A PROGRAM FOR NONTRADITIONAL STUDENT COMPLETION IN COMMUNITY COLLEGES

by

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ABSTRACT

Nontraditional students present unique challenges to community colleges in terms of retention and completion. This project analyzes research regarding influences on nontraditional student retention and completion—academic preparation, enrollment status, financial limitations, family responsibilities, stress, and employment. A program is then presented to help address these influences, thereby increasing student retention and completion. The developed program provides critical components to encourage nontraditional student retention and completion, including orientation, a student success course, mentoring, work-study, and academic and social support. The Program is packaged to be immediately useful to any community college needing to increase retention and completion of nontraditional students while minimizing the need for new resources.
DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to nontraditional students in community colleges who are accomplishing what they never thought they could and were told they never could. Every day I see how hard you work to increase your education, despite everything else going on in your lives. I share in your frustrations and rejoice in your accomplishments. Never give up.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Completion of this dissertation would not have been possible without the amazing support of my committee, my family, and my friends. Throughout this entire process, you kept me motivated and focused on the end goal. For that I thank you!

To my chair, Tina Stovall, the guidance, support, and encouragement you have provided me over the last three years has been extraordinary. Your passion for helping me to succeed is overwhelming. I could not have asked for a better dissertation chair to guide me through the dissertation process. You kept me motivated and excited about this dissertation, even when I felt overwhelmed. My true appreciation cannot be expressed in words.

To my committee members, Cindy Lanman and Andie Wirgau, I am honored that you were willing to serve on my committee and help me through this process. Each of you has a passion for student success and that passion helped me create this dissertation to increase nontraditional student retention and completion. You each have many other obligations, but gladly took time to provide feedback and encouragement throughout the process.

To my family, thank you for supporting me through this journey. Being a first-generation student, you have been there and supported me 100% even though I know it was difficult for you to understand some of stress and frustration that accompanied the
dissertation process. Thank you for believing in my and encouraging me throughout this process. I love you!

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Lastly, to my partner, Tony, and our family pet, Shadow. When I got frustrated, stressed or discouraged, everyone else could get away from me. You guys, however, were stuck! It sometimes had to be difficult to keep up the encouragement, Tony, but you always seemed to keep me motivated and optimistic! More than once you tried to help by cleaning and organizing my desk, only to be met with me shouting, “You don’t clean up a grad student’s desk! I have a process!” Your patience with me was extraordinary! Shadow, without you curled up on my lap while I was doing research, writing or revisions, I fear I would have been tempted to grab that television remote or do something else with my time. Though it seems a little silly, completing this dissertation would not have been possible without you guys. I love you!

When starting as a faculty member at Lake Land College, I would have laughed if you told me I would have a doctoral degree by age thirty-four. I have challenged myself through this process, made new friends and acquaintances, and strengthened
relationships with friends and coworkers I already had. I would not change this amazing experience for anything.
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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Introduction

Nontraditional students, those who present with unique characteristics that differ from the traditionally seen college student aged 18–23 years old, are making an increased presence in higher education, especially within community colleges. Though nontraditional students are not a new phenomenon to community colleges, this ever-growing group of students presents with many challenges to retention and college completion (Center for Community College Student Engagement, 2012; Fike & Fike, 2008; Spellman, 2007). As the “completion agenda” (College Board, 2013; McPhail, 2011; The White House, 2014) continues to grow support and momentum in the United States, and as a large number of nontraditional students are seeking higher education to modify existing job skills or to seek new employment opportunities, the reliance on community colleges to produce successful graduates is strong. Even with a large emphasis on nontraditional student completion, however, a comprehensive program to increase the success of these students in community colleges has not been found.

This project will explore the unique characteristics of nontraditional students that often turn to community colleges to advance their education. Prominent theories focused on student success will be presented as well as techniques proven to increase student success in community colleges. Finally, this project will provide a unique,
comprehensive program, based on research and proven methods, to help facilitate nontraditional student success in community colleges.

**Characteristics of the Nontraditional Student**

The definition of nontraditional student can vary from one institution to another, though many definitions have similar characteristics. According to the United States Department of Education (Horn, 1996), students are typically categorized as nontraditional if meeting one or more of the following characteristics:

- not enrolling immediately after graduating high school;
- is a part-time student for at least a part of the academic year;
- working 35 or more hours per week while enrolled in college;
- is financially independent; and/or
- is a single parent.

Most institutions also consider a nontraditional student to be at least 24 years old (Forbus, Newbold, & Mehta, 2011; Justice & Dornan, 2001; Taniguci & Kaufman, 2005).

Coincidentally, some of these aspects coincide with what Watson (2009) refers to as “at risk” students: those who present with an increased risk for failure in college (p. 15). “At risk” simply implies that students with characteristics such as these have an increased likelihood of dropping out of college before completing a degree.

Horn delineates nontraditional status of students by the number of characteristics they possess. For example, a student who is financially independent, is a single parent, is 30 years old, and is working full time would be categorized as “highly nontraditional,” whereas a student who possesses only one of the characteristics would
be considered “minimally nontraditional.” These characteristics are important when investigating the differences between successful and unsuccessful nontraditional students. As the number of characteristics making a student nontraditional becomes more extensive, the higher the likelihood the nontraditional student will not succeed in higher education, either by failing courses or choosing not to persist with his or her education.

**Definition of Terms**

The following terminology is used in this project:

*Completion* – completion of a degree or certificate within 150% of normal (or expected) time (U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], n.d.).

*First-generation student* – an individual whose parents did not complete a baccalaureate degree or, in the case of any individual who regularly resided with and received support from only one parent, an individual whose only parent did not complete a baccalaureate degree (U.S. Department of Education, 2014).

*Highly nontraditional student* – an undergraduate student who possesses at least three characteristics that would make him or her “nontraditional” as defined by this section of the project (Horn, 1996).

*Independent student* – According to the Higher Education Act of 1965, a student is considered independent

- if he or she is 24 years of age or older by December 31 of the financial aid award year;
• if he or she is an orphan, in foster care, or a ward of the court, or was an orphan, in foster care, or a ward of the court at any time when the individual was 13 years of age or older; is, or immediately prior to attaining the age of majority, an emancipated minor or in legal guardianship as determined by a court of competent jurisdiction in the individual’s State of legal residence;

• if he or she is a veteran of the Armed Forces of the United States or is currently serving on active duty in the Armed Forces for other than training purposes; is a graduate or professional student; is a married individual; and/or

• if he or she has legal dependents other than a spouse; or is a student for whom a financial aid administrator makes a documented determination of independence by reason of other unusual circumstances.

*Nontraditional student* – an undergraduate student typically 24 years old or older and possesses one or more of the following characteristics: does not enroll in college immediately after graduating high school, is a part-time student for at least part of the academic year, works 35 or more hours per week while enrolled in college, is financially independent, and/or is a single parent (Horn, 1996).

*Retention* – a measure of the rate at which students persist in their educational program at an institution (U.S. Department of Education, NCES, n.d.) (may also be referred to as persistence).

*Traditional student* – undergraduate student between 18–23 years old who typically attends college directly after graduating high school.

**Justification for the Project**

According to the National Center for Education Statistics (2013b), students aged 25 to 34 years old are expected to increase by 20% within institutions of higher learning by the year 2021. Additionally, students aged 35 and over are projected to increase by
25% by the same year. Though the number of traditional-aged students is also projected to increase, it is at a substantially lower rate of 10%. As nontraditional students slowly shift the paradigm of the “typical” college student, community colleges in particular will need to pay special attention to this “at risk” demographic of student in order to help facilitate successful retention and completion. The community college’s traditional open-access philosophy coupled with the convenience and affordability of attending a community college help contribute to the institution’s increased percentage of nontraditional students (Myran, 2009, p. 1).

Research pertaining specifically to nontraditional community college students can be difficult to separate from the general community college student population because many community college students have at least one characteristic that could categorize them as “nontraditional.” The easiest characteristic to observe when conducting secondary research on nontraditional college students is based on age. Focusing solely on age, however, cannot depict an accurate picture of the nontraditional student population, nor explain why this demographic of student has such a difficult time being retained in higher education.

In order to build an accurate knowledge base, it is important to understand that some differences between the community college student body and 4-year college/university student body do exist. Understanding the characteristics of the typical community college population will help reinforce the foundation upon which this project is built. According to the U.S. Department of Education (Staklis & Chen, 2010),
several differences exist between community college students and students from 4-year colleges or universities. Consider the following:

- A majority of community college students are part time (57.1%) compared to full time (42.9%). This contrasts with 4-year college/university students who are primarily attending full time (80.4%).

- 44% of community college students enroll in at least one developmental education course compared to 30.4% of 4-year college/university students.

- An estimated 49% of community college students are over age 23, compared with 26% of 4-year college/university students.

- 56.5% of community college students are identified as being independent, with 25% reporting being married and 31.6% reporting having dependents. This contrasts with the 30.9% of 4-year college/university students who identify as being “independent,” with 11.9% reporting being married and 12.9% reporting having dependents.

- 42.9% of community college students report working full time, 40.7% report working part time, and 16.4% report not working at all. The weekly average of hours worked for community college students is 32.4. On the other hand, 23.2% of 4-year college/university students report working full time, 52.1% report working part time, and 24.7% report not working at all. The weekly average of hours worked for 4-year college/university students is 26.1.

As one can see, community colleges generally have students with increased nontraditional characteristics such as marital status, age, and dependency status, when compared to 4-year institutions. The impact of these characteristics is evident, especially when considering that only 20% of public, community college students complete a degree at a community college in 150% of time compared to 51% of public, 4-year college/university students completing a bachelor’s degree (NCES, 2013a).
Importance of the Issue

The nontraditional community college student presents with a variety of factors that influence his or her retention and completion. With only 20% of community college students obtaining a certificate or associate’s degree within 3 years of starting the degree requirements (NCES, 2013a), action needs to be taken to increase the retention and completion rates of community college students. With the future of community college financial support potentially being impacted by completion rates (Southern Regional Education Board [SREB], 2012), the issue demands the attention of community college leaders throughout the nation.

Table 1 illustrates many of the influences on nontraditional student retention and completion in the community college setting. Though many others exist, research reveals academic preparation, enrollment status, finances, family, stress, and employment are all influences that can drastically affect retention and completion. By understanding these influences, community colleges can help mitigate the effect they might have on the nontraditional student.
Table 1: Influences on Student Completion

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Influences on Completion</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Academic Preparation</td>
<td>Many nontraditional students require at least one developmental education class (see, e.g., National Center for Education Statistics, 2011).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enrollment Status</td>
<td>Many nontraditional students are enrolled on a part-time basis, limiting the opportunity for institutional integration and extending completion time (see, e.g., McClenney, 2007).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial</td>
<td>Many nontraditional students are less likely to obtain financial aid and more likely to have financial debt (see, e.g., Crosta, 2013).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family</td>
<td>Many nontraditional students have a spouse and/or dependent children who compete for the student’s attention (see, e.g., Gabriel, 2001).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stress</td>
<td>Many nontraditional students have to juggle external demands and conflicting responsibilities, increasing stress (see, e.g., Lundberg, 2003).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employment</td>
<td>Many nontraditional students work at least part-time, limiting the time they can dedicate to academics (see, e.g., Lammers, Onwuegbuzie, &amp; Slate, 2001).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Being academically and socially integrated into an institution is critical to increase retention and completion for nontraditional community college students (Tinto, 1993). Four specific strategies for increasing academic and social integration that have shown to be successful are illustrated in Table 2.
### Table 2: Influences into the College Mindset

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategy for Increased Academic and Social Integration</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tr>
<td>Orientation</td>
<td>Students who are familiar with college policies, services available, and classroom locations are more likely to persist (see, e.g., Cohen &amp; Brawer, 2008).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Success Course</td>
<td>Students who are prepared with good study techniques and time management skills are more likely to persist (see, e.g., Cho &amp; Karp, 2013).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student-Peer Interaction</td>
<td>Students who establish relationships with other students are more likely to be retained (see, e.g., Schnee, 2014)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faculty-Student Interaction</td>
<td>Students who establish relationships with faculty and staff at the institution are more likely to persist (see, e.g., Chang, 2005).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Purpose of the Project

Given the importance of nontraditional student success in community colleges, the purpose of this project is to provide a strategy for nontraditional student completion by incorporating research surrounding influences on nontraditional student success and proven methods to maximize that completion. This project will help create a program that is beneficial to the retention and completion of nontraditional students in the community college setting. The Program, illustrated in Chapter Four, will serve as a reference for community college leaders aspiring to increase nontraditional student retention and completion, thereby preparing the student to be successful in his or her college transfer and/or employment endeavors.
Summary

The presence of nontraditional students in community colleges is not a new phenomenon. However, the rate at which this unique demographic of student is entering community colleges, and at which it is projected to increase, commands attention. Whatever special characteristics a student presents with to categorize him or her as “nontraditional,” this category of student is more at risk in higher education than traditional students. As institutions that support the open-door philosophy and care about the success of students, community colleges are obligated to work to the best of their ability to ensure a high level of quality, leading to increased retention. Though every student is different, this project provides community colleges with needed information to successfully accomplish that goal. As we progress into a new era of higher education, a 20% completion rate is simply no longer acceptable.
CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

When developing a program to increase nontraditional student completion, it is important to examine known influences that typically affect nontraditional student retention and completion. By understanding the most common influences to completion, one can focus on increasing the positive influences and decreasing the negative influences. Though most research focuses on influences to student retention and completion in higher education generally, there is a variety of research focusing on those influences for nontraditional students, specifically.

Influences on Student Completion

Academic Preparation

One issue that nontraditional students typically present with when enrolling in higher education is the time between high school graduation (or GED attainment) and enrollment in college (Crosta, 2013). As a result, many must begin their enrollment in developmental education to prepare for college level classes. According to the National Center for Education Statistics (2011), in 2008, approximately 78% of first-year undergraduates age 24 or older enrolled in at least one developmental education course, compared to 34.6% of students under 24 years old. Directed more specifically at
community colleges, research from the Center for Community College Student Engagement (2012) reveals that 82% of entering community college students report being required to take at least one developmental education course.

Of community college students required to take at least one developmental education course, 62% complete all of their required developmental education courses, 22.3% complete their required developmental education courses and associated college-level courses in 2 years, and 9.5% graduate within 3 years (Complete College America, 2012). The Complete College America report also illustrates that 80.9% of community college students aged 25 or older do not complete their required developmental education courses and associated college-level coursework within 2 years.

As this statistical information shows, being academically underprepared, therefore being required to complete developmental education upon entering college, has an adverse effect on college completion. As a result, many research studies recommend mandatory assessment of developmental education needs (Boylan, 2002; Boylan, Bliss, & Bonham, 1997; Center for Student Success, 2007; McCabe & Day, 1998; Roueche & Roueche, 1997) and enrollment in required developmental education courses early in the academic tenure (Zachry & Schneider, 2010) to improve success in the courses.

**Enrollment Status**

An additional influence on student completion includes enrollment status. According to McClenney (2007), a majority of the approximately 66% of part-time
enrolled community college students in the United States are characterized as nontraditional. Research has shown that enrollment in college on a part-time basis can significantly reduce chances for degree completion in an academic setting (Forbus et al., 2011; Taniguchi & Kaufman, 2005). Taniguchi and Kaufman attribute the reduced degree completion to weakened bonds between nontraditional students and fellow students as well as weakened bonds with faculty and staff outside of the classroom, thus weakening the support system if unexpected problems present. The researchers add that when degree completion is extended, there is a higher likelihood the student will not retain basic information needed for successful progression to additional courses.

Financial

Financial stability can also determine nontraditional student persistence and completion (Tinto, 1993). Tinto postulates that though the lack of financial resources will not necessarily affect the decision to attend college in general, it will affect the type of institution attended (p. 67). More likely than not, lower income students will choose to attend a community college, given that community colleges traditionally have lower costs associated with attendance (e.g., tuition rates) than 4-year colleges and universities (U.S. Department of Education, 2012). Information from the 2011 Survey of Entering Student Engagement (SENSE), which analyzed data from community colleges nationwide, revealed that 30% of students would be “very likely,” 19% of students would be “likely,” and 23% of students would be “somewhat likely” to withdraw from classes because of a lack of finances (McClenny & Arnsparger, 2012, p. 64).
In a report from the Community College Research Center, Crosta (2013) found that “older students” (those over age 27) were less likely to receive federal financial aid than their traditional student counterpart. Though Crosta does not differentiate between students who applied for financial aid and students who did not apply for financial aid, Davidson (2013) states that community college students, in general, are less likely to receive financial aid because they are less likely to complete a Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). Researchers list many reasons for failure to complete a FAFSA, including lack of a basic understanding of financial planning for college, not understanding a lengthy and complicated application process, and difficulty to access campus services (e.g., financial aid counseling) when taking online and/or evening courses (College Board, 2010).

**Family**

Family influences can affect a student’s success in college. Schlossberg (1981) suggests that these influences can be supportive or non-supportive depending on the views of family and friends. Though not directly related to higher education, Schlossberg uses the example of research conducted of “draft dodgers” during the Vietnam War who fled to Canada to avoid being drafted. Schlossberg illustrates subjects who obtained parental support for their actions adapted better to their new situation than those who did not have support in their decision. It can be derived from Schlossberg’s example that anyone having as much influence as a parent (e.g., a close friend or spouse) could equally have a strong influence on decisions made by an individual.
Another example of family influence comes from a qualitative study conducted by Cerven (2013) of 60 low-income, single mothers enrolled in a California community college. The study took into consideration why these nontraditional students enrolled in the community college, as well as what influences, if any, previously kept them from enrolling in the community college before they actually did enroll. Key findings from the research include:

- 25% of the sample revealed that support from a close family member, a friend of the family, and/or a peer encouraged the student to enroll in the community college, and/or helped the student complete the required paperwork;
- 12% of the sample revealed a major barrier to enrolling in the community college was a significant other, with 71% listing a partner or ex-spouse as a significant barrier and 29% listing a mother as a significant barrier to enrollment; and
- 22% of participants associated positive emotional support and guidance from significant others as a significant reason for enrollment and completion.

Cerven notes that many of the sample enrolled and persisted in higher education to better provide for their children (as a result of obtaining a better job by achieving a higher education) as well as serve as a good role model for their children. This research shows that family influence can be both negative and positive on a nontraditional student’s decision to enroll and/or persist in higher education.

It is not unusual for nontraditional students to have family obligations that require them to focus attention away from their academic responsibilities (e.g., spouse, children, or a dependent parent). In three separate research studies focusing on the reasons for students’ withdrawal from community college, reasons stated were a lack of “child care” (Fralick, 1993; Swager, Campbell, & Orlowski, 1995) and “family reasons”
(Gabriel, 2001). Cerven (2013) also noted that the inability to obtain adequate child care was a commonly stated reason single mothers did not persist in their community college education. With strain on whether to continue with a college education already so intense, one or more of these factors could be the tipping point for non-completion.

**Stress**

Some research suggests that external demands and conflicting responsibilities can create unique stressors for nontraditional college students that differ from their traditional student counterpart (Lundberg, 2003). Other research has suggested that nontraditional students handle some stress from external sources better than traditional students because of experience with time management and the presence of higher self-esteem (Kearns & Gardiner, 2007). In a research study conducted by Forbus et al. (2011), the researchers determined that nontraditional students experienced more stress than traditional students in the areas of work, commuting, and a general lack of time, as well as with money issues. With students learning how to better cope with stress, as well as the college helping to eliminate as much unwarranted stress as possible, healthy stress levels can be maintained.

Tinto (1993), describing his Theory of Individual Departure, acknowledges that external forces, especially when a student is attending a nonresidential campus, can play an important role in the decision for students to depart from higher education (p. 109). Many researchers agree that attending college is only one of the multiple daily tasks required of nontraditional students and one that might not be on the forefront of a student’s priority list (Forbus et al., 2011; Giancola, Grawitch, & Borchert, 2009; Tinto,
The stressors that accompany everyday life for a nontraditional student, coupled with stress from college-related activities, can be too much stress for many students to handle. When a list of activities has to be prioritized, education may be at the bottom of the list.

**Employment**

Another common influence to college completion is employment. Consider the following statistics provided by the American Association of Community Colleges (2014) regarding community college students for the 2011–2012 academic year:

- 22% of full-time students were employed full-time;
- 40% of full-time students were employed part-time;
- 41% of part-time students were employed full-time; and
- 32% of part-time students were employed part-time.

Employment in addition to attending college can negatively impact college completion (Bers & Smith, 1991; Broadbridge & Swanson, 2006; Lammers et al., 2001; Ross, Niebling, & Heckert, 1999; Salamonson & Andrew, 2006), especially when working and being enrolled in college, both on a full time basis. Employment can increase the amount of stress a student feels (Ross et al., 1999) as well as decrease the time a student spends preparing for class (Lammers et al., 2001). Many times students must choose between adequately preparing for their college classes and making needed money for financial obligations.

Some research shows a positive correlation between employment and academics when the employment is related to the degree being pursued (contextualized...
learning) (Perin, 2011) and/or when employment is on campus (Beeson & Wessel, 2002; Hayward, 2014; Hodgson & Spours, 2001). For example, Jensen, Yohalem, and Coles (2011) found a positive impact on student involvement when working 15 or fewer hours a week, with on-campus employment having a greater positive effect than off-campus employment. Cermak and Filkins (2004) found a positive correlation between student employment on campus and persistence. Not only does campus employment provide a means for income, it also increases the likelihood of integration into the institution.

Integration into the Collegiate Environment

Academic Integration

Just as research identifies potential negative influences to nontraditional student retention and completion, research also shows various methods and techniques that commonly increase retention and completion. Before examining a few specific, positive influences on student completion, it is important to examine the concepts of academic and social integration. These concepts, first presented by renowned researcher Vincent Tinto, lay the foundation for which many research studies on student completion are built.

Academic integration in the collegiate setting can be one of the most formal aspects of student’s success (Tinto, 1993, p. 107). Tinto defines the academic component of education as the “formal education of students” and directly involves those responsible for that task, mainly faculty members (p. 106). Academic integration can be illustrated as when a student is truly vested in obtaining the greatest knowledge
possible from the courses taken and is willing to work hard to receive that knowledge. Students see the benefits of the knowledge received from each course, and strive to be successful in receiving that knowledge by studying course materials and asking faculty members questions about course material that is difficult to comprehend, all while striving to obtain the best grade possible for the course.

Though academic integration typically works in tandem with other characteristics of student success (e.g., social integration), academic integration must be accomplished. Tinto (1993) reiterates that a minimum requirement for most institutions of higher education is a passing course grade and acceptable grade point average (GPA) (p. 107). Without these minimum standards, the student is typically forced to desist from higher education.

Social Integration

Many of the same factors that influence academic integration (e.g., enrollment status and/or employment) also influence social integration into the collegiate environment. Tinto (1993) defines the social component of education as the interaction with faculty, staff, and peers that takes place mostly outside of the academic domain of the college (p. 106). Tinto illustrates that successful social integration into the collegiate environment not only occurs through college-sponsored activities (e.g., theater, athletics or student clubs), but also through informal social activities that may arise out of the day-to-day activities at the institution (p. 108).

Though arguably more difficult in a community college environment, which is typically a non-residential campus, when compared to a residential college or university,
social integration within the community college is obtainable. In research conducted by Astin (1993), positive correlations between social integration with other students and the following factors were discovered:

- discussion of course content with other students;
- working on group projects for classes;
- tutoring other students;
- participating in intramural sports;
- being a member of a social fraternity or sorority;
- discussing racial or ethnic issues;
- socializing with someone from a different racial or ethnic group;
- participating in a campus protest;
- being elected to a student office; and
- socializing or participating in student clubs or organizations (p. 385).

Involvement in activities such as these can help facilitate change and transition from ideas once playing an integral part of a student’s life (e.g., upbringing) to a diversity of new ideas developing in the collegiate environment with a broad student base, which, then, leads to social integration (Astin, 1993; Milem & Berger, 1997; Tinto, 1993).

Clark (2012), through her post-graduation interviews with nontraditional community college students, showed an increase in persistence and motivation when students shared their struggles with one another. Clark’s research showed three common themes through the nontraditional student interviews, including

- a sense of belonging fostered by appreciation for shared struggles and nontraditional characteristics positively contributed to persistence;
• persistence through encouraging relationships with faculty, staff, and peers; and
• persistence through developing self-confidence and visualizing success.

These common themes illustrate that student completion can be accomplished through a variety of academic and social integration settings, specific to each individual student. A combination of academic and social integration that helps establish these themes for one student may very well be different for another student.

**Strategies for Increased Academic and Social Integration**

Many influences, both in and out of the student’s span of control, can affect student completion. Academic and social integration is vital to helping students address potential challenges so they complete college. Research shows success in increasing student retention and completion using a variety of interventions. Delivery of these interventions occurs through four core avenues: orientation, a student success course, student-peer interaction, and faculty-student interaction (National Resource Center, n.d.). Commonly referred to as a first-year experience (FYE), a strong foundation formed by these interventions helps increase student completion (Center for Community College Student Engagement, 2012).

**Orientation**

Orientation plays an important role in the transition to college (Braxton, Hirschy, & McClendon, 2004; Colton, Connor, Shultz, & Easter, 1999; Fidler, 1991; Tinto, 1993). In a study conducted by Wood and Ireland (2014), completion of an institutional orientation showed a positive correlation with student retention for African American
community college students. For many students, orientation is the first glimpse they will see into the institution; a location they have likely never set foot in before, filled with concepts they have likely never before needed to understand. Terms that are commonplace to academic institutions, such as “syllabus,” “student life” and “academic integrity,” may not resonate with new students who have never before attended an institution of higher education.

Orientation programs are “designed to provide students with a map of educational requirements and services available to them” as well as help them integrate into the collegiate environment (Cohen & Brawer, 2008, p. 225). As the presence of orientation is a vital transitional component, the Center for Community College Student Engagement (CCSSE), through its 2012 survey, identified core components of which a majority of active orientation programs consisted. Of those top-ranking components, information about and/or use of the college’s personal/social support services, information about and/or use of the college’s academic support network, and use of information resources were the most prominent. Additionally, orientation programs illustrate that the institution has resources available, and is willing to use those resources to help the student be successful (Holmes, Ebbers, Robinson, & Mugenda, 2000).

**Student Success Courses**

In an attempt to increase the success of new students while making the transition to college, many institutions of higher education have developed a student success course for first-time, first-year students (Cho & Karp, 2013; O’Gara, Karp-
Mechur, & Hughes, 2009; Zeidenberg, Jenkins, & Calcagno, 2007). Student success courses, though varying in styles, focus on the elements of time management, test taking/studying skills, exploration of learning styles and encouraging students to develop a plan for college (Derby & Smith, 2004), as well as familiarization with the college (e.g., guided tours and/or meeting academic advisor) and financial responsibility (Cho & Karp, 2013). In addition to students learning valuable skills needed to be successful in college (e.g., gaining information about the college, developing skills and techniques valuable in academic success, and importance in creating relationship with faculty/staff and other students), a positive correlation has been found between participating in a student success course and successfully completing developmental education courses (Cho & Karp, 2013; O’Gara et al., 2009; Zeidenberg et al., 2007).

A prime example of the effect student success courses can have on student retention comes from Durham Technical Community College (DTCC, 2012) in North Carolina. Figure 1 shows how a student success courses offered at the college affected student retention from the fall semester to the spring semester. Students who attended the student success course, regardless of final grade, were more likely to be retained to the spring semester than those who did not.
Student-Peer Interaction

Research indicates a positive correlation between peer interaction and college satisfaction, thereby increasing retention and completion (Astin, 1993; Schnee, 2014; Tinto, 1993). Peer interaction has been shown to foster development (Chickering & Reisser, 1993) by increasing academic learning, providing emotional support, and broadening perspectives for students (Drago-Severson et al., 2001). Students can learn from each other’s diverse experiences and provide a solid support group when a fellow student is struggling. In absence of an established cohort or learning community, students can gain this student-peer interaction component using the suggestions presented by Astin (1993), which were discussed earlier in this chapter under the “Social Integration” section.

Figure 1. Retention from Fall to Spring Semesters at DTCC.
Faculty-Student Interaction

Frequent interaction with faculty is one of the foundational characteristics of academic integration and helps define the “highly involved” student (Astin, 1999), thus is an important element for student retention (Tinto, 1993, p. 56). Tinto explains that as important as student-faculty interaction inside the classroom is, even more valuable is student-faculty interaction outside of the formal classroom, incorporating “broader intellectual and social issues,” thus creating a better environment for the student (p. 57).

Chickering and Reisser (1993) reiterate the importance of the faculty-student relationship because of the influence faculty members can have on their students as “scholars and teachers, mentors, role models, and skilled listeners” (p. 316). Chickering and Reisser offer that this relationship can make a critical difference in a student’s success as “competence is fostered first by the example of those in teaching or leadership roles, second by the expectations they convey, and third by the encouragement they offer” (p. 317).

Chickering and Reisser’s logic is reinforced by research conducted by Pascarella and Terenzini (1991) showing that higher levels of cognitive development were displayed in students who perceived faculty caring about their development and formed a close relationship with at least one faculty member and Chang’s (2005) research showing a positive correlation among minority community college students between a high level of faculty-student interaction and student retention. Research conducted by Nakijima, Dembo, and Mossler (2012) revealed that community college student
retention was not based as much on the actual amount of faculty-student interaction, however, was based on the *perceived* caring by the faculty member for the student.

Schlossberg (1989), in her Theory of Marginality and Mattering, illustrates the importance of early relationship building through easing a student’s sense of “not fitting in” (p. 5) by making students feel more comfortable with their new environment and new expectations they are faced with (Chaves, 2006). Rendon (1994), through her Theory of Validation, presents the concept of “validation,” which is very similar to Schlossberg’s concept of marginality. In Rendon’s theory, she also emphasizes the need for “faculty and peer engagement” early in the student’s academic endeavors and adds that this engagement can help increase a student’s confidence in learning ability, sense of self-worth, and sense that they “fit” into the collegiate environment (Chaves, 2006). This relationship will help faculty and staff realize any interventions that need to be made to keep the student on track with his or her academic path.

Lastly, by conducting interviews with nontraditional community college students who had recently graduated, Clark (2012) found two different commonalities that increased retention until graduation: encouraging relationships between faculty, staff, and peers and visualizing success. Feedback from the participants revealed that retention had increased when faculty members were personable and actively involved in the education of the student.
Summary

A variety of positive and negative influences exist affecting nontraditional student retention and completion within the community college. Negative influences such as inadequate academic preparation and stress can be mitigated by positive influences such as attending an orientation and increasing faculty-student interaction, thus better preparing a student for the collegiate environment and encouraging persistence once there. The weight each one of these positive and negative influences carries on the nontraditional student’s retention and completion will vary. One thing is for certain: a student’s chance for retention is increased with academic and social integration into the institution. Considering academic and social integration, as well as the other variable influences mentioned, will allow a community college to focus on increasing nontraditional student retention and completion.
CHAPTER THREE: DESIGN METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The literature review presented in Chapter Two illustrated a variety of influences on nontraditional student completion as well as provided some best-practices for addressing common influences on nontraditional student completion. This chapter serves as a transition between how pertinent research translates into critical components for nontraditional student completion within the community college. Following is an illustration of the methodology behind each of the critical components utilized in the Program for Nontraditional Student Completion.

Critical Components for Nontraditional Student Completion

Table 3 illustrates components of the Program important for nontraditional student completion in the community college environment. The methodology behind each critical component is illustrated in this chapter, whereas the practical applications for each component is integrated in the Program presented in Chapter Four.
Table 3: *Critical Components of the Program*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CRITICAL COMPONENT</th>
<th>OBJECTIVE</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Orientation</td>
<td>To familiarize the student with the Program as well as the college itself (see, e.g., Wood &amp; Ireland, 2014).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Success Course</td>
<td>To prepare the student for successful transition to college (see, e.g., Cho &amp; Karp, 2013).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mentoring</td>
<td>To provide a sense of belonging and integration into the institution (see, e.g., Chang, 2005).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic and Social Support</td>
<td>To provide opportunities beneficial to student involvement and success (see, e.g., Clark, 2012).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work-Study</td>
<td>To provide employment opportunity integrated into a learning environment (see, e.g., Beeson &amp; Wessel, 2002).</td>
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**Orientation**

Orientation is key for nontraditional student completion and will be conducted prior to the first semester enrollment. In order to help facilitate student retention while obtaining a degree, students in the Program will attend a mandatory orientation session. This orientation session will provide all of the information provided in a traditional orientation for any student, but will be tailored to focus on the unique needs of the nontraditional college student. The orientation, attended by all students participating in the Program, will likely be the first opportunity for participating nontraditional students to meet others in the Program, as well as to express any questions and/or concerns the students might have. Though many aspects of this orientation are covered in all college orientation sessions, the critical aspect of this
orientation is the chance to meet fellow nontraditional students who will likely become a support group to increase retention and completion.

Many first-time, nontraditional students will not have a realistic expectation of the time requirements needed for success in college courses. Though dedicated time needed for success in each course will differ by individual student, orientation will not only help illustrate the realistic time commitment required for college, but also provide the student with resources the college has to help facilitate success (e.g., a tutoring center or a library). Illustrating an accurate picture of the college experience from point A to point B will not only reduce anxiety by allowing the student to ask questions about any unclear requirements, but will also show the “light at the end of the tunnel,” illustrating how obtainable a college degree really is.

**Components for nontraditional students.** Two important concepts to cover during orientation for the nontraditional student population are child care and paying for college.

**Child care.** As a potentially negative influence to completion (Cerven, 2013; Fralick, 1993; Swager et al., 1995), nontraditional students must be advised of child care options that exist on campus, including cost, hours of operation, and location. If no child care facilities are present on the campus, a list of child care options within the community will be provided, also including cost, hours of operation, and location. Even if a student’s children are regularly in school, a “what if” scenario can be provided in case the school is closed due to inclement weather or other unforeseen event. Helping
students formulate an action plan for unforeseen circumstances will reduce the stress and missed class time should an unexpected circumstance present.

**Paying for college.** Paying for college is another topic that can present as a potentially negative influence to nontraditional student completion (McClenney & Arnsparger, 2012, p. 64). During the general orientation session, students will be instructed on the costs of attending college (e.g., cost per credit hour and course fees), how to access college billing statements, payment deadlines and options for paying for college. It is not only important that students realize the true cost of attending college, but also investigate ways to pay for college to ease the financial burden.

It should not be assumed that a student has completed a Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). A financial aid representative will be available during orientation to review the student’s FAFSA submission process for the current year. If the student is not able to complete the FAFSA during orientation, the initial process can be completed by the student and the financial aid representative, then the representative will follow-up with the student to ensure the FAFSA was completed accurately. If a student has submitted a FAFSA for the current year, a review of the documentation will be conducted by the financial aid representative, with the student, to ensure accuracy and to review the reward received.

Regardless of FAFSA submission status, the student will not only be told of financial aid opportunities that exist within the college (e.g., Foundation scholarships or work-study opportunities), but also shown how to search and apply for these opportunities. Students will be encouraged to search and apply for funding
opportunities through external sources, including the local Chamber of Commerce, a local Rotary, or even national organizations related to their major and career field. Many students may not realize the steps to take to search for, and receive, financial assistance.

**Federally funded support.** During the Program application process, students are screened for eligibility for any federally funded support programs on campus. The characteristics that many students present with that categorize them as nontraditional will also be characteristics that qualify them for support programs such as TRIO, a federal grant-funded program that provides services to low income students, first generation students, and/or students with disabilities in order to achieve a college degree (U.S. Department of Education, 2014). During orientation, a representative from these programs will be available to meet with qualifying students.

**Advisement.** Many nontraditional students will present with inadequate preparation from high school (Bailey, 2009), and/or an extended period of time between high school and college (Crosta, 2013). Because of this, academic advisement during orientation is mandatory in order to have adequate time to prepare the student before the first semester begins. Academic advisors will help students enroll in their first semester classes during the orientation.

If a student has not taken course placement tests upon applying to the college, he or she will complete testing at orientation and review the scores with an academic advisor. The key to increasing the preparedness of a student will be early examination of
test scores at orientation. The student can be provided information to increase areas of knowledge where deficient prior to starting the first full semester of courses. For example, if a student applies to the college in the spring and academic preparation is deficient, the academic advisor can connect the student resources to increase his or her proficiency in this subject area prior to enrollment. Resources will vary by college, but could include completing a summer developmental education course or attending a workshop aimed at increasing subject matter proficiency.

**Developmental education.** The role developmental education plays in college completion has already been presented within the literature review. Preparation for college is crucial for completion, and early advisement is key. The level of the student’s academic preparation will determine the amount of developmental education needed for college completion. Enrolling the nontraditional student in any needed developmental education courses as soon as possible in his or her academic endeavor is beneficial to continued retention (Zachry & Schneider, 2010).

As research shows a negative correlation between developmental education and college completion (Complete College America, 2012), reducing the number of developmental education courses needed is important. By connecting students with resources to increase proficiency in developmental education subjects (reading, writing, and mathematics) prior to enrollment, the number of developmental education courses required will likely be reduced, thereby increasing chances for students to be successful. If a student still needs to complete a developmental education course(s), the academic advisor can work with the student to ensure he or she has adequate time in his or her
class schedule to focus on successfully completing the developmental education course(s).

**Campus tour.** In conjunction with orientation, a tour of the college will help students be less anxious on the first day of classes, when their stress level is already elevated by a new, unknown environment. The tour will be conducted after the student has worked with the academic advisor to establish a semester class schedule. The tour should consist of showing students the locations of various campus offices, including classrooms, the counseling office, the bookstore, the library, the financial aid office, and their respective academic advisor’s office. By having their class schedule already established, students can locate their specific classrooms and faculty members’ offices during the tour. Providing the student with a campus map will also help the student find his or her way on the first day of classes, in case the student forgets where the various offices are located from the tour.

**Student life.** Student life on a community college campus is an aspect that is often not put on the forefront of student success, though research shows it is an important component to student retention (Astin, 1993; Tinto, 1993). Participating in events and/or clubs on campus will help integrate students to the collegiate environment, as well as give them a sense of belonging. Attending a campus event can help promote diversity in education while increasing the potential for socialization among students (Astin, 1993; Milem & Berger, 1997; Tinto, 1993). Involvement in a student club can not only promote socialization, but can enhance leadership skills in
members as well as help with academic integration if the club is related to a student’s major.

Most college campuses offer a variety of activities in which students can get involved in a non-academic setting. From participating in a student club or attending a monthly cultural event on campus, to serving as a representative on a student-led governing board or activity board, a wide array of student activities are present for students with a variety of schedules. At orientation, students active in this realm of the community college will provide testament to the activities typically provided, times frequently utilized (e.g., a weekly activity period), and benefits received from participation in student life events. Students will be provided information on how they can get involved as well as where they can learn about upcoming events taking place around campus. If the college already has a club associated with nontraditional students, orientation is a good time for current club members to introduce themselves to the new nontraditional students.

**Informal meet-and-greet.** Lastly, a socialization component is necessary to initiate a strong support network that will follow the student throughout his or her academic career (Clark, 2012). A meet-and-greet that is part of orientation will not only allow a nontraditional student to meet other nontraditional students starting the same academic journey, but will also allow the student to ask questions of orientation facilitators in an informal setting. The presence of experienced, nontraditional students and faculty members from various academic divisions will be available to answer questions and thwart anxiety by students. Many of the attending nontraditional
students will likely have the same questions that need answered. This meet-and-greet provides a good forum in which to address these questions.

**Student Success Course**

A second critical component to the Program is a participation in a student success course. A student success course in the first semester of a student’s academic endeavor can be beneficial to successful completion (Cho & Karp, 2013; Derby & Smith, 2004; O’Gara et al., 2009; Zeidenberg et al, 2007). The student success course builds the foundation from which good learning and organizational habits are formed. Introducing the student to college resources will help them be prepared for their college experience and discussion of success strategies for college, and for life in general, will help the student be successful in their college experience. If a student is focused on developing a career for after graduation, the success course can help him or her focus on what that career will “look” like, thereby giving him or her a goal for which to strive.

A student success course will provide a practical application for the student. For example, a student will learn how to register for the next semester classes in this course, but will also actually register for the classes in this course. A student will learn that it is important to meet with an academic advisor each semester to keep on track with their academic plan, but will also actually meet with the advisor as an assignment for the course. Not only will key concepts be presented, but a chance to practice those key concepts, and see the importance of those key concepts, will also be incorporated into the course.
**Topics for student success course.** Based on the unique needs of nontraditional students, a variety of topics will help students be retained by the institution. Major topics include an introduction to college resources, success strategies for college, general life management skills, and career development. Each of these topics will provide a foundation for success at the institution and after graduation. Additionally, students will be taught how to utilize online resources in addition to traditional print resources (e.g., class schedules, advisement information, and/or financial aid calculators).

*Introduction to college resources.* It is vital that students understand key aspects of college processes, including where to find important information. Examples of information examined include the student handbook, college catalog, advisement/registration information, and financial aid. The student will be expected to find specific information throughout those sources as instructed by the course faculty member. An example might include the student locating academic advisement information then meeting with an advisor. This not only shows the student where to locate the information, but also reinforces the concept by actually completing the task.

*Success strategies for college.* Many nontraditional students will present with an extended time between high school and attending college. It is important to lay a solid foundation for student success in college. Note-taking, goal-setting, and test-taking strategies will all be explored, as well as good study habits. Additionally, the importance of prioritizing events will be reiterated. As students are learning about these topics, they will be using them in other classes.
**General life management skills.** Academics is not the only obstacle the nontraditional student will have while attending college. Encouraging students to plan for the future will help with time management skills, so when an unexpected problem arises, it can be easily addressed. Other topics covered include how to establish rewarding relationships with faculty and staff, how to handle stress, and how to increase financial responsibility by creating and implementing a budget.

**Career development.** Lastly, job search techniques and resume building is important not only for mentally preparing the nontraditional student for completion of college, but also to help the student tailor his or her resume in order to be the best candidate for a position. Included will be how to appropriately identify careers associated with the student’s college major, as well as how to search and adequately prepare to apply for positions related to those careers. Students will also realize if they have any real-world experience that can be documented on the resume to better qualify them for positions.

**Mentoring**

A third critical component to the Program is mentoring. Students who have a relationship with a faculty or staff member at the college are more likely to be successful (Astin, 1993; Chickering & Reisser, 1993; Tinto, 1993). By having college faculty and staff serve as mentors, students can have a dedicated, reputable contact from which to build knowledge and trust. Students will be more likely to ask questions about unclear information if they know who to utilize for those resources, instead of experiencing the frustration of inquiring with several different people until they find the
answer. Each nontraditional student will have different backgrounds and experiences. Guidance from mentors that is personalized to each individual student will ease institutional integration and reduce a possibly already anxious student.

**Mentor selection.** The selection of faculty mentors must be intentional. Faculty members who truly care about student success and have adequate time to dedicate to the student (though minimal time might be required) are crucial. The mentors must be approachable and knowledgeable about college processes and preferably familiar with the academic discipline in which the student is interested. For example, a criminal justice faculty member who serves as a criminal justice student’s mentor for the Program will not only be knowledgeable in the subject of criminal justice, but will also likely have frequent contact in the classroom with the student. This frequent contact will help build rapport, making the student more likely to approach the faculty mentor with questions, even if just briefly after a class.

There is a natural mentoring process that occurs in the classroom setting between students and a faculty member. Because of frequent interaction with students within an academic discipline, multiple students may be assigned to a single mentor. As students familiarize themselves with the mentor, the relationship builds, naturally creating the mentoring relationship. This relationship continues to strengthen throughout the student’s academic experience. As mentors are intended to assist the same student(s) until the graduation, this natural mentoring relationship is ideal.
**Mentor training.** Mentors must have familiarization with college processes. A workshop held for Program mentors will familiarize them with unique aspects of nontraditional students, Program requirements, and content from the student success course for reinforcement throughout the student’s academic career at the institution. A review of how to access important college information (e.g., financial aid deadlines and registration dates) will be conducted to help mentors better address student questions throughout the semester.

Professional development for mentors will be held at various times throughout the academic year. The opportunities may be facilitated by key individuals from the Program or by other mentors in order to share experiences and brainstorm on solutions to any common problems. It is mandatory that mentors attend at least one session every semester in order to maintain the mentor’s knowledge and skills.

**Mentor-student collaboration.** The mentor will hold regular meetings with the student, meetings which may be informal before or after class, or more formalized in the mentor’s office. During these meetings, discussion can be facilitated surrounding problems and/or frustrations being felt by the student, and opportunities for knowledge advancement can be provided (e.g., financial aid education, interviewing techniques and/or resume creation). These opportunities will help the student gain a well-rounded experience while at the college and will help them better prepare for success after graduation, whether transferring to a 4-year college/university or reintegrating into the workforce. It will also be beneficial to highlight activities for students to be involved with
on campus where they can gain multi-cultural perspectives with the convenience of remaining on campus.

**Academic and Social Support**

A fourth critical component to the Program is academic and social support. This component is incorporated throughout the other Program components and is vital to student success because it provides continuous support throughout the Program. The academic and social support component reinforces concepts introduced in other components of the Program, while maintaining a high level of academic and social integration.

**Early alert.** The key to early intervention is early acknowledgement. Faculty members and faculty mentors will likely be the first to observe a student struggling because they have the most interaction with the student and know how the student interacts on a day-to-day basis. The goal of early intervention is providing the necessary resources to the student before the struggle gets out of control.

Many institutions already have a system in place for easily alerting specific departments within the college when a student is struggling (e.g., Counseling Services) (Center for Community College Student Engagement, 2012). Once a report is filed with the designated department, the student is contacted so that he or she can be connected with the appropriate resources. However, the success to this early intervention is recognizing and acknowledging that a student needs assistance.
By simply speaking with a student, a faculty member or mentor may able to assess the student’s needs and connect him or her to the appropriate resources. If an early alert system is not already being utilized by the college, it is important to develop one for the Program in order to acknowledge and document a student’s specific needs. Though an electronic method is best, in order to easily post updates and share notes with involved participants, any method is can work to document needed intervention and ensure follow-up.

**Tutoring.** Many colleges have tutoring centers where a student can gain access to academic support. Tutoring center location, tutoring center hours, types of tutoring available, and cost of tutoring (many institutions offer free tutoring to students), topics that were introduced at orientation, will be reinforced by the mentor. The mentor will work with the student to ensure these resources are being utilized when needed. Though the tutoring opportunities are explained during orientation, the student may not need tutoring the first semester he or she is at the institution. The student may later struggle and not remember assistance that is available. The mentor assigned to the student can help with continuous reiteration of resources available to increase student success.

**Workshops.** As the purpose of the Program is to increase retention and completion of nontraditional students in college, while preparing students for employment after graduation, workshops will be provided each semester. These workshops will be aimed at supplementing the student’s knowledge and skills. The
workshops will provide a variety of knowledge, from study and budgeting skills to resume building and interviewing techniques.

**Identification of extracurricular events.** Socialization among students in the Program is important (Astin, 1993, p. 385). The Program will identify extracurricular events occurring on campus and communicate those events to Program participants. Two possibilities for this communication are through social media (e.g., Facebook or Twitter) and through texting. If possible, the Program can reserve seating at events so Program participants can sit together. For example, the Program may reserve a section of seating at a campus sports event so Program participants and their families can socialize with one another while at the event.

**Academic advisement.** Initial academic advisement was completed at orientation; however, continuous academic advisement is important (Clark, 2012). The Program will help facilitate a meeting between the student and his or her academic advisor once a semester. This ongoing advisement will not only ensure the student is on the correct educational path, but will also allow the student to visualize graduating and what is required to obtain that goal.

**Work-Study**

The last critical component of the Program is work-study. This component is listed last because it is an optional component of the Program, whereas the other components are critical to all nontraditional students. Participation in this component of
the Program is dependent on a variety of variables, including whether the student is already employed and the number of work-study opportunities available on campus.

**Purpose.** The work-study program aims to match students with a work assignment on campus directly connected with their future career goals. For example, a marketing major will be assigned to a marketing faculty member or to the college’s marketing department. Throughout this experience, students will not only obtain vital, real-world experience related to their field, but will also receive direction from the workplace supervisor (a faculty or staff member) who can help them develop and integrate skills needed after graduation. This contextualized learning will allow students to experience how their future career functions.

A work-study component is included in the Program because it addresses many potential influences of student success, including providing for the need of financial assistance and/or income while attending school, decreasing the need for off-campus, part-time employment, and increasing integration into the institution. Though employment while in school can negatively impact student completion (Bers & Smith, 1991; Broadbridge & Swanson, 2006; Lammers et al., 2001; Ross et al., 1999; Salamonson & Andrew, 2006), employment in relation to the student’s major, and employment on campus, can increase completion (Beeson & Wessel, 2002; Hayward, 2014; Hodgson & Spours, 2001; Perin, 2011).

**Placement.** Placement in a work-study position should coincide directly with a student’s major and career aspirations, when possible. A prime example could be a
criminal justice faculty member serving as a work-site supervisor and mentor for a
criminal justice student. Staff and faculty members should be identified to serve not
only as a work-site supervisor, but also a mentor to a student (this may very well be the
same person as discussed as a faculty-staff mentor under the “Faculty-Student
Interaction” section of this chapter). The work-site supervisor will need to not only lead
the student through daily tasks (e.g., data entry or marketing strategies), but also
dedicate time to mentor him or her through college experiences (e.g., having a bad day
or stress from a big exam). Advice given by the work-site supervisor/mentor, and
contacts met through this mentor, can prove useful as the student continues through
his or her educational endeavor.

Compensation. Compensation for work completed by the student can be
configured in a variety of ways. However, one way to compensate the student is
through a tuition waiver. With this method, a student will be compensated with a
tuition waiver based on the amount of time worked in the specific position. For
example, if tuition is $100 per credit hour, and a student takes 15 credit hours in a given
semester, he or she will owe approximately $1500 for the semester (not including any
college fees). Instead of the student paying the tuition, he or she will dedicate 11 hours
a week for 16 weeks, basically equaling $8.50 per hour. The student could still be
responsible for any college fees; however, the amount is minimal compared to full
tuition. This compensation can vary depending on the cost of tuition, number of credit
hours taken, and number of weekly hours worked. Other ways of compensating the
student can include traditional hourly compensation (with the student not getting a waiver for tuition) or through the federal Work-Study program.

**Type of work completed.** The type of work completed by the student will vary depending on placement. Keeping in mind confidentiality and other federal regulations for community colleges, it is recommended that a student completes work that is relevant to his or her major and helps him or her supplement his or her education. Examples might include a chemistry major helping to set-up a chemistry lab or a marketing major helping to organize a marketing campaign. The work should not be overwhelming for the student to the extent that it affects academics, but should provide real-world experience to benefit the student and productive work to benefit the supervisor/mentor.

**Scheduling.** It is important for the student to have a standard schedule for which he or she can maintain successfully. Holding the student accountable for arriving to work on time and maintaining the schedule will help prepare him or her for the realities of employment after graduation. It is equally important to allow for exceptions in scheduling. Though a student should be expected to work the required number of hours a week, flexibility in scheduling can be key for continued completion. For example, if a student has a child that is ill, the supervisor should consider allowing the student to make up the missed hours at a different time. If the student has an important examination in one of his or her courses, the supervisor could consider allowing the student to use an hour or two of the required work hours to study for the exam. The
goal is to reduce the amount of stress the student might be feeling as a result of situations similar to these, while still preparing the student for success in the workforce.

**Continuous evaluation.** Lastly, continuous evaluation of the placement is important for continued persistence. The objective of work-study within the Program is to decrease stress, encourage completion of a degree, and learn skills that can be directly applied beyond college (e.g., professional dress and punctuality). The supervisor/mentor is likely not receiving additional compensation for the student supervision; therefore, continuous evaluation of the relationship (preferably at the end of each semester) should be completed to ensure the placement is working well for both parties involved. If not, identify any potential barriers to success in the placement. Some barriers may be easily fixed (e.g., miscommunication of job duties or requirements) while others might require alternative placement. All alternative solutions should be considered before terminating a student’s placement.

**Summary**

The methodology illustrated in this chapter applies known positive influences to nontraditional student completion and demonstrates how these influences can be addressed through a developed program for community colleges. Coordinating a program of the presented core components of orientation, a student success course, faculty-staff interaction, structured support and work-study specifically for nontraditional community college students can increase retention and completion. The Program for Nontraditional Student Completion is presented in Chapter Four, and
illustrates how this methodology relates to a practical program ready for implementation.
CHAPTER FOUR: THE PROGRAM FOR NONTRADITIONAL STUDENT COMPLETION

Introduction

This chapter illustrates a program to increase nontraditional student completion within the community college. The Program consists of three phases, as illustrated in Figure 2. Each phase incorporates practices important for implementing a program for student completion and will be described in detail. The chapter will conclude with a discussion about Program assessment and evaluation.

Phase 1: Organization

Phase 2: Orientation

Phase 3: Integrated Support

Figure 2. The Three Phases of the Program.

Phase 1: Organization

The first phase of implementing the Program for Nontraditional Student Completion is organization. The organization phase lays the foundation for a successful nontraditional student completion program within the community college.
Figure 3. Elements of Organization Phase.

Length

The Program is designed to last four semesters, consisting of the fall and spring semesters of years one and two. This time frame will allow a student to visualize a graduation date, giving him or her a major accomplishment toward which to work. The summer semester will be used as a break period for the student, or as a period for taking a needed course (e.g., a developmental education course). Students will enter the Program at various levels of preparation, and summer can be used to keep the student on track with completing within two years.

Timeline

A recommended timeline for the organization phase is illustrated in Table 4.
Table 4: *Timeline for Organization Phase*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Targeted Time Frame</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>September&lt;br&gt;(<em>previous year</em>)</td>
<td>Formation of Implementation Team</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November – April</td>
<td>Development and implementation of marketing strategies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February</td>
<td>Correspondence with mentors/work-study supervisors; recruitment of students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mid-April</td>
<td>Training workshop for mentors/work-study supervisors.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Early April</td>
<td>Student application deadline</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Late April</td>
<td>Initial student selection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mid-May</td>
<td>Program orientation session and workplace assignment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mid-July</td>
<td>Second Program orientation session and workplace assignment</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There is some flexibility in the illustrated time frames, but the schedule presented will ensure adequate time for each component before progression to the next.

**Implementation Team**

An Implementation Team is vital to the success of the Program. The Implementation Team will provide leadership to the Program 12 months a year; therefore, it is important members of the Team be accessible on the community college campus on a regular basis. The Team will meet once a month to discuss any potential issues with the Program, and recommend actions to address those issues.
The Implementation Team will be created in September of the year prior to the Program’s initial semester and will consist of representatives from a variety of college departments, including a teaching faculty member, two Student Services employees, and an administrator, as illustrated in Figure 4. No matter who is chosen from each of these categories, it is vital the Team member is able to dedicate the appropriate amount of time to the success of the Program.

Figure 4. Implementation Team for the Program.

**Faculty team member.** Teaching faculty experience is essential on the Implementation Team. As faculty-student interaction is vital to student retention, the faculty member on the Team will not only provide advice and support to the Team on academic concerns, but also help recruit faculty mentors and work-site supervisors for
the Program. It is vital that the faculty member has adequate time for the Team and the Program itself. It is important the faculty member will be available to meet and discuss the Program during the summer, if needed.

**Student Services members.** Two Student Services employees will be selected for the Implementation Team. The importance of this is two-fold: Student Services employees are knowledgeable and experienced in supporting students, helping them to overcome potential challenges, and they are typically the first point of contact for college students upon coming to the community college. Though specific titles will likely vary by institution, the role each plays will remain the same.

First, many students choose to attend college to obtain the skills and credentials needed for employment after graduation. Therefore, one of the Student Services employees will be familiar with career services. This may be an actual career services representative, by title, or a counselor who focuses on career services for the college. This Team member will be essential in working with individual students involved in the Program to focus career goals and to illustrate a pathway for the student to obtain those goals. This Team member will have the skills necessary to assist students in resume development and interviewing skills, which will help students prepare for employment after graduation.

The second Student Services Team member will be an employee with adequate time to manage day-to-day operations of the Program. This position is important because it will be the first point of contact for the Program participants. This Team member will
• help identify nontraditional students for the Program;
• notify students of acceptance into the Program;
• ensure students come prepared for orientation (e.g., to complete placement tests and/or financial aid applications);
• correspond with students regarding important dates;
• maintain contact with students during the summer in order to keep the students’ motivated during summer break;
• help facilitate activities for students;
• help identify appropriate work-study placement;
• be the day-to-day contact for students;
• collect and organize ongoing Program evaluations; and
• coordinate with various college departments for continuous communication.

Because of the above listed duties, among others, it is important that this Team member be assessable to students on a daily basis. Students will be provided this member’s office location, as well as other contact information, and will serve as the Program’s contact for students.

**Administrative member.** This Implementation Team member is important because he or she can make decisions on the behalf of the college and can provide the Program with any needed resources (e.g., room space and/or financial assistance for marketing). This member will serve as the liaison between the Implementation Team and other college administrators, informing them of the Program’s progress and helping to securing resources for the Program.
Marketing Strategies

A solid marketing strategy will be developed by the Implementation Team to inform potential students of the Program. The prime marketing period for the Program is November through April of the year prior to start of the Program. Working with the college’s designated marketing coordinator, a flyer will be created for public distribution and display. The flyer will highlight key elements of the Program that will resonate with nontraditional students, including but not limited to: completion within 2 years, affordability, work-study opportunities, career-advancement assistance, and child care availability (if applicable). It is important to focus on a variety of marketing methods to reach as many potential students as possible. The marketing materials will provide enough information to gain the interest of the potential student and to thwart any initial thoughts of barriers to enrollment (e.g., not having enough time or not having accessible child care), but limited enough information so the potential student will contact the college to find out more information (thereby establishing that first personal contact).

The purpose of this flyer is not only to advertise the Program, but also to show the potential student that it is possible to continue his or her education. The flyer will also include a telephone number and email address for the designated Implementation Team support staff member so the potential student can obtain additional information. The flyer will be displayed not only on campus, but also within the community (e.g., grocery stores and retail establishments).
Other means of marketing will take place through radio and newspaper advertisements, advertisements on social media sites (e.g., Facebook and/or Twitter), and a Program webpage accessible from the college’s website. Each of these marketing outlets will provide important information about the Program, as well as contact information for the designated Team member serving as a potential student’s first contact.

**Selection of Mentors**

The Implementation Team will select mentors for the Program. Every student participating in the Program will be assigned a mentor. Mentors will be selected for their positive work ethic and ability to provide guidance to others. The mentor will serve as a positive role model in the nontraditional student’s academic experience. Thus, the mentor should be knowledgeable of college processes, be organized, and be personable.

In mid-February, correspondence will be sent to college employees about the opportunity to serve as a mentor for the Program (an example is illustrated in Appendix A). In this correspondence, either on paper or via email, the employee will be provided a description of the Program as well as responsibilities of a mentor within the Program

- to hold regular meetings with the mentee;
- to recommend college-sponsored activities to attend;
- to provide information on college resources (e.g., tutoring and proctoring);
- to provide constructive criticism on a student’s work (if also a work-study supervisor); and
• to challenge the student to increase his or her knowledge and experience while in college.

The goal of this correspondence is to provide a realistic view of the expectations of a mentor, as well as the expected time dedicated to mentoring. Employees who have a reputation of hard work and compassion for student success will be sought after in person by a member of the Implementation Team, and spoken to about this mentoring opportunity.

Employees who are interested in serving as a mentor will be requested to express their interest to the Implementation Team by mid-March. At this time, received student applications will be evaluated for proper placement with a mentor. When selecting a mentor for the student, the Team must consider the student’s academic focus while attending the college, career goals after graduation, and primary location of the student’s classes. For example, if a student’s career goal is to become a probation officer after graduation, he or she will most likely benefit from a mentor with experience in the criminal justice field. If there is no career-specific mentor available at the location where a student takes classes, a “best case scenario” must be addressed. In this case, an available mentor that best fits the student’s goals will be selected.

After mentors are selected, they will participate in a workshop facilitated by the Implementation Team. The workshop will consist of the following topics, at a minimum:

• goals and objectives of the Program;
• mentor/work-study supervisor responsibilities;
• special needs of the nontraditional student;
• college resources available to nontraditional students; and
• who to contact with questions and/or concerns throughout the Program.

Mentors will also be provided ongoing support by the Implementation Team throughout the Program.

Selection of Work-Study Sites and Supervisors

Work-study supervisors must be mentors. As faculty and staff are selected to be mentors, the Implementation Team will assess whether the mentor can also serve as a work-study supervisor. This will be based on two criteria:

1. The mentor desires to be a work-site supervisor; and

2. There is sufficient work to be completed in the assignment, as related to the student’s major and/or career aspirations, to advantageously supplement the student’s education.

The purpose of work-study in the Program is not to get “free” labor for supervisors; the purpose is to integrate experiential learning into the academic setting. For example, a marketing major learns how to apply classroom concepts to marketing by working on marketing projects. Therefore, the student will be placed in a work-study position that relates to his or her academic and/or career goals.

The work-study supervisor, who also serves as the mentor for the student, will help the student perceive real-world applications for classroom-learned material. The supervisor will also work with the student to develop a realistic career path and help prepare the student to meet his or her career goals after graduation. Lastly, the work-study supervisor will provide constructive criticism to his or her student, facilitating an environment for continuous improvement.
The work-study supervisor will help the student learn skills needed after graduation. Punctuality, professional dress and appropriate workplace behavior will all be emphasized. The work-study supervisor will also help direct the student to campus resources when needed (e.g., career services and tutoring). The mentoring completed by the work-place supervisor will provide a vital component of student interaction thereby increasing retention and completion.

**Selection of Students**

The application process for students will begin in the spring semester prior to the first semester of the program. For example, if the first semester of the Program will start in fall, the application process will start the preceding spring. The selection of students will not be limited except by availability of resources (e.g., mentors).

Interested students will be provided basic information for the Program through either mail, email, or Program website, or the student can pick up the form in person from the designated Team member. The Team member will be available to assist the student with completing the form, if needed. Because of various deadlines, a student will be encouraged to complete a FAFSA and any appropriate scholarship application forms at the time of Program information form, and will be assisted with placement testing completion.

The Program information form will request the following information from the student, including

- a name, address, and telephone number;
- an email address (if applicable);
• a brief inquiry of how he or she heard about the Program;
• if the student is a first-generation student;
• estimated income level (for federal support program screening purposes); and
• how the student is nontraditional.

Given the fact that multiple factors can contribute to a student being categorized as “nontraditional,” the application will request responses to several questions to verify the student meets nontraditional status. This will also allow an opportunity for the Implementation Team to assess the nontraditional characteristics a student has, allowing for customized assistance during the student’s learning experience. All other information needed (e.g., education history) can be obtained from the college entrance application/form in order to make the process as simple and short as possible for students. An example of the information form can be found in Appendix B.

The encouraged deadline for applications will be early April, in order for a decision to be made as to acceptance into the Program, adequate time for mentor matching and to give as much notice as possible to accepted students for mandatory orientation attendance. The first mandatory orientation will be scheduled for mid-May. This will allow for early advisement and also allow for students who have a developmental education need to complete a course during the summer before enrollment. Though the initial deadline is early April, a continuous acceptance of applications will be conducted until the start of the fall semester. An additional orientation will be held in mid-July for students who were not accepted into the Program by the May orientation date.
Work-Study Placement

Students participating in the work-study component of the Program will be assigned as they are accepted into the Program. This assignment will be based on the student’s intended college major and his or her career aspirations after college. If possible, the student will be assigned to a work-study placement that is related to both of these. If not possible, assignment within the closest related placement site is necessary. The number of work-study placements available will dictate the number of students who can participate in this option of the Program.

Phase 2: Orientation

Orientation

Orientation for students participating in the Program will be mandatory. Orientation will be held as early as possible, preferably by mid-May, and will be organized specifically for Program participants. A secondary orientation will be held in mid-July for students who are admitted later into the Program. A general breakdown of the orientation is illustrated in Table 5.
Table 5: *Breakdown of Orientation Content*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TIME FRAME</th>
<th>DESCRIPTION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Morning</td>
<td>General session</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lunch (provided)</td>
<td>Meet-and-Greet with work-study supervisors and mentors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Afternoon</td>
<td>Academic advisement appointments, placement testing and FAFSA review</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mid to Late Afternoon</td>
<td>Campus tours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stress</td>
<td>General session</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employment</td>
<td>Meet-and-Greet with work-study supervisors and mentors</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Important topics covered in the general orientation session include:

- an overview of the Program;
- introduction of Implementation Team members;
- policies and procedures of the college;
- services offered by the college (e.g., tutoring, child care and library);
- identifying and understanding the costs of college (internal and external);
- degree/graduation requirements; and
- opportunities to get involved on campus.

After the morning orientation topics are covered, lunch will be provided for the students. Joining the students for lunch will be work-study supervisors and mentors with the Program. This will provide students an opportunity to meet and socialize with those who will help lead them through their academic journey over the next two years.
This socialization will not only allow participating students to congregate with other nontraditional students starting their educational journey, but also allow students to ask questions of faculty and staff.

After lunch will be the time for academic advisement. College employees responsible for academic advisement will meet with each student, discuss with the student his or her placement test scores, and develop an academic plan with the student to complete his or her degree within two years. If a student has not yet taken placement tests, he or she will complete the testing during the early afternoon and meet with an academic advisor following the testing, on the same day. During this meeting is when the student will be enrolled in his or her fall classes. The opportunity to take a needed developmental education course during the summer will also be discussed, if applicable.

Students will meet with financial aid representatives and review their FAFSA status. When invited to the orientation by the Implementation Team, students will be advised to bring financial information necessary to complete financial aid forms. Financial aid advisors will assist students in reviewing and completing the FAFSA, no matter what stage of completion. In addition to completing the FAFSA, financial aid advisors will work with students to explore and identify other means of financial aid. Additionally, representatives from any federally funded support programs (e.g., TRIO) will be available to speak with eligible students about enrollment and support services their program can offer.
The campus tour will be conducted by Implementation Team members, or experienced nontraditional students already enrolled at the college, after students meet with their academic advisor and classes are scheduled. These tours will be continuous throughout the afternoon, and will have a limited number of students in order to personalize the experience. The tour will allow students to locate their specific classrooms, as well as observe where their academic advisor’s office is located. Other locations will be highlighted, including the tutoring center, financial aid, counseling services, and the library.

Phase 3: Integrated Support

The third phase of the Program includes implementation of various student success interventions, as illustrated in Figure 5, while the student is enrolled in classes. This phase starts at the beginning of the fall semester of the first year. In this phase of the Program, students benefit from a student success course, a work-study placement, personalized mentoring, and ongoing, academic and social support throughout their tenure at a community college. Each of these components will be introduced in the first semester, then the work-study assignment, personalized mentoring, and academic and social support will continue throughout the student’s tenure at the college. Providing a solid foundation in the first semester, then ongoing support throughout following semesters, will help facilitate continued retention and completion.
Student Success Course

Participation in a student success course during the first semester of the Program is crucial to student success. Students will be enrolled into a student success course dependent on their scheduling needs. When possible students should participate in the same student success course as other students from the Program. The student success course will assist with successful transition to college as well as provide “just in time” practical knowledge for key college processes (e.g., academic advisement and registration). Topics covered in this course will include

- an introduction to college resources (e.g., student handbook, college catalog, advisement/registration information and financial aid);
- success strategies for college (e.g., note-taking, goal-setting, and test-taking strategies, good study habits and prioritization of events);
• general life management skills (e.g., time management, establishing rewarding relationships and how to handle stress);
• financial planning strategies (e.g., budgeting); and
• career development (e.g., job search techniques and resume building).

If a student success course does not currently exist at the college, one can be developed. Several successful models exist from community colleges across the United States. These models can be modified to fit specific institutional needs by academic advisors at the college and/or by experienced faculty members familiar with college processes.

An alternative while a student success course is being developed is workshops coordinated by the Implementation Team consisting of the same information that would be obtained in the success courses. This series of workshops, which would be held during the first semester, could help the nontraditional student get acquainted with college processes while building the foundation for a successful academic tenure. These workshops could be held at a variety of times so students could attend one of the sessions without inconveniencing their schedules (e.g., the same session offered during the day and during the evening).

**Mentoring**

All students will benefit from an assigned mentor. If a student is not participating in the work-study component of the Program, he or she will be assigned a mentor from within the major he or she has chosen. If this pairing is not feasible, then a mentor who closely matches the academic aspirations of the student will be chosen. For example, if a
student is majoring in criminal justice, and no criminal justice faculty member is
available to serve as a mentor, a member of the campus police or security department
may serve. The key to this mentoring relationship is that the mentor be dedicated to the
student’s success and have adequate time to dedicate to this success.

The student will meet with his or her assigned mentor regularly. The meeting
may be informal before or after a class, or in a more formalized office setting. During
these meetings, the mentor will

• inquire with the student about his or her ongoing progress;
• recommend any student-based activities occurring within the next week to
the student for attendance consideration;
• allow the student to ask questions he or she has; and
• recommend any college services that will help the student be successful.

The mentor will keep the designated Implementation Team member informed of the
progress of the student, as well as any college support services suggested. The Team
member will then work with the mentor to ensure the student takes advantage of the
suggested resources.

**Academic and Social Support**

Continuous academic and social support will be given to students in the Program
by both the Implementation Team and the assigned mentor. While the Implementation
Team will schedule workshops and events that everyone in the Program can attend,
mentors will be in a better position to recommend services such as tutoring, depending
on how the student is progressing in his or her academics. These support services can be
identified through the weekly meetings with the mentor.
First, students will be encouraged to attend at least two college-sponsored events each semester. These events can be of the student’s choosing and can include sporting events, campus cultural events, student organized club meetings (e.g., Criminal Justice Club or Accounting Club), or other special events occurring on campus. Students will be encouraged to attend the events in groups, as to increase the socialization component among Program participants. The Program will identify extracurricular events occurring on campus and communicate those events to Program participants. Two possibilities for this communication are through social media (e.g., Facebook or Twitter) and through texting. The same event will not be required for each student, however, as the students’ schedules will vary. Students will work with their mentors to identify appropriate events to attend.

Second, students will be provided workshops organized by the Program every semester. A minimum of four workshops will be scheduled each semester at a variety of times and with a variety of topics. Students will be required to attend at least two workshops each semester, and will be allowed to choose the workshops they wish to attend. The workshops will include information pertinent to continued college and/or career success (e.g., FAFSA renewal procedures, resume building, mock interviewing). During the workshop, time will be allowed for socialization for the students in the Program. This can be in the form of informal socialization, for example, before or after the formal workshop. Topics for the workshops will be developed by the Implementation Team, taking into consideration suggestions from the students and mentors.
Lastly, students will be provided academic advisement each semester. The student’s mentor will help prepare the student for the advising appointment by encouraging him or her to reevaluate goals and assess whether career aspirations have changed. The mentor can help suggest classes for the student to take in the upcoming semester and help the student formulate any questions to ask the academic advisor.

During the academic advisement session, which is conducted by a trained academic advisor at the college, the student’s academic progress will be assessed as well as a clear academic plan developed, including classes to be taken in the remaining semesters. The academic advisor will also illustrate to the student general classes to be taken before the student can graduate. For example, the advisor and student will speak about specific courses to be taken in the upcoming semester; however, they will generally speak about other classes that need to be taken in the future semesters before graduation. The academic advisor’s goal is to illustrate to the student that the goal of graduation is getting closer each semester.

**Work-Study**

The work-study component of the Program will start in the fall semester of the first year. During the first week of classes, the student will meet with the supervisor (who is also the student’s mentor) to discuss position expectations. The supervisor/mentor and student will develop a work schedule convenient for both parties, taking into consideration the student’s academic schedule, duties of the work-study position and obligations that exist outside of the college environment. This schedule will remain consistent throughout the semester.
The supervisor/mentor will be relatively flexible with the student’s hours worked, but still provide a structured work environment. For example, if the student has to pick up dependents from school at a certain time, the work schedule should be drafted to accommodate this. Likewise, if a college-sponsored event is occurring during the designated work time, the mentor should consider allowing the student to attend the event.

During the work-study placement, the supervisor/mentor will keep in mind the following objectives:

• integrate skills that will prepare the student for employment (e.g., professional conduct, etiquette and appropriate dress);
• provide praise when the student accomplishes set goals;
• speak with the student about how work being completed relates to concepts learned in the classroom; and
• take a genuinely caring interest in the student’s success.

The mentoring process will be integrated throughout the work-study program; however, each week the supervisor/mentor and student will designate a specific time to discuss the accomplishments and areas for improvement observed for that week.

The designated Implementation Team member will keep abreast of the student’s progress by speaking with the supervisor/mentor on a monthly basis. A formal evaluation will address the student’s progress at the end of every semester (see Appendix C). This evaluation, which will be discussed and signed by both the mentor and the student, will be kept on file by the designated Implementation Team member. If any support services are recommended for the student (e.g., tutoring or counseling) the
Team member will work with the mentor to ensure the student has access to the appropriate resources. The objective is not to dismiss a student if not meeting standards, but to assist the student in achieving those set standards.

**Continued Participation in the Program**

Students participating in the Program will be evaluated for continued participation at the end of each semester. As explained to students at orientation, continued participation in the program is contingent upon the following each semester:

- regular collaboration with mentor;
- satisfactory work-study evaluation (if applicable);
- meeting with an academic advisor; and
- attending at least two workshops.

The Implementation Team is responsible for verifying each of these requirements every semester and documenting successful completion (see Appendix D).

**Program Assessment and Evaluation**

The Program model includes various opportunities for assessment throughout. Students should complete pre and post learning assessments as part of the orientation program (see Appendix E), the Student Success course (see Appendix F) and for each program workshop attended (see Appendix G). Students should reflect on their learning as part of the work-study evaluation each semester. Both students and mentors should complete an assessment of the mentoring experience each semester (see Appendix H). Summaries of each assessment should be provided to the Implementation Team to use
for continuous program improvement and to guide training for mentors and worksite supervisors.

In addition to the ongoing program assessment conducted for continuous program improvement, it is important to continuously evaluate the impact of program participation on student academic performance and completion. Academic performance can be measured by both student grade point average (GPA) and academic standing. Each semester, the term and cumulative GPA of each student should be assessed noting the percentage of students in good academic standing and the percentage of those on academic warning, probation or some other academic standing. These percentages, as well as an average GPA for Program participants can be compared to the academic standing and average GPA of non-Program participants who are also nontraditional students as well as the overall college population.

The retention and completion rates of students participating in the Program should be tracked from initial entry until completion of a degree or certificate. Retention can be measured by the percentage of credit hours completed each semester and by continued enrollment to the next term. Completion can be measured by the percentage of students who complete a college certificate or degree “on-time,” 150% of the recommended time, and 200% of the recommended time. The rates for Program participants can be compared to non-Program participants who are also nontraditional students as well as the overall college population. Because the work-study component of the Program is voluntary, data should be analyzed with consideration for any differences between participants with work-study assignments and participants with no
work-study assignments to consider how that Program component may impact student performance and completion differently.

A final Program assessment should include feedback from students at the end of their participation in the Program (see Appendix I). A written survey can inform the Implementation Team of a student’s perceived advantages and disadvantages of the Program. A sample of Program completers can then be invited to supplement the written survey data with an in-person interview with the Implementation Team.

Summary

The Program to promote nontraditional student completion in community colleges illustrated in this chapter is comprised of three phases: organization, orientation, and integrated support. Each phase is specifically designed to optimize success for the nontraditional student. The first phase is focused on getting the Program organized, from consistency of the Implementation Team, selection of mentors/workplace supervisors, and selection of students. Included is a preferred timeline to help the Program reach milestones by certain times. The second and third phases are focused on serving students. The second phase, orientation, provides details, based on research, on how an orientation should be utilized to build a foundation for nontraditional retention and success throughout the program. The third phase, integrated support, provides necessary support to nontraditional students while enrolled at a community college. Throughout the Program, any opportunity for the students to socialize and work together should be utilized. Lastly, assessment and
evaluation throughout the Program, as well as at the conclusion, will provide valuable feedback on how to improve Program components.
CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

Nontraditional students make up a large proportion of the community college student population and present with many challenges to retention and completion (Center for Community College Student Engagement, 2012, Fike & Fike, 2008; Spellman, 2007). The success of these students in the community college is important so employment after graduation can be obtained, community colleges can continue to receive funding for student completion, and the community sees a return on investment for its support of the community college. Community colleges need to be prepared to meet the challenges associated with nontraditional student completion.

The Program presented provides an intentional way to increase the success of nontraditional students in community colleges by utilizing methods that have been proven to make a difference in nontraditional student retention and completion. This Program is ideal for community colleges because it is easily adaptable to any community college, does not require a great deal of financial resources and uses existing college staff to make the Program successful. The Program provides a comprehensive guide to creating a better learning environment for nontraditional community college students, thereby increasing retention and completion.
Limitations of the Program

Every effort was taken in developing the Program for Nontraditional Student Completion to make it a viable option for every community college. Each community college may need to make adaptations based on their own special circumstances. Omitting a critical component could alter the effectiveness of the Program.

Just as community colleges present with unique needs, so do nontraditional students. The most common way of identifying a nontraditional student from a traditional student is by age; however, this is but one characteristic that makes a “nontraditional student” worthy of special attention and allows the group to be easily researched. The special circumstances that each nontraditional student presents with make it difficult to illustrate more than a general program to fit every student’s needs. The presented Program is designed to benefit all nontraditional community college students; however, some students may need more intervention.

Though the Program has a structured timeline of progression, experience has shown that many nontraditional students are not able to make a college-going decision until shortly before the semester starts. As a result, these students pose an elevated risk of dropping out and are less likely to be retained than those who made the decision to enroll in college earlier. The Program may need to be modified to accommodate these late-enrolling students, providing extra support toward their retention and completion.

A multitude of research has shown the benefits of cohorts and peer socialization when attempting to increase retention and completion. When possible, Program participants will attend orientation and other aspects of the Program (e.g., the student
success course) together. Realistically, however, the schedules of nontraditional students vary to the extent that a true cohort model for the Program is not practical. Many of the benefits likely to be obtained by cohort interaction are instead obtained by personalized mentoring, which allows for every student to benefit from integration complimentary to his or her individual schedule.

Future Recommendations

It will be important for community colleges implementing the Program to conduct ongoing assessment and evaluation to guide program development and evaluate the program’s impact on student performance, retention and completion. The Program model includes suggested practices for conducting that ongoing assessment and evaluation. Additionally, future longitudinal research, comparing outcomes of cohorts of students over time, could provide valuable information for the bodies of research focused on college completion of nontraditional students and community college students.

Though this Program is focused on nontraditional students, investigation into whether this Program could be implemented with other student groups who struggle with retention and completion in college could be beneficial (e.g., international students or student veterans). This Program may provide the opportunity for these groups to benefit from Program components as well. Investigation into development of online components could also be advantageous to better meet the unique needs of an increasingly larger number of students enrolling in courses online.
The research behind the Program’s critical components is foundational for nontraditional student success. As community colleges progress in the future, the Program must be modified to incorporate that progression without compromising the fundamental components influencing academic and social integration. As technology and resources evolve, so must the Program. Continuous evaluation is the key to continued sustainability of the Program.

Summary

Nontraditional students come from within the community and make up a large proportion of community college students. Community colleges are charged with preparing students for an ever-evolving workplace. It is important that community colleges prepare students for successful employment after graduation; however, there are many influences that can affect the retention and completion of nontraditional students while in the community college. The Program for Nontraditional Student Completion in Community Colleges mitigates the effect that negative influences can have on nontraditional student retention and completion and provides a comprehensive approach that can be utilized by any community college using resources already available. With ongoing assessment of nontraditional student needs at a community college, the Program can be sustainable well into the future.
REFERENCES


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


APPENDIX A: CORRESPONDENCE TO MENTORS
Dear Colleague:

As you have already probably heard, the College has implemented a program to increase the retention and completion of nontraditional students who have chosen us for a quality education. The program provides a customized experience to nontraditional students by working closely with them to identify financial aid opportunities, obtain skills needed to be successful in college and beyond, and obtain critical academic advisement information, among other things.

Personalized mentoring is an aspect of the program for which we are seeking your help. The program is looking for mentors to help guide students on their academic journey. As someone who will have frequent contact with a student, the mentor is very important to student success. At a minimum, the mentor is responsible for

- holding regular meetings with the mentee;
- recommending college-sponsored activities to attend;
- providing information on college resources (e.g., tutoring, proctoring, etc.);
- providing constructive criticism on a student’s work (if also a work-study supervisor); and
- challenging the student to increase his or her knowledge and experience while in college.

We know you are interested in providing the best experience possible for our students. This is a way you can be involved in a student’s success while at our institution. If you are interested in discussion this opportunity further, please contact [Implementation Team Member] at [e-mail address] or [telephone number].

Sincerely,

John Doe
APPENDIX B: INFORMATION FORM FOR PROGRAM
# [Community College Name]
## Program Information Form

### Student Information

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Last Name</th>
<th>First</th>
<th>M.I.</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Street Address</th>
<th>Apartment/Unit #</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>City</th>
<th>State</th>
<th>ZIP</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phone</th>
<th>E-mail Address</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Supplemental Questions
(answers to these questions are used in determining your suitability for the program. There are no wrong answers that will automatically disqualify you from participation.)

- Marital Status:  
  - [ ] Single  
  - [ ] Married  
  - [ ] Divorced

- Are you 24 years old or older?  
  - [ ] YES  
  - [ ] NO

- Do you have any dependents (other than a spouse)?  
  - [ ] YES  
  - [ ] NO  
  - (#______)  

- Are you employed?  
  - [ ] More than 34 hours/week  
  - [ ] 34 hours or less/week  
  - [ ] Not employed

- Are you interested in part-time employment with the College?  
  - [ ] YES  
  - [ ] NO

- Are you an active duty member or veteran of the Armed Forces?  
  - [ ] YES  
  - [ ] NO

- Do either of your parents have a bachelor’s degree or higher?  
  - [ ] YES  
  - [ ] NO

- Estimated yearly income: $__________

- How did you hear about the Program?  
  - [ ] Friend  
  - [ ] College Employee  
  - [ ] Radio Ad  
  - [ ] TV Ad  
  - [ ] Flyer  
  - [ ] Facebook/Twitter

### Acknowledgement of Accuracy

By signing this application, I verify that I have answered the above questions truthfully and accurately. I can obtain clarity on any of these questions by contacting [Implementation Team member’s name] at [telephone #] or [e-mail address]. I agree to notify [Team member’s name] immediately if any of the above answers change.

Signature:  
Date:
### College Use Only:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Value</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Program application received</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Application Approved</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If no, why?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College application on file?</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listed program of study</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enrollment status</td>
<td>FULL-TIME</td>
<td>PART-TIME</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orientation date assigned</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student notified?</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>DATE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic Advisor assigned</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advisor notified?</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>DATE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eligible for work-study?</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mentor/Work supervisor assigned</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mentor notified?</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>DATE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eligible for TRIO?</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>NO</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX C: WORK-STUDY EVALUATION
## WORK-STUDY EVALUATION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student:</th>
<th>Semester:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Supervisor/Mentor:</td>
<td>Date:</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Poor</th>
<th>Below Expectations</th>
<th>Satisfactory</th>
<th>Above Expectations</th>
<th>Excellent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Student presents with a professional appearance and demeanor.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student adheres to the prescribed work schedule.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student shows a willingness to learn new skills.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student asks questions about unclear tasks.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student incorporates suggestions into daily tasks.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Areas for Improvement:

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
Supervisor Comments:

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

Student Comments:

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

☐ Recommended for continued placement in work-study position. ☐ Not recommended for continued placement in work-study position.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student Signature</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Supervisor Signature</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX D: IMPLEMENTATION TEAM CHECKLIST
# IMPLEMENTATION TEAM CHECKLIST
FOR CONTINUED PARTICIPATION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student:</th>
<th>Semester:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Regularly corresponded with mentor</td>
<td>□ YES □ NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Met with academic advisor</td>
<td>□ YES □ NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satisfactory work-study evaluation</td>
<td>□ YES □ NO □ N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attended at least two workshops</td>
<td>□ YES □ NO</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Recommendation for Program continuation**

- □ Recommended to continue Program
- □ Not recommended to continue Program

**Reason (if not recommended)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reviewing Team Member Signature</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
APPENDIX E: ORIENTATION ASSESSMENT TOOL
# ASSESSMENT OF ORIENTATION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Not at all</th>
<th>Not very well</th>
<th>Somewhat</th>
<th>Mostly</th>
<th>Completely</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I understand the requirements for continued participation in the Program.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I know where to locate policies and procedures of the College.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I understand the tuition and fees associated with attending college.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I know how I can get involved with extracurricular activities on campus.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am familiar with the classes required to complete my degree.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I understand what a FAFSA is and how to complete it.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I know where my academic advisor’s office is located</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

What was the most valuable thing you learned in the orientation?
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

What would you have liked to learn more about?
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
APPENDIX F: SUCCESS COURSE ASSESSMENT TOOL
# ASSESSMENT OF STUDENT SUCCESS COURSE

**Pre-Assessment and Post-Assessment**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I set goals and actively work toward achieving them.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I use techniques to manage stress related to exams.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My notes are valuable for when studying.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I use specific strategies to help me better manage my personal finances.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I use time management tools to help me do everything I need to during the day.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I can locate resources in the student handbook.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have the skills needed to assist me with finding a job.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

What was the most valuable thing you learned in the student success course?

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

What would you have liked to learn more about?

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________
APPENDIX G: WORKSHOP ASSESSMENT TOOL
**ASSESSMENT OF WORKSHOP**

Workshop: ___(Resume Writing)___  Date: ________________

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Not at all</th>
<th>Not very well</th>
<th>Somewhat</th>
<th>Mostly</th>
<th>Completely</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I understand the function of a resume.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I understand what important information should be included in a resume.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I understand how to best draw attention to my resume by a potential employer.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I understand when a resume should be given to a potential employer.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am confident in my resume building skills.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

What did you like most about the workshop?

________________________________________________________________________

What did you like least about the workshop?

________________________________________________________________________

What suggestions do you have to improve this workshop?

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________
APPENDIX H: MENTORING ASSESSMENT TOOL
### ASSESSMENT OF MENTORING (STUDENT)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Somewhat disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Somewhat agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>My mentor shows interest in my ongoing progress at the college.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My mentor recommends activities for me to attend.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel comfortable asking my mentor questions about school.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My mentor challenges me to be a better student.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My mentor genuinely cares about my success in college.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My mentor recommends college services that might be helpful (e.g., tutoring).</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My mentor challenges me to apply classroom concepts to real-life scenarios.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

What was the most valuable thing you learned from the mentoring process?

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

How could you have learned more?

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
### ASSESSMENT OF MENTORING (MENTOR)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Somewhat disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Somewhat agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The student meets with me on a regular basis.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The student inquires with me about what college activities to attend.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The student inquires with me about college services that can be beneficial to his or her learning.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When the student has questions, I feel I can provide the proper guidance.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

What additional information or support could we provide that would help you with the mentoring aspect of the Program?

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
APPENDIX I: PROGRAM ASSESSMENT TOOL
**ASSESSMENT OF PROGRAM AT COMPLETION**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Information I learned during orientation helped me be successful in the Program and at the college.</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Somewhat disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Somewhat agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Was there any information from orientation that you found especially useful?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Looking back, were there any topics that would have made your experience easier if they would have been covered in orientation?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Information I learned during the student success course helped me be successful in the Program and at the college.</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Somewhat disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Somewhat agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Was there any information from the course that you found especially useful?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Looking back, were there any topics that would have made your experience easier if they would have been covered in the course?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My mentor provided guidance and motivation to help me be successful.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Was there any information or support from your mentor that you found especially useful?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Looking back, what additional help could your mentor have provided?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My work placement reinforced course content with work related skills I can use after graduation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Were there any skills you learned that were particularly beneficial?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Looking back, how could the work-study component be more beneficial to you?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In your opinion, how much influence did the following factors have on your success?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor</th>
<th>No Influence</th>
<th>Couldn’t have succeeded without it</th>
<th>Did Not Use</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Academic advisement</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial aid</td>
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<td>3</td>
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<td></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Good study skills</td>
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<td>5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Good time management skills</td>
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<tr>
<td>Financial planning/budgeting</td>
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<td>Family support</td>
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<td>Extracurricular activities</td>
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<tr>
<td>Student study group</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If you could change one thing about the Program, what would it be and why?
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

If you were going to recommend this Program to a friend who is considering college, what would your top reason be and why?
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

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