during high school, and seven of the thirteen had a 3.5 or higher. The study

concluded that although many of the students did well. In contrast, many students reported deficits in study skills and time management relative to college standards.

Despite high schools' efforts to prepare students for college, some students admitted to having insufficient reading, writing, or mathematics skills to the college (Koch et al., 2012). Hall and Ponton (2005) suggested that teaching methodologies used in developmental programs should address academic deficits and self-awareness of increased ability. In addition, the Higher Education Act of 1965 incorporated the creed that all Americans should have the same opportunity to pursue a college education (Doninger, 2009).

One outcome of the 1965 Education Act was initiating open-access policies that encouraged more people to pursue a college education, regardless of their academic preparedness. There is a long-standing controversy in learning about whether integrity and open-access policies can coexist (Donniger, 2009). According to Finkelstein and Thom (2014), part of this controversy is colleges relying on only cognitive factors to assess academically prepared and underprepared students. Following this procedure may not be a reliable assessment of academic preparedness for all potential students (Moore, 2007; Schmitt et al., 2009; Sternberg, 2008).

Academic Preparation and Non-cognitive Factors

Most colleges in the United States do not consider non-cognitive factors, such as emotional stability, social skills, and persistence when assessing students' academic preparedness (Boylan, 2009; Lindqvist & Vestman, 2011). Sternberg (2007) argued that the measurement of intelligence includes a cognitive ability and the ability to adapt to non-cognitive environmental challenges successfully. Bailey (2009) argued for the restructuring of assessments to include non-cognitive capabilities to address academic preparedness.

Sedlacek (1993) argued that two of the biggest problems in admissions are deciding how we call “culturally different” applicants and figuring out how we identify them. By labeling them as deprived or minority, he stated that it could be detrimental to them thriving, so he prefers to call them non-traditional applicants/students. Now we know that non-cognitive variables exist, how to define them, whom they work best for, and how students can be assessed with them. What we still need to know is how this information enhances existing assessment programs.

Faculty Engagement

Bailey et al.(2016) made a strong case that two-year colleges can substantially increase their rates of student success, if they were able to redesign the way they offered curriculum and support services to students. One of the problems discussed by Bailey et al. (2016) is faculty resistance to change. Bailey et al. laid out some challenges that colleges are facing when implementing guided pathways. First, the faculty was not excited about guided pathways when first introduced. Secondly, students arrived at college with many outside challenges and little idea about what they wanted to do academically, and they took different paths through college. Rose (2016) spoke favorably of the overall model in response to the challenges but raised two potential problems. Firstly, faculty resistance may thwart the implementation of guided pathways, and the discussion of how to engage faculty members seems abstract. Second, students arrive at college with many outside challenges and little idea about what they want to do academically. Student will thus inevitably take a variety of different paths through college. Rose (2016) argued that some problems at community colleges remain unsolvable. Those barriers may prevent the model from living up to its potential – leading to discouragement and perhaps a backlash.

Overview of Student Outcomes and Student Success in Community Colleges

For decades, community colleges have encountered numerous challenges with the effort to identify effective strategies to improve learning outcomes for their students. This section of the literature review presents a discussion of the key studies related to student success in community college: Attainment, Student Engagement and Retention, and Data and Student Achievement.

Academic Attainment

Attainment disparities research reveals that the performance of African American and White students differ when analyzing student outcomes. While defining performance gaps at the Community College of Baltimore County (CCBC) in 2001, the administration uncovered unacceptable differences in performance between African American and White students for course pass rates, retention rates, graduation rates, and transfer rates (McKusick & McPhail, 2003). Until all learners are successful, the Community College of Baltimore College promised that access and opportunity were created for all students regardless of background or race. According to McKusick and McPhail, to make that promise a reality, the institution must take a closer look at the performance gaps in two intersecting populations, African American students and developmental education students. For the college to make good on its promise, language in vision and mission statements must have a collaborative, transformative tone for creating an atmosphere where all employees feel ownership for closing the performance gap at the college. The conclusion reached in this study was that students thrived when taught by a person who look like them and who understood them as a person. Through continued assessment of learning outcomes, the compass that helped steer the direction of Community College of Baltimore

College as a learning-centered institution was able to monitor its own progress and make adjustments along the way.

Student Engagement and Retention

A significant influence on achievement and learning in higher education is student engagement, which has been widely theorized and researched (Kahu, 2013). According to Kahu, the focus on student engagement aims to clarify the construct of engagement and differentiate it from its experiences and results. An overarching conceptual framework recognizes the student and the institution's importance while recognizing the socio-cultural context's critical influence.

There is growing evidence of student engagement's critical role in achievement and learning. Students engaged in their studies and campus life have a better chance of graduating on time. Teaching practices also influence students' positive and negative engagement; hence, a determining factor of whether students will stay the course until graduation. The approaches to understanding engagement include: (a) the behavioral perspective, which focuses on practical teaching practice; (b) the psychological aspect, which views participation as an individual internal process; (c) the socio-cultural perspective, which considers the critical role of socio-cultural context; and, (d) a holistic view (Kahu, 2013). In addition, the researcher noted the value of advising as a core element of each student's success: setting academic goals based on transfer and career interest, developing an educational plan to attain those goals, and staying on track until goal completion.

Furthermore, like Kahu (2013), the Community College Survey of Entering Student Engagement (2010), report titled *Benchmarking & Benchmarks: Effective Practice with Entering Students*, reported that students who meet with an adviser persist across all CCSSE benchmarks more than their peers who have not met consistently with an adviser. The survey results also

indicated that while most students report meeting with an adviser, returning students are more likely to report doing so (78%) than are entering students (62%). Less than 59% of first-time college students return to the same institution the following fall; this discrepancy suggests that early advising might increase retention.

Data and Student Achievement

While community colleges are a prominent part of the national education discussion in 2020, few organizations took note of the community college's student-focused agenda before 2004. Few were devoting substantial funds toward their improvement. Moreover, before the Lumina Foundation for Education launched Achieving the Dream, few colleges or other post-secondary institutions focused on community college student success; instead, they spent more time providing open access. Open access is a usual focus for community colleges to help students enter the doors of higher education. Still, unfortunately, after they enroll, far too many learners lose their way and move on without earning a credential (Rutschow & Schneider, 2011).

Achieving the Dream's national initiative called Community Colleges Count is designed to increase the academic success of community college students, with emphasis on low-income students and students of color (Rutschow & Schneider, 2011). The approach helps community colleges build a culture of evidence and uses student records and other pertinent data to examine how students perform by identifying barriers that hinder their academic progress. Accordingly, Rutschow and Schneider (2011) cited, as of December 2010, more than 130 community colleges in 24 states and the District of Columbia participate in Achieving the Dream.

Institutional change is the primary focus of Achieving the Dream. Participating colleges are committed to building a culture of evidence among administrators, faculty, and students for decision-making purposes (Collins & Couturier, 2008).

Community College Reform Initiatives

The needs of students who come to community college underprepared necessitate academic preparation. Students require an array of reform initiatives that will prepare them to take advantage of those initiatives.

Each year, millions of students pursue a college degree or credential, seeking to move one step closer to acquiring the American dream. However, most of these students are deemed unprepared or underprepared for college-level coursework and placed into developmental or remedial courses (Schak et al., 2017). Therefore, student initial admission to community college entails taking a series of skill assessments to determine the level of college readiness. Students can then enroll in college-level classes or developmental courses designed to elevate their skillsets to college standards (Bailey & Cho, 2010; Ganga et al., 2018). The researchers, however, argued that developmental education students graduate at lower rates because they lack academic strength in reading, writing, and math; quite the opposite for college-ready students. In addition, the researchers noted, by offering these non-credit courses, more students gained access to a post-secondary education that otherwise would be denied to them.

In April of 2010, the AACC joined with five other national organizations to express a shared commitment to student completion. The partner organizations were the Association for Community College Trustees, the Center for Community College Student Engagement, the League of Innovation in the Community College, the National Institute for Staff and Organizational Development, and the Phi Theta Kappa Honor Society (McPhail, 2011). According to McPhail, the impetus for the call to action was to strategize on how to improve in producing 50% more students with high-quality degrees and certificates by 2020.

Some key points on the commitment and how to get to the 50% target where as follows:

- Completion must be embedded into the fabric of the institution
- The completion agenda must be transparent and data-driven
- Community engagement into the framework
- Completion must be a part of the institution's strategic plan

McPhail's call to action urged community college educators to play a key role in efforts to promote student success by communicating plainly and informative manner about the importance of college completion.

On the other hand, Ganga et al. (2018) posited that the inaccuracy of placement test results causes inflation of student enrollments in developmental courses. The study found that more than one-third of students placed into developmental English and almost one-quarter of students placed into developmental math had the potential to earn a B or higher in college-level courses.

Achieving the Dream

Achieving the dream is a national non-profit leader in championing evidence-based institutional improvement. Achieving the Dream leads the most comprehensive non-governmental reform movement for student success in higher education history (<https://www.achievingthedream.org>).

Achieving the Dream was successful in drawing attention to improving student completion, equity, and overall community college performance and was at the forefront emphasizing longitudinal tracking of individual students (Brown et al., 2019). With these initiatives being in place and were partially successful, colleges started taking notes and began to implement bits and pieces and from that most of the components of the guided pathways model as understood today were gleaned from the eight principles of Completion by Design.

According to Bailey et al. (2015), Florida State University implemented default academic program maps, required students to enroll in exploratory majors, and provided proactive advising to help ensure that students stay on the path. Bailey et al. provided insightful data about completion which stated that between 2000 and 2009, the year-to-year retention rate for the first-time-in-college freshman increased from 86 to 92 percent, the four-year graduation rate increased from 44 to 61 percent, and the percentage of students graduating with excess credits dropped from 30 to 5 percent. In the article, *What we Know About Guided Pathways: Helping Students to Complete Program Faster*, Bailey et. al. also stated that at Guttman, a new CUNY college designed around guided pathways principles, all first-time students are required to attend a summer bridge program, to enroll full-time, and to follow a common first-year curriculum intended to help them explore careers and choose a major. Remedial instruction is embedded into college-credit coursework. In their second year, students are required to choose a program of study in a limited number of fields identified as promising based on New York City labor market data (Bailey et al., 2015).

These pathway initiatives, along with accompanying research, have shown us crucial insights that have helped to solidify the foundation of the pathways movement. By extension, the next generation of guided pathway reforms will provide even more vibrant models and approaches to maximize higher education's impact on student learning outcomes.

Completion by Design

Completion by Design is a structural process put in place by nine colleges in 2011 to transform students' experience and ultimate success at their colleges (<https://www.completionbydesign.org>). Its vision is for community college faculty, staff, administrators, and students to work collaboratively to create integrated institutional policies,

practices, processes, and culture that together improve student performance and completion outcomes. Bailey (2017) stated that students at community colleges need to overcome several challenges to achieve the ambitious goals of the completion agenda. Among the challenges Bailey noted was a lack of knowledge about higher education and the overwhelming number of options available to students once they enter community college.

The goal of Completion by Design is to increase graduation rates dramatically. To meet that goal, a community college must change policies, programs, and practices across the entire institution so that all components and services work synergistically to strengthen pathways to completion for students from the time they enter college until the time they leave (Cerna et al., 2015).

Bailey (2017) stated that students at community colleges need to overcome several challenges to achieve the ambitious goals of the completion agenda. Among the challenges Bailey noted was lack of knowledge about higher education and the overwhelming number of options available to students once they enter community college.

Corrin (2013) advised on the need for reform efforts in developmental education. The goal of developmental education is to build up the necessary skills in English and mathematics for academically unprepared students so that they are successful in college-level work. Rigorous evaluations suggest three significant conclusions about reform efforts:

- (1) Short-term, focused reforms tend to have modest effects that fade within a semester or two.
- (2) One common approach is a learning community, in which cohorts of students co-enroll in developmental courses linked with college-level classes.

(3) Single-semester learning communities have produced modest, positive effects on the number of developmental credits students take during the program semester. Still, the results tend to diminish within one year. On the other hand, when enhancements, such as tutoring, advising, and book vouchers are added, learning communities can lead to higher graduation rates, primarily for already college-ready students. Similarly, summer bridge programs, which give high school seniors a last-minute opportunity to brush up their skills before taking college placement tests, have generated higher pass rates in college-level math courses. Still, the effects fade within a year.

Corrin (2013) made two critical assertions about how to address the obstacles students face:

- (1) Comprehensive reforms may lead to more sustained effects than approaches that address only one or two obstacles facing students. For example, the Accelerated Study in Associate Programs at the City University of New York provides various support services and incentives. However, these programs are costlier and difficult to scale up. The program was designed to help developmental education students graduate and increase the proportion of students who completed their developmental coursework by the end of the first semester.
- (2) Programs that accelerate students through developmental education hold promise for helping students to graduate on time. For example, the Accelerated Learning Program at the Community College of Baltimore County placed developmental English students into mainstream college-level English courses while enrolling them in a companion course. The same instructor provided additional guidance. As a result, students participating in Accelerated Learning Program were more likely to take and

pass the first two college-level English courses than students who enrolled in developmental courses. Moreover, individuals with many options may neglect to make the right decisions.

Bailey et al (2009) argued that many students are sidetracked by remedial courses for which they do not receive college credit on the way to entering a program of study. Additionally, Bailey and Cho (2010) argued that students who entered a program of study in the first year performed substantially better than those who became concentrators in the second year or later. In addition, students starting directly in a program during their first year earned college credentials or successfully transferred to a four-year college at higher rates. Moreover, the consequences of the community college students' decision-making may be more harmful as they go it alone in a sea of too many program options (Bailey et al., 2015).

There is evidence that community colleges could be more successful in helping students persist and complete a program of study if they offered a set of tightly structured program options (Scott-Clayton, 2011). Scott-Clayton also argued that providing students with more structured paths to graduation is not without tradeoffs, particularly if “more structure” is taken to imply “less choice and flexibility.”

College administrators, faculty, and industry representatives are vital to redesigning academic programs and support services. A growing number of community colleges and four-year universities seek to improve student outcomes by redesigning educational programs and student support services following the guided pathways model. Jenkins et al. (2017) reasoned that institutions are mapping highly structured, educationally coherent program pathways for students to follow with the end goal in mind. Community colleges are conferring with education providers at the next level and employers to guarantee that learning outcomes align with the

requirements for further education and careers. Jenkins et al (2002) acknowledged that broad-based communication, engagement, and collaboration are critical for guided pathways reforms to succeed. According to Jenkins and Pellegrino (2019), collaboration is most vital to implementing guided pathways. Faculty and advisers need to work together to map program pathways while cooperating within and across departments to define sequences of courses that students can take to fulfill program requirements

According to Scott-Clayton (2011), students confronted with making decisions about study choices are more problematic at community colleges than for their peers at elite four-year institutions. Scott-Clayton further explained that at Harvard University, students have fewer options, and the university dictates most of the decisions they make. Kelly and Schneider (2010) argued that most researchers making strides in developing programs that promote degree completion; too often, these small experiments are not scalable across institutions and are rarely evaluated in terms of cost-effectiveness. In summary, developing vital completion pathways requires more than tinkering around the edges or implementing best practices at a single stage of student progression.

Complete College America

Complete College America is a national nonprofit with a mission to work with states to significantly increase the number of Americans with quality career certificates or college degrees and close attainment gaps for traditionally underrepresented populations (Complete College America, 2020). Complete College America believes the most impactful colleges should create outcomes by understanding the unique needs of every student and building clear and supportive pathways to graduation (www.completecollege.org). Complete College America also stressed the need for using data to identify best practices and advancing the policies, perspectives, and

practices that meet the needs of students who have been systematically excluded or overlooked for far too long.

The state of Texas created a plan to help improve its graduation rate and close the achievement gap. In that document, titled *Complete College Texas* (Complete College America, 2020), the state laid out five concrete plans that Complete College America believes that other states could use to help improve on-time graduation.

The five game-changers cited by *Complete College Texas* are worthy of considering in other states to improve graduation rates. (1) Performance funding pays for performance, not just enrollment; (2) Remediation as a corequisite, not a prerequisite, recommends registering most unprepared students in college-level gateway courses with mandatory, just-in-time instructional support. (3) Time and intensity game-changer recommend capping the degree credit requirement to ensure degrees can be completed on time (120 credits for bachelors and 60 for associate). (4) Block scheduling game-changer helps working students balance jobs and school by utilizing block-scheduling classes to add predictability to their busy lives, and (5) Guided pathways to success enabled by technology enroll all students in the highly structured degree plan, not individual courses. It requires mapping out every semester of study for the entire program and guaranteeing courses will be available when needed. Third, use built-in early warning systems to alert advisers when students fall behind to ensure efficient intervention (Complete College America, 2020).

Overview and Implementation of Guided Pathways

Guided pathways reforms involve mapping programs to specify course sequence, progress milestones, and program learning outcomes (Jenkins et al.,2018). According to the CCRC (2018) report, *What We Are Learning About Guided Pathways*, the guided pathways

reform addresses a fundamental problem with how community colleges are organized. In their 2015 book, *Redesigning America's Community Colleges: A Clearer Path to Student Success*, Bailey et al. argued that, for community colleges to substantially improve graduation rates and narrow gaps in completion among student groups, isolated, programmatic interventions will not suffice. Because community colleges were founded with the mission of providing broader access to higher education, they focused on a variety of program offerings to attract students.

According to Jenkins et al. (2015), the pathways model includes three essential design principles. The first principle states that colleges' program redesigns must focus on the entire student experience, rather than just one segment (developmental education or the intake process). Second, a guided pathways redesign is not just an initiative of the past. The framework of the model helps unify a package of reform elements around a goal. Students choose, enter, and complete a program of study aligned with their goals of employment or further education. Thirdly, student enrollment should be redesigned with the student's end goal or either a career or further education in mind. These principles help in walking through the steps to support the students to ensure they can thrive in employment and learning at the next phase

According to Rose (2016), the structural reform efforts recommended by Bailey et al. (2015) need a coupling with real-world problem-solving in the context of each college to overcome the challenges. Rose alluded that the choices put forth by Bailey et al. will do more harm than good to colleges that intend to implement the ideals embedded in the guided pathways model. Rose suggested that power and status in the community college administrative hierarchies are structural features, but they also have consequences and repercussions. Rose also examined the work of Bailey et al. (2015) by stating that various methods can bring people together to work on some of the dynamics toward a common goal. The researcher also indicated that

because of ideological differences, people jockeying for power could foil ethical ideals. Finally, Rose explained that people or faculty are skeptical of data because of the distrust of administration, which causes them to blame the students they teach to become better prepared for the future.

Johnstone (2015) in a report titled *Demystifying Guided Pathways*, argued that multiple efforts are taking root across the nation to implement the Guided Pathways approach at scale. In the report, Johnstone laid out ten questions on guided pathways about the concerns from those who opposed guided pathways stating that the changes the guided pathways is seeking to include many Americans in the college experience will compromise our education values. The ten questions were as follows:

1. Isn't college a meritocracy where the strong and smart succeed and the weak, underprepared, or unmotivated don't?
2. Isn't free choice the cornerstone of American higher education?
3. Won't we sacrifice quality when we move to guided pathways?
4. Won't we lose the heart of liberal arts education when we move to guided pathways?
5. Won't faculty lose control over what is taught in their discipline?
6. Won't we lose enrollment at our college if we decrease swirl with increased structure- or by making things mandatory?
7. Isn't all of this "hand-holding" going to create graduates that can't navigate the workplace and the "real world"?
8. Don't students benefit when they "find themselves" by what looks like wandering to observers?

9. How can students be expected to make career decisions at age 18 or 19?
10. Don't students change careers four to seven times? Given this context, why would we put them on structured pathways?

Johnstone acknowledged that some of the questions were controversial and others were practical; all are genuine issues that represent a deep concern for our students and the institution at which a wide range of practitioners dedicate their energy and time; as such these questions will arise and need to be addressed before we can make any substantial changes in the minds of the naysayers before we can adopt guided pathways. Higher education leaders raise these questions about guided pathways with good intentions – surfacing concerns about the students and the institutions they care about.

According to Johnstone, the following organizations were at the forefront of guided pathways, seeking real solutions that support a fundamental redesign of our nations' colleges to ensure that community colleges students are achieving their goals and earning family-sustaining wages: Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation's Completion by Design (CBD) initiative in Ohio, North Carolina, and Florida; the Lumina Foundation's Guided Pathways to Success (GPS) efforts in Indiana, Georgia, and Tennessee; The Kresge Foundation's Pathways projects in Arkansas and Michigan and Centers for Student Success with pathways focus in Connecticut, New Jersey, Ohio, and Texas; and Texas Completes Initiative.

Leadership Engagement

For a policy or change to take root in any organization, the organization's leader should lead the way forward and offer a clear roadmap for the organization to follow. The significant change is often impossible unless the organization's leader is an active supporter of the change (Kotter, 2012). According to Kotter, efforts that lack a sufficiently powerful guiding coalition

can make apparent progress short-lived. Since guided pathways have become a full-fledged movement among community colleges in the past few years, data suggest that many institutions that adopted the pathways model still encounter stumbling blocks when implementing the guided pathways model (Schwartz, 2019).

To find out more about the challenges faced by community colleges, Schwartz (2019) interviewed some administrators at several colleges who implemented guided pathways. The researcher asked administrators to share what they learned from rolling out the guided pathways model and what advice they had to share with other institutions. In response to Schwartz's inquiry, Beth Stewart, vice president of instructional services at Asheville-Buncombe Technical College, stated that she learned two great lessons she was willing to share during the implementation phase. First, quality advising was more critical to the success of the pathways project than developing structured curricula. She stressed the need to garner buy-ins and give advisers the authority to say no to students who wanted or stray from their path. The other advice Stewart provided was for colleges to be flexible when implementing guided pathways. Stewart stressed the need for starting small and learning from mistakes as you go through the implementation process.

Charlie Cook, provost and executive vice president for academic affairs at Austin Community College, stated that everyone in the college must see their role in improving the student experience for guided pathways to be successful. He urged other colleges to maintain a continuous flow of communication and offer opportunities for professional development for staff. Cook stated that they are beginning to see the potential for transformation beyond the college, which could play a vital role in the region's economic development (Schwartz, 2019).

Lorain County Community College in Ohio Provost and Vice President, Jonathan Dryden stated that the secret to the success of the guided pathways program is due to the grassroots effort guided by their faculty and staff. They empower people from all spectrums of the college, including faculty, adviser, and deans, to be creative in responding to obstacles as they saw fit. The college also created math and english faculty team to redesign their developmental courses, creating and accelerating on-ramp to program pathways (Schwartz, 2019).

Institutional Effectiveness and Guided Pathways

The Office of Institutional Effectiveness in Community Colleges plays a pivotal role in organizing and housing the data to show a culture of evidence on the effectiveness of the guided pathways model. In light of the importance of institutional effectiveness, public and government officials alike are increasingly asking for institutions to demonstrate their effectiveness and that such institutional effectiveness (IE) be rooted in evidence and not mere intuition (Gellman-Danley & Martin, 2019).

According to Gellman-Danley and Martin (2019), in light of this central importance of institutional effectiveness, public and government officials alike are increasingly asking for institutions to demonstrate their effectiveness and that such institutional effectiveness be rooted in evidence and not mere intuition. Community colleges are working together to meet this demand, as they always have, despite the rising challenges to American higher education. From the learner-centered college to Achieving the Dream (ATD), Guided Pathways, the Completion Agenda, and the Voluntary Framework of Accountability (VFA), the nation's community colleges are taking the journey toward institutional effectiveness seriously and transforming themselves in the process. The complexities of this journey bear further analysis. In 2020,

accrediting agencies began to require a culture of evidence rather than one of seeing improvement as an intuitive process.

Attewell et al (2006) conducted a study that was published in the *Journal of Higher Education* to determine how institutions view institutional effectiveness. According to the authors, only 20% of the respondents agreed that institutional effectiveness had been appropriately defined. The survey results indicated that 41.7% said "no," 29.7% responded "maybe," and the other 9.57% stated they did not know. The responses from this report indicated that most while colleges have their definitions of what the office of institutional effectiveness should be, there appears to be no uniform agreement about a definition of institutional effectiveness.

Seymour and Bourgeois (2018) in their *Institutional Effectiveness Fieldbook*, observed that the challenge of defining institutional effectiveness is primarily due to the size and scope of institutional effectiveness that crosses divisions and makes it easier to limit institutional effectiveness to one part of the organization. However, the sheer size and cross-functional capability make institutional effectiveness a powerful force for creating coherence and driving positive change, this has been a problem for community colleges to institute coherence.

Experiences of Students Following a Guided Pathways Roadmap

Fink (2017) suggested that community colleges and universities adopted the guided pathways reform to create clearly defined, coherent pathways to make it easier for students to complete their studies and help them acquire a college degree or certificate in the shortest possible time. Fink and members of his team interviewed 48 first-year students from the City Colleges of Chicago to ascertain how well the guided pathways model worked. Fink reported that many students were enthusiastic about program maps and educational planning—a hallmark

of the guided pathways approach – yet a few students had adverse reactions to the same elements other students praised.

This research study on the low graduation rate of community college students confirms that when students are not clear on what path to take, they usually drop from college in the first year. Fink also emphasized that one of the first undertakings of any college implementing guided pathways is clarifying academic program pathways by creating default "maps" for each program of study. Along side information about career and transfer options for students who follow each pathway, these program maps include a faculty-and adviser-recommended semester-by-semester default sequence of courses for students from their first term to completion (Fink, 2017).

According to Fink, the three-year IPEDS Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System, the graduation rate at City Colleges of Chicago increased from 7% in 2009 to 17% in 2015, and the 2013-2018 five-year plan sets the goal completion rate at greater than 20%. It is clear from the information that the guided pathways model at City Colleges of Chicago was yielding some positive rewards.

According to Fink, another concern was the additional time involved in their educational plan required them to take developmental courses. As a result, they could not earn the 15 credits per term the advisers told them to take.

Fink also reported most students interviewed felt that the program maps, individual plans, and tracking information were beneficial. In addition, the students participating in the study reported that the information and resources provided by the college increased their confidence and motivation to make progress toward completion. Students also appreciated that they could easily track their progress and confidence about what courses to take in upcoming semesters. These initial opinions from students about this nascent endeavor called guided pathways will

help practitioners continue their quest to improve guided pathways so that community college practitioners can see significant improvements in the completion agenda.

Overall, Fink (2017) received positive results from the guided pathways' experiences of most of the 149 students interviewed. Some of the drawbacks students expressed were that program maps and educational plans restricted their ability to choose the course they wanted or made it difficult to change major.

College students are more likely to complete a degree quickly if they choose a program and develop an academic plan that identifies a clear road map with courses they need to take to complete a credential. According to the Brown et al.(2019) report titled *Redesigning Your College through Guided Pathways*, the pathways model is an integrated, institution-wide approach to help students succeed by intentional interference to help them navigate college from entry to attainment. Central to the Guided Pathways model is straightforward, educationally coherent program maps that include course sequence specified, progress milestones, and program learning outcomes aligned to an expected outcome for the student upon program completion (<http://www.sac.edu/facultystaff/guidedpathways/pages/default.aspx>)

Overview of Academic Advising

According to the 2018 Center for Community College Student Engagement report, *Show Me the Way: The Power of Advising in Community Colleges*, academic advising is the process where students depend on the college to help lead them to make the right decision in choosing courses and careers that would lead them to the completion of a degree or transfer to a four-year institution. Academic advising is pivotal in keeping students motivated when they are underperforming in college. Several researchers have connected academic advising and student success. For example, Light (2001) concluded that good advising might be the single most

underrated characteristic of a successful college experience (p. 81). Furthermore, Pascarella and Terenzini (2005) noted, “research consistently indicates that academic advising can play a vital role in students’ decisions to persist and increase their chances of completing college” (p. 404).

More recently, numerous studies have confirmed the critical role of effective academic advising in improving student retention (Bahr, 2008; Chiteng Kot, 2014; Kolenovic et al., 2013). Bahr (2008) acknowledged that advising is actively beneficial to students’ chances of success if it is done properly. Chiteng Kot (2014) also asserted that to enhance student success, many colleges and universities have expanded academic support services and programmatic interventions. One popular measure that has been recognized as critical to student success is academic advising (Kolenovic et al., 2013). Kolenovic et al. emphasized the need to encourage students to seek academic advisement, which can yield a positive academic outcome among community college students.

Glennen and Baxley (1985) argued that advisers should not always assume that students know when they need help to call on advisers, or how to ask the right questions they need to progress, but suggested students should be required to make advising appointments throughout their college career. By asking students probing questions about their academic journey, and not waiting on the students to come to the advisers is what is historically referred to as intrusive advising (Varney, 2013).

Earl (1988) explained the advantages of intrusive advising, reporting that a candid and direct adviser-advisee relationship is stronger and established early when the student is most likely motivated and receptive to intervention. Intrusive Advising involves intentional contact with students to develop a caring relationship that leads to increased academic motivation and persistence (Heisserer & Prette, 2002). Varney (2013), also argued that another way to be

intrusive is to be proactive in monitoring students' grades: both mid-semester and final. Varney also acknowledged that there are other ways to be intrusive, and one way is to engage students outside of the academic setting.

Advising and Implementation of Guided Pathways

The examination of the role of academic advising is not a new topic. As early as 1972, O'Banion stressed that advising is a process in which the adviser and advisee enter a dynamic relationship, ensuring that the student's concern is paramount. Historically advising was viewed as a linear transaction where decisions were made going through steps in a process. A major limitation of the current research on advising and retention is that it tends to be dominated by studies conducted at four-year institutions (Bailey & Alfonso, 2005).

Little is known about the college experience of first-generation college students (Pascarella et al., 2003), and even less is known about community college students. Many of the new advising models in use today in community colleges have some features of the O'Banion model. Some aspects of O'Banion's 1972 advising model fits well with the AACC Guided Pathways Conceptual Framework (2018), which consisted of five parts: (a) exploration of life goals, (b) exploration of vocational goals, (c) exploration of program choice, (d) exploration of course choice, and (e) exploration of scheduling options.

Student engagement and advising can be powerful tools because they are the core elements to increase student success (CCCSE, 2018). The 2018 CCCSE report, *Show Me the Way: The Power of Advising in Community Colleges*, expressed that when advisers meet with students individually or in groups to help students explore their academic and career options and set career and academic goals, it is easier for students to see a clear path to completion.

One other primary function of advisers in today's community colleges is to help students develop academic plans and register for courses (CCCSE, 2018). Advisers help students plan detailed academic plans to attain their goals and help them identify and register for courses they need to complete their academic goals. In a 2011 *Survey of Entering Student Engagement Report*, 56% of entering students reported that an adviser helped them set academic goals and created a plan for achieving them. One issue stressed in this report is that colleges ask advisers to do more with little resources by asking them to delve into intrusive advising, more equitable, and more holistic advising. According to available research, the problem in many advising programs is that the caseload for the advisers is getting very high, and for that reason, advisers spend less time with students as they should do more holistic advising.

According to the CCCSE (2018) report *Show Me the Way: The Power of Advising in Community Colleges*, advisers are now required to have a broader skillset than historically practiced. They must increasingly have in-depth conversations with students about degree plans and transfer opportunities and current job markets, specific career opportunities and earning potential, and career decisions based on current data trends (CCCSE, 2018). According to the Survey of Entering Student Engagement, a CCCSE report written in 2010, when a student, with knowledgeable assistance creates a road map—one that shows where he or she is headed, what academic path to follow, and how long it will take to reach the end goal—that student has a critical tool for staying on track. Students are more likely to persist if they not only are advised about what courses to take but also are helped to set academic goals and to create a plan for achieving them. The following five items constitute the Clear Academic Plan and Pathway benchmark: (1) I was able to meet with an academic adviser at times convenient for me; (2) An adviser helped me to identify the courses I needed to take during my first semester/quarter; (3)

An adviser helped me to select a course of study, program, or major; (4) An adviser helped me to set academic goals and to create a plan for achieving them; and (5) A college staff member talked with me about my commitments outside of school (work, children, dependents, etc.) to help me figure out how many courses to take.

In conclusion, the literature review suggested that while a some scholars have researched the guided pathways model, few studies have focused on the implementation process of guided pathways in community colleges. The literature review shows that community colleges across the country confront challenges promoting student success. For example, many students arrive on campus unprepared and are placed into developmental (or remedial) courses where they fail to progress, and never complete a credential, graduate, or transfer to a four-year institution. At the same time, community colleges are subject to increasing expectations—and increased scrutiny—about their capacity to prepare workers for a global economy.

Chapter Summary

This chapter focused on the literature reviewed in this study. The chapter discussed the following major topics: (1) Overview of academic issues in community colleges; (2) Barriers to student success; (3) Overview of student outcomes and student success in community college (4) Community College Reform Initiatives (5) Overview and Implementation of guided pathways (6) Overview of academic advising. Analysis of the literature reveals that community colleges have implemented a variety of reforms in developmental education in recent years. While research shows modest effects for some of these efforts, it is increasingly evident that bolder change—and more evidence of what works—is needed to substantially improve completion rates for the hundreds of thousands of college students placed in remedial education each year (Corrin, 2013).

Chapter 3 - Methodology

The purpose of this case study was to examine the student experience in an established guided pathways model that integrates a system of support services for increasing on-time graduation rates. The main topics covered in this chapter include Research Design and Rationale, Data Collection Methods including a discussion on document review, Data Analysis, Population and Sample, Setting and Context, Role of the Researcher, Ethical Considerations, and Trustworthiness.

Research Design and Rationale

The researcher used a qualitative research design to conduct the study.

Research Design

A qualitative research design was employed for this study. Yin (2008) posited that a case study was an appropriate research method because it is used to gather an in-depth practical examination of a current event in its actual state. According to Yin (2002), the case study design is focused to answer "how" and "why" questions, and it is difficult to manipulate the behaviors of those involved in the study. Yin also categorized case studies as explanatory, exploratory, or descriptive. One primary concern of a case study approach is the difficulty to make generalization to other similar areas.

Rationale

The qualitative research design was appropriate for this study because it allowed the researcher to collect data that other designs would not quickly obtain (Creswell, 2011). Yin's (2008) characteristics of qualitative research are described as follows:

- (1) Natural setting – qualitative researchers often collect data in the field at the site where participants experience the issues or the problem being studied;

- (2) Researcher as key instrument;
- (3) Multiple methods;
- (4) Complex reasoning;
- (5) Participants' meanings;
- (6) Emergent design;
- (7) Reflexivity; and,
- (8) Holistic account

For purpose of this investigation, a qualitative investigation helped the researcher construct a greater understanding of student experiences in a guided pathways program at the participating community college.

Research Questions

The research questions that guided this study were:

1. How did the participants describe the college's approach to helping students enter an academic pathway?
2. How did the participants describe the college's approach in clarifying the students' pathways that helped them to choose the right career to keep them on track to ensure students are learning?
3. How did the participants describe their guided pathways model experiences to keep students on track with their career goals?
4. How did the participants describe the college's approach to ensure that learning happened with intentional outcomes for students?

Data Collection Methods

The researcher used two forms of data collection to conduct this study.

Interviews

Semi-structured interviews were conducted via Zoom. Galletta (2013) stated that semi-structured interviews incorporate both open-ended and more theoretically driven questions, eliciting data grounded in the experience of participants as well as data guided by existing constructs in the particular discipline within which one is conducting research. According to Creswell and Poth (2018), semi-structured interviews are used as an attempt to understand the world from the subjects' point of view, to unfold the meaning of their experience, and to uncover their lived world. Interviews are also considered a social interaction based on a conversation (Creswell & Poth, 2018). In order to conduct this study, participants were informed of the confidentiality of the information shared and the anonymity of their identities.

Interview Protocols

Data was gathered using a three-part, open-ended, qualitative interview instrument (see Appendix A). During the Zoom interview, the researcher used a biographic questionnaire to collect personal biographic such as education, age, gender, program of study, income level, high school graduation, and first-generation college-going status. For administrators and advisers participants, biographic data includes years of work experience in student advising, education level, age range, and current position. These categories provide helpful information to analyze the demographic information about students enrolled in developmental education courses and the guided pathways support system. The researcher then individually interviewed each participant in the study – two senior administrators, two advisers, and four students. The researcher asked nine interview questions to each student participant, four questions for advisers, and four questions for administrators during the interview process. A copy of the interview questions appears in Appendix A.

Document Review

Document review was conducted during the same time period that the interviews were conducted. The researcher reviewed documents from Southern University at Shreveport, Louisiana (SUSLA), listed in Table 1. Some of the documents reviewed were documents from the college's website. Administrators also emailed documents that were not available on the website. Table 1 displays the documents used for the document review process: SUSLA's mission statement, history, and meeting minutes.

Data Analysis

For the purpose of this study, the researcher used Creswell's (2007) seven-step data analysis approach:

1. Organize files to manage the data
2. Read through the text, making margin notes, forming initial codes
3. Describe the case and its context
4. Use categorical aggregation to establish themes or patterns
5. Use direct interpretation
6. Develop naturalistic generalizations
7. Present an in-depth picture of the case using narrative and tables.

The researcher arranged codes into a thematic concept to make sense of the data after the interview process. An inductive approach allowed the researcher to develop key themes from the data collected from the interviews and the document review analysis.

Table 1*Documents Reviewed at Southern University Shreveport*

Document Type	Description	Source
College Mission Statement	Definition of the college's business, its objectives, and its approach to reach those objectives.	www.susla.edu
History of SUSLA	Information on when the college was founded and changes that have taken place since its inception	www.susla.edu
Board Meeting Agendas 2017-2019	Documents used to guide board meetings	www.susla.edu
Administrative Council	Administrators at the College gather each fiscal quarter to receive updates on college initiatives and items from board meetings and state and national matters. Professional development components are also considered to provide an opportunity to grow and learn.	www.susla.edu
Board Policies	Policies that govern the board	www.susla.edu
Policy Governance Process	Policy governance is a conceptual model of Boardmanship that provides a framework for strategic leadership by the SUSLA Board of Trustees.	www.susla.edu
President Message	Information from the college president, informing people about the purpose of the college	www.susla.edu
Organizational Charts	Organization charts of various functions of the college	www.susla.edu
President Leadership Council	The senior administrators who help the president to run the college daily	www.susla.edu

Coding Process

Coding is the most basic form of the simple operation of identifying meaning in the data and labeling them with a code, which is defined by a “word or phrase that symbolically assigns an evocative attribute for a portion of language-based or visual data” (Saldana, 2016).

The researcher used inductive coding where I developed code directly from the data. The inductive approach is relevant when doing an exploratory study or when the theoretical concepts are immediately available to help you grasp the phenomenon being studied. Working systematically with coding, allows me the opportunity to observe transparency and thus offer credible interpretations of the information collected (Corley, Gioia, and Hamilton 2013).

After the researcher coded the data for each interview, the researcher took notes to help process the data into thematic concepts. The researcher kept a comparative table of emerging codes during this process and made entries to the tables. Then, the researcher continued the coding-and-memo process. Next, the researcher analyzed information from the interviews and compared them with the college’s documents selected for the study. The researcher's constant comparative method is defined as how any newly collected data is compared with previous data collected in earlier analyzes. Thus, data collection for this investigation was a continuous, ongoing procedure because themes were formed, enhanced, confirmed, or even discounted because of any new data that emerges from the study as the analyses unfolded (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Overall, this coding process assisted the researcher in identifying the major themes from participants’ interviews.

During the analysis of the participants’ comments, using the four pillars of Guided Pathways as a guide, the researcher reflected on the comments and placed a comment in bold after

a particular comment. The purpose of this approach was to collect evidence about the extent to which guided pathways was reflected in the participants' observation.

Population and Participants

The population for this study was community college practitioners and students at a select community college in Louisiana. The participants consisted of two senior administrators, two advisers, and four students from SUSLA. Study participant considerations included first-generation college students, adult learners who have been away from college for a long time, and recent high school graduates attending college for the first time, and student participants were from these target populations. All students selected for this study were currently enrolled in courses or had taken courses in previous semesters.

The researcher used a purposeful sample to identify participants for the study. Creswell and Poth (2018) defined purposeful sampling as the researcher selecting the participants and site for the study because they can purposefully inform an understanding of the research problem and central phenomenon in the study. The researcher selected this approach because he had contacts at the participating institution who could provide direct access to participants. The data obtained for this study was the cohort of students who were currently taking developmental courses, had taken developmental courses in the past, and were first-time college students who just started or may have been gone from college for a long time. Some students were excluded from this study because they did not meet this criteria.

Confidentiality of Participants

The participants in the study were made anonymous to protect their identities. I relied on the fact that anonymization is a form of confidentiality, for which I decided to conceal the identity of the participants (Saunders et al., 2015). For example, each participant was named in

the following order: The first administrator that was interviewed was given the alias Administrator 1. The same naming convention was given to the student participants and the advisers in the same order as the administrators. After downloading the interview data into Microsoft Word documents, the researcher exchanged pseudonyms for respondent names and college site identities with the control (F) function and replace feature.

Setting and Context

The study took place at a small, seaport community college, Southern University of Shreveport Louisiana, to examine their guided pathways model. Southern University at Shreveport, a unit of the Southern University System located at Baton Rouge, Louisiana, was created by Act 42 of the ordinary session of the Louisiana Legislature on May 11, 1964, and designated a two-year commuter college to serve the Shreveport-Bossier City area. Its basic emphasis was to provide the first two years of typical college and university work.

In 1999 for the first time in the history of higher education in the State of Louisiana, a two-year college board was organized. This board controls all two-year colleges except those under the Southern University and Louisiana State University systems. Because of the unique situation that places Southern University at Shreveport under the Southern University Board of Supervisors, it became necessary to investigate the appropriateness of the assigned name (Southern University at Shreveport-Bossier City). As a result, the Board and other leaders chose to align the name with the pattern of other campus names in the Southern University System. Thus, Southern University thought it feasible to name the Shreveport campus, Southern University at Shreveport, which coincided with Southern University at Baton Rouge and Southern University at New Orleans. This kept the name of the school identifiable in reference to

its location, and reinforced when the acronym SUSLA was assigned to the Southern University at Shreveport, Louisiana campus. The institution currently occupies eleven (1) buildings in 103 acres of land located at 3050 Martin Luther King, Jr. Drive in Northwest Shreveport.

At present the Southern University at Shreveport Metro Center occupies nearly 50% of the 610 Texas Street Office Building, housing computer labs, allied health labs, classrooms, academic and administrative offices, a media productions studio, the Southern University Museum of Art at Shreveport, and a compressed video distance-learning classroom. The building is an example of turn-of-the-century urban commercial architecture and consists of two structures. The six-story red brick building was built in 1919 by the Jacobs family as office space. The adjoining four-story building, known as the Barrett Building, was constructed in 1929 by a Little Rock, Arkansas department store for use as a ladies specialty fashion store. In 1982 the two buildings were combined and renovated to create the existing structure which now contains approximately 70,000 square feet. In 1992, the building was given the DSU Award for Preservation of Historic Architectural Buildings in Downtown. The researcher narrowed the focus of the study to SUSLA because the researcher was granted access to participants for the study. Additionally, SUSLA had recently implemented a guided pathways model. SUSLA implemented a pathways model to help underserved students and first-generation college-going adults to persist and achieve their education goals in their individualized academic plan.

According to SUSLA's website (2020):

- 31% of SUSLA's students attend full-time, 69% part-time

- 79% of students are female, 34% male
- Minority enrollment is at 90%
- 90% African American
- 6% Caucasian
- 1% Hispanic American
- 1% Asian American

SUSLA is one of 18 community colleges in Louisiana. In 2013, in light of the college's decision to begin developing curriculum for two bachelor degree programs and increased efforts in international studies, the Board of Trustees voted to change the name from Southern University Shreveport-Bossier City to SUSLA. At present, the SUSLA Metro Center occupies nearly 50% of the 610 Texas Street Office Building, housing computer labs, allied health labs, classrooms, academic and administrative offices, a media productions studio, the Southern University Museum of Art at Shreveport, and a compressed video distance-learning classroom. The Metro Center is an example of turn-of-the-century urban commercial architecture and consists of two structures. SUSLA has 74 full-time faculty, 133 full-time staff and administrators, and 361 part-time personnel. Because of the widespread implementation of guided pathways as a new phenomenon, little research is available on the successes and failures of developmental education students.

In fall 2018-19, the institute's full-time enrollment was 3,567, with a total college enrollment of 5,227. From fall 2018 to winter 2019, the student retention rate was 78%, and for fall 2017 to fall 2018, the retention was 55%. In addition, the graduation rate increased by 14%, and transfers out of the institution were 34% during 2018-19 (www.susla.edu).

The Role of the Researcher

The researcher is a current community college leader and currently works in the Human Resources Department at Wayne County College District in Detroit, Michigan. He has worked in higher education for the last 15 years and has an extensive background in working with faculty and student services. Prior to working in Human Resources, the researcher served as a Dean of Distance Learning and worked in Educational Affairs.

In planning and conducting an ethical study, the researcher considered and addressed all anticipated and emergent ethical issues. When the researcher contacted potential interview respondents, the researcher stressed that he would not engage in any deception that will tarnish his reputation or put respondents' characters into disrepute. Creswell and Poth (2018) stressed the three principles that should guide the research: (a) are respect for a person, (b) concern for the welfare of participants, and (c) justice. The researcher is aware that he has to ensure that the participants see those principles through his interactions with them during the study. These principles were employed when I reached out to participants via email, I made it clear that it was their choice to participate in the study, and had all rights without reservation if they wanted to leave the study. The researcher made sure that each participant was treated with the utmost respect during the process of interacting with him or her.

The researcher's role in this study is to ascertain information by interviewing the participants respectfully. At no time did the researcher deviate from being neutral in dealing with the participants. Thus, personal biases were avoided even if they contradict what the researcher believed. The researcher used neutral language to describe the data; thus, this is a clear indication of upholding all of the guiding principles for conducting qualitative research.

For a novice researcher, designing and implementing a case study project, several rudimentary critical elements to the study design can be integrated to enhance overall study quality or trustworthiness (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Researchers utilizing this method will operate to ascertain enough detail so that readers can assess the validity or credibility of the work. As a rudimentary substructure to achieve this neophyte researcher has a responsibility to ascertain (a) the case study research questions are understandable and substantiated; (b) case study design is appropriate for the research questions; (c) purposeful sampling strategies are suitable and applied for the case study; (d) data are amassed and managed systematically; and (e) the data are analyzed correctly (Russell et al., 2005). Research design principles for case studies include numerous strategies that promote data credibility or "true value." Triangulation of data sources, data types, or researchers are primary strategies that can be used and strengthen the principle in case study research that the phenomena are viewed and explored from multiple perspectives. The researcher took the time to explain the process to the participants and was willing to answer all questions the participants had during and after the interviewing process. The researcher took the time to employ the strategy on how to gain support from the participants explaining the purpose of the study and did not engage in deception about the nature of the study (Creswell & Poth, 2018, P. 151).

Ethical Considerations

In conducting data analysis, the researcher was mindful that ethical behavior should be paramount. In addition, the researcher realized that analyzing text and multiple other forms of data presented a challenging task for the researcher. Further, deciding how to present the data in tables, matrices, and narrative forms was also a challenge (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

The researcher followed Kansas State University's IRB protocols (see Appendix F).

Trustworthiness

In qualitative research, there are challenges, and one of those challenges is to demonstrate trustworthiness (Creswell & Poth, 2018). In addition, Creswell and Poth noted that trustworthiness is about establishing credibility, transferability, confirmability, and dependability. To establish credibility, the researcher was aware of his own bias as a community college professional, therefore he established research procedures to avoid personal biases. For example, I had no way of determining whether the participants were truthful in answering my interview questions. I advised the participants that answers would be kept confidential and in no way will put them in jeopardy with their employer or college. In this study, several strategies were employed to ensure the trustworthiness of this research; specifically, member checking, and source triangulation were implemented to establish trustworthiness.

Member Checking

After the data was transcribed, the researcher utilized member checking by allowing the participants to review the data for accuracy. Member checking was used in this study when the researcher was done with the interviewing. Before analyzing the data, the transcript for each participant was sent back to the participant to validate the data and make corrections, where the participant felt, was appropriate. (Yin, 2011, P. 97).

Source Triangulation

Using multiple sources of data, methods, or investigators, the researcher utilized the triangulation of data analysis used by Creswell and Poth (2018).

The data was triangulated in that the researcher uses multiple sources (interviews and documents) to collect data on the same topic. The reason for the triangulation of the data is to corroborate evidence through multiple data sources.

Description of Appendices

The appendices section includes: (a) Appendix A is the interview protocol and interview questions for the study, (b) Appendix B is the invitation letter to the study participants, (c) Appendix C is the informed and consent form for the participants to join the study, (d) Appendix D is the participants profiles, (e) Appendix E is the field notes, (f) Appendix F is the Kansas State University IRB document.

Chapter Summary

The main topics covered in Chapter three included research design and rationale, data collection methods, document review, data analysis, population and sample, setting and context, the role of the researcher, ethical considerations, and trustworthiness.

Chapter 4 - Findings

Chapter 4 presents the findings from the study. It is organized in the following sections: purpose of the study; research questions; presentation of the findings; profile of participants; presentation of findings by research questions: what advisers said; what students said; what administrators said; emerging themes; and chapter summary.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to examine an established guided pathways model that integrates a system of student support services to increase on-time graduation rates.

Research Questions

The research questions that guided this study were:

1. How did the participants describe the college's approach to helping students enter an academic pathway?
2. How did the participants describe the college's approach in clarifying the students' pathways that helped them to choose the right career to keep them on track to ensure students are learning?
3. How did the participants describe their guided pathways model experiences to keep students on track with their career goals?
4. How did the participants describe the college's approach to ensure that learning happened with intentional outcomes for students?

Presentation of Findings

This section of the study presents a display of the findings starting with a profile of participants, presentation of findings by the research question, and major themes.

Profile of Participants

For the study, participants were identified by their role – administrator, adviser, or student. They were each assigned a number (i.e. Adviser 1, Admin 2, Student 3, etc.), which corresponded to the order in which they were interviewed.

Eight SUSLA participants were enlisted to participate in this study – two administrators, two advisers, and four students. Profiles of the participants are displayed in Table 2.

Table 2

Profile of Participants

Administrator 1	
Title at the college	Chairperson, Department of Humanities, Associate Professor of English Position Summary: Develop and implement a vision for the Humanities Department aligned with the priorities of the strategic goals of the University.
Years at SUSLA	20+
Age range: 21-41; 42-52; or 53+ years	50+
Highest degree attained	PhD
Race	African American

Administrator 2	
Title at the college	Assistant Vice Chancellor for Student Success, responsible for advocating SUSLA’s student success initiatives. In addition, he directs the staff at SUSLA’s Student Success Center and its related programs, including TRIO, Dean of Student Life, and William Center, a program for African American male students.
Years at SUSLA	14

Age range: 21-41; 42-52; or 53+ years	53+
Highest degree attained	Master's
Race	African American

Adviser 1	
Title at the college	Professor of developmental math and also served as a student adviser at SUSLA.
Years at SUSLA	14
Age range: 21-41; 42-52; or 53+ years	53+
Highest degree attained	Master's
Race	African American

Adviser 2	
Title at the college	College Success Coach at the Student Success Department. Served as a student success coach and adviser to students at SUSLA
Years at SUSLA	17
Age Range: 21-41; 42-52; or 53+ years	21-41
Highest degree attained	Master's
Race	African American

Student 1	
Full-time/Part-time	Full-time student who graduated from SUSLA with an Associate's Degree in Sociology
Years at SUSLA	4 years/graduated
Age Range: 21-41; 42-52; or 53+ years	42-52
First-generation college student?	No
Race/Ethnicity	African American

Student 2	
Full-time/Part-time	Full-time student majoring in Radiology
Years at college (SUSLA)	Second-year
Age Range: 21-41; 42-52; or 53+ years	21-41
First-generation college student?	Yes
Race/Ethnicity	African American

Student 3	
Full-time/Part-time	Full-time student majoring in Nursing
Years at SUSLA	First-year
Age Range: 21-41; 42-52; or 53+ years	21-41
First-generation college student?	No
Race/Ethnicity	Black American (As reported the by participant)

Student 4	
Full-time/Part-time	Full-time student majoring in Computer Information Systems
Years at SUSLA	First-year
Age range: 21-41; 42-52; or 53+ years	21-41
First-generation college student?	No
Race/Ethnicity	Caucasian

Presentation of Findings by Research Questions

Data was collected through interviews conducted with each of the eight participants using the Zoom video conferencing platform and HyperTrans Software. Each participant shared their experiences as students, advisers, and administrators and their roles in the guided pathways model at SUSLA. Their experiences are presented in this section. The researcher sought to align participants’ comments with the four research questions and interview questions. Table 3 shows the alignment of the research questions and the interview questions.

Administrators, advisers, and students participating in this study described their experiences with guided pathways, and each answered the interview questions related to their roles at the institution. In this section, the researcher presents the major findings by research question. Researcher reflections on participant comments are displayed in bold commentary in parentheses following some of the comments. These reflections are aligned with the principles of the guided pathways pillars.

The following section displays the findings according to participants' categories:

Advisers.

What Advisers Said

Research Question One

Research question one was *How did the participants describe the college's approach to helping students enter an academic pathway?* For advisers, the interview question that aligned most closely with this research question was *how do the advisers help new students choose a program of study, particularly for developmental students?*

Advisers explained the methods employed to keep students on track for early graduation.

Adviser 1 stated:

I teach developmental Math, and normally, everybody that comes through my classroom wants to be a nurse, but not everybody is meant to be a nurse because you have to be able to do calculations without a computer, without a calculator, and stuff like that. So what ends up happening, if they don't get frustrated with the Math, they end up finding out when they take the [Nursing School Entrance Exam] where you can't use the calculator.

(clarifying the path)

She noted that students often want to take college-level courses, yet, “knowing they are not ready to take those courses” (**student lack of clarity**). She noted that when math impedes a student’s program of study, they immediately change their program of study (**clarifying the path**).

Adviser 2 answered the question by stating a student’s work plan is reviewed during an initial advising meeting (**entering the pathway**). He said,

Initially when they come in, they tell us what they are interested in. During the freshmen orientation, they complete a career interest survey, they complete an intake form, and all this information we use to determine what it is they want to study. When they do their career interest survey, if the career interest survey doesn't line up with exactly what it is they want to study, we will sit there and talk to the student, see if it is something else that you really want to do besides Nursing. Maybe there is something else because your interest doesn't line up with the career field that you have outlined. (**clarifying the path**)

Research Question Two

Research question two was *How did the participants describe the college’s approach in clarifying the students’ pathways that helped them choose the right career to keep them on track to ensure students are learning?* For advisers, the interview question that most closely aligned to this research question was *Are further education and employment targets specified for every program?*

As both an adviser and instructor, Adviser 1 said her dual role at SUSLA gives her the opportunity to engage with students before they begin taking college courses. She stated,

You know how students are given the ACT test, and sometimes their scores might represent you may not be college ready? However, you may be workforce ready, so they

are told about the workforce option as well as the college option, and they are also told about the certificate program. **(clarifying the path)**

Adviser 2 shared,

When students initially come in, they inform us about what program they are interested in. During that initial assessment, the students are given a career interest survey and intake form to complete. When we assessed the career survey and notice the career survey not aligning with exactly what the student wants to do, the adviser sits with the student to discuss other options that may align with their interest. I would present it to the student by saying, 'Is it something else you want to do besides Nursing?' We as advisers would suggest an alternative program that is closely aligned with their career interest **(entering the path)**. If you take courses that will not count toward your degree, you could be paying money that will not count toward your degree **(importance of advising)**. Now, if you are thinking about changing your major, we can discuss that, but taking courses outside the scope of your major is not an ideal situation. **(clarifying the path)**

Research Question Three

Research question three was *How did the participants describe their guided pathways model experiences to keep students on track with their career goals?* For advisers, the interview question that most closely aligned to this research question was *Are you able to identify when students are at risk of deviating from their program?*

Adviser 1 answered the question by stating:

One of the things I do is, I give a test after every topic. The reason why I do that, I find it is most effective because it's fresh on their minds **(tested students frequently to help student retain concepts)**. If I give you a test on chapter one, that means we are going to

go through everything that we have done on chapter one. And one thing about Math is, Math is a building block. You know when you do this, that's going to help you to be able to do the next thing. So, I do it by topic, and I find out they do better when you do it by topic, because it is fresh on their minds, and they are able to see how what we just did lead into the next subject area. You can normally tell on those topic tests, by test number 2 or 3, not a good student, or I have to always tell them, 'Don't forget when you get home, take your backpack out of the car, because you need to work on your Math. You are in developmental Math for a reason, your skills are not quite there, because you need to work on your Math' (**ensuring learning is taking place**). I make sure students are tested frequently so that I can see whether they are mastering the course content. (**ensure learning is taking place**)

Adviser 2 answered the same question by saying:

We will have a meeting. We will look at the plan of study. During that time, I will outline with them, telling them, 'If you take these courses, these courses will not go toward your plan of study, and your time of degree could be delayed. Therefore, if you do take these classes, it is not for your plan. Now if you are thinking about changing your major, we can discuss that, but taking something outside the scope of your major is not ideal.'

(**staying on the path**)

Research Question Four

Research question four was *How did the participants describe the college's approach to ensure that learning happened with intentional outcomes for students?* For advisers, the interview question that most closely aligned with this research question was *How well defined is the learning outcome for each program?*

Adviser 1 shared:

I will say this, a lot of the time when they get out of high school, they are pretty much in bad shape, and you will be amazed at the things I have to do (**students come with deficiencies**). Sometimes, I do not get to cover my syllabus. The reason why I do not is that I have to go backwards. Remember, I am developmental, so I have had to give out multiplication sheets, teach multiplication by showing you how you add and multiply at the same time. So a lot of times when a student comes in, I am already at a deficit, so therefore, I start off behind (**students are underprepared**). I have to sometimes go back to concepts that should have been taught in high school. They do so much talking about getting rid of developmental education. I do not see how you can get rid of it with the caliber of students that we have. Like I said, it's hard to get the outcome that you want. (**ensure learning is taking place**)

Adviser 2 answered by stating, “That is not in my area, learning outcomes for each program. It is not” (**not clear on how to answer the question**).

Adviser 1 answered the question by stating she gives a test on every classroom topic because she wants to keep the topics fresh on the minds of students so that they may easily retain the instruction (**ensuring learning is taking place**).

Adviser 2 answered the same question by intervening early on by reviewing the student’s plan of study. He stated, “I will outline with the students to inform them of the peril of taking courses that will not count toward their degree” (**staying on the path**).

The following section displays the findings according to participants’ categories:
Students,.

What Students Said

Research Question One

Research question one was *How did the participants describe the college's approach to helping students enter an academic pathway?* For students, the interview question that most closely aligned with research question one was *How has the college guided pathways prepared you to select your course or program of intent?*

In response to this question, Student 1, a SUSLA graduate at the time of the interview and who self-identified within the 42-52 age category (see Appendix D), stated:

It is hard being a non-traditional student. The faculty and advisers were very helpful in guiding me to select classes that helped me complete on time as possible. The faculty and the advisers helped me learn new approaches, and new technologies made it easier to adapt and choose the program that I thought was best for me. I had not been in school for a very long time, and to retain things that I learned previously was very difficult.

(clarifying the path)

Student 2 stated:

I wasn't in school, however, when I graduated from high school, I was just teetering around, so the curriculum she brought in to help me back to my Math got me back into gear for the next level, so it was pretty good, a good follow up. A lot of examples was very good as far as working with the example on the Math problem, such and such like that. It was pretty good, and a great starting point to accelerate to the next level.

Everything was over the phone, everything with the pandemic and stuff was over the phone. I have not been in touch with the campus yet, so everything was over the phone. I talked to my academic adviser, and she give me the list of classes that I needed to sign up

for, and then I am getting through with my first semester. (**clarifying the path**)

Student 3 shared, “After I was accepted to SUSLA, the guidance given in my freshman semester was very helpful. When becoming a full-time student it begins to become a more independent effort” (**clarifying the path**).

Student 4 stated, “They didn't really help me with that. I kind of had an idea of what I wanted to do. I am a little older than the normal student.” Student 4 also shared that this was his second attempt at college after a lengthy break, admitting, “I am a little older than the normal community college student” (**clarifying the path**).

Research Question Two

Research question two was *How did the participants describe the college's approach in clarifying the students' pathways that helped them to choose the right career to keep them on track to ensure students are learning?* For students, the interview question that most closely aligned with this research question was interview question six, *Are the learning outcomes clearly defined for your current program?*

She stressed that with each class she took each semester, her knowledge was elevated and that, as time went by, all pieces of the puzzle fell into place (**staying on path**). Student 1 answered this question by saying:

Each semester that you take another class as far you go up and up, and you learn more and you get more in-depth specialized areas, and so it really helps to where it gives you an idea overall what the degree is, and then you start taking classes in special areas that help you to determine what area you are interested in going. I learned everything basically came together. (**ensure learning is taking place**)

Student 2 said:

Yes, but for some classes, the syllabus was vague and did not go into detail. Like one of my classes, I do not want to name names, I really had to guess the due dates for assignments in the course. I emailed most times to get the due dates of assignment for that particular course. I think it is a lack of communication due to the pandemic. Some syllabuses were on point. **(sometimes learning outcomes were vague)**

Student 3 answered this question by saying:

As far as what I learned so far, it has been clear for me. I just basically been taking it in stride and trying to complete it. I am a first-generation college student, this is my first go round with everything, basically feel my way through and not cut any corners, if that make sense. But I think once I get into clinical, it will be more in depth on what procedure I need to take, yes. **(student felt loss sometimes)**

Student 4 said:

I have a worksheet, but I don't know how to translate that. What I mean is that there are electives, but I already had college credits, so of those things I have taking before, is that a problem? I have taken Ancient History and Civilization History. Does that stuff apply to my worksheet? That is why I need to talk to an adviser. They also have an African American class I am supposed to take. Does that count as an elective? I have already taken Art and Music. Does that stuff I have taken fit into the plan? **(student felt lost navigating path)** I have been trying to get in touch with an adviser. I have sent a couple of emails. I mean, every time you look on the website, you try to or, like when you contact the different advisers, some of those positions are vacant. Some of those people are not there for the job. So, and then with the COVID thing, everything is Zoom now a day, so imagine I just kind of like put my name in line, but I want like a direct path. I

might be taking a class now that can wait, but there is a prerequisite that I do not know about. That is kind of why I want to talk to an adviser. (**student struggled to navigate process**)

Student 2 answered:

I was not in school for a while after I graduated from high school. I was just aimlessly living life without direction and purpose. The adviser helped prepare me to get back in college, but many of my interactions with the advisers and faculty were done online due to the pandemic. (**adviser helped to navigate the path**)

Student 3 said, “After being accepted to SUSLA, the guidance given in my freshman semester was very helpful. When becoming a full-time student, it begins to become a more independent effort” (**adviser helped to navigate the path**).

The second question was to ascertain how students chose a program of interest. Student 2 said:

It was hard because my dream job is always working in the entertainment industry, to be, like, an actor. But being an adult and realizing, okay, you know, you can work in the entertainment industry, but becoming like a top star like Dwayne the Rock Johnson is one in a billion, but you got to have like a backup plan, and for all this time I was like, mom, ‘What is the backup plan?’ She was like, ‘Josh, why don't you go for radiology tech at Southern?’, and my cousin who works at Southern mentioned it, so, I am like, I don't know, I am not too into the medical field. I remember my uncle telling me, he said, ‘But one thing, Josh, one career that's going to always be in business is the medical field and won't go out of style, and radiology is a pretty good thing to go into,’ and so I meditated and I prayed on it and wanted to make sure I wanted to do it, not just to do it for money. I

believe it was October or November last year, so I decided on Radiology Tech. (**family member helped student choose path**)

Student 4 said the decision came down to money. He expressed his feeling this way:

It really comes down to money. So, you know, when I decide what I want to do, it's the one that, after school, pays the most an hour. So IT positions. I been looking for a job.

Now for every job that I want, there are too many IT positions that pay a lot of money. So it makes sense at my age to try to jump into something that you start off with a higher salary. 'Cause, you know, I am 41. So let's be honest, in 23 years, I do not want to work. So my time is limited.

Student 1 stated:

I was working at a plant here in Shreveport, and the plant was basically doing layoffs, so they were doing a reduction in the workforce, so I had been there almost 5 years, but prior to that, me going, signing to go to school, whatever, I had always said that if I ever got an opportunity to go back to school, I would. However, I started working there and hearing people saying you might be full-time, and then they do a lot of layoffs and just be prepared, don't take this to be your permanent spot because it is not guaranteed to be here, so I had in my mind that I was on a five-year plan, and my five-year plan was either I would promote within the company or grow with the company or if the opportunity came, I would go back to school. So right in five years, that is what happened. And so eventually when I did go back, I didn't know what to do, and first I said Nursing, but after getting there and learning that the process was going to be longer than what I thought it was going to be, and how harder and strained it was, I eventually just went to where I originally started back in 1992 and that was Psychology. So it prepared me, even doing

the developmental class or whatever it showed me where I really needed to be versus where I wanted to go.

The third question asked how long before students could start taking college-level courses. Student 4 noted this was his first semester at SUSLA, and he was unsure why he took a developmental course. He stated:

This is my first semester at SUSLA. I am not exactly sure why I am taking developmental course, because I have already done that a community college, but I guess that they didn't oppose to it because Math is an important thing, so it is just going to help refresh my memory moving forward. But I mean, honestly, it's just a waste of time, the whole semester, just doing factoring and stuff, and that's pretty easy you know. **(student questioned the logic of course offering)**

Student 2 said: "It will take me two years to get into the program. I am only taking intermediate Algebra as a developmental course" **(student understood expectation)**. Student 3 said: "One or about two semesters."

Question four sought to find out how courses are scheduled and whether students can select classes when needed. Student 2 stated:

The way is scheduled right now it is, I have gotten used to it. From the beginning, it was kind of rough. My plate was kind of full, learning to share from working in the church, working on a regular job. But after a while, I got used to it. I have gotten my groove with it. By next semester I will know how to handle the courses. **(student was empowered to guide himself)**

Student 4 said:

Yes, because I am taking all online classes. Because, like I said, so I did not know what

the future was going to hold for me as far as the job, so I chose online because I am able to do my work when I can you know. (**college provided flexible course offering**)

Student 1 stated:

No, some classes are on and out. The way everything is set up there, certain classes are offered in the spring, some classes are offered in the fall, and it's up in the air for the summer. So that was one of the challenges that I had as far as trying to plan strategy of taking classes, and that is why I changed over because of how things were with the program as far as what they offered at certain times. (**clear program offerings are needed**)

Student 3 said, "No, honestly I had some issues trying to take courses in B term that aren't available until summer semester" (**student questioned course scheduling**).

Student participants offered mixed insights into answering question five, which asked whether program decision-makers knew what courses they needed to take and the course sequences. A follow-up question asked students how long each had left to finish their programs. Student 3 said that determining his class schedule required information from the website. He explained:

To figure out the classes you will need, get the information from either of the website or, if you were like me, I need a little bit more help, so that's why I went to the college success coaches. They have an entire list of the curriculum and all the courses that need to be taken in order to qualify for that major that you are trying to get into (**student sought adviser's help**). Basically, like I wouldn't have, but speaking from a freshmen perspective, I did not know that I have to, but you don't know that you have to speak with someone till you come up here and this and that, and somebody that is doing an online

class, it might be a little difficult to locate the itinerary that they need to look into to see what courses they need to take, but as far as how long, I have in my journey onto getting my associate's, I just passed my test February 1, praise God for that. Now, I am currently waiting on them to mail me a letter from the director of Nursing, and then she said that will have the next instructions on what I need to follow to prepare myself for clinical coming this fall. So I am looking at least another semester or two left, and I should be getting ready to come out. No later than 2022, I should be out of here. **(student had a timeline in mind for graduation)**

Student 1 stated:

I always spoke with my adviser in the department, not necessarily for admission. I will always speak with people that went to school prior to me, as far as what will be a good thing to do until I was able to get something else or vice versa, so it was more part of me talking to the department head as well as my professor. **(student sought adviser's help).**

Student 2 answered, "Honestly, I do not know much about the program map, but still have a long way to complete" **(student was not sure about program maps).**

Student 4 said:

I do not. I have been trying to get in touch with an adviser, I have sent a couple of emails. I mean every time you look on the website, you try to or, like, when you contact the different advisers, some of those positions are vacant. Some of those people are not there for the job. So, and then with the COVID thing, everything is Zoom now a day, so imagine I just kind of like put my name in line, but I want like a direct path. I might be taking a class now that can wait, but there is a prerequisite that I do not know about. That is kind of why I want to talk to an adviser. **(student found it difficult to speak with**

adviser)

Question six asked whether the students were reminded to take courses they needed before the semester ended. Student 2 said:

Yes, based on what you are studying. I haven't gotten a reminder yet. I am still waiting to hear from them. Well, I do not know whether they do that because of the pandemic, I do not know. I email them to get information about the courses I need to take. (**adviser helped student to navigate path**)

Student 3 stated:

No sir, it is very self-disciplined, I must say, because if you are not going to over-step their job, if you do not ask them for help, or if you don't check in yourself, they are not going to take the initiative to reach out to you in order to intrude (**advisers were not intrusive**). As far as the courses, they do not call to remind you. The registrar's office will email me to reach a professor, but as far as classes, they don't do that. (**students were asked to contact faculty**)

Student 1 said, "Yes, and this is based on what you are studying" (**college reminded students about courses to take**).

Student 4 said:

No, but they do send a lot of emails, and some of them, I do not trust. Like I trusted the ones from the professor because I had emailed them this weekend about finals, but I get so many emails about job opportunities and this and that, and then at the bottom, it said this email was not generated from the institution, so, I don't pay those emails any mind. To answer your question, not really. (**college was not reminding students**)

Question seven dealt with the processes used to assess students in math and English and

how students felt about the placement test. Student 4 said he did not take a placement test because he was currently enrolled in English 101 and had completed the same courses in the past. This was how student 4 said it:

I did not take a placement test. I am taking English 101 now, 'cause, like I said, I have done those classes before (**student chose to take classes previously taken**). I am so old and waited and I had things in my life different than a lot of people, and I just couldn't go to school, I had other things to take care of. So I decided to go back in 2018 when I did developmental. But I did take the placement test. But even though I passed some of these things, I said let me just do it so I can just refresh. I think I scored like a 97 on sentence structure. They had like a reading one, an English, and like the Math, it was the Accuplacer. So I did well, I mean the Math one was like only like 15 questions. But like I said, I am not opposed to it because Math is pretty important, I must have to do trigonometry, I might have to do calculus. Really one to go in, I must have to do differential equation, who knows.

Student 1 laughed when the question was posed to her. She stated:

The placement test made me feel dumb (**student felt not so smart**). I am just going to be honest, because just thinking about things, or whatever you know, especially the Math part. Things that you thought was right, was actually wrong, and you are looking like, I am just dumb. The test administrator said don't think of it as something trying to prove whether you are smart or not, we are just trying to see where you are, and where you need to do, and what you need help in, and it really helped, especially with that Math because it was something different. I just realize that you know I am glad it's in flight, especially

being a non-traditional student, how would you know, just getting a regular class and you are struggling. So it really prepared me.

Student 3 said:

I believe my fundamental Math class where we had to take a pre- or post- test to see where you are, it didn't bother me (**student was confident taking math**). I didn't see a problem, because Math is not really my strong suit, but I know how to do it. English, I've always loved English, but hate to read, but I have always loved to write. We did not take a placement test for English, but what we did was a pretest for professor Hamilton, and they did say that I was on a freshmen-level capacity of the vocabulary or this much or that much, it did not really so much bother me, but when I took the ACT, my plan was to go to Tech or Grambling, but my mama said no, I did not have the proper ACT score to get into Tech, so therefore I had to wait, and then I came to SUSLA 'cause I took it one time, I got a 17, and took it another time, I got a 19, and so it was the correct score I needed for Tech. So therefore I was blessed to be able to come to SUSLA.

Student 2 said: "I took the Accuplacer at another school, locally at LSUS, and I sent in my results and I did good with the English, but it was the math that I did not do well in, hence the developmental math" (**student struggled with math**).

Question eight asked whether the learning outcomes were clearly defined for their current programs. Student 1 described it like this:

It was. It basically was a stepping stone. Each semester that you take another class, as far you go up and up and you learn more and you get more in-depth specialize areas, and so it really helps to where it gives you an idea overall what the degree is, and then you start

taking classes in special areas to help you to determine what area you are interested in going. I learned everything basically came together. **(college clarify path)**

Student 2 stated:

Yes, but for some classes, the syllabus was vague and did not go into detail. Like one of my classes, I do not want to name names, I really had to guess the due dates for assignments in the course. I emailed most times to get the due dates of assignment for that particular course. I think it is a lack of communication due to the pandemic. Some syllabuses were on point. **(some course syllabi were vague)**

Student 4 said:

I have a worksheet, but I don't know how to translate that. What I mean is, there are electives, but I already had college credits, so of those things I have taken before, is that a problem? I have taken Ancient History and Civilization History, does that stuff apply to my worksheet? So that is why I need to talk to an adviser **(student felt lost in navigating path)**. They also have an African American class am I supposed to take. Does that count as an elective? I have already taken Art and Music or whatever. Does that stuff I have taken fit into the plan?

Student 3 said:

As far as what I learned so far, it has been clear for me. I just basically been taking it in stride and trying to complete it. I am a first-generation college student, this is my first go round with everything, basically feel my way through and not cut any corners, if that make sense. But I think once I get into clinical, it will be more in depth on what procedure I need to take. **(college clarify path)**

Question nine asked whether the assignments and exams the students took were designed to help them build the essential skills to master the learning outcomes in their area of study.

Student 1 said:

Yes, it did, and basically, I look at it as, you first engage in what do you think you know going in, and then as you go through it, what did you learn? Did you learn something new, or did it verify what you already knew or have you learned more to add what you need? How far do you want to go? So I would say definitely, you know, the whole entire process, it was very helpful. **(college helped student to stay on path)**

Student 2 said:

They do. The math software program that Ms. Wilson has selected has really helped me to understand. 'Cause really the homework shows the examples to follow. If you give me a problem without an example for me, it is difficult, but if I see examples, it helps me to see how it is broken down. I usually get it because assignments help me to build on the essential skills. **(college ensured learning took place)**

Student 3 said:

I had a teacher, he was a brilliant man, and the things he taught us about anatomy, I had not even known in my consciousness. The way he broke it down, he simplified it to the point where he made look like a baby will be able to understand anatomy. He is one of the professors that I would call a nugget, he made me want to continue into the field that I am going into. Certain professors, you know, you cannot put them all into one barrel, but some of them are perfect or knowledgeable and not caring. Some are empathetic while others are not. Some are arrogant and do not like to work with students. **(faculty helped student to stay on path)**

Student 4 said:

It depends, I think. So one of my classes is obnoxious. In addition, it is just a lot of work. I get it, you are trying to teach the students some work ethic and this and that, but when you are 41 years old and having to do some of the things I am doing it's insane, and being around the workforce for a long time and doing different jobs, like, you know, at the end of the day, I think the education system is flawed in that degree because it is not preparing you for like a real life situation. So what I mean by that is, probably every job you do, I feel, like engineering or some type of something like that, if I need a quadratic formula figured out, you just go on Google and just hop on a calculator it does it for you. Moreover, that is what I mean. We should be teaching everybody how to do things in today's world and not the old fashioned way. Because the reality of it is, I spent four years at Southern, graduated, and guess what? I am going to find a fancy program that does it for me. Therefore, that is my problem with it. Then like with English, if you can write one successful two-page report, you should not have to write 12 of them next semester, and then it is like a dead horse. If you can successfully write a paper and you do not screw with it and you get a decent grade, that should be it. Because you writing a paper in biology, chemistry, and English and everything and all the lab you have to do, and if you can successfully write a paper and do I mean everybody is good at research now? You don't have to go to school to do research.

Research Question Three

Research question three was *How did the participants describe their guided pathways model experiences to keep students on track with their career goals?* For students, the interview

question that most closely aligned to research question three was *Are the way courses are scheduled to enable you to choose them when you needed them?*

Student 1 answered this question in the negative. She said:

No, some classes are on and out, the way everything is set up there, certain classes are offered in the spring, some classes are offered in the fall, and it's up in the air for the summer. So that was one of the challenges that I had as far as trying to plan a strategy of taking classes, and that is why I changed over because of how things were with the program as far as what they offered at certain times.

Students 2 and 3 answered the question similarly. Student 2 had problems trying to take courses that were not available until the summer semester. He said:

The way is scheduled right now, I have gotten used to it. From the beginning, it was kind of rough. My plate was kind of full, learning to share from working in the church, working on a regular job. But after a while, I got used to it. I have gotten my groove with it. By next semester, I will know how to handle the courses. (**student's path was not clear**)

Student 3 said, "No, honestly, I had some issues trying to take courses in B term that were not available until summer semester" (**student's path was not clear**).

Student 4 said classes were available when he needed them because he took most courses online. He said:

I am taking all online classes. Because, like I said, so I did not know what the future was gonna hold for me as far as the job, so I chose online because I am able to do my work when I can. (**clarifying the path**).

Research Question Four

Research question four was *How did the participants describe the college's approach to ensure that learning happened with intentional outcomes for students?* For students, the interview question that most closely aligned to this question was *Are assignments and exams you took in your classes designed to help you build the essential skills to master the learning outcomes in your area of study?*

Student 1 said it did. She said, "As you go through it, it becomes clearer and you notice you are learning" (**ensure learning took place**). She also said:

Yes, it did, and basically, I look at it as, you first engaged in what do you think you know going in, and then as you go through it, what did you learn? Did you learn something new, or did it verify what you already knew or have you learn more to add what you need? How far do you want to go? So I would say, definitely, you know, the whole entire process, it was very helpful. (**clarifying the path**)

Student 2 said:

They do. The math software program that Ms. Wilson has selected has really helped me to understand. 'Cause really the homework shows the examples to follow. If you give me a problem without an example for me, it is difficult, but if I see examples, it helps me to see how it is broken down, I usually get it. Assignments help me to build on the essential skills. (**ensure learning took place**)

Student 3 said:

I had a teacher, professor Ulbeck, he was a brilliant man, the things he taught us about anatomy I had not even known in my consciousness. The way he broke it down, he simplified it to the point where he made look like a baby will be able to understand anatomy.

He's one of the professors that I would call a nugget. He basically made me want to continue into the field that I am going into. Certain professors, you know, you can't put them all into one barrel, but some of them are perfect or knowledgeable and not caring. Some are empathetic while others are not. Some are arrogant and do not like to work with students. (**ensure learning is taking place**)

Student 4 said:

It depends, I think. So one of my classes is obnoxious. And it is just a lot of work. I get it, you are trying to teach the students some work ethic and this and that, but when you are 41 years old and having to do some of the things we are doing, it's insane.

The following section displays the findings according to participants' categories:

Administrators,.

What Administrators Said

Research Question One

Research question one was *How did the participants describe the college's approach to helping students enter an academic pathway?* For administrators, the interview question that most closely aligned with this research question was *how have you emphasized the culture of inquiry and improvement using evidence and research to help the college further its goals of higher completion rates and better attainment of 21st century/career-ready skills?*

Admin 1 said:

Every year we go to a conference that used to be NADE, National Association for Developmental Education, and now it's NOSS, but every year we go, of course, but last year was one of these things, but every year we go. We have actually changed the program, as far as how we get students in, how we are implementing accelerated courses

to get them out of Developmental Education Program courses, so that has been a major plus for us, because we see what other colleges are doing and then we bring it back. Let me give you an example. The State of Louisiana, right now, they are limiting the number of hours that you can get in Developmental Education Program, because we have students who are just going through the recycling and taking Developmental Education Program courses and never getting out. So knowing that Developmental Education Program students are still coming in with these deficiencies in the English, and the Math, and the Reading, what we did, when we went to NOSS, what we were able to see was how a school, I think it was in Arizona, and we created courses. We created courses that still allowed them to have the supplemental instruction for developmental education and put them on the road or path to regular college level courses. **(clarifying the path)**

Admin 2 answered by stating:

First, we added the workforce development department to academic affairs division to emphasize the importance of academic program alignment with their appropriate destination. We have expanded our assessment data to include workforce development, e.g. job attainment, level of earnings, employer feedback. Yes, there is a department that actually sends surveys out to recent graduates, for the purpose of obtaining whether or not their feedback as to whether the program actually prepared them for the things they thought they were being prepared for, they ask them how much money they are making, they ask them a whole lot of questions relative to outcome results and make some determination as to how that should affect the program. They have surveys being used for that purpose. **(ensure learning is taking place)**

Research Question Two

Research question two was *How did the participants describe the college's approach in clarifying the students' pathways that helped them choose the right career to keep them on track to ensure students are learning?* For administrators, the interview question that most aligned with this research question was *What can we learn from baccalaureate program faculty, employers, and program alumni to ensure that your program prepares students to succeed in further education and advancement in the labor market?*

Admin 1 stated:

Let me give you some background. Actually, I haven't spoken to many of the baccalaureate programs because this is a community college, but what I try to do, because I also teach some of the dual-enrollment students, these are high school students I get with, and I try to meet with the senior faculty at the high schools, I know that's not the baccalaureate, and I try to layout or give them some kind of prescription of what we are looking for in college, and so far, as far as the baccalaureate programs since many of our students are in terminal associate degree programs, they may not transfer to a baccalaureate program. Now as far as their employers are concern, it depends on whatever area they are graduating in. Because what I try to do is, especially, I am trying to think of a good example. Okay, I have a good example of a student who started out in DEP and progressed in a medical tech program and was fortunate enough to go on to the four-year program, and even as I think about it, I'm thinking about something more in my area. Ms. Hazel, I will just leave it at that, Ms. Hazel was non-traditional, started going to school, of course she has been out of school for years and years, and then Ms. Hazel started in DEP. Of course she passed the pre- and post-tests and she went on to a 4-year

program, but what was interesting is that she even finished in education and was able to teach elementary education. **(clarifying the path)**

Admin 2 spoke mainly about the course and program learning outcomes:

Faculty determine the effectiveness of their programs from review of several student outcomes. The main ones of which are grades, Comprehensive Academic Achievement Plan (CAAP) assessment performance, job attainment that aligns with program destinations, and earnings. The information learned from this review assists faculty in redesigning certain programs to be aligned with their expected destinations as well as program student learning outcomes. **(staying on the path)**

Research Question Three

Research question three was *How did the participants describe their guided pathways model experiences to keep students on track with their career goals?* For administrators, the interview question that most closely aligned to this research question was *What policies are in place to assess whether students are mastering the skills and knowledge that the programs seek to teach them?*

Admin 1 stated:

Okay, let me kind of give you some background. Our students have to score a certain score on their ACT, and then we have a student success center where they handle incoming freshmen and they handle first year, you know freshmen. Once it is determined they may need developmental educational courses, some students you know, they even opt out and take the Acuplacer. And up to, I guess, this last year when we had the pandemic, students take a pre- and a post-test where they were actually had to score a certain score on their post-test in order to make sure they were mastering the skills that

we were teaching. Now the Math people, you know, it was one test, but generally, it had migrated from the Math people deciding to do the Math part, and then, of course, the English people did our part (**clarifying the path**). What we did in English actually was have them to craft an essay, create their own essay, we wouldn't give any more than three topics, because they get really frustrated when they see all the topics, and they will start on one, start on the other, and never finish. So we ended it. All of the full-time instructors will get together read the essays and determine if the students were ready to move on.

(ensure that learning is taking place)

Admin 2 said:

We have a CAAP assessment of general education, i.e. English, math, general science, writing, that students who have 45 hours or more have to take prior to graduating. It is not graded, but we review it to determine if scores have improved over previous years and how our scores compare with schools with similar demographics. Faculty compare the performance on this assessment with certain student learning outcomes in their courses and programs. (**entering the path**)

Admin 2 also stated while this assessment is not graded, it is reviewed to determine if a student's scores have improved over the previous year and how a student's score compares with students who share similar demographics (**ensure learning is taking place**). He noted that faculty also compare performance on this assessment with specific student learning outcomes in their courses and programs.

Research Question Four

Research question four was *How did the participants describe the college's approach to ensure that learning happened with intentional outcomes for students?* For administrators, the

interview question that most closely aligned with this research question was *How has your thinking about achieving these learning outcomes under a guided pathways model shifted from when your model was more traditional?*

Admin 1 stated:

We do, in fact, not this last accreditation, but the accreditation that we had in 2010, our quality and enhancement was structured in intrusive instruction advisement, and that's guided pathways. So we were very motivated to make sure that when the students came in that they had a very clear picture of what they were supposed to do, and if they wanted to go into whatever area. It really hasn't changed that much, because that's how I always advise my students, you know, I would go as far when I knew a student had aspirations to go to local university, like we have Grambling State, we have LSU, we have Northwestern, these are all in driving distance right. I would always look at the catalogues from the other schools, and I say your going to need a literature, 200-level literature, and so I would always put them on that path anyway. So I can say that the new buzzword, guided pathways, has actually changed my thinking. I do see a place where advisement could always be improved because we deal with a lot of first-year students, students who are first in their family going to college, and they do not know. They end up taking courses that will not be beneficial to their degree (**hard time navigating college**). But as far as changing my thinking, I've always thought that we need to put them on the road, this is what you need to take, no you don't need that extra ceramics class, put that down. But you also experience, especially with the developmental students, they don't always know what they want to do, they know they need to go to college, and through any means, financial aid, they have the opportunities to go to college, but they know what

they want to do. That's my first thing I want to bring up and they are not always able to evaluate their potentials. **(enter the path)**

Admin 2 said:

When we reflect on our experiences with the guided pathway to student success model, we notice significant improvements in program alignment with destinations, general education pathway redesign, especially math, where we have had serious problems with student stop out/dropout. **(ensure learning is taking place)**

Emerging Themes

The section captured what the participants said during the interview where the researcher noticed recurring words and phrases that helped formulating key themes. The content in this section were: (a) students' observations and key themes. (b) advisers' observations and key themes, (c) administrators' observation and key themes.

Students' Observations

1. Advisers helped clarify entry to pathways and helped student stay on the pathways
2. The college provided policies and practices to ensure learning took place
3. Students raised questions about the sequencing of course offerings
4. When students faced challenges, advisers helped get them back on course.

Student Key Themes

Analysis of the data relevant to student observations revealed the following key themes: (1) The importance of advisement in clarifying the path for students; (2) Support roles of advisers were essential in keeping students on the path; (3) A students' demographic made a difference in navigating the path; (4) Students raised questions about sequencing of course offering; and (5) When students faced challenges, advisers helped to get them back on track.

The importance of advisement in clarifying the path for students was how SUSLA integrated advising in its plan so that any student who was new to the college had to interact with an adviser before choosing a program. Student 3 reported:

To figure out the classes, you will need get the information from either the website or, if you were like me, I need a little bit more help, so that is why I went to the college success coaches. They have an entire list of the curriculum and all the courses that need to be taken in order to qualify for that major that you are trying to get into.

One adviser also reported that when students came into the student success center, they were always reminded to complete the career interest survey and an intake form. If there was a disconnect between the survey and the intake form, they advise the student by saying, “Maybe there may another program you can choose because your interest does not line up with the career program you have outlined.”

Support roles of advisers were essential in keeping students on the path. It was reported by many student participants about how advisers play pivotal roles in keeping them on the path. One adviser said she had to readjust her syllabus to bring incoming high school students up to the standard to prepare them for college courses. She stated:

Now I will say this, a lot of the time, because my students, when they get out of high school, they are pretty much in bad shape, and you will be amazed at the things I have to do. Sometimes, I don't get to cover my syllabus. The reason why I don't is because I have to go backwards. I have had to. Remember, I am developmental, so I have had to give out multiplication sheets, teach multiplication by showing you how you add and multiply at the same time. So a lot of time when a student comes in, I am already at a deficit, so therefore, I start out behind.

Student demographics made a difference in navigating the path. The two students who were 40 or over said that they relied on their experience to navigate their paths. Student 4 reported that his age was a factor in choosing his program of study. He stated he did not have time to waste in college, so he took it upon himself to select his program and the courses he thought were beneficial for him to get out of college in a timely manner. Student 1 expressed that she initially wanted to go into nursing, but because of her age, she changed to psychology so that she could graduate faster. In Student 1's own words:

Eventually when I did go back, I didn't know what to do, and first, I said nursing, but after getting there and learning that the process was going to be longer than what I thought it was going to be, and how more harder and strained it was, I eventually just went to where I originally started back in 1992 and that was psychology. So it prepared me. Even doing the developmental class or whatever, it showed me where I really needed to be versus where I wanted to go.

Students were vocal in raising questions about course sequencing that could delay their graduations. Student 1 stated that the way classes were set up made it difficult to get some core classes when she needed them. Based on this difficulty, it was one of the contributing factors that led her to change her major from nursing to psychology. She said:

Some classes are on and off, the way everything is set up there. Certain classes are offered in the spring, some classes are offered in the fall, and it's up in the air for the summer. So that was one of the challenges that I had as far as trying to plan a strategy of taking classes, and that is why I changed over because of how things were with the program as far as what they offered at certain times.

Student 2 shared the same sentiment about classes not being available when he needed them. He stated: “Honestly, I had some issues trying to take courses in B term that were not available until summer semester. This made it difficult to quickly navigate the path in my mind.”

When students faced challenges, advisers helped to get the students back on track. Adviser 1 reported that when she noticed students are struggling with math in the beginning of the program and that students want to choose nursing as a major, she usually has a meeting with the student to see what options are available other than nursing, like respiratory technology, which requires less math.

Adviser 2 reported he is in constant communication with students to make sure they do not deviate from their plan of work. He stated:

We are constantly in communications with the students to track their progress. Most times, we schedule meetings with the students when we see those taking courses that are outside of their field of study. I believe that when we constantly remind them to keep taking courses that we suggested to them, a majority of the time, they see the benefit.

Advisers’ Observations

1. Advisers clarify the path for students who lack clarity
2. Advisers worked with students to show the importance of advisement
3. Advisers used creative ways make sure learning occurs
4. Advisers used innovative ways to make sure student stay on path
5. Advisers helped students enter the pathways

Advisers’ Key Themes

Analysis of the data relevant to advisers observations revealed the following key themes:

(1) Advisers clarified the path for students who lacked clarity; (2) Advisers worked with students to show the importance of advisement; and (3) Advisers used creative ways to make sure learning occurred. The adviser at SUSLA connected students with the right program of study.

Advisers reported that many times students who came to them were lost and needed to be put back on course. Advisers made sure students had a clear path of what programs they wanted to take when they came to the college. Student 1 reported:

It was hard being a non-traditional student, you know? The faculty and advisers were very helpful in guiding me to select classes that helped me to complete on time as possible. The faculty and the advisers helped me learn new approaches, and new technologies made it easier to adapt and choose the program that I thought was best for me. I had not been in school for a very long time, and to retain things that I learned previously was very difficult.

Adviser 1 revealed that she would advise students to take math classes that are not science-related when they are in a business program. She stated that this clarifies the confusion of taking courses that may not count toward their degrees.

Adviser 2, in his own words, clarifies the path for students:

We will have a meeting. We will look at the plan of study. During that time, I will outline with them, telling them, 'If you take these courses, these courses will not go toward your plan of study, and your time of degree will be delayed. Therefore, if you do take these classes is not for your plan. Now, if you are thinking about changing your major, we can discuss that.'

Working with students, advisers show the importance of advisement early in the process. Advisers keep students on the path by giving them options where the advisers saw the students struggling for direction in choosing a program of intent.

The institution invested in professional development to ensure that advisers and administrators knew how to implement the practices and procedures to make guided pathways effective and work for the students. Admin 1 revealed that the college sends staff to conferences to bring back best practices to improve the processes in helping students to enter and stay on path. Admin 1 shared this on the importance of advisement:

Not this last accreditation, but the accreditation that we had in 2010, our quality and enhancement was structured in intrusive instruction advisement, and that's guided pathways. So we were very just motivated to make sure that when the students came in that they had a very clear picture of what they were supposed to do, and if they wanted to go into whatever area. It really hasn't changed that much, because that's how I always advise my students. I would go as far when I knew a student had aspirations to go to local university, like we have Grambling State, we have LSU, we have Northwestern, these are all in driving distance, I would always look at the catalogs from the other schools, and I say you are going to need a literature, 200-level literature, and so I would always put them on that path anyway. So I can say that the new buzzword, guided pathways, is actually changed my thinking. I do see a place where advisement could always be improved, because we deal with a lot of first-year students.

Adviser 1 used creative ways to make sure learning occurs. She revealed that, on many occasions, she had to go back to prepare the students for her course because she noticed that

many of them had deficiencies. She decided to pair students who were weaker in certain areas with those who were strong in the same area. She said:

I started group teaching, placing my students in groups. The purpose of the group was for them to have partners, and then during the class time, you get in with your group, and I may put a problem on the board, but you guys can talk about it together, because you are going to have one person that is real good in the group, and you are going to have another person that is really slow. I look at it like this, this person I may not be able to get over to you, but your classmate may be able to get over to you. I find that way effective in many of the classes I teach.

Administrators' Observations

1. The college allowed administrators to attend conferences to improve processes to help students clarify their paths
2. Assessment was done yearly on program learning outcomes to see whether students found jobs when they graduated
3. Intrusive advising was encouraged to help students stay on path

Administrators' Key Themes

Analysis of the data relevant to administrator observations revealed the following key themes: pathway guidance; continuous assessment; and constant advisement, and making sure that learning takes place. Administrators made program changes when needed to promote student success. They also created new courses to meet student needs, identifying these courses through a process of continuous assessment through student surveys and faculty feedback.

One administrator revealed that the college encouraged travel to conferences to learn new ideas that would be beneficial to students as it related to keeping the students on path with the

four pillars of guided pathways. Admin 1 attended a conference that led to the creation of a new course that integrated developmental education with the college curriculum, decreasing the time it took for students to take a developmental course. As Admin 1 stated:

Every year, we go to a conference that used to be NADE, National Association for Developmental Education, and now it's NOSS, but every year we go of course, but last year was one of these things, but every year we go. We have actually changed the program, as far as how we get students in, how we are implementing accelerated courses to get them out of Developmental Education Program (DEP) courses, so that has been a major plus for us, because we see what other colleges are doing and then we bring it back. Let me give you an example, the State of Louisiana, right now, they are limiting the number of hours that you can get in Developmental Education Program, because we have students who are just going through the recycling and taking Developmental Education Program courses and never getting out. So knowing that Developmental Education Program students are still coming in with these deficiencies in the English, and the math, and reading, what we did, when we went to NOSS, what we were able to see was how a school, I think it was in Arizona, and we created courses. We created courses that still allow them to have the supplemental instruction for developmental education and put them on the road or path to regular college level courses. I am speaking about, totally about English, because I know Math has done something similar. In English, we created, we had our English developmental course was English 090, anything under a 100 was considered to be developmental. We had actually had two levels. We had 089 and we had 090. So our developmental course was, we had implemented the INRW courses, which is the Integrated Reading and Writing, and we took the 090 and changed it to a 100S, now

because it's at the level of 100 and above is considered to be a college credit course, but the S also implies that they are supplemental information that go along with that.

Continuous assessment is when the college assesses, on a yearly basis, how well student graduates are doing in the real world. Are they finding jobs in the areas they graduated from at the college? Admin 2 stated:

Actually, we sent surveys out to recent graduates, for the purpose of obtaining feedback from them to know whether the program actually prepared them for the things they thought they were being prepared for. The survey asks them how much money they are making, they ask them a whole lot of questions relative to outcome results, and make some determination as to how that should affect the program. Faculty also determine the effectiveness of their programs from review of several student outcomes. The main ones of which are grades, CAAP assessment performance, job attainment that aligns with program destinations, and earnings. The information learned from this review assists faculty in redesigning certain programs to be aligned with their expected destinations as well as program student learning outcomes.

“Constant advisement has been one of the surest way we can help our students enter and stay on the pathways to ensure that learning is taking place,” said Admin 1. She reported that she goes to the high schools in their district and discusses with faculty what they expect from dual-enrollment students before coming to the college. Adviser 2 reported he closely watches students during the beginning of the semester to make sure they are staying on the path and learning is occurring. If advisers see a student deviating from their original plan of work, they schedule a meeting to advise the student that he or she is veering of the path. In his own words:

We will have a meeting. We will look at the plan of study. During that time, I will outline

with them by telling them, ‘If you take these courses, they will not go toward your plan of study, and your time of degree could be delayed. Now if you are thinking about changing your major, we can discuss that, but taking something outside the scope will prolong your stay in college and would put you in more debt.’

Document Review Observations

During the document review on SUSLA’s website, I learned that most of the questions asked during the interview about guided pathways were easily accessible on the SUSLA’s website. The Center for Student Success created a student-centered environment that was centered around the four pillars of guided pathways. The college catalog was easily accessible and was designed to assist students in understanding their college and career options in achieving their academic goals. The website also stressed the need for students to be engaged with advisers to help them with resources to help clarify, enter, stay, and ensure that learning is taking place. On the college’s website there were mentions of guided pathways. The information mentioned that guided pathways was designed to assist students in understanding college and career options and plan on how to help students achieve their goals. The information also stated that students will respond to Success Coaches/Advisers and remain engaged by attending assigned sessions that will lead to resources enlightening the learning experience.

Chapter 5 - Discussion and Recommendations

Chapter 5 of this study reintroduces the study chapters in the introduction, followed by the summary of the study, including the overview of the problem, purpose statements, and the research questions, followed by a summary discussion of the significant findings, findings related to the literature, findings related to the conceptual frameworks, conclusion, implications for practice and policy, recommendations for further research, summary, and a personal reflection from the researcher.

Overview of the Study

Chapter 1 introduced the topic, problem statement, purpose of the study, Nature of the study, research questions, conceptual frameworks, and definitions of terms, limitations, and delimitations, and the significance of the study. Chapter 2 furnished the literature review process, the framework, and the literature overview, which led to the introduction of a crucial literature review. Chapter 3 expounded on the research methodology, including the rationale for the research design, central phenomenon of the study, research tradition and rationale, population and sample, instrumentation, data collection procedures, data analysis, ethical considerations limitations, a chapter summary. Chapter 4 chronicles the findings of the study. It addresses the participants, findings by the research questions, emerging themes, and encapsulates the key findings.

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this case study was to examine an established guided pathways model that integrates a system of student support services for increasing on-time graduation rates.

Research Questions

This study's research questions were designed to understand how developmental students at SUSLA experience the guided pathways model.

The research questions that guided this study were:

1. How did the participants describe the college's approach to helping students enter an academic pathway?
2. How did the participants describe the college's approach in clarifying the students' pathways that helped them to choose the right career to keep them on track to ensure students are learning?
3. How did the participants describe their guided pathways model experiences to keep students on track with their career goals?
4. How did the participants describe the college's approach to ensure that learning happened with intentional outcomes for students?

Discussion of Findings By Research Question

This section provides an interpretation of major findings based on the research questions.

SUSLA's Approach in Clarifying Student Pathways

Research question one was, *how did the participants describe the college's approach to helping students enter an academic pathway?*

The participants in the study reported that SUSLA had clear policies and practices for implementing guided pathways. Based on analysis of the data provided by participants, the college used a variety of interventions to clarify the academic pathways for students.

SUSLA integrated career and academic exploration into orientations and student success courses. Academic advising at SUSLA requires new students to meet with academic advisers to

discuss their area of interest and to help them register for first semester courses, which includes college success courses designed to support students in making informed decisions about their program of intent.

The guided pathways model at SUSLA included several key components. The Center for Student Success integrated academic support into program gateway courses so that students can complete these courses in their first year and then proceed with more specialized coursework in their field of study. The pathways to student success was designed to assist students in understanding their college and career options and plan how the students will achieve their goals. College advisers begin with the end in mind, starting with student goals for career and further education, then mapping educational paths to those goals.

Many of the student participants spoke highly of the academic advising at SUSLA. The mission of the Center for Student Success is to provide quality, integrated, responsive services that promote student success in support of desired institutional student success outcomes.

Adviser 2 stated,

When students come in, they tell us what their interests are, and during that meeting complete a career survey, career interest form, and intake forms. We use all of that information to determine their area of interest. If their career interest is not aligned exactly with what they want to study, we will advise them to choose another program that is aligned with their career interest.

Adviser 1 had a dual role at SUSLA as both an adviser and a developmental math instructor (see Appendix D). She stated, “Usually, everybody who comes through my classroom wants to be a nurse. Still, not everybody can be a nurse because you have to do calculations without a computer or a calculator.” She noted that when students realize math may impede a

program they want to study, they change their program of study. She also stated that when students are told their desires do not align with the courses they want to take, students usually are open to changing their initial area of interest to a more desirable area that they do better in as they progress through college.

The participants reported that SUSLA provided information about employment opportunities for students and that advisors routinely provided students information about how to connect with a program of study. An important role of the advisors was to monitor the academic progress of students. At-risk students were referred to tutoring and other support services. Students also benefited from Supplemental Instruction support.

SUSLA's Approach to Introducing Students to Guided Pathways

As for research question two – how did the participants describe the college's approach to a student entering the pathways that helped them to choose the right career to keep them on track to ensure students are learning?

According to participants in this study, SUSLA staff redesigned the college's intake and onboarding experience to provide opportunities for all incoming students to explore workforce and academic pathways. To accomplish this, new students are required to visit the college success center before choosing a program. The Center for Student Success believes students are able to accomplish the following learning outcomes to successfully attain their academic and vocational goals: (1) To distinguish and demonstrate their roles and responsibilities from those of their academic/social support team; (2) To identify, develop, and explain their degreed plan, including the sequence of coursework, the time to degree, and expected graduation date; (3) To apply the success strategies taught in the Student Success Course in the classroom and to regulate these strategies to meet the requirements of each course.

Adviser 2 explained the approach:

When students come in and tell us what they are interested in, they complete a career interest form, along with an intake form. That information is used to determine what program aligns with their interest. If the career survey does not align with what they want to study, we suggest to them the best option that matches their interest.

SUSLA's Approach to Supporting Students in Guided Pathways

Research question three was, *how did the participants describe their guided pathways model experiences to keep students on track with their career goals?*

Participants in this study reported that the college used variety a of interventions to support students in the guided pathways. The college provided academic support to the students to makes sure that the students keep on track with their career goals. College staff created what they refer to as supplemental instruction (SI) – an academic model that uses peer-assisted study sessions to improve student retention and success courses. An SI leader is an undergraduate student who provides peer academic support for an assigned course. SI leaders assist in student learning and retention through the facilitation of sessions that assist the student to better understand concepts and applications of the course content.

SUSLA's academic advisers make sure that every first-time college or transfer student with less than 32 college-level hours completes a new student advising and registration session. This encounter with an adviser assists in clarifying a path and in clearing up any confusion the student may have such that a student may remain focused and to ensure that learning is taking place on whatever path the student may choose.

Adviser 2 explained how she sees students who come from high school who cannot do a simple multiplication table. Adviser 2 stated, "Sometimes, I do not get to cover my syllabus,

because I have to go back and teach the students how to multiply and add.” She also stated that she began group teaching by pairing weaker students with the ones that are prepared. She realized that this method works when students work together as a group, that they learn the subject more comfortably when peers assist them in understanding concepts.

SUSLA’s Approach to Ensure Learning Under Guided Pathways

As for research question four – *how did the participants describe the college’s approach to ensure that learning happened with intentional outcomes for students?*

According to study participants, SUSLA employed a number of interventions to ensure learning takes place at the institution. For example, Success Coaches provide individualized guidance and ongoing feedback to students while assisting them with prioritizing tasks and managing time so as to meet goals. Success Coaches also introduce students to smarter learning – an assortment of active reading, test-taking, and task analysis strategies to improve a student’s study skills and test taking performance.

SUSLA’s Tutoring Center, a center where students may go for assistance when they begin falling behind in a particular subject, is yet another example of the institution’s commitment to ensure that learning takes place. The center is a safe, supportive environment where tutors help students to become more successful by developing techniques and other resources to help students with their academic performance.

The college also has a Student Retention Service, the primary focus of which is to increase the retention, persistence, degree attainment, and graduation rates among students admitted either as first-time freshmen or transfer students. The service works with faculty and academic advisers to implement an “early alert” notification system as a means of monitoring student attendance and classroom progress. Students with frequent absences or whose mid-term

progress places them at risk of dropping out are appropriately intervened upon to ensure their success.

Discussion of Findings Related to the Literature

One of the most related similarities of this study to the recent literature is that most of the students from high schools to community colleges were underprepared as they were back in the early 1960s. For example, Roueche and Roueche (1977) wrote that the same problem continues to persist – students who are completing high school and are still unable to read and understand a simple sentence did not just start today, an issue in which community colleges have had to contend with for the last five decades. Roueche and Roueche noted that, in the 1960s, many high school graduates lacked job-related skills. The graduates also were characterized as functionally illiterate because of public schooling. Functional illiteracy here is described as the inability to either read or write one's name. Thus, after 12 years of formal education, students are graduating from American high schools that fit the description of functionally illiterate (Roueche & Roueche, 1977). In answering question four of the interview question, a comment by Adviser 2 closely mirrored what Roueche and Roueche stated in 1977. Adviser 2 commented :

Now I will say this, a lot of the time because my students or when they get out of high school, they are pretty much in bad shape, and you will be amazed at the things I have to do. Sometimes I don't get to cover my syllabus. The reason why I don't is because I have to go backwards. I have had to. Remember, I am developmental, so I have had to give out multiplication sheets, teach multiplication by showing you how you add and multiply at the same time. So a lot of time when a student comes in, I am already at a deficit, so therefore, I start out behind.

This comment solidified what was stated by Roueche and Roueche – that the majority of students coming out of high school today are still underprepared.

Boylan (2009) listed some common errors that community colleges make today in regards to developmental education. He noted that there is not a seamless transition between developmental courses and college-level courses. In other words, the same standard for completing the lowest level developmental mathematics course should be the same as those required for entry into the next level developmental mathematics course. Boylan argued that he would prefer that if the same instructors teach both the developmental courses and the college-level courses in a particular subject, the instructors are likely to provide the consistency of standards. This consistency would greatly help the students be familiar with the faculty's teaching style and allow the faculty to know the students' weaknesses and strengths going into the course. The evidence for the finding that is connected to what Boylan is professing here is what Admin 1 stated below.

Admin 1 referred to the fact that students who scored at least an 18 on the ACT are exempt from taking developmental courses, but if it is determined, a student needs to, some students choose to take the ACCUPLACER to test out of Developmental Education Program courses, if possible. She noted that program directors had contacted the department to discuss problem areas they observed with their students. The English Department will then provide supplemental instruction, workshops, and tutoring for students in some programs to shorten the developmental course and put them on the path of taking college courses in the shortest time possible.

According to a 2015 CCRC report, for guided pathways to succeed, the report stressed the need for faculty and advisers to work in tandem to map program pathways while sharing

information across departments to provide a coherent program map for the students. In this study, Adviser 1 in this study reported that she served a dual role as an adviser and faculty member. This dual role provided the faculty member with the opportunity to share academic and support perspectives across two departments. She stated that being an adviser and a faculty member gave her the big picture by knowing more about the students before setting foot into the classroom. She stated that one of the first comments most students make is that they do not like math. She came up with a strategy of pairing students who are struggling with students doing well in the subject. Peer mentoring has significantly helped because most students are comfortable asking peers for help in understanding lessons delivered in the classroom.

The advisers who participated in the study were clear and emphatic that they used the data to make informed decisions when advising students to select a program. Diverting them from having too many options, but advising them to choose the right career path that matches their interest, is very important (Bailey, 2017). Adviser 2 noticed students deviating from their initial program of intent. He explained to students that taking courses outside of their program delays their graduation and increases tuition costs and other fees. Adviser 2 tells students, “If you intend to change your major, we could discuss and place you in the right program and accelerate your time taking developmental courses and moving to college-level courses.”

Discussion of Findings Related to the Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for this study was the Guided Pathways Model and its four pillars designed to steer community college students on a path to fast-track enrollment eligibility in college courses (AACC, 2012). These four pillars—helping students to enter the path, clarifying the path, staying on the path, and ensuring that learning takes place—formed the foundation of this study’s conceptual framework.

The participants in the study reported how the Guided Pathways Model at SUSLA reflected each of these four pillars. Pillar one—clarifying the path—involves ensuring that students are clear in what program they want to take by mapping the pathway to a student's end goals. The college creates maps that are easily accessible on their websites and implemented by advisers so students will understand what courses are necessary to complete a program or qualify for transfer to a four-year university or college. Advisers are clear in mapping out a pathway students will understand so that advisers and students are all in agreement to what program the student wants. If advisers see a shift from that plan, the student is called in for a meeting to bring that student back on the right path.

Pillar two—entering the path—is about helping students to choose and enter a program pathway. Advisers help new students explore programs, consider possible careers, and develop an academic plan. This path is an early opportunity for career exploration to help students to choose an area of interest and engage them in completing the coursework related to the area they choose as their major.

Administrator 2 stated that, to help students stay on course, program directors have identified problem areas they observed with students, then provide supplemental instruction, workshops, and tutoring to ensure students continue on the path they enter. Adviser 2 addressed SUSLA's approach to pillar two of the guided pathway model:

Initially when they come in, they tell us what they are interested in. During the freshmen orientation, they complete a career interest survey, they complete an intake form, and all this information we use to determine what it is they want to study. When they do their career interest survey, if the career interest survey doesn't line up with exactly what it is they want to study, we will sit there and talk to the student, see if it is something else that

you really want to do besides Nursing. Maybe there is something else because your interest doesn't line up with the career field that you have outlined.

Pillar three—staying on a path—involves making sure students stay on a path where both students and advisers can track a student's plan as mapped out through graduation. The resources enlisted to ensure a student stays on path include success guides and instructional faculty and advisers who work closely to monitor student progress and connect students to appropriate resources – including an alternate career path if needed. This pillar also helps students to connect to and receive the supports they need to succeed. Admin 1 explained how a student stayed on course and was motivated to earn a bachelor's in Elementary Education. She explained the story of Mrs. Hazel who was a non-traditional student who came through the developmental education track, graduated from SUSLA, and went on to earn a bachelor's degree.

Admin 1 also stated that a student returned after earning her degree to take courses in reading and writing because those skills are needed in the medical field. About this student, “When people depend on you, you should communicate clearly with other medical team members to clearly state your message without any ambiguity,” said Admin 1.

Pillar four—ensuring that learning is taking place—involves the steps faculty, program directors, and administrators have taken to ensure programs are designed around a coherent set of learning outcomes, rather than a collection of courses. This pillar ensures program learning outcomes align with requirements for further education and employment. Regarding pillar four, Administrator 1 stated,

Characteristically, developmental education program students sometimes do not evaluate their potential or circumstances well and do not know how to grow out of the dependency for somebody to tell them what to do. We are constantly finding ways to improve and

make sure our students are learning, so we do best practices by attending conferences to bring back ideas to help improve our learning outcomes to help students master the skills they need to succeed. All of the student participants stated that the assignments and exams have helped them build the essential skills to master the learning outcomes in their areas of study.

Student 3 said, “The math software program that Ms. Wilson has selected really helped me to understand. If I see examples, it helps me to see how it is broken down.”

Student 1 said,

I look at it as you first engage in what you think you know, going in and then having an open mind, you are bound to keep learning as you work on assignments and take exams in the course.

The study confirmed evidence of guided pathways at SUSLA by way of the Student Success Center. Students talked about being helped by their peers which helped them understand the subjects they were taking which mirrors pillar 3, staying on path. Tutoring was very evident in that students had a safe environment where tutors were available to assist students when they needed help. Tutoring aligned with pillar 4 in that it helped in making sure the students were learning as they navigated the courses in their respective programs. Admin 1 spoke of a student who graduated and was working in the nursing field. She came back to SUSLA to take writing course so that she could communicate effectively with the health care team. Pillar 4, making sure that learning takes place is what confirmed her decision to come back to SUSLA.

Conclusions

The purpose of this case study was to examine an established guided pathways model that integrates a system of student support services for increasing on-time graduation rates. The findings in the study substantiated that advisers, administrators, and students were justified to conclude that guided pathways at SUSLA helped accelerate the time it takes students to complete the developmental Education Program and fast track to college-level courses.

Six conclusions emerged from the analysis of the data.

1. The participants in this study reported that SUSLA had developed a variety of interventions to guide students into appropriate academic pathways, including career and academic exploration, orientations, and student success courses.
2. Requiring new students to meet with an adviser to help students make informed decisions before selecting a program of intent.
3. Academic support, such as supplemental instruction with peer-assisted study sessions, improved student success in more difficult courses.
4. SUSLA's tutoring center was a creative way for the college to help students to become more successful by developing study skills and organization techniques and to connect them to the support students need to succeed.
5. Academic advising assisted not only in clarifying an educational pathway for SUSLA students, also in helping students to stay on that pathway by enlisting supportive services when necessary – even changing the pathway if indicated.
6. Professional development played a key role in SUSLA's guided pathway approach in that SUSLA staff learned of policies, procedures, and approaches of other institutions formulating their own guided pathway models.

Implications

Analysis of the data provided evidence for the following implications for both further research and future practice.

Implications for Further Research

This study sought to examine students in guided pathways and may need a more extensive quantitative study to see which demographic of students struggle to navigate guided pathways. Further research may focus on a quantitative study as to how adviser approaches to student advising align with developing student academic plans and monitoring protocols that follow a guided pathways model to increase graduation rates. A quantitative study that explores how decision-making behavior reported by the community college administrator corresponds to decision-making models for assessing student-focused institutional effectiveness. A quantitative study could also be done to track a cohort of Developmental Education Program students to measure their success in the guided pathway model.

Since this study was conducted at SUSLA, a unit of the Southern University System(HBCU) located at Baton Rouge, Louisiana, the researcher suggests further studies on this topic be conducted at predominantly white institutions and urban community colleges to determine the type of results that may emerge among other demographic groups at these non HBCU institutions.

Although the literature is replete with studies on guided pathways, it may be beneficial to research the topic with a larger population than this study used. Increasing the number of participants may provide a richer description of student experiences. It may also be beneficial to conduct another research to examine the experiences of students who do not persist in comparing their experiences to the experiences of students who did persist.

Implications for Practice

- The feedback from all participants may be used to provide community college leaders information on how to increase completion rates by following the four pillars of the guided pathways model.
- The comments from participants may be used to enhance the development of curriculum for advising students.

Researcher's Reflection

When I embarked on the journey of writing this dissertation, I had no clue as to how arduous the journey would become. The first surprise I encountered in this process was the difficulty I had in finding a setting for the study. It took me many tries with multiple schools when I needed the approval of their Institutional Review Board.

One of the lessons learned while conducting this study was the similarities of initiatives to help students explore pathways – almost the same as the four pillars of the guided pathways model. Another lesson learned is that guided pathways involve every part of the college, requiring the redesign of major departments and functions, such as advising and tutoring.

The study has changed my leadership perspective by showing me that, as a leader, one must furnish his or her team with the necessary tools and support in order for a complex initiative like guided pathways to be successful and used on a larger scale. I learned that implementing a huge and complex initiative like guided pathways, takes coordination among faculty, advisers, financial aid personnel, and many other key departments of the college. After conducting this study I am even more convinced of the importance of the role of academic advisers in helping students connect with a program of study and stay the course until

completion. Further, I can be a stronger advocate for the implementation of guided pathways models in community colleges. I plan to use the information to advance my career as a community college practitioner by speaking at conferences about implementing findings from this study.

Summary

This study focused on the progress of students in the guided pathways model. Guided pathways, for me, is a process that is on a continuum. Students come to college with various learning needs. The findings from this study confirmed the essential roles that advisers play in connecting with the different needs of students in order to guide them in pursuit of their academic goals. The data from this research suggested that the four pillars that guided this study have the potential to guide change in mapping the pathways to students' end goals.

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Appendix A - Interview Protocol

Title of Research Study:

An Exploration of the Experiences of students in a Guided Pathways Model

Program

Participant: _____

Date: _____

Place: _____

Description

The purpose of this case study is the examination of an established guided pathways model that integrates a system of student supports for increasing on-time graduation rates. The analysis of the evidence may warrant a different kind of decision-making that impacts the allocation of institutional resources aligned to a student-focused strategic direction. The findings may lend support to graduate school professors attempting to restructure community college leadership programs to include guided pathways model as a viable intervention system to support student achievement.

Central Research Questions

1. How did the participants describe the colleges' approach to helping students enter an academic pathway?
2. How did the participants describe the college's approach in clarifying the students' pathways that helped them to choose the right career to keep them on track to ensure students are learning?
3. How did the participants describe their guided pathways model experiences to keep students on track with their career goals?

4. How did the participants describe the college's approach to ensure that learning happened with intentional outcomes for students?

Interview Questions

Questions for Students

1. How has the college guided and prepared you to select your course or program of intent?
2. How did you or will you choose a program of study?
3. How long did it take you to start taking college-level courses?
4. Are the way courses are scheduled enables you to choose when you need them?
5. How is your program mapped out – that is, how do you know what you need to take in what order and how long you have left to finish?
6. Are the learning outcomes clearly defined for your current program?
7. Are you reminded to take courses you need before the semester ends?
8. What process was used to assess you in math and English? How did your placement
9. Are the assignments and exams you take in your classes designed to help you build the essential skills to master the learning outcomes in your study area?

Questions for Advisers

1. Are further education and employment targets specified for every program?
2. How do you help new students choose a program of study, particularly developmental students?
3. Are you able to identify when students are at risk of deviating from their program plan?

4. How well defined is the learning outcome for each program?

Questions for Administrators

1. What policies are in place to assess whether students are mastering the skills and knowledge that the programs seek to teach them?
2. What can we learn from baccalaureate program faculty, employers, and program alumni to ensure that your program prepares students to succeed in further education and advancement in the labor market?
3. How has your thinking about achieving these learning outcomes under a guided pathways model shifted from when your model was more traditional?
4. How have you emphasized the culture of inquiry and improvement using evidence and research to help the college further its goals of higher completion rates and better attainment of 21st century/career-ready skills?

Appendix B - Invitation Letter

Dear Research Participant,

Your participation in a research project is requested. The title of the study is *Exploration of the Experiences of Students in a Guided Pathways Model Program*. I am seeking your assistance because your institution has been identified as having high success in developmental education.

Your participation will involve answering questions via Zoom to describe your experiences in Guided Pathways at your institution. Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary. The study has been designed to ensure participant confidentiality. Suppose you elect not to participate, discontinue your participation in the study, or decline to answer any part of the questions on the questionnaire. In that case, you may do so at any time without consequences.

If you are interested in participating in this study, please contact Clarence Madison via email at cmaddy2002@gmail.com or telephone at (313) 384-1236.

Appendix C - Informed Consent

CONSENTING TO THIS STUDY AND CONSENT FORM

[An Exploration of the Experiences of Students in Guided Pathways Model Program]

Introduction

The purpose of this form is to provide you information that may affect your decision as to whether or not to participate in this research study. If you decide to participate in this study, there is a one-page consent form at the end of the study that you can sign to record your consent. The purpose of this case study is the examination of an established guided pathways model that integrates a system of student supports for increasing on-time graduation rates. You were selected to be a possible participant because you meet the above criteria.

What will I be asked to do?

Suppose you agree to participate in this study. In that case, you will be asked to engage in a minimum of two interviews, talk about your experiences with the assistance of prompts provided by the researcher. This study will take three months. Over the months, I will interview you for approximately 30 minutes on two occasions if I have follow-up questions. Next, I will ask you about your educational experiences. Lastly, I will follow up with you to review data, check for accuracy of transcription, verify meanings made, and check for accuracy of meanings to verify findings. Your conversations will be audiotaped. In addition, documents supplied by you would be analyzed for themes and patterns of your experiences in the developmental education track.

What are the risks involved in this study?

There is no foreseeable risk for participating in this study. However, at any point, participants can exit the study if they feel uncomfortable without penalty.

What are the possible benefits of this study?

There is no direct benefit for you to participate in this study.

Do I have to participate?

Your participation is voluntary. You can exit the study anytime without any penalty or prejudice.

Who will know about my participation in this research study?

The records of this study will be kept confidential. No identifiers linking you to this study will be included in any sort of report that might be published or presented. Research records will be stored securely, and only my dissertation chair, Dr. Christine McPhail, will have access to the records.

Whom do I contact with questions about the research?

If you have questions regarding this study, you may contact Clarence Madison at 313-384-1236, or cymadiso@ksu.edu or cmaddy2002@gmail.com or Dr. Christine McPhail at 410-245-9955 or Cjmcphail@ksu.edu

Whom do I contact about my rights as a research participant?

The Human Subjects Protection Program and the Institutional Review Board at Kansas State University have reviewed this research study.

Signature

If you agree to participate in this study, please read the consent form on the following page, ask any questions you have about the study, and sign at the bottom to demonstrate understanding of your expected role.

Researcher

Signature

Date

Participant

Signature

Date

Consent Form

I, _____, agree to participate in a case study as part of a doctoral dissertation by Clarence Madison chaired by Dr. Christine McPhail (410-245-9955) from the Department of Educational Leadership at Kansas State University titled An Exploration of the Experiences of Students in a Guided Pathways Model Program: A Narrative Case Study. I understand that my participation is voluntary. I can stop taking part without giving any reason and without penalty. I can ask to have all of the information returned to me, removed from the research records, or destroyed.

The reason for this study is designed so that the researcher can gain some understanding of how developmental education students are faring in the guided pathways model.

If I agree to take part in this study, I will be asked to do the following:

1. Attend one 30-minute Zoom interview with the researcher.
2. Share relevant documents with the interviewer, such as archival documents.
3. Check for accuracy in the researchers' transcripts and findings when depicting my information.

I understand that:

- The researcher will audiotape conversations and interviews that occur between the researcher and me.
- The researcher will keep the data and will be shared while maintaining confidentiality with Dr. Christine McPhail.
- The researcher will analyze the data and keep it for no longer than one year for educational and research purposes after the last data collection date.
- There is no direct benefit for me participating in the project.
- No risk is expected but, if I experience some discomfort or stress during observations or

conversations, then I can choose to discontinue my participation in the study without any penalty.

•No information about me, or provided by me during the research, will be shared with others, except if it is necessary to protect my welfare (for example, if I were injured and need physician care) or if required by law.

The researcher will answer any further questions about the research, now or during the project. I understand that I agree with my signature on this form, take part in this research project, and understand that I will receive a signed copy of this consent form for my records.

Researcher Signature Date

Participant Signature Date

Please sign two copies, keep one and return one to the researcher.

Appendix D - Participant Profiles

Administrator 1	
Title at the college	Administrator 1 is Assistant Vice Chancellor for Student Success, responsible for advocating SUSLA's student success initiatives. In addition, he directs the staff at SUSLA's Student Success Center and its related programs, including TRIO, Dean of Student Life, and William Center, a unique program for African American male students.
Years at SUSLA	14
Age range: 21-41; 42-52; or 53+ years	53+
Highest degree attained	Master +30
Race	African American

Administrator 2	
Title at the college	Administrator 2 is chair of SUSLA's Humanities Department.
Years at SUSLA	20 + years
Age range: 21-41; 42-52; or 53+ years	50+
Highest degree attained	PhD
Race	African American

Adviser 1	
Title at the college	Adviser and teaches developmental math at SUSLA.
Years at SUSLA	14
Age range: 21-41; 42-52; or 53+ years	53+
Highest degree attained	Master +30
Race	African American

Adviser 2	
Title at the college	College Success Coach at SUSLA's Student Success Department.
Years at SUSLA	17
Age Range: 21-41; 42-52; or 53+ years	20 – 41
Highest degree attained	Masters
Race	African American

Student 1	
Full-time/Part-time	Full-time
Years at SUSLA	4 years/Graduated
Age Range: 21-41; 42-52; or 53+ years	42-52
First-generation college student?	No
Race/Ethnicity	African American

Student 2	
Full-time/Part-time	Full-time
Years at college (SUSLA)	Second-year
Age Range: 21-41; 42-52; or 53+ years	21-41
First-generation college student?	No
Race/Ethnicity	African American

Student 3	
Full-time/Part-time	Full-time
Years at SUSLA	First-year
Age Range: 21-41; 42-52; or 53+ years	21-41
First-generation college student?	No
Race/Ethnicity	Black American (As reported by participant)

	Student 4
Full-time/Part-time	Full-time
Years at SUSLA	First-year
Age range: 21-41; 42-52; or 53+ years	21-41
First-generation college student?	No
Race/Ethnicity	Caucasian

Appendix E - Field Notes

Clarence Madison

EdD Student

College of Education, Community College Leadership

Kansas State University

Name of Interviewee: _____

Date: _____

Time: _____

Place: _____

Recorder: _____

Narrative	Notes to self

Appendix F - Kansas State IRB Process

If you are performing research involving human subjects, it is your responsibility to address the issue of informed consent. This template is intended to provide guidance for crafting an informed consent document. The Committee for Research Involving Human Subjects (IRB) *strongly* recommends that you model your consent form on this template. However, if you choose a different approach, it must contain at a minimum the same elements as this standard version. Language and terminology used in the consent form must be written at no more than the 8th grade level, so that the potential participant can clearly understand the project, how it is going to be conducted, and all issues that may affect his or her participation. In addition, please write the consent form in a manner that addresses your subjects directly instead of writing it in a manner that addresses the University Research Compliance Office directly. *Information on the important issue of informed consent can be found in 45 CFR 46 at <http://www.hhs.gov/ohrp/humansubjects/guidance/45cfr46.html#46.116>. Federal law mandates that all signed and dated informed consent forms be retained by the P.I. for at least three years following completion of the study.*

WAIVER OF INFORMED CONSENT: *There are limited instances where the requirement for a formal informed consent document may be waived or altered by the IRB.*

45 CFR 46 states that "An IRB may waive the requirement for the investigator to obtain a signed consent form for some or all subjects if it

- finds either:*
- 1) That the only record linking the subject and the research would be the consent document and the principal risk would be potential harm resulting from a breach of confidentiality. Each subject will be asked whether the subject wants documentation linking the subject with the research, and the subject's wishes will govern; or*
 - 2) That the research presents no more than minimal risk of harm to subjects and involves no procedures for which written consent is normally required outside of the research context."*

If a study employs only questionnaires and surveys as the source of their data, it may generally be assumed that to answer and return the questionnaire is an appropriate and sufficient expression of free consent. However, there are circumstances that might call this assumption into question - e.g., teacher-student relationship between the investigator and the subject, etc. However, a statement should be included on the questionnaire or survey form indicating that participation of the subject is strictly voluntary, the length of time reasonably expected to complete the questionnaire or survey form, and that questions that make the participant uncomfortable may be skipped.

Form Content

PROJECT TITLE: Full title of project. If possible, the title should be identical to that used in any funding/contract proposal.

PROJECT APPROVAL DATE/ EXPIRATION DATE: provided in the approval letter, must be in place before distributing to subjects.

LENGTH OF STUDY: Estimate the length of time the subject will be expected to participate.

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR/CO-INVESTIGATOR(S): Must be a regular member of the faculty.

CONTACT DETAILS FOR PROBLEMS/QUESTIONS: Name, phone number and/or email address of the P.I.

IRB CHAIR CONTACT INFORMATION: *For the subject should he/she have questions or wish to discuss on any aspect of the research with an official of the university or the IRB. These are: Rick Scheidt, Chair, Committee on Research Involving Human Subjects, 203 Fairchild Hall, Kansas State University, Manhattan, KS 66506, (785) 532-3224; Cheryl Doerr, Associate Vice President for Research Compliance, 203 Fairchild Hall, Kansas State University, Manhattan, KS 66506, (785) 532-3224.*

PROJECT SPONSOR: Funding/contract entity.

PURPOSE OF THE RESEARCH: Explain in lay terms that this is a research project, and why the research is being done.

PROCEDURES OR METHODS TO BE USED: Explain in lay terms and in language understandable at the 8th grade level how the study is going to be conducted and what will be expected of participants. Tell participants if they will be audio or videotaped, if they will be paid, etc.

ALTERNATIVE PROCEDURES OR TREATMENTS, IF ANY, THAT MIGHT BE ADVANTAGEOUS TO SUBJECT: Explain any alternative procedures or treatments if applicable.

RISKS OR DISCOMFORTS ANTICIPATED: Describe any foreseeable risks or discomforts from the study. If there are no known risks, make a statement to that effect.

BENEFITS ANTICIPATED: Describe any *reasonably expected* benefits from the research to the participant or others from the research.

EXTENT OF CONFIDENTIALITY: Explain how you plan to protect confidentiality.

IS COMPENSATION OR MEDICAL TREATMENT AVAILABLE IF INJURY OCCURS: *In cases where more than minimal risk is involved.*

PARENTAL APPROVAL FOR MINORS: If minors or those who require the approval of a parent or guardian are participants, you should include a space for their consenting signature.

PARTICIPANT NAME/SIGNATURE: Name of research participant and signature.

WITNESS TO SIGNATURE (PROJECT STAFF): Staff signature.

If any of the following content sections do not apply to your research, feel free to delete from the consent form.

PROJECT TITLE:

AN EXPLORATION OF THE EXPERIENCES OF STUDENTS IN A GUIDED PATHWAYS MODEL PROGRAM

PROJECT APPROVAL DATE:

PROJECT EXPIRATION DATE:

LENGTH OF STUDY:

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR:

CO-INVESTIGATOR(S):

CONTACT DETAILS FOR PROBLEMS/QUESTIONS:

IRB CHAIR CONTACT INFORMATION:

PROJECT SPONSOR:

PURPOSE OF THE RESEARCH:

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to examine an established guided pathways model that integrates a system of student support services to increase on-time graduation rates.

--

PROCEDURES OR METHODS TO BE USED:

<p>Qualitative cases study</p>

BIOLOGICAL SAMPLES COLLECTED (Describe procedure, storage, etc.):

<p>None</p>
<p>[Select a statement from the drop down menu]</p>
<p>[Select a statement from the drop down menu]</p>

ALTERNATIVE PROCEDURES OR TREATMENTS, IF ANY, THAT MIGHT BE ADVANTAGEOUS TO SUBJECT:

--

RISKS OR DISCOMFORTS ANTICIPATED:

--

BENEFITS ANTICIPATED:

--

EXTENT OF CONFIDENTIALITY:

[Select a statement from the drop down menu]

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

PARENTAL APPROVAL FOR MINORS:

PARENT/GUARDIAN APPROVAL SIGNATURE:

DATE:

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:

--